

Call for Papers

Collection: Multispecies Intellectual History

Arcadia: Explorations in Environmental History, Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society

Curated by Eiko Honda, Global Studies, Aarhus University.

The Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society and Eiko Honda (Aarhus University) call for papers under the theme of ‘Multispecies Intellectual History,’ to be published in the peer-review, open-access journal *Arcadia: Explorations in Environmental History*. The CfP aims to create the new thematic collection of featured articles within the journal on events in environmental history understood through a multispecies intellectual history perspective.

While the turn towards the more-than-human has been a strong presence in disciplines like geography, anthropology, and literary studies for close to a decade, it has received little recognition by intellectual historians with a few, notable exceptions. In this light, the new field of multispecies intellectual history (MIH), proposed by the project [Unearthing Multispecies Intellectual History](#), challenges the foundation of “intellectual” history. That is, the assumed superiority of the autonomous human mind and its ability to reason on its own.

MIH emerges in a post-European Enlightenment paradigm where historical ideas and thought acknowledge their corresponding influences from realms beyond society and reasoning; here, they open their embrace to emotion, sensations, physical matters, and nonhuman actors. While doing so, MIH discerns epistemologies that surface out of encounters among plural ontologies, cosmologies, and historicities of heterogenous cultures and natures across time and space beyond the modern West. This collection therefore actively pays attention to cases in various regions of the world at the crossroad of area studies—with understanding of local languages—and the environmental humanities. The diversity of environments, people, and organisms call for a diverse MIH. The importance of MIH follows from the epistemic injustices inherent to intellectual history’s own history. In the present context of planetary crisis and ecological collapse, we are faced with a heightened urgency to situate our historical inquiries in a decolonial commitment to pluralism. This means recognizing other ways of defining and understanding the human and the nonhuman, and deconstructing or widening what is defined as intellectual per se.

The multispecies intellectual history and its methodology is not yet singularly defined and fixed. It would be a field whose methodologies could morph and diverge much like how

Shuvatri Dasgupta has discussed the potentiality of a “nonhuman intellectual history.”¹ As Donna Haraway reminds us, “we need stories (and theories) that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections.”² The *Arcadia* collection of multispecies intellectual history opens the space of possibilities for uncovering such (hi)stories. This multispecies entanglement destabilizes the illusion of a dichotomized separation and hierarchies between humans and nonhumans. It recognizes the role of the nonhuman in different ways of understanding the world.

To do so, we may experiment with established and new methodologies to unearth, analyze, and theorize the epistemological process behind an “environmental” event situated in a specific historical context. Case studies that the curator and the collaborators of this collection are working on include slime moulds’ role as an actor of ANT in epistemology of the Japanese polymath Minakata Kumagusu during his environmental activism in 1906–1912 and epistemological negotiations of ecology in colonial Zambia between local populations, tsetse fly, and British colonial scientists and administrators in the aftermath of the 1925 Native Reserves Act.

Examples of questions that would help re-evaluate an event from environmental history from a MIH perspective include but are not limited to:

- Were there any historical actors whose epistemology recognized multispecies entanglements, knowingly or unknowingly?
- How would employing established theories like actor–network theory, feminist theory, queer theory, and decolonial theory enable historians to better recognize such a multispecies intellectual history?
- What kinds of new conceptual frameworks emerge inspired by a multispecies approach to intellectual history?
- How did historical actors grapple with notions like “anthropomorphism” and “anthropocentrism” and invoke local and Indigenous knowledges in a specific context of their culture, locale, and moment in time, either reinforcing or breaking away from them?
- Could studies on animal epistemologies pertaining to experiences, sensory worlds, dreams, and expressions today and of the past illuminate an insight into more plural narratives of intellectual history where human knowledge emerged “hand in hand” with that of animals?

¹ <https://www.jhiblog.org/2022/05/16/non-human-intellectual-history-virtual-issue-1-1/>

² Haraway, Donna. “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin.” *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, p.160.

- What examples are there of groups or individuals embracing multispecies knowledge systems in ways that introduced chaotic elements and destabilize a hegemonic structure?

While philosophical and theoretical enquiries on the nature of history writing in the present moment of the planetary crisis exist as the driving force of this theme, an article must nevertheless center on an “environmental” event within a specific historical context, showing its relevance. Submissions *must* conform to the [guidelines of Arcadia](#).

Scholars who do not primarily identify themselves as intellectual historians are also welcome to contribute a manuscript if they respond to the theme’s concerns. Please contact the journal editor Jonatan Palmblad and the collection’s principal curator Eiko Honda if you are unsure about the topic and approach you are considering for your contribution.

The launch of this collection is part of the project *Unearthing Multispecies Intellectual History: Earthing the Trajectories of Area Studies*, funded by the Aarhus University Research Foundation and the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (2023–2025). For more information, visit: <https://cas.au.dk/en/UMIH>

The collection is created in collaboration with Rithma Kreie Engelbreth Larsen (Intellectual History, Aarhus University), Jeremy Farr (Archaeology, University of Queensland), Diego Molina (Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London), Sonia Contera (Physics, University of Oxford), Hatib Abdul Kadir (Global Studies, Aarhus University), Ryan Mealiffe (Medieval History, University of Oxford), Aike Peter Rots (Japanese studies and religious studies, University of Oslo), and Toshiaki Hicosaka (Art and Child Studies, Kyoto University of the Arts).