

Perspectives on the Anthropocene

New humanities I

Guest Editors

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Academic Quarter presents a new call addressing new perspectives on the Anthropocene in the humanities.

Five years ago, British writer Robert Macfarlane introduced us to “Generation Anthropocene: How humans have altered the planet for ever”. The Anthropocene denotes a new epoch of geological time in which human activity has such a strong influence on the planet that it will leave a geological strata record (Macfarlane 2016). The term goes back to the year 2000 with Crutzen & Stoermer’s article “The ‘Anthropocene’”. Macfarlane presents a large number of aesthetic responses to the Anthropocene, novels and films in particular, but he also sees it as a challenge to the humanities: “The indifferent scale of the Anthropocene can induce a crushing sense of the cultural sphere’s impotence.”

In a similar, and more recent blend of pessimism and call to action, Carolyn Merchant asks, “How, for example, is the air and water pollution associated with global warming reflected in history, art, literature, religion, philosophy, ethics, and justice?” (2020, p. x) She consequently lauds the emerging multidisciplinary concept of *environmental humanities* as necessary, her reason being that the hu-

manities have not responded adequately to relevant questions: “today there are relatively few analyses of the Anthropocene as it relates to the humanities.” The humanities must be reconceptualized “in new ways that make them compelling for the twenty-first century.” (p. xi)

It is these challenges that the issue of *Academic Quarter* about the Anthropocene seeks to meet. We ask for new perspectives on the Anthropocene. How can the humanities throw a new light on the Anthropocene and articulate new perspectives on it, possibly from an activist standpoint? How to create “arts of living on a damaged planet” (Tsing et al. 2017)? Articles could for instance focus on themes and approaches such as dark ecology (Morton 2018), new materialism (Sanzo 2018), object-oriented ontology (OO) (Harman 2018), rewilding – virtual and real (Lorimer 2015; Jepson & Cain 2020), swamp theory (Sutherland 2021; Urbonas et al. 2022), (eco-) feminism and queer theory (for instance Grusin 2017), and de-colonialist perspectives (for instance Stenbeck 2020).

Aesthetic responses to the Anthropocene are already manifold, and there are also scholarly treatments of it and related fields. Examples are: Elizabeth Kolbert’s *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (2014) and *Field Notes from a Catastrophe* (2006), Naomi Klein’s *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate* (2014), Gaia Vince’s *Adventures in the Anthropocene* (2015), Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing’s *The Mushroom at the End of the World - On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2017). The post-apocalyptic movie and computer game genres with locations of a collapsed and potentially lethal world are represented by for instance Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006), the *Mad Max* franchise, *The Walking Dead* streaming series, and *The Fallout* computer game series. Scholarly publications on the subject include Carolyn Merchant’s *The Anthropocene and the Humanities. From Climate Change to a New Age of Sustainability* (2020), Nomeda Urbonas et al.’s *Swamps and the New Imagination. On the Future of Cohabitation in Art, Architecture, and Philosophy* (2022), Alanda Y. Chang’s *Playing Nature Ecology in Video Games* (2019). The Anthropocene has been reflected and debated within the art institution, for instance with various events and research initiatives at Berlin’s Haus der Kulturen der Welt since 2013, and Danish artists and artistic researchers such as Rikke Luther, Eva la

Cour and Jakob Kudsk Steensen have worked with this theme, Steensen in his *Berl Berl* exhibition in Berlin 2021.

One challenge to the humanities is whether an activist approach may be expected from them, as contemporary environmental movements might reflect. In *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*, Macfarlane elaborates on the unique imaginative challenge posed by the Anthropocene and calls for “a retrospective reading of the current moment”, i.e. “a palaeontology of the present” (2019, p. 78) in which we confront ourselves from a distant future as “the sediments, strata, and ghosts” we have become, and ask ourselves the question (originally phrased by Jonas Salk, and pursued by strands of indigenous research): “Are we being good ancestors?” (p. 77) This call from *Academic Quarter* is the first of three serialized issues under the common theme “New humanities” from an active and committed standpoint.

This issue of *Academic Quarter* is dedicated to articles from the fields of:

- literature
- art
- film, tv and media
- architecture
- computer games
- music
- museology and curating
- fashion
- experience design
- gender
- leadership
- organisation research
- history
- human geography
- cultural anthropology
- religion
- philosophy
- *indigenous* research

and other pertinent approaches and critiques of the concepts of the Anthropocene itself are also welcome. We especially value new perspectives on the antropocene from the humanities in a wide and inclusive sense.

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Submission of abstract
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Abstract
Around 150 words

Full article
Around 3,000 - 3,500 words

Video-essay
7-12 minuts

Urbonas, Nomedas, Urbonas, Gediminas and Sabolius, Kristupas (eds.) 2022. *Swamps and the New Imagination. On the Future of Cohabitation in Art, Architecture, and Philosophy*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Wright, Christopher, Daniel Nyberg, Lauren Rickards, and James Freund. "Organizing in the Anthropocene." *Organization* 25, no. 4 (July 2018): 455–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508418779649>.

Practical Information

Abstracts in English, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish will be accepted. Abstracts and articles should be sent to Annemette Helligsø (anhe@hum.aau.dk).

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Final articles submitted:	1.10.2022
Layout copyedit:	1.11.2022
Publication expected:	1.12.2022

Word count

Abstract: 150 words
Article: 3,000 – 3,500 words
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ing text should clearly explain the argument in the video essay as well as the insight that the viewer may gain from watching it. This guiding text should follow the directions in the article style sheet.

Video essays should be final and handed in as a separate mp4-video-file. *Academic Quarter* supports only publication and not the technical development of video essays.

Video essays and the guiding text will be reviewed together. Criteria for reviewing video-essays are

- a the lucidity of the argument,
- b the technical and stylistic execution of the video material and
- c the clarity of the guiding text.