

# DEBBIE BECHER

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## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

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- 2011- Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology  
Barnard College, Columbia University
- 2010-11 Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Sociology  
Barnard College, Columbia University
- 2009-10 Visiting Scholar, American Academy of Arts and Sciences

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## EDUCATION

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- 2009 Ph.D. Princeton University, Sociology  
Dissertation: *Valuing Property: Eminent Domain for Urban Redevelopment, Philadelphia, 1992-2007*, Paul DiMaggio (chair)
- 2005 M.A. Princeton University, Sociology, exams with distinction
- 1991 B.A. University of Virginia, Mathematics, Echols Scholar, Phi Beta Kappa

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## GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

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### NATIONALLY COMPETITIVE AWARDS

- National Science Foundation Law and Social Sciences (\$250,000), 2015
- Visiting Scholar, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2009-10
- Research Fellow, The Brookings Institution, Metropolitan Policy Program, 2008-9
- American Fellow, American Association of University Women (AAUW), 2008-9
- Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy (\$3,000), 2008
- National Science Foundation Law and Social Sciences, Doctoral Dissertation (\$12,000), 2007
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Doctoral Dissertation (\$22,220), 2007
- Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations Research Grant (\$4,925), 2007
- Law and Society Association, Graduate Student Workshop, 2006

### INSTITUTIONAL AWARDS (BARNARD COLLEGE)

- Global Innovation Fund, 2020
- Special Assistant Professor Leave, 2014

### INSTITUTIONAL AWARDS (PRINCETON UNIVERSITY)

- Fellow, Society of Woodrow Wilson Scholars, 2006-8
- Graduate Prize, American Studies, 2007-8

Global Network on Inequality Fellowship, 2007  
Graduate Prize Fellowship, Center for Human Values, 2006-7  
Arthur Liman Fellowship, Arthur Liman Public Interest Program, 2006  
Dissertation Research Grant, Department of Sociology, 2006  
Policy Research Institute for the Region Dissertation Grant, 2006

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## BOOKS

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- Debbie Becher. 2014. *Private Property and Public Power: Eminent Domain in Philadelphia*. Oxford University Press.  
Reviewed in *American Journal of Sociology*, *City and Community*, *Shelterforce*, *Social Forces*
- Co-Winner of the 2016 Zelizer Book Award from the Economic Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association
  - Winner of the 2015 Hart Socio-Legal Prize for Early Career Academics from the Socio-Legal Studies Association
- Debbie Becher. (In Progress). *A Fractured Nation*. Under contract with Oxford University Press.

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## ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS

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- Debbie Becher. 2015. "Race as a Set of Symbolic Resources: Mobilization in the politics of eminent domain." In *Race and Real Estate*. Eds. Adrienne Brown, Kim Lane Scheppele, and Valerie Smith. Oxford University Press, pp. 125-144.
- Debbie Becher. 2012. "Political Moments with Long-term Consequences." 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. Transaction Publishers. pp. 203-220.
- Debbie Becher. 2010. "The Participant's Dilemma: Bringing Conflict and Representation Back In." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 34(3) 496-511.
- Debbie Becher. 2010. "The Rights behind Eminent Domain Fights: A Little Property and a Lot of Home." In *Property Rights and Neo-liberalism: Cultural Demands and Legal Actions*. Eds. Laura Hatcher and Wayne McIntosh. Ashgate Press. pp. 75-93.
- Debbie Becher. 2008. "Narrating and Naming Positive Agents: Storytelling by Philadelphia Postwar Political Elite." *Poetics*. 36(1) 72-93.

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## BOOK REVIEWS AND ESSAYS

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- Debbie Becher. *Forthcoming*. Review of *Manufactured Insecurity: Mobile Home Parks and Americans' Tenuous Right to Place*, by Esther Sullivan. 2018. University of California Press. *Contemporary Sociology*.
- Debbie Becher. 2017. "The (Valuation) Politics of Privatization." Review Essay on *Caring Capitalism: The Meaning and Measure of Social Value*, by Emily Barman, 2016, Cambridge University Press. *Contemporary Sociology*. 46(5) 521-6.

