Call for Chapter Submissions

Conceptualising Resilience in the Age of the Anthropocene

Prof. Michael Christopher Low (University of Utah: m.chris.low@utah.edu)
Dr. Philip Gooding (Indian Ocean World Centre, McGill University: philip.gooding@mcgill.ca)
Dr. Julie Babin (Indian Ocean World Centre, McGill University: julie.babin2@mcgill.ca)

The proposed edited volume stems from an online conference entitled, 'Adaptation and Resilience to Climatic and Environmental Changes in the Indian Ocean World, Past to Present,' which was held at the Indian Ocean World Centre (IOWC), McGill University on 25-27 May 2022. Video recordings of conference presentations are available via a curated playlist on the IOWC's YouTube Channel.

The key contexts for this volume are climatic and environmental changes in the Indian Ocean World, a macro-region stretching from eastern Africa, the Middle East, and southern, eastern, and southeastern Asia. Focusing on these concepts, the volume will take an interdisciplinary and critical approach to:

- Re-conceptualise the idea of 'resilience' to climatic and environmental changes, centring the experiences and epistemologies of people and peoples of different gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic group in the Indian Ocean World.
- Challenge 'global' or 'universal' understandings of the characteristics and features of present-day global warming, such as the Anthropocene, whose origins centre structures from Europe, North America, and the wider Global North.
- Examine changing patterns of human-environment interaction since the late 18th century in the Indian Ocean World, and how they have affected people's experiences of climatic and environmental changes.

The concepts of Resilience and the Anthropocene are developed further in the following sub-sections, and they are followed by a style guide and a timeline to eventual publication.

The current intention (which may be subject to change) is to submit a manuscript for publication in the Palgrave Series in Indian Ocean World Studies. This series centres the Indian Ocean World, promotes interdisciplinarity, provides rigorous peer review, and enables rapid publication of manuscripts.

Resilience

Resilience has become something of a buzzword in response to global warming in recent years. Its origins as an analytical term in relation to ecologies and the environment may be attributed to work by Crawford Holling in 1973.[1] He wrote:

> Resilience determines the persistence of relationships within a system and is a measure of the ability of these systems to absorb changes of… variables… and parameters, and still persist.[2]

[1] Holling 1973.
[2] Ibid., 17.

In last *circa* 20 years, however, this definition has taken on new contexts, such that the original environmental/ecological meanings have been somewhat lost. In short, the idea of 'resilience' has been co-opted by a range of actors, including governments, multi-national corporations, and international organisations, for whom the term has become much more aligned to the idea of building strategies to limit the effects of climate change, so that they may preserve the current world and economic order.[3] In Günel's terms, 'resilience' might be understood as having become about building 'status-quo utopias.'[4] This means that it is increasingly seen as enabling the persistence of certain human – often global – structures in the face of changing climatic conditions, while giving short shrift to the survival of ecologies, environments, and localised patterns of human-environment interaction.

This volume seeks to push back against these co-opted meanings. It argues that seeking to build 'resilience' into many global structures serves to preserve factors that have heightened levels of vulnerability to climatic and environmental changes across the Indian Ocean World, past and present. Whether referring to Vinita Damodaran's work on India during the 1780s-90s global climatic anomalies or to Mike Davis' work on the 'global famines' of the late nineteenth century, capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism have all exacerbated environmental hardship and contributed to the erasure of indigenous mitigative strategies against adverse climatic factors.[5] Even Dagomar Degroot's work on the Dutch Golden Age (1560-1720), which argues that Dutch 'resilience' to adverse climatic conditions during Little Ice Age enabled it to thrive, shows that much of this 'resilience' relied upon exploitative relationships with peoples and institutions in other regions, including in the Indian Ocean World, which diminished such regions' adaptive capacities in times of climatic stress.[6] In the present, meanwhile, the idea of building a 'utopia,' in Günel's terms, is often preserved for Capitalist elites, while much of the Global South is consigned to merely 'muddling through' and adapting to environmental exploitation led by the Global North.[7] Historic and current modes of 'resilience' frequently sideline the lives, experiences, and ambitions of peoples who are most affected by climatic extremes.

Therefore, this volume seeks to re-conceptualise how 'resilience' is applied in the context of present-day climatic and environmental changes. In some ways, it seeks a return to Holling's original thesis, which focused on ecology and the environment rather than on the preservation of structures that have been and are exploitative and extractive of the natural world. But it also intends to go beyond such paradigms by also centering indigenous patterns of human-environment interaction in the Indian Ocean World, many which have been erased from global discourses by the imposition of structures, such as colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism, that emanate from Europe and elsewhere in the Global North.

Key questions that authors may wish to explore include:

- What does the term 'resilience' mean to people and peoples of different gender, class, ethnicity, and region in the Indian Ocean World, and how has this changed over time?
- What is being preserved or made more adaptable by building 'resilience,' as the term is currently applied? Or, who is 'resilience' and the current prevailing discourses surrounding it meant to be for, and how can this be changed?

[3] See e.g. Center for Climate and Energy Solutions 2019.
[4] Günel 2019, 13.
[5] Damodaran et al. 2018; Davis 2000.
[6] Degroot 2018.
[7] See, for example, the major criticisms of the COP 26 resolutions at Glasgow in 2021, e.g. Kühn 2021.

- In what ways have indigenous patterns of human-environment interaction and 'resilience' in the Indian Ocean World been erased since the end of the 18th century?
- How might a focus on indigenous patterns of human-environment interaction challenge how we conceptualise 'resilience' in the Indian Ocean World in the present and future?

