

Uniting Ecology and Civilization: Histories, Theories, Futures

International conference convened at NYU Athens,
27 May- 29 May 2022

Cosponsored by NYU Athens, eARTHumanities NYU Abu Dhabi, and the Center for
Ecological History, Renmin University, Beijing

Conveners: Christof Mauch, Sophia Kalantzakos, Mingfang Xia, Shen Hou, Donald
Worster

In the 1970s, a German philosopher coined the phrase “ecological civilization,” which has now become popular in many parts of the world, not least so in China. How might the humanities help us achieve that vision in the future, and what ideals should modern societies adopt in relation to the natural world? Can the science of ecology offer guidance to philosophy, governance, economics, technology, or the design arts? We also hope to address how the ancient cultural ideal of “dominion over nature” has informed past civilizations and what might be its relevance in the so-called “Anthropocene.” Another cultural ideal we want to consider is “sustainability”—its shifting meaning, promise, and application. And then there is the ideal we might call “recovering the wild,” as it was enunciated by Henry David Thoreau among others, meaning to infuse civilization with a love of wild, unmanaged nature. Can that ideal help civilizations address the loss of biodiversity and the destruction of such natural ecosystems as the rainforest and coral reefs?

• Friday, 27 MAY

Opening Ceremony 10:00-12:00

Welcoming remarks by Sophia Kalantzakos, Mingfang Xia, Christof Mauch

Keynote addresses 10:30-12: 00 am

Moderators: Mingfang Xia and Christof Mauch

Donald Worster, *“Building the Ecological Civilization”:
China’s Public Policy Commitment and the Global Sustainability Discourse*

Yin Shaoting, *“Eco—Civilization and the Reconstruction of a ‘Holy Land’: A
Case Study of Building the Immortal Cave Cultural-Ecological Village in
Yunnan”*

Environing Infrastructure (Project Presentations)

Lunch at 12:00-2:00pm

Panel I: 2:30-6:30 pm

Chair: Christof Mauch

Sophia Kalantzakos, New York University/ NYU Abu Dhabi
"Discursive dimensions of ecological civilization"

Kerstin Borchhardt, University of Leipzig
"From philosophical speculation to an ecological civilization? The role of visual arts in eco-critical discourses"

Mark Stoll, Texas Tech University
"A Just, Equitable, Sustainable Society: A Lesson from History"

Tea and coffee break 4:00 -4:30 pm

Claiton Marcio da Silva, Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS)
"An Invisible buen vivir in the subtropical Brazil: Lessons from the Puxirão caboclo to unite ecology and civilization "

Jacobus Bracker, University of Hamburg
"Savage is the new civilized: lessons from archaeology"

Dinner 8:00pm

• **Saturday, 28 May**

Panel II: 10:00-12:30 am

Chair: Francesca Tarocco, University Ca' Foscari Venezia

Christopher K. Tong, University of Maryland in Baltimore
"The Paradox of China's Ecological Civilization"

Erin Ryan, Florida State University
"Ecology and Civilization in China"

Carl Mitchman, Renmin University of China

"Does the Idea of Ecological Civilization Rest on a Mistake?"

Tea and coffee break 11:00-11:30 am

11:30-12:30

China's Belt and Road Project Initiative

Chair: Sophia Kalantzakos

Alessandro Ripa, RCC

"Amber Circulations: Re-thinking Chinese global engagements"

Huiying Ng, RCC

"Interrupting infrastructure: hydropower ambitions, desire lines, and seasonal ecologies along the Mekong"

Roger Norum, RCC

"Infrastructural socialities: Relations of mobility and precarity in a transnational, transient community"

Lunch at 12:30-2:30pm

Panel III: 2:30 - 5:30 pm

Chair: Donald Worster

Emilie J. Raymer, Harvard College Writing Program

"Biodiversity and Indigenous Agriculture: A Different Kind of Green Revolution"

Albert van Wijngaarden, Independent Scholar

"Pro-, Re-or De-gressing towards an Ecological Civilization?: The Idea of Progress and the Relevance of Historians for an Ecological Future"

Concluding Discussion 5:30 - 6:15 p.m

Chair: Christof Mauch

Francesca Tarocco

Sophia Kalantzakos

Donald Worster

Dinner at 8:00- 11:00pm

Sunday 29 May

Urban Tour of Athens (optional) organized by eARThumanities

The urban tour is a walk around the downtown of Athens to see how it went from abandonment to a new renaissance. The tour guide can explain and talk about it as an architect, urban planner and person who reformed the building code/ urban building code for Athens. It's also a great way to see and explore the center of Athens.

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