

Contesting, redefining and defending 'nature': conceptual and practical tensions in the environmental crisis

Blanche Verlie, Lauren Rickards and Phil McManus

Nature, Risk, Resilience study group

Geography has long explored the messy entanglements between the Modern domains of the 'social' and the 'natural' and now frequently works with alternatives to 'nature' such as the 'nonhuman', 'inhuman', 'naturalcultural', 'posthuman', 'material-discursive', 'multispecies' and 'planetary' (e.g. Houston et al. 2018; Clark and Szerszynski 2020). At the same time, with declarations of emergency from Extinction Rebellion, geographers (Wilkinson and Clement 2021) and many others, there is growing awareness of the environmental crisis, including the foundational importance of biodiversity and the existential threat posed by 'environmental' pollution and destruction. Among other things, these concerns are driving belated efforts in at least some quarters to reduce nonhuman deaths, to extend justice to species other than humans (Celermajer et al. 2020) and to 'work with nature'. Related policies include stronger implementation of conservation protections and 'nature-based solutions' to climate change (Xie and Bulkeley 2020). But such approaches can re-essentialise nature and are not uncontested (Fletcher et al. 2021; Osaka et al. 2021). This session will explore historical and contemporary manifestations of 'more-than-human' geographies that reinforce, remake, grapple with or dissolve human/nature binaries, including consideration of the necessity (or not) of interdisciplinarity in such work. Papers in this session could address questions such as:

- How are categories of nature and natural being defended or redefined in contemporary real-world debates and why?
- What are the normative and biopolitical implications of how the human-nature distinction is being selectively reinforced or reworked in different empirical contexts?
- What are the distinctive features of scholarship 'beyond anthropocentrism' and what is at stake – for whom – in such work?
- How can more-than-human scholarship and a multispecies ethic be reoriented towards more collaborative practices of intercultural solidarity and justice (e.g. (Country et al., 2016)
- What geographical ideas, practices and methodologies are particularly suited or unsuited to exploring multispecies/posthuman etc geographies?

References

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