- Debbie Becher. 2015. "The Public Nature of Private Property," in *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Science*, Eds. Robert Scott and Steven Kosslyn. Online resource. John Wiley and Sons.
- Debbie Becher. 2015. Review of *Black Citymakers*, by Marcus Hunter. 2013. Oxford University Press. *Contemporary Sociology*. 44(4) 519-21.
- Debbie Becher. 2013. Review of *Everyday Law on the Street*, by Mariana Valverde. 2012. University of Chicago Press. *City and Community*. 12(4) 410-12.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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- "Private Property and Private Law as Sources of Progressive Power: Lessons from American Oil Development," Economic Sociology Conference, June 2019 (invited)
- Author-meets-reader session on *Cooperative Capitalism* by Rashmi Dyal-Chand, Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics Annual Meeting, June 2019
- Author-meets-reader session on *Cooperative Capitalism* by Rashmi Dyal-Chand, Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, June 2019
- "A Fractured Nation: Private Property and the Fracking of the Rural West," Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, June 2019
- "A Fractured Nation," Property Works in Progress Conference, October 2018 (invited)
- "Not Left Behind: Cultural Affinities between Agriculture and Oil in the Great Plains," Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting, July 2018
- "Making Property Law through Private Action: Who Owns What in the Bakken," Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, June 2018
- Discussant, Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, Socio-Economic Rights to Property, June 2018
- "Who Owns What in the Bakken? A Socio-Legal Approach to Property Fragmentation and Concentration," Progressive Property Conference, May 2018 (invited)
- "Surprising Ourselves about Property and Power," Eastern Sociological Association Presidential Session, February 2018 (invited)
- "Making Property Markets Moral in American Oil Country," Property Works in Progress Conference, September 2017 (invited)
- "Making Markets by Making Informal Rules: Oil's Landmen," and "Legitimate Compensation: Categorizing Property Interests," Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, June 2017
- "Public Demands Asserted through Private Property Rights: Struggles for Control over Oil Development," Progressive Property Conference, April 2017 (invited)
- "The Long Histories of Privatization and Commodification in the Global North: Lessons from Oil Development in the American Northern Plains," American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, April 2017
- "Controlling Commodification when Energy Companies Come Knocking" Eastern Sociological Association Presidential Session, February 2017 (invited)
- "Government Protecting Poor People's Property as Investment," Eastern Sociological Association Presidential Session, February 2017 (invited)

- “Power in Private Property Rights: The Pursuit of Lifestyle in the Interior West’s Fracking Boom,” American Sociological Association (ASA) Annual Meeting, Economic Sociology Section, August 2016 (invited)
- “Controlling Commodification with Private Property: Countermovements in the Oil Boom,” Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics Annual Meeting, June 2016
- Discussant, Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, “Front-Line Regulators and Compliance,” June 2016
- “Property, Power, and Oil,” Contested Property Claims Conference, Aarhus University, December 2015
- Author-meets-reader session on *Private Property and Public Power*, Social Sciences History Association annual conference, November 2015 (invited)
- Author-Meets-Reader Session on *Private Property and Public Power*, Socio-Legal Studies Association annual conference, April 2015 (invited)
- Discussant, Conference Questioning Space of Citizenship, Columbia University, Panel “Citizens in Search of Space: Squatters in Latin America,” April 2014
- “Private Property’s Social Values and Law as a Hybrid Institution,” Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics Annual Meeting, July 2014
- Private Property’s Social Values and Law as a Hybrid Institution,” Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, June 2014
- “Private Property’s Social Values and Law as a Hybrid Institution,” Social Value Workshop, Boston University, May 2014 (invited)
- Discussant, Conference from the Outside In: Sustainable Futures for Global Cities and Suburbs, at Hofstra University, Panel “Shrinking Cities and Demographic Change,” March 2013
- “What the Cowboy Hat is Hiding: Professional Landmen as Prospectors or Brokers in Leasing for Fracking,” International Academic Association on Planning, Law, and Property Rights Annual Meeting, February 2013
- “Government Legitimacy in a Contemporary Capitalist Economy: Beyond Markets and Market Value to an Investment Logic,” ASA Annual Meeting, Economic Sociology Section, August 2012
- “Earning Government Legitimacy by Taking Property for Private Ownership: Everyday Encounters with Eminent Domain,” Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, June 2012
- “What the Cowboy Hat is Hiding: Professional Landmen as Prospectors or Brokers in Leasing for Fracking,” Land Deal Politics Initiative, Second International Academic Conference on Global Land Grabbing, October 2012
- “Political Moments with Long-term Consequences,” International Sociological Association, Research Committee 21 on Sociology of Urban and Regional Development’s annual conference, July 2011
- “The Rights behind Eminent Domain Fights: A Little Property and A Lot of Home,” ASA Annual Meeting, Culture Section, August 2010
- “The Common Test Case: Rights against Discrimination Meet Property Rights in Everyday Takings,” Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, May 2010
- “The Rights behind Eminent Domain Fights: “A Little Property and a Lot of Home,” Association for Law, Property, and Society Annual Meeting, March 2010

