

Shaping Asia

Asia@Anthropocene

Why Asian Knowledge Matters Most for Global Environmental Change

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University of Bonn

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10:15–11:45 (CET)

Zoom event

Knowledge on and from Asia is relevant to the Anthropocene for several reasons. Asian countries, especially China, already form a central point of the global economy and, in the near future, probably also of politics. Furthermore, the earliest intensive and also long-term landscape changes are in Asia, which is why especially cases from Asia point to a much earlier Anthropocene onset ("Early Anthropocene"). This contrasts with dominant theses of onset in the 1950s. In large parts of Asia, entire large landscapes were "domesticated" early on to an extent that is equivalent to modern monocultures. In colonial times, large parts of the landscapes in parts of Asia were permanently changed by the plantation economy. Today, large regions are permanently and partly irreversibly changed by the extractive economy. The findings on the Anthropocene in Asia have contributed significantly to a general trend in universal history and global history to no longer unquestioningly see Europe as the centre of the world. Unfortunately, however, Asia is significantly under-researched in this regard. The calls for decentering and provincialising historiography can be supported by empirical findings on comprehensive environmental change in Asia. The paper will also consider current discourses on the Anthropocene in East, South and Southeast Asia. Some of the debates and views in Asian countries are quite different from Atlanto-centric perspectives, crisis rhetoric and ways of knowing. Knowledge on and from Asia can and should correct the still strong *WEIRD* bias of research on global environmental change.

Christoph Antweiler is a cultural anthropologist and Senior Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies at the University of Bonn, Germany. His main research fields are cognition, local knowledge, urban culture, ethnicity and popular anthropology. His main theoretical interests are socio-cultural evolution, pan-cultural patterns (human universals) and vernacular cosmopolitanism. His main research region is Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia. Antweiler is a member of the Academia Europaea (London) and a member of the International Advisory Board, Humboldt Forum (Berlin). His book publications include *Inclusive Humanism. Anthropological Basics for a Realistic Cosmopolitanism* (2012), *Our Common Denominator. Human Universals Revisited* (2016, pb. 2018) and *Anthropologie im Anthropozän* (2022).

Zoom registration Link: <https://uni-bielefeld.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0kfuotpjgsE9yN4jz9FVCG4CljvqDyPSRt>