

Danning (Leilani) Lu

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Education

PhD student, Development Studies, Cornell University August 2024-now
Master of Environmental Science, Yale School of the Environment May 2023

- Social Science Concentration, honors (16/16)
 - Courses: Qualitative Methods, Quantitative Research Methods, Environmental Governance, Circular Economy, Environmental Communication, Cultural Sociology, Ethical Consumption, Life Cycle Assessment, Power, Knowledge, and the Environment, Urban Ecology
- BS. Environmental Science, BA. Sociology, Wheaton College (IL) May 2021
- *Summa cum laude* (3.92/4.0), scholastic honor society

Skills

Language: Mandarin and English (native-speaker level). Elementary level Vietnamese.
Software: office tools, R, SPSS, STATA, ATLAS.Ti, NVivo, Datawrapper, OpenLCA

Research Experience

Research Assistant, Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences, CAS Feb-Aug 2025

- Working with professor Dr. Chuanbin Zhou who specializes in plastic and municipal solid waste management under the urban metabolism and industrial ecology lab group. Co-authored a report about food packaging plastic waste in China and the potential of chemical recycling, commissioned by China Association for Circular Economy. Co-authored an evaluation report for Hainan provincial government's plastic governance efforts during the 14 five-year. Co-authored a proposal for Beijing Yangqing zero waste city building. Co-authored a paper evaluating national plastic policy-making in the East Asia sea region.

Research Project Lead, Peking University Institute of Carbon Neutrality Feb-Aug 2025

- Analyzed national-level survey of Chinese public opinions and action potential about climate change. Lead author of data analysis chapter for book Introduction to Coordinated Governance of Climate Action and Gender Equity. Led other research assistants in data visualization for reports and literature review work.

Research Assistant, Yale Program on Climate Change Communication Sep 2021-Aug 2023

- Developed climate justice public perception survey questions through participatory research, analyzed data, and published one report which is among the first studies of national-level climate justice public attitudes in the US. Conducted exploratory statistical analysis with R and SPSS on national-level surveys, created data visualizations, and published a short communication article on Americans' support for various policies related to climate justice actions. Conducted literature search and data analysis of climate attitudes among video gamers using quantitative survey analysis.

Thesis Research on Zero Waste Lifestyle, Yale School of the Environment Jan- Aug 2022

- Won a \$12,500 research grant and managed the research project as the principal investigator. Employed mixed methods to study motivations, practices, and challenges of zero waste lifestyles of Chinese urban citizens in the GoZero Waste community. Conducted 41 in-depth interviews, seven-month participant observations in two online groups and four in-person events, and 500 surveys of GoZero Waste members on demographics, sustainable lifestyle practices, and values as well as their broader commitment to environmental sustainability.

Global Scholar Award Research Project, Wheaton College, IL May-Sep 2020

- Designed a research project on narratives of motivations, benefits, and challenges of community gardens in Beijing and Shanghai. Conducted participant observation in 14 gardens and 90 interviews with stakeholders including gardeners, residents, government officers, landscape designers, and NGOs about motivations, benefits, and challenges of participating in the garden project. Compile data into ATLAS.ti for coding and qualitative data analysis.

Social Research Course Project, Wheaton College, IL

Feb-May 2020

- Designed and conducted an experiment on the effect of faith-based climate communication on an evangelical student body at Wheaton College with two co-researchers. Designed survey and analyzed data using SPSS. Studied the factors of demography, religious belief, and political stand on climate change views for each group.

Professional Experience

Research and Staff Intern, Wilson Center - China Environment Forum Sep 2023- Present

- Editing and writing 10+ blogs/op-eds on China's environmental challenges and US-China collaboration, particularly on plastic waste governance, climate-smart agriculture, development threats to river deltas, and the environmental impact of China's overseas investments. Research to support ongoing projects and events, including webinars on the plastic waste treaty, food waste reduction, US-China climate-smart agriculture cooperation, and China's climate actions.

Intern for Plastic Reduction in Express Delivery, Plastic Free China March 2023 - Aug 2023

- Assisted research for policy advocacy to reduce plastics in express delivery packaging. Collected policy documents and government work updates on green express delivery and circular economy. Conducted literature review of overseas experiences on circular packaging. Wrote social media articles about plastic reduction in e-commerce delivery packaging. Created a public education toolkit on plastic reduction and biodegradable plastic.