- “Government Support of Growth in Whose Interest? Political and Economic Pragmatism Motivate the Use of Eminent Domain for Redevelopment,” ASA Annual Meeting, Community and Urban Sociology Section, August 2009
- “The Participant’s Dilemma: Bringing Conflict and Representation Back In,” ASA Annual Meeting, Community and Urban Sociology Section, August 2009
- “The Rights Behind Eminent Domain Fights: A Little Property and A Lot of Home,” Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, May 2009
- “Valuing Property: Eminent Domain for Private Development, Philadelphia 1992-2007,” Urban Affairs Association Annual Meeting, May 2009
- “The Third Way: How Private Negotiation Creates Government Legitimacy in Public Conflicts over Eminent Domain,” ASA Annual Meeting, Political Sociology Section, August 2008
- “Politics of Home: Eminent Domain and Negotiations of the Common Good along Philadelphia’s American Street,” Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, May 2008
- “Hitting a Moving Target: Everyday Evaluations of Governments’ Growth Efforts,” International Sociological Association, Research Committee 21 on Sociology of Urban and Regional Development’s annual conference, August 2007
- Discussant, Princeton University Center for Human Values Graduate Prize Seminar, comments on “A Problem for Scanlon,” by Katie Gallagher, October 2006
- “The Gender of Volunteering: Networks and Expectations,” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting, March 2006
- Discussant, Princeton University Department of Sociology Workshop on ‘Normative Perspectives on Inequality’, comments on papers presented by Erik Olin Wright and Michael Burawoy, January 2006

## INVITED LECTURES

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- “A Fractured Nation: Private Property and the Fracking of the Rural West,” Tulane University Department of Sociology, April 2019
- “Protecting Poor People's Property? Eminent Domain in Philadelphia 1992-2007,” Drexel University Department of Sociology, Power, Pleasure and Space-Planning the 21<sup>st</sup> Century City Series, October 2018
- “Privatized Governance of Land and Minerals: Private Property and Fracking in the American Interior West,” Rutgers University Symposium on Privatizing the Public Good, February 2018
- “Private Property and the Fracking of the Rural West,” Barnard College Junior Faculty Talks, March 2017
- “The Social in Private Property: Lessons from Eminent Domain (and Oil),” Cornell University, Department of Development Sociology, October 2016
- Author-Meets-Reader Discussion of *Private Property and Public Power*, Discussion across Disciplines, Columbia University, February 2016
- “Private Property and Public Power,” Montana State University Earth Sciences Seminar, March 2015
- “Taking Poor People’s Property,” University of Connecticut Law School 20<sup>th</sup> Gallivan Conference, Kelo: A Decade Later, March 2015

