

Announcement of a topic for a Master thesis:

The Anthropocene Concept: a framing for the future or an ideology to gain power?

In 2002 the Nobel Prize winner for chemistry Paul Crutzen announced that mankind has entered a new geological epoch. Characteristic of this new epoch is that the human species is going to become the dominant force of shaping the earth. The holocene is now giving way to the anthropocene. Humans have become more and more capable to influence the earth system which has led to increasing instability of natural systems and increasing degradation of natural resources. According to some authors conventional institutions such as states, markets and international organisations are no longer able to deal with this development.

This understanding has caused a lively debate among scholars from different disciplines. Some of them question whether the anthropocene approach is a reasonable framing to prepare for future challenges. They suggest that it is a kind of ideology that justifies going beyond principles of humanity by suggesting a kind of “transhumanity”. Critics say that this would counteract continuing the way of a conventional humanity which is opposed to suppression, exploitation and discrimination and instead recommends the maintenance of the human species and its natural resource base, resolution of conflicts and increase of the well-being of all members of society.

The master thesis should describe this debate based on relevant literature from different disciplines. In addition, the student might interview some authors and find some concrete examples for the impact that the anthropocene framing could have. In particular, this thesis should make use of an analytical framework for the institutional analysis of social-ecological systems.

Literature:

Latour, Bruno (2014). Agency at the time of the Anthropocene. *New Literary History* Vol. 45, pp. 1-18

Baskin, Jeremy (2015). Paradigm Dressed as Epoch: The Ideology of the Anthropocene Environmental Values 24 9–29

Manemann, Jürgen (2014). Kritik des Anthropozäns. Plädoyer für eine neue Humanökologie. Transcript Texte. Transcript-Verlag Bielefeld

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