Research Intern, Friends of Nature - Gaiascope, Beijing, China

Sep 2020 - June 2021

- Led research project that evaluates Gaiascope's community garden projects through 300+ surveys of community residents. Assisted in developing the first ecological place-making course and ran grants to support community-based grassroots environmental actions in China. Designed grant applications, conducted evaluation research, and wrote quarterly reports to Gaiascope's funder.
- Wrote articles for Gaiascope's social media account about community garden workshops and permaculture principles.

Low Carbon Project Intern, Environmental Defense Fund, Beijing, China Aug 2018

- Researched and proposed possible ways for EDF to initiate diesel truck emission reduction projects in China. Presented a possible project plan for EDF to consider, which included background of the issue along with 12 possible proposed solutions.

Publications and Manuscripts

Peer-reviewed

Liao, C., Zhou, S., **Lu, D.**, Tu, Y., Shin, S., Mosdosy, K., Li, L., Nelson, R., Lehmann, J., Xu, S., & Lee, Y. (2026). Global nutrient justice through a circular bionutrient economy. *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment*. (in press).

Zhou, S., **Lu, D.**, Li, L., Mosdosy, K., Nelson, R., Lehmann, J., & Liao, C. (2026). Realizing an equitable circular bionutrient economy in the United States. *Nature Sustainability*, 1–12.

Deng, Y., **Lu, D.**, Pradhan, M., Manomaivibool, P., Boonma, K., Wu, R., Van Pham, T., Unroj, P., Phengsisombounf, S., & Zhou, C. (2026). Evolution and consistency analysis of plastic pollution control policies in East Asian Seas countries. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 224, 119103.

Lu, D., & Ran, T. (2025). Navigating social and material challenges of sustainable consumption among the Chinese urban middle class: Environmentalism, simplicity, and frugality. *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 0(0).

- Carman, J. P., **Lu, D.**, Ballew, M., Low, J., Verner, M., Rosenthal, S. A., Barendregt-Ludwig, K., Torres, G., Gelobter, M., McKenney, K., Burga, I., Magaña, M., Amer, S., Williams, R. T., Burgess, M., McRae, G., Larson, A., Salgado, M., Kioko, L. N., ... Leiserowitz, A. (2025). Americans' support for climate justice. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 163, 103976.
- Wang, B., **Lu, D.**, Xing, J., Leiserowitz, A., Carman, J., Chen, R., & Ding, M. (2024). Chinese Public Awareness, Support, and Confidence in China's Carbon Neutrality Goal. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 66(6), 25–36.
- Lu, D.** (2024). Networked sustainable lifestyle activism: Growth and limits of zero waste movement in urban China. *Social Movement Studies*, 0(0), 1–23.
- Lu, D.** (2024). Performing zero waste: Lifestyle movement, consumer culture, and promotion strategies of social media influencers. *Environmental Sociology*, 10(1), 12–29.
- Carman, J. P., Psaros, M., Rosenthal, S. A., Marlon, J., Verner, M., Lee, S., **Lu, D.**, Goldberg, M. H., Ballew, M., & Leiserowitz, A. (2024). Geeks versus climate change: Understanding American video gamers' engagement with global warming. *Climatic Change*, 177(6), 85.
- Lu, D.** (2022). Cultivating Vibrant Gardens in Urban Communities: Success Factors of Community Gardens in Beijing and Shanghai. *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*, 12(2), Article 2.

Book Chapters

- Wang, B., **Lu, D.**, Xing, J., & Everett-Lane, B. (2026). Data analysis of Chinese women's climate awareness and action. In *Bridging climate action and gender equality: An integrated governance approach from China* (in press). Springer Nature.
- Lu, D.**, & Lu, H. (2026). Governance models of community gardens in urban China. In *Chinese collaborative planning in the digital era* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Other publications

- Carman, J., Ballew, M., **Lu, D.**, Leiserowitz, A., et al. (2023). Climate Change in the American Mind: Climate Justice, Spring 2023. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.
- Carman, J., Ballew, M., Verner, M., **Lu, D.**, Low, J., Rosenthal, S., Maibach, E., Kotcher, J., Marlon, J., and Leiserowitz, A. (2023). Who supports climate justice in the U.S.? Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.
- Carman, J., **Lu, D.**, Low, J., Leiserowitz, A., Barendregt-Ludwig, K., Marlon, J., Rosenthal, S., Goldberg, M., Maibach, E., Kotcher, J., Torres, G. (2022). *Exploring support for climate justice policies in the United States*. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

Public-facing writings

- Reusable Food Packaging in US and China: Closing the Loop on Plastics in Closed Environments. (2024, June 6). *New Security Beat*.
<https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2024/06/reusable-food-packaging-in-us-and-china-closing-the-loop-on-plastics-in-closed-environments/>
- Igniting a Reuse Revolution in China's War Against Plastic Waste. (2024, February 15). *New SecurityBeat*. <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2024/02/igniting-a-reuse-revolution-in-chinas-war-against-plastic-waste/>

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Global Development, Cornell University Aug - Dec 2026

- An undergraduate foundational course at Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Solo teach two discussion sections with 30+ students each, grade weekly assignments and host office hours.

