

Vienna Anthropocene Network

(social and societal transfer)

Project leads

Univ.-Prof. Eva Horn, Univ.-Prof. Michael Wagreich

Contact person

Eva Spiegelhofer (contact.anthropocene-network@univie.ac.at)

Abstract

The Anthropocene presents challenges to all academic fields. As a new geochronological epoch it redefines the human relationship to the planet in ecological terms with consequences that are also historical, social, and ethical. Bringing together the humanities and the sciences, our network comprises scholars from geology, geography, the life sciences, history, philosophy, political science, literary and cultural studies, STS, anthropology and a range of area studies. Drawing on this broad interdisciplinary base, we will explore the new perspectives on nature, culture, society, and technology that the Anthropocene urgently solicits. We furthermore aim to convey an understanding of the significance of the Anthropocene to a wider audience of policy makers, teachers, journalists and the public at large.

Keywords

Anthropocene; climate change; Earth System; natural sciences; humanities

Aims of the Third Mission activity

“Research for a future we want to live in” - The Vienna Anthropocene Network is an interdisciplinary group of researchers at the University of Vienna. We address the challenges that lie ahead from the perspectives of the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. In doing so, we aim to advance our understanding of human impact on the planet and the complex global problems that societies are facing today.

Cooperation partners outside the university sector

Forum Anthropozän, Kärnten, Austria; Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich, Austria.

Cooperation partners from the scientific/research field

University of Vienna: Department of Political Sciences, International Politics, Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, Science and Technology Studies, Department of Oriental Studies, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Department of Geography and Regional Research

Faculty Faculty of Earth Sciences, Geography and Astronomy and Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies

Timeframe 01.04.2019 - 31.03.2024

Funding University network

Research basis The Anthropocene, a term coined by the natural sciences, sparked broad scientific and scholarly debates across disciplinary boundaries. Thereby, it fosters interdisciplinary research and reunites increasingly specialized and fragmented scientific disciplines by defining a space for collaborative projects involving the natural and social sciences as well as the humanities. For the geosciences, the definition of the Anthropocene poses the main challenge within the framework of stratigraphy. Meanwhile, the humanities are tasked with rethinking and repositioning the 'anthropos' in this age of humans. The Anthropocene thus finds its place in Earth history but also stands symbolically for today's anthropogenic changes to the Earth system as a whole.

Social/economic relevance We aim to convey an understanding of the significance of the Anthropocene and its impact to a wider audience of policy makers, teachers, journalists and the public at large. This involves raising awareness for the major global challenges of our time - such as climate change, biodiversity decline and the dangers of breaching planetary boundaries.

Integration into academic teaching/the curriculum New in SS2021: Ringvorlesung/lecture series 'Anthropozän-Anthropocene'

Impact We explore the new perspectives on nature, culture, society, and technology that the Anthropocene urgently solicits.

Transfer aspect of the activity The Anthropocene concept symbolizes the urgency of climate change and other risks human activities pose to the Earth system. We therefore believe that it lends itself to communicating these issues to a broader public, and to making scientific debates more accessible and immediately relevant to society.

Future orientation & sustainability To highlight the relevance of the Anthropocene for research as well as political and social agendas, means to promote activities directly linked to a sustainable future of the Earth System.

Achievement of objectives

Several workshops and open activities for the public have been organized, including discussion panels, book presentations and conferences, e.g. 'Vanishing Ice' (panel discussion and workshop).

Measures to sustain this activity over the long term/expand it

Lecture series and workshops on various topics, network meetings and discussions

Visibility

Website, social media initiative for 2021

Links/Publications

- <https://anthropocene.univie.ac.at/>
 - Wagreich, M. (2020). Im Übergang zum Anthropozän: vom Wiener Neustädter Kanal und der I. Wiener Hochquellenleitung zur Großen Beschleunigung. In: C. Sipl, E. Rauscher and M. Scheuch, eds. Das Anthropozän lernen und lehren. Innsbruck, Wien: Studienverlag, 171-178.
 - Syvitski, J., Waters, C.N., Day, J. et al. (2020). Extraordinary human energy consumption and resultant geological impacts beginning around 1950 CE initiated the proposed Anthropocene Epoch. Communications Earth & Environment 1 (32): 1-13.
 - Horn, E. and Bergthaller, H. (2019). The Anthropocene. Key Issues for the Humanities. London/New York: Routledge.
-