

The State of a Nuclear State

A People's Atlas of Nuclear Colorado. Edited by Sarah Kanouse and Shiloh Krupar. 2021.
Open access: <https://www.coloradonuclearatlas.org/>

A People's Atlas of Nuclear Colorado presents the first digital public humanities project to explore the nuclear geographies of Colorado, USA. This exciting and immersive new work has created a platform across which essays, personal narratives, cartographies, and visual media are showcased. Laudably, the publicly accessible website format makes Krupar and Kanouse *et al's* work freely available, not just to other academics but also to community members, activists, artists, veterans, nuclear workers, and policy-makers. It offers an important new avenue for public involvement in nuclear knowledge-making.

The editors of the Atlas are Sarah Kanouse, an interdisciplinary artist and critical writer who examines the politics of landscape and space, and Shiloh Krupar, a multidisciplinary cultural geographer and polymath. If you are encountering Krupar's work for the first time, I would recommend their first book, *Hot Spotters Report: Military Fables of Toxic Waste*.¹ This book provides an origin story for the Atlas, as it reconfigures the mutant ecologies and biopolitics of post-nuclear military spaces in the USA.

The minimalist homepage of the Atlas initially presents a choice of seven chapters that consider nuclear Colorado from extraction to legacy waste, across environmental, social, technical and ethical consequences. Evocative double titles, including 'The Earth/Whose Earth?' and 'Production/Friction', offer the reader a snapshot into the complexity of nuclear Colorado, as they guide themselves across the site. Topics covered include extraction, milling and processing, the assembly and deployment of nuclear weapons, and the storage and monitoring of nuclear waste. Each chapter presents an issue brief, an essay, a creative response, and a personal narrative that often 'locates the nuclear in lived, material, and sensory experience'². The digital nature of this project can create a pleasingly jarring exploratory experience. For example, a social history of Buckley Space Force Base coexists just a few clicks away from Jeff Gipe's provocative 2015 memorial artwork, *Cold War Horse*. An image of the controversial Candelas housing development adjacent to Rocky Flats is a mere page away from a short essay by Katherine Schmidt on the Maybell Disposal Site. In this way, the Atlas condenses nuclear space and time.

The featured essays are elegant and diverse in scope. They include authors such as Stephanie Malin, A. Laurie Palmer, and Gretchen Heefner. Artistic highlights include Abbey Hepner's 'Uravan', which is a collection of laser-cut engravings of the vanished uranium mill town of Uravan, superimposed onto the contemporary landscape. Allan Ginsberg's wry 1978 'Plutonian Ode' to Rocky Flats plutonium pit manufacturing plant and Claudia X. Valde's poignant flag-based work, 'For the Future, With Love', are also featured.

The cartography page within the Atlas offers a comprehensive, simple, and clickable A–Z of each nuclear site in Colorado. Upon selection, each location includes a brief referenced description and a link to a relevant keyword; for example, 'Deployment, Training, Command and Control' or 'Refining'. However, the overarching site is deliberately multicursal, which

creates a meandering but occasionally aimless user experience. While this format mirrors the anfractuous nature of nuclear issues, it may also create some navigational challenges for the casual reader. However, the inclusion of multiple pathways is creative, and does offer insights into the complexity and connectivity of nuclear places and mobilities.

This project is representative of a larger inclusive turn in cultural geographies, more generally. While the Atlas is currently set across Colorado and its hinterland, I envisage that the globalised nature of the nuclear industrial establishment could offer an expansion upon this original work. Perhaps, in due course, we can hope for 'A People's Nuclear Atlas of the World'.

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1. Shiloh R Krupar, *Hot spotter's report: military fables of toxic waste* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013)
2. Sarah Kanouse and Shiloh Krupar, Introduction, in *A People's Atlas of Nuclear Colorado*. 2021. Accessed here: <https://www.coloradonuclearatlas.org/essay-narrative/introduction/index?>