The Anthropocene

The idea of the Anthropocene originates in the early 2000s with the work of chemist, Paul J. Crutzen, and marine scientist, Eugene F. Stoermer.[8] They argued that the significance of the human imprint on the environment had become so great that it had led to the beginning of a new geological epoch towards the end of the 18th century. This dating coincided James Watt's design of the steam engine and the industrial revolution in Europe. To them, this was the beginning of the 'Age of Man' in geological terms. This original conception has been critiqued and refined by scholars from a range of disciplines during the last twenty years.[9] From social science and humanities perspectives, the most prominent recent critiques are those of Jason W. Moore and Donna Haraway, who are respectively proponents of the Capitalocene and the Plantationocene.[10] Although divergent in approach, these concepts seek to uncover the broader factors that have contributed to global warming, arguing that global warming itself is a mere symptom of broader structural developments. For Moore, these developments are the growth of the capitalist world system since c. 1500; for Haraway, it is a shift that has gradually turned the natural world into what she regards as a 'plantation' since c.1600.

This volume seeks to both build on and challenge these concepts. It focuses primarily on the period since the end of the 18th century, and so, temporally speaking, it aligns with Crutzen and Stoermer's original conception of the Anthropocene. In the Indian Ocean World, this periodization also aligns with a significant growth in the influence of European imperialism, capitalism, and plantation agriculture – key features of the Capitalocene and Plantationocene.[11] But these 'global' ideas also erase concepts and epistemologies related to human-environment interaction in 'extra-European' regions, including in the Indian Ocean World. They focus on European structures and Europeans' activities, leaving no space for alternative modes of human-environment interaction outside of monolithic frameworks emanating from the Global North. By contrast, a recent handbook on human engagements with oceans through time, which contains several chapters focusing on the Indian Ocean, sought to 'nuance accounts of negative, causal anthropogenic impacts on the environment, to reveal complex, symbiotic and intersubjective human interactions with the oceans and coasts.'[12] This volume seeks to do likewise, examining how patterns of human-environment interaction in the Indian Ocean World challenge widespread understandings of the Anthropocene.

Thus, we urge authors to think about the following questions:

- How do local understandings of climatic and environmental changes in the Indian Ocean World challenge our understandings of the Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Plantationocene?
- In what ways could these concepts be refined so that they centre people of different gender, class, and ethnicity in the Indian Ocean World?

[8] Crutzen and Stoemer 2000.
[9] See e.g. Ruddiman 2013.
[10] Moore 2017, 2018; Haraway 2015.
[11] See also Chakrabarty 2009; Ghosh 2021.
[12] Boswell. 2022, 3.

- Alternatively, should/could a new theory (or theories) of human-environment interaction since the late 18th century in the Indian Ocean World be developed, and if so, what form might this take?
- How might an Indian Ocean World-centred approach to the Anthropocene further development of 'resilience' to climatic and environmental changes in the macro-region.

Bibliography

Boswell, Rosabelle. 2022. 'Introduction: Blue Heritage, Human Development and the Climate Crisis.' In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Blue Heritage*, edited by Rosabelle Boswell, David O'Kane, and Jeremy Hills. Cham, CH: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. 2019. 'Climate Resilience.' https://www.c2es.org/our-work/climate-resilience/ Accessed: 12 July 2022.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2009. 'The Climate of History: Four Theses.' *Critical Inquiry*, 35, 2: 197-222.

Crutzen, Paul J. and Eugene F. Stoermer. 2000. 'The "Anthropocene".' *Global Change Newsletter*. 41: 17-18.

Damodaran, Vinita et al. 2018. 'The 1780s.' In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, edited by Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen. London: Palgrave.

Davis, Mike. 2000. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. London: Verso.

Degroot, Dagomar. 2018. *The Frigid Golden Age: Climate Change, the Little Ice Age, and the Dutch Republic, 1560-1720*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Günel, Gökçe. 2019. *Spaceship in the Desert: Energy, Climate Change, and Urban Design in Abu Dhabi*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Haraway, Donna. 2015. 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin.' *Environmental Humanities*. 6: 159-65.

Holling, C.S. 1973. 'Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems.' *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*. 4: 1-23.

Kühn, Michael. 2021. 'COP 26: The Climate Conference that Failed the South. https://reliefweb.int/report/world/cop-26-climate-conference-failed-south Accessed: 12 July 2022.

Moore, Jason. 2017. 'The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of our Ecological Crisis.' *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. 44, 3: 594-630.

Moore Jason. 2018. 'The Capitalocene, Part II: Accumulation by Appropriation and the Centrality of Unpaid Work/Energy.' *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. 45, 2: 237-79.

Ruddiman, William F. 2013. 'The Anthropocene.' *Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences*. 41, 1: 45-68.

Style Guide

Please follow the same rules as used in this call for chapters:

- All in-text references should be in footnotes using an Author Date system.
- A full bibliography should be provided. See the above bibliography for examples of how to reference books, journal articles, book chapters, and websites. Please maximise capitalisation.

Chapters should be 8,000-10,000 words in length, including footnotes and bibliography.

Timeline

30 November 2022: Submission of full chapter manuscripts to editors.

31 January 2023: Return of all chapter submissions to authors with comments.

31 March 2023: Submission of revised manuscripts to editors.

31 May 2023: Submission of full volume manuscript to publisher, following final editorial changes made in consultation with authors.

In general, we will try to remain flexible about the timeline. Please get in touch about extensions/accommodations during the process.