- “Property as Investment: Eminent Domain in Philadelphia, 1992-2007,” CUNY Graduate Center, Critical Social/Personality Psychology and Environmental Psychology Brown Bag Series, October 2013
- “Property as Investment: Private Property, Government Authority, and Eminent Domain in Philadelphia, 1992-2007,” University of Pennsylvania, Department of Sociology Economy and Society Workshop, April 2013
- “Property as Investment: Private Property, Government Authority, and Eminent Domain in Philadelphia, 1992-2007,” University of Washington, Department of Sociology SCOPE Seminar February 2013
- “An Investment Logic behind Government Legitimacy: Eminent Domain Use and Abuse in Philadelphia, 1992-2007,” Georgetown University Department of Sociology Colloquium/Speaker Series, April 2012
- “Uncertainty, Redevelopment Legitimacy, and Communication,” University of Michigan, A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning Risk: Present Predicaments in Architecture and Urban Planning Conference Series, March 2012
- “Government Legitimacy and Valuation: When Protecting Property's Values means Taking Property Titles,” Columbia University Center on Organizational Innovation, Workshop on Economic Sociology Meets Economic Geography, February 2012
- “Investing like a State: Political Culture and Property Takings”  
Rutgers University Edgar J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, The Bloustein Speaker Series, March 2011  
Columbia University Urban Planning Program Lectures in Planning Series, February 2011  
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
- “The Moral Economy of Home: Property Takings in an Investment State,” Harvard University Department of Sociology Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, May 2010
- “The Moral Economy of Home: A Practical Take on Taking Property in an Investment State,” Harvard University Department of Sociology Urban Social Processes Workshop, March 2010
- “The Political and Moral Classification of Property Relations: The Case of Eminent Domain,” University of Wisconsin Department of Sociology, Politics, Culture, and Society Seminar, February 2010
- “The Investment State,” University of Wisconsin Law School Institute for Legal Studies Faculty Workshop, February 2010
- “A Moral Code in Property Politics,” University of Arizona Department of Sociology Friday Lunch Oratory Program aka “Brown Bag,” October 2009
- “The Closed Boxes of Race and Property, The Open Box of Home: Struggles for ‘Home’ in Philadelphia Conflicts over Eminent Domain,” Princeton University African American Studies Program and the Program in Law and Public Affairs, Conference on Race and Real Estate, May 2009
- “The Political and Moral Classification of Property Relations: Eminent Domain Use and Abuse in Philadelphia,” Brown University Taubman Center for Public Policy, Brown Bag Series, March 2010
- “Valuing Property: Eminent Domain for Private Development, Philadelphia 1992-2007,” Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, December 2008

## PRESS FEATURES

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Erika Nesvold. 2017. Debbie Becher featured in podcast “Who Owns Mars: Property Rights in Outer Space,” Episode 3 of Making New Worlds: Exploring the Ethics of Human Settlement in Space. November 29. <https://makingnewworlds.com/2017/11/29/ep-03-who-owns-mars/>

Ferhunde Dilara Demir, 2017. Interview with Debbie Becher in *Accounts*, Newsletter of the Economic Sociology section of the American Sociological Association. 16(2) 9-16.

## SERVICE TO THE DISCIPLINE

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- 2019-22 Editorial Board member, *Contemporary Sociology*
- 2019 Organizer, Author-Meets-Reader sessions on *Cooperative Capitalism* by Rashmi Dyal-Chand, for Law and Society Association and Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics Annual Meetings
- 2017- Founding member, Socio-Legal Approaches to Property, a Collaborative Research Network of the Law and Society Association
- 2019 Organizer, Author-Meets-Reader Sessions, *Collaborative Capitalism* by Rashmi Dyal-Shand (Cambridge 2018), for Law and Society Association and Society for the Advancement of Socio-economics Annual Meetings
- 2016-17 Zelizer Book Award Committee, American Sociological Association  
Economic Sociology Section
- 2016-17 Jane Addams Paper Award Committee, American Sociological Association  
Community and Urban Studies Section
- 2016-17 Organizing Committee for American Sociological Association Pre-Conference,  
Sociology of Law Section
- 2013 Best Graduate Student Paper Award Committee, American Sociological  
Association Political Sociology Section
- 2012 Robert E. Park Award for Best Book Committee, American Sociological  
Association Section on Community and Urban Sociology
- 2012 Peterson-Krivo Mentoring Award Committee, American Sociological  
Association Sociology of Law Section
- 2011 Organizer, American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Political Sociology  
Section, Panel on Social Policy
- 2009 Organizer, Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, Panel “Origins of Rights”

## ONGOING REVIEWER

*American Ethnologist, American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, City and Community, Environment and Planning A, Ethnography, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Journal of Empirical Legal Studies, Law and Social Inquiry, Law and Society Review, Politics and Policy, Socio-Economic Review*

## COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE

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2011-	Urban Studies Program Advisory Board, Barnard College
2018-19	Search committee, Director for Center for Engaged Pedagogy, Barnard College
2018-19	Search committee, Assistant Professor of Urban Studies & Sociology, Barnard College
2017-19	Faculty Governance and Procedures Committee, Barnard College (elected)
2017-18	Search committee, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Barnard College
2010-18	Advisory Board, Center for Research on Women, Barnard College
2015-17	Faculty Recorder, Barnard College (elected)
2013-15	Academic Success and Enrichment Committee, Barnard College
2010-14	Faculty Mentor, Undergraduate Research Program and Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences Program, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, Columbia University
2011-12	Search committee, Term Professor of Urban Studies, Barnard College
2011	Review committee, Seed Grant Proposals, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, Columbia University
2004-05	Diversity Committee, Department of Sociology, Princeton University.
2003-04	Graduate Student Government, Department of Sociology, Princeton University

## TEACHING

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### COURSES, Barnard College and Columbia University

Undergraduate Lectures: Social Theory, Law and Society

Undergraduate Seminars: Urban Inequality, Advanced Topics in Law and Society, Eminent Domain and Neighborhood Change, Senior Thesis (co-taught)

Graduate: Sociology of Law

### GRADUATE ADVISING, Columbia University

#### Dissertation Committees

Paige Ambord, Sociology (University of Notre Dame), exp 2021

“Urban Ruins: Visibility and Value in Land Management Decisions”

Kathleen Ann Griesbach, Sociology, exp 2020

“Waiting, Hoping, Working: Uncertain Schedules and Contingent Worker Experience in Rural and Urban Contexts”

Adrianna Bagnal-Munson, Sociology, exp 2020

“Managing Adulthood: Guardianship and autonomy for people with developmental disabilities”

Pierre-Christian Kremp, Sociology, exp 2019

“The Rise of the Money Market: The U.S. State, New York City Banks and the Commodification of Money, 1945–1980”



- Adele Cassola, Architecture and Urban Planning, 2018  
 “Planning for Equitable Neighborhood Change: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of 80 Cities’ Displacement Mitigation Approaches”
- John Haynal West, Architecture and Urban Planning, 2016  
 “The Rule of Choice: How economic theories from the 1950s became technologically embedded, politically contested urban policy in New York City from 2002-2013”
- Ari Waldman, Sociology, 2015  
 “Privacy as Trust: Sharing Personal Information in a Networked World”
- Julia Del Palacio Langer, History and Latin American Studies, 2014  
 “Agrarian Reform, Oil Expropriation, and the Making of National Property in Postrevolutionary Mexico”
- Elif Alp, Sociology, ABD  
 “Screen Cleaning: Moral Knowledge and the Politics of Citizenship”
- MA Thesis, Sociology
- Hanna Love, exp 2019 (advisor)  
 “Narrating Youths' Lives in the Courtroom: How Symbolic Narratives Construct a 'Juvenile Delinquent”
- Marina Pera Ros, 2014  
 “The Spanish Mortgage Crisis and the P.A.H.’s Campaign of Occupations ‘La Obra Social de la P.A.H.’”

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE ACADEMIA**

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- 1999-2002     *Community Development Project Associate*, PRO Neighborhoods, Tucson, AZ  
 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, AZ  
 Facilitated long-range planning and visioning for local groups on request.
- 1996-99        *Project Development Coordinator*, Rammed Earth Solar Homes, Tucson, AZ  
 Supervised employees and subcontractors on construction of custom homes. Facilitated communication among customers, contractors, suppliers, and crews. Marketing, estimating, management, and general labor.
- 1997-98        *Community Development Coordinator*, Pima Youth Partnership, Tucson, AZ  
 Mobilized neighborhood residents to increase leadership and success. Wrote successful \$30,000 federal grant. Coordinated family-literacy program.
- 1995-98        *Self-Employed, House Renovation Projects*, Norfolk, VA and Tucson, AZ, 1995-1998.  
 Renovated two century-old homes. Budgeting, scheduling, and construction.
- 1993-95        *Coordinator of Volunteers, Training, In-Kind Donations*, Tucson Centers for Women and Children, Tucson, AZ  
 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, AZ  
Counseling and case management for domestic violence shelter residents.
- 1991-92      *Caseworker*, New Beginnings Treatment Center, Tucson, AZ  
Maintained caseload of 14-16 adults in community correctional center.  
Led support groups and workshops on domestic violence, budgeting, and other  
daily-life issues.