The American Geographical Society Awards 2020 Wrigley-Fairchild Prize

Description: The Wrigley-Fairchild Prize, awarded by the American Geographical Society (AGS), is one of several prestigious honors given by the Society. Drs. Ingrid Boas, Ruben Dahm, and David Wrathall will receive the prize during the AGS Fall Symposium, to be held virtually in November 2021.

[New York City, NY] – [April 30, 2021] — The American Geographical Society (AGS) is pleased to announce Drs. Ingrid Boas, Ruben Dahm, and David Wrathall have been selected to receive the ninth Wrigley-Fairchild Prize. The prize will be presented during American Geographical Society's Fall Geography 2050 Symposium. Their Geographical Review paper "Grounding Big Data on Climate-Induced Human Mobility" was selected as the winner from 34 articles published in Geographical Review under consideration for the award.

The Wrigley-Fairchild Prize was established in 1994 as a way to promote scholarly writing among new scholars. The prize is given every year to the author of the best article by an early-career scholar published in the most recent three volumes of the Geographical Review. It is named for two previous editors of the journal, Gladis Wrigley and Wilma Fairchild, whose combined editorships covered 60 years of publication.

"Boas, Dahm, and Wrathall's article demonstrates how analysis using 'big data' can and should be checked against the ground fieldwork" said Dr. David Kaplan, Editor-in-Chief of Geographical Review. "Oftentimes the patterns and relationships revealed by large data sets are a useful start but are most helpfully supplemented by site visits and interviews… this article helped us understand better just how people use their mobility in the face of climate change," added Dr. Kaplan.

Dr. Ingrid Boas is an Associate Professor at the Environmental Policy Group of Wageningen University. Since 2007, she has worked on the nexus between environmental change and mobilities, with an emphasis on the subject of human mobility and migration studied from the angles of governance, discourse, and human geography. "This paper and my work shows how the relation between climate risk and mobility can be quite different to what we expect and working across disciplines helps to better understand it. This award will inspire me to enhance the interdisciplinary collaborations we started in order to get to a more accurate understanding of the complex relations between environmental change, climate risk, mobility and immobility," said Dr. Boas, when asked about the winning paper.

Dr. Ruben Dahm is a senior researcher at Deltares, an independent research institute on water and subsurface in the Netherlands. His research focuses on water resources, particularly flood and drought risk, and the role of climate in societal stability and conflicts. He holds a master’s degree in hydrology from Wageningen University, the Netherlands. Dr. Dahm noted "It is a great honor to receive the Wrigley-Fairchild Prize as to me it demonstrates the value Deltares can bring to interdisciplinary research with our expertise on numerical models, data science, and earth observation. By joining our perspectives and knowledge we ultimately contributed to a better understanding of a complex and important issue like climate-induced human mobility. And personally, as a researcher, I find these kinds of collaborations with other disciplines very rewarding."

Dr. David J. Wrathall is an assistant professor in the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University, and a Lead Author on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change AR6, WG2, Ch.8: Poverty, Livelihoods and Sustainable Development. He studies the ways that climate change impacts are threatening people's livelihoods and rendering parts of the planet uninhabitable, and thus driving new patterns of human migration. When asked about his research, Dr. Wrathall stated "Every single year of the last decade, humanity has created more digital information via handheld devices than the entirety of history that preceded."
Social and environmental scientists are swimming in data, but we lag far behind in our ability to meaningfully interpret it and solve the world’s most pressing problems. Methods like the one we developed for this paper are a necessary step forward.”

The American Geographical Society (AGS) is a 21st-century learning society dedicated to the advancement of geographic thinking, knowledge, and understanding across business, government, academe, social sectors, and most importantly with teachers and students. Established in 1851, AGS is the oldest professional geographical organization in the United States. It is recognized worldwide as a pioneer in geographical research and education for over 170 years. The mission of AGS is to advance and promote geography in business, government, science, and education. Our goal is to enhance the nation’s geographic literacy to engender sound public policy, national security, and human well-being worldwide. AGS seeks to engage the American public, from its youngest to its oldest citizens, with new and amazing ways to understand and characterize our changing world. The Society maintains its headquarters in New York City.

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