Teaching Assistant, Data, AI, and Development, Cornell University January - May 2026

- A graduate and undergraduate-level data analysis course at Cornell University Ashley School of Global Development and the Environment. Graded weekly assignments, presentations, and final reports of students' coding and data analysis written in software R. Solo taught a session on data visualization.

Teaching Fellow, Qualitative Social Science Research Methods, Yale University Aug-Dec 2022

- A graduate-level research method class at Yale School of the Environment. Wrote rubrics for the class. Graded weekly written assignments for students' literature review development. Facilitated class discussions and one lecture on conducting surveys. Assisted students in the process of developing research proposals.

Awards and Grants

Polson Institute's Small Grants (\$5000) Cornell University 2026

-Assessing Potential of Circular Economy for Sustainable Production and Consumption in Emerging Rural Entrepreneurship

Einaudi Center International Research Travel Grant (\$2000, PI) Cornell University 2026

Graduate School Research Travel Grant (\$2000, PI) Cornell University 2026

Assessment of Hainan Province's Plastic Pollution Governance Effectiveness during 14th Five-Year Plan (\$45000) Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences, CAS 2025

-competitively commissioned by the Hainan Provincial Department of Ecology and Environment. I was one of the four grant authors with the Chinese Academy of Sciences team

Yale School of the Environment MoChen Liao Award (\$500) Yale University 2023

-Awarded for the final project of Life Cycle Assessment course

Hixon Center for Urban Ecology Student Research Fellow (\$7000, PI) Yale University 2022

Council on East Asian Studies Research Grant (\$4500, PI) Yale University 2022

School of the Environment Summer Research Grant (\$1000, PI) Yale University 2022

Global Scholar Award (\$3000, PI) Wheaton College 2020

First Place in Sociology Division in Ivan Fahs Paper Competition Wheaton College 2021

Scholastic Honor Society (top 7%) Wheaton College 2021

Rhodes Scholarship semifinalist The Rhodes Scholarship 2020

Services

Student Organizer, Yale Symposium on Chinese Overseas Investment Impacts Jan-Apr 2023

- Revived Yale's largest student-run symposium on China after two years' abeyance.

Culture and Arts Cabinet, Associations of Chinese Students and Scholars at Yale Sep 21-May 23

- Revived Yale's Chinese dance club. Led the Chinese dance program at New Year's gala twice.

Student Government Sustainability Committee Member, Wheaton College Sep 2018- May 2019

- Initiated the development of a sustainability certificate program that launched in summer 2021. Proposed for the establishment of a sustainability director position.

President, A Rocha USA Wheaton Chapter, Wheaton College Sep 2019- May 2020

- Led on-campus compost workshops (made 100+ bins), compost petition signing, and various environmental awareness campaigns.

Presentations and Talks

American Sociological Association Annual Conference, Environmental Sociology Round Table, “Zero Waste Movement in China: Civic Environmental Movement Through Sustainable Lifestyle and Alternative Consumption Networks”, August 2023

Yale School of the Environment, Research Day, “Environmental Movement through Sustainable Lifestyles in Urban China: Motivations, Practices, and Challenges of Zero Waste Community”, April 2023

Yale School of the Environment, Confluence Research Seminar, “Conceptualizations and motivations of sustainable lifestyle among zero waste practitioners in China”, February 2023

Hixon Center for Urban Ecology, Research Fellow Presentation, “Zero Waste Movement in Context: Agency and Limits of Sustainable Lifestyles in Urban China”, February 2023.

Student Symposium, Associated Colleges of The Chicago Area, “Factors of Success and Failure of Community Gardens in Beijing and Shanghai”, April 2021

Wheaton College Global Scholar [Presentation](#), May 2021

Other Certified Education

Cornell University three-credit online course: Introduction to Civic Ecology	2016
Cornell University 30-hour online course: Urban Environmental Education	2018
HarvardX online course: Data Science: R Basics course	2021