

RIHN 13th International Symposium

**Humanities on the Ground:
Confronting the Anthropocene in Asia**

December 13 - 15, 2018

Research Institute for Humanity and Nature
National Institutes for the Humanities
Inter-University Research Institute Corporation

PREAMBLE

Initially formulated to indicate humankind's total impact on the global environment, the concept of the Anthropocene draws all humanity into Earth history. Especially in the modern period of dramatic human-environmental change, it distinguishes the Earth as a grand collective project and problematic, so appearing to justify and legitimize a new round of techno-scientific management of the 'Earth System'.

At the same time, the 'environmental crisis' has also been called a crisis of culture, and thus of imagination. In this sense, it begs the attention of the humanities, which have always been concerned with the human experience, even as it challenges their underlying assumptions and practices.

This symposium engages the three-part challenge facing humanities scholarship today: the need to expand beyond Western narrative/disciplinary super-structures—in which human separation from nature is a fundamental component—and to *simultaneously* address 'alternative' subjects and societal experience *and* the role of environment and nature itself as constituent element in this experience.

In this sense the Anthropocene concept—useful now as it encapsulates in a single word the grand theoretical tradition that has so defined Western understandings of modernity and nature itself—must be taken down to the ground, to the lived experience that composes the long cultural-ecological histories of Asia.

The Anthropocene therefore presents an epistemological problem that, if taken seriously, is also ultimately an ontological opportunity. The question of the knowledge that is considered legitimate and relevant now as human societies face rapid social-ecological change is linked so closely to particular cultural understandings of the agencies that constitute the known world. How to see such knowledge, cultures and ecologies in themselves as agents that indeed have also created the Earth?

This symposium asks humanities and interdisciplinary scholars how to re-conceptualize the significance of the humanities now, in light of the history and modern day contexts of Asia, in which humankind's inevitable experience has formed part of an always dynamic, yet changeable nature.

Outline of the Sessions

1. Knowledge, science, and the experience of nature

This session examines the foundational ideas of nature (including human nature) embedded in traditions of Eastern and Western environmental experience, thought, and practice, and the opportunities that their contact and conflict with one another may present.

2. Facing the ever-present agency of environment

This session examines the historical experience embedded in particular—often unexamined—understandings of environmental agency, and the ways in which particular technological and institutional capacities emerge relative to that agency. These presentations provide examples of the cultural, ecological, institutional and political changes that can—or should—accompany shifts in societal experiences of nature.

3. Management systems of the Anthropocene

Even if the concept of the Anthropocene does not reflect nature in itself, but is instead an image of science, it has very real implications in the world today. This session examines the contemporary scientific, technical and institutional fields emerging to manage existing—and create new—social-ecological systems, and the ways in which the information on which they rely is identified, mobilized and controlled.

Field + Workshop Component

The symposium is opened and concluded by a set of linked field and workshop activities designed to amplify our sensitivity to the Anthropocene. On 12 December* we will visit Kenin-ji, one of Japan's most historic Buddhist temples, where Zheng Chongbin (Independent artist, China/USA) has been invited to create an art installation. Mr. Zheng is an accomplished artist working at the intersections of traditional Chinese and Western aesthetic traditions, and he and the abbot of Kenin-ji are particularly interested in the ways in which traditional modes of perception, thought, and practice intersect with our everyday experience of contemporary environments. We will visit the public temple grounds and gardens as well as the private space in which Mr. Zheng's installation is to appear in 2019.

* This field trip is optional for all participants. We will meet at the Hotel Monterey at 15:00 and return there to join all others at an (also optional) "icebreaker" in the evening.

On Saturday 15 December, our symposium concludes with a unique workshop entitled *Anthropocene on the Ground* to take place at Shibunkaku Gallery. Mr. Zheng has designed a creative exercise, *Erasing and Revealing*, which is also linked to his installation at Keninji, especially for the occasion.

The workshop continues with *Earthbound Knowledge: The Anthropocene Curriculum*, a discussion facilitated by Katrin Klingan and Christoph Rosol, representing the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW, Berlin) and Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. The ongoing multi-year Anthropocene Curriculum (AC) is a wide-ranging collaborative exploration of the knowledge and practices adequate to address the challenges of the Anthropocene. Our workshop thus also forms a step within the AC, allowing us to link the central themes of the symposium also to the experimental modes of perception and knowledge formation that it seeks. As a group, we explore the challenges of the Anthropocene not just as a subject of research, but—in light of the international experience the AC allows us to consider as a whole—as an opportunity to understand more fully the culture-ecology, the sensibilities and structures, that must always create the Earth.

