

Call for Papers

“A Post-Coffee Crisis World?: Comparative Experiences of Production, Development, and Livelihoods across the 21st Century Global Coffee Belt”

Special Issue: International Journal of Comparative Sociology

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Key Dates:

- February 15, 2026 – Abstract Submission Deadline
- March 1, 2026 - Notification of intention to include paper in special issue
- May 15, 2026 – Initial submission of paper – begin peer review process

Background:

The global coffee industry provides a useful vantage point to analyze the social dynamics of historical capitalism and the 21st century global political economy. Ecologically limited to cultivation sites located across the tropical “coffee belt” highlands of SubSaharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, South and South East Asia, and the Pacific Islands, coffee is a “global commodity” that connects some 80-100 million people in producer countries to about 1 billion daily consumers of coffee (50% of whom reside in the countries of the Global North).

Historically, coffee arose as a social beverage produced and consumed across the Islamic World of the 15th and 16th centuries, but it transformed into a key cash crop buttressing European colonization and coercive plantation systems over the subsequent three centuries. In the mid-20th century, as decolonial, nationalist, and revolutionary fervor spread throughout the rural regions of the Third World, coffee-based developmentalist policies became a critical geopolitical tool that sustained U.S. world hegemony during the postwar decades. Specifically, the U.S. signed onto a series of International Coffee Agreements (ICA) that stabilized export prices and trade volumes and thus opened unparalleled opportunities for governments across the global coffee belt to implement economic growth policies, expand production, and stabilize livelihoods for rural farmers and their communities. Coffee had transformed from a colonial commodity associated with underdevelopment into a site of smallholder stability and rural development.

In the closing decades of the 20th century, coffee once again fell into disfavor. In 1989, the U.S. pulled its support for the ICA and the international coffee market underwent a rapid

process of deregulation and “neoliberal” restructuring. By the turn of the 21st century, scholars decried a “global coffee crisis” whereby production costs dramatically increased while domestic farm-gate prices of unroasted green beans became subjected to an unpredictable rollercoaster of sharp booms and busts. Compounding the risks created by this volatility, warming temperatures and extreme weather events brought on by climate change have shrunk arable coffee lands and forced farmers into higher altitudes that require costly fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides. Saddled with crippling debts and uncertain futures, vast numbers of coffee farmer families have been compelled to abandon their fields, contributing to contemporary problems of urban overcrowding, global mass migrations, informal and illegal economic activities, and social and political instability.

Scholarly writing on the causes, consequences, and experiences of the “global coffee crisis” peaked in the early decades of the 21st century. Much of this writing compared coffee farmer and coffee-based development experiences in the 1990s and early 2000s to the prior period of geopolitical governance under the ICA agreements. However, the past two decades has seen a growth in a new type of scholarship that, while remaining critical of the developmentalist illusions of coffee policy, has nevertheless drawn attention to what might be described as a “post-coffee crisis world” marked by innovative new coffee production systems, significant changes in market structures and value chain dynamics, and transformations in rural household livelihood strategies. This emerging literature draws upon social reproduction theories, economic sociology/convention theory, Marxist political ecology and world ecology frameworks, intersectional analysis, and critical development and agrarian studies to highlight the emerging dynamics of coffee-based livelihoods in the 21st century, with important implications for our understanding of future tendencies of historical capitalism.

This special issue seeks to explore these broad transformations and emerging trends in the political economy of coffee farming and coffee-based development through in-depth case studies. Topics may include (but are not limited to):

- Coffee-based development policy
- Coffee farmer experiences with the contemporary dynamics of economic and ecological turbulence
- Specialty coffee and other “value-added” and “sustainable” production and marketing systems
- Analysis of on-farm and off-farm livelihood strategies utilized by coffee farmers
- Intersectional studies of gendered, racial, aged dynamics of farming
- Social and economic inequalities associated with the political economy of coffee
- World-systems and world historical perspectives on coffee industry dynamics

- Environmental perspectives on coffee farming
- Coffee's intersection with other social dynamics (food regimes, social reproduction, migration flows, etc.)
- Coffee-based social and political movements
- Political and institutional dynamics of coffee farmers, development agencies, and governments
- Coffee commodity chain studies
- Coffee market segmentation and consumer trends
- The rise and fall of Fair Trade and other ethically certified coffee markets

We are interested in both comparative papers and single case studies. Papers from all methodological approaches are welcome. Papers that grapple with twenty-first century dynamics (either on their own or through historical comparison) are especially encouraged.

Please send an extended abstract of 1000-1500 words to phough2@fau.edu by February 15, 2026.

Submissions should follow the Author Guidelines of the *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. Papers published in IJCS are generally 8,000 words, though we can be somewhat flexible with this word length.