

# HYPHENATED GEOGRAPHIES: THE DEINDUSTRIALIZATION OF NATURE–SOCIETY GEOGRAPHY\*

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**ABSTRACT.** As visions of ecological crisis mark the daily headlines, industrial spaces of intensive energy and material consumption become a more intense object of political and social concern. In this article, I attempt to situate geography's relative neglect of the ecological underpinnings of industrial capitalism within the context of the history of geographical thought. I argue that the ways in which geographers read the hyphen in the phrase "nature-society" reveals epistemological limits to their object of study. I then offer three dramatically different readings of the hyphen and discuss how they have affected the lineages and trajectories of geographical research—Barrows's human ecology, Sauer's cultural landscape, and critical theories of social nature. I conclude by suggesting that geography needs to let go of its empirical and conceptual fixation on "nature." *Keywords:* Harlan H. Barrows, history of geographical thought, nature-society geography, Carl O. Sauer.

On 18 October 2007 Senators Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) and John Warner (R-VA) introduced the Climate Security Act of 2007 on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Among other things, this act would aim to regulate some 2,100 industrial facilities that produce significant greenhouse gas emissions—power plants, refineries, and industrial factories. This act—along with countless political discussions of climate change—reveal that the ecological challenges of the twenty-first century require us to confront the socioecological transformations wrought by expanding patterns of urbanization, industrialization, and fossil-fuel combustion. Geographically speaking, these processes unfold in particular places and spaces constructed as highly unnatural due to the dominance of the built environment, high levels of pollution, and dependence on societal metabolisms of waste, water, materials, and energy (Fischer-Kowalski 2003).

From the narrow disciplinary perspective of geography, principally its Anglo-American variants, it is also interesting to note that most of these sites remain under the purview of the more spatial side of human geography, particularly urban and economic geography (Hanson 1999; Angel 2000).<sup>1</sup> Despite fleeting calls for a "critical industrial ecology" (a term credited to Jody Emel in Bridge and Jonas 2002, 764) and an "industrial geography of the environment" (Gibbs and Healey 1997), it is still safe to say that, by and large, "few geographers have been involved in the study of industrial ecology" (Liverman, Yarnal, and Turner 2003, 273). This gap persists in spite of the fact that, since 1990 multitudes of geographers have answered influential calls for research on nature-society questions (Kates 1987; FitzSimmons 1989; Turner 2002). Critical geographical work on nature has exploded to what Noel

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