PROGRAM

Thursday, December 13, 2018

Plenary Session

Chair: **Hein MALLEE** (Deputy Director-General, RIHN)

10:00- 10:10 Welcome and Opening Remarks

Tetsuzo YASUNARI (Director-General, RIHN)

10:10-10:20 Introduction to Plenary Session

Hein MALLEE (RIHN)

10:20-11:20 Keynote Address

Risk and responsibility in the Anthropocene

Sheila JASANOFF (Harvard University, USA)

11:20-11:35 Coffee Break

Session 1 Knowledge, science, and the experience of nature

Chair: **Kaoru SUGIHARA** and **Masahiro TERADA** (RIHN)

11:35-11:50 Introduction to Session 1

Kaoru SUGIHARA and **Masahiro TERADA** (RIHN)

11:50-12:20 Global history of science as a knowledge resource for the Anthropocene

Matthias SCHEMMEL

(Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Germany)

12:20-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:00 The emergence of queer nature in modern science:

Minakata Kumagusu and the Microbial Knowledge

Eiko HONDA (University of Oxford, UK)

14:00-14:30 Morally attuning to, and living in, the changing weather:

A case from farmers of Northern Thailand

Chaya VADDHANAPHUTI (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)

14:30-14:45 Coffee Break

14:45-15:15 Humanities on the ground: The everyday aesthetics of lived
environmental experience

Daniel NILES (RIHN)

15:15-15:45 Why Anthropocene history is not environmental history:

Clearing the ground for a new field

Julia Adeney THOMAS (University of Notre Dame, USA)

15:45-17:15 Discussion

Katrin KLINGAN (Haus der Kultur der Welt [HKW], Germany) and

Christoph ROSOL (HKW/Max Planck Institute for the History of
Science, Germany), Discussants

19:00 Reception at Hotel Monterey

Friday, December 14, 2018

Session 2 Facing the ever-present agency of environment

Chair: **Daniel NILES** and **Kazuhiko OTA** (RIHN)

- 9:20-9:30 Introduction to Session 2
Daniel NILES and **Kazuhiko OTA** (RIHN)
- 9:30-10:00 Retrieving earthliness: philosophy and practice of natural farming in Japan
Augustin BERQUE
(École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, France)
- 10:00-10:30 Thinking about politics beyond the human: Towards a multispecies conception of political membership and stakeholding in our planet's future
Maya KÓVSKAYA
(AMOR MUNDI Guerilla Think Tank for Ecological Justice, Anthoropocene Research and Curatorial Platform, Thailand/USA)
- 10:30-10:45 Coffee Break
- 10:45-11:15 First, love the volcano: Forming geological kinships in Japan
Emily SEKINE (The New School for Social Research, USA)
- 11:15-11:45 Postwar typhoons and the reshaping of Japan's environment
Julia Mariko JACOBY
(Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Germany)
- 11:45-12:45 Discussion
Aiko TANABE (The University of Tokyo, Japan), Discussant
- 12:45-14:00 Lunch

Session 3 Management systems of the Anthropocene

Chair: **Steven McGREEVY** and **Christoph RUPPRECHT** (RIHN)

14:00-14:10 Introduction to Session 3

Steven McGREEVY and **Christoph RUPPRECHT** (RIHN)

14:10-14:40 Being affected by sinking deltas: Changing landscapes, resilience and Complex Adaptive Systems in the scientific story of the Anthropocene
Atsuro MORITA (Osaka University, Japan)

14:40-15:10 Digital Control and the Earth Ecosystem

Will the Governance of the Anthropocene be Designed in East Asia?

Stéphane GRUMBACH

(Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et Automatique,
Institute Rhonalpin des Systemes Complexes, France)

15:10-15:40 Sustainable urban systems, a research agenda

Stephanie PINCETL (Institute of the Environment and
Sustainability, University of California, Los Angeles, USA)

15:40-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-16:45 Discussion

Soraj HONGLADAROM (Chulalongkorn University, Thailand), and
Kyoko SATO (Stanford University, USA), Discussants

Final Session

Chair: **Hein MALLEE** (RIHN)

16:45-17:35 Discussion across all sessions,

Comments by **Sheila JASANOFF** (Harvard University, USA)

Closing

17:35-17:40 Closing Remarks

Kaoru SUGIHARA (RIHN)

18:00 Dinner at RIHN with film screening

Session (Yuuya TAKEDA [Ritsumeikan University, Japan] ~20 minutes)

Chimerical Landscapes (ZHENG Chongbin [China/USA], 18 minutes)

Saturday, December 15, 2018

Anthropocene on the ground
Workshop at Shibunkaku Gallery, Kyoto*

10:00-12:00 *Erasing and revealing*

Exercise by **ZHENG Chongbin** (Independent artist, China/USA)

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:00-15:30 Earthbound knowledge: The Anthropocene Curriculum

Christoph ROSOL and **Katrin KLINGAN**

(Haus der Kultur der Welt Berlin/Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Germany)

Anthropocene Curriculum East Asia

Short contributions by Eiko Honda, Maya Kóvskaya, Daniel Niles and Masahiro Terada

Discussion

* We will depart from the Hotel Monterey at 9:30.