Globalising forces create new power sources and unleash new political possibilities. Global contestations reconfigure ideologies and political communities across the political spectrum. How has this process developed under the current neoliberal wave of market globalism, now thirty years in the making? Looking back, across the ebb and flow of antagonism, what can we look forward to? What might active political agency look like in the Anthropocene?

This public forum draws an extraordinary group of activists and scholars together to explore these issues from a variety of perspectives to generate a deepened understanding of present-day dynamics of global political contestation.

RSVP: [http://www.uws.edu.au/ics/events/social_agency_in_a_globalizing_world](http://www.uws.edu.au/ics/events/social_agency_in_a_globalizing_world)


**PROGRAM**

**9.00 Registration**

**9.30-11.00am, Panel 1: Social Crisis and the Human Condition**

**Moving on from a "Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene": Economy as Ecological Livelihood**
Katherine Gibson

Shortly before her death Val Plumwood wrote of the need to “go onwards in a different mode of humanity” if we are to survive the ecological crisis humans have produced. In response to this challenge, community economies scholars and environmental humanities scholars sat down to consider what this “going onwards” might entail. The product of our deliberations was a tentative Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene and a book of mini-essays making the case for

- Resituating humans within ecological systems;
- Resituating non-humans in ethical terms;
- Recognizing and strengthening systems of survival that are resilient in the face of change;
- Diversity and dynamism in ecologies and economies;
- Ethical responsibility across space and time, between places and in the future; and
- Creating new ecological economic narratives.

In this presentation I will illustrate how research and thinking is moving on from these propositions with a consideration of how we might cultivate ethical ecological-economic sensibilities that undermine the possibility for thinking ‘the economy’ as hyper-separated domain beyond the reach of politics, ethics and the dynamics of social and ecological interdependence.

**Action in the Anthropocene: Towards Engaged Cosmopolitanism**
Paul James

Some critics have talked about how we are sleep walking towards the end of human life on
this planet as we know it. However, while the possibility of reducing life on this planet to nasty, brutish and technological mediated is real, this deferral of structural change in the form of the economy and culture is much more active than that. Nobody is asleep. It entails real effort. In effect, it amounts to energetic projection of business-with-a-changed-rhetoric while supercharging the technological infrastructure to support an increasingly fragile social platform. The Smart Cities rhetoric, for example, is replete with images of the planet and hyperbolic announcements about relatively mundane (even if sometimes useful) developments—traffic management systems that will supposedly give people the capacity to skirt neatly around traffic snarls; cloud systems that mean that we can collect even bigger data sets. They all defer the need to rethink fundamentally the form of the hyper-mobile, consumption-heavy and growth-based social freedom that presents itself as the raison d’être of ‘sustainable development’—the paradoxical ‘revolution’ that allows us in the metropolitan West to stay basically the same, at least on the surface of social life. This talk explores the current crisis and argues for a form of engaged cosmopolitanism that seeks reconciliation across the boundaries of continuing difference, including the tension between the social and the natural.

11.00-11.30am Morning Tea

11.30-1.00pm Panel 2, Ecological Crisis

The Dialectics of Climate Change: a new Cosmopolitics?
James Goodman

The Paris Summit of the UN's Convention on Climate Change is soon to finalise a new 'comprehensive' global agreement with emissions reductions for all. For the first time climate change is positioned as a general responsibility, including for newly industrialized countries which now come to assume a central role in global emissions policy. With this we can expect an important shift in political antagonism over climate. To date, UN climate policy has focused on emissions-reduction for high-income industrialized countries. Disputes over climate policy have tended to collapse into North-South inter-state antagonism. After Paris, state elites will 'comprehensively' take responsibility, and climate politics can shift more decisively towards cosmopolitical antagonism. Here, elite responsibility for failure may become more visible. The preparations for Paris already betray a global effort to minimize state commitments. At this nexus we can expect climate movements to gain new traction as harbingers of the on-coming disruption, bringing a deeper global polarisation on climate policy. In this discussion I would like to explore the limits and possibilities of interpreting climate change in this way, that is, as a globalising dialectic. Anthropogenic climate change is socially generated, and those seeking to act on it exercise climate agency. In this way, for instance, we see global ecological injustices politicized and challenged in new ways. Clearly, though, climate change is a bio-physical process that has its own logic: emissions growth is cumulative (not cyclical) and there are defined ecological horizons and effects. That logic, arguably, transforms the very meaning of social agency. While elites plan for a world that is 4-6°C hotter, counter-narratives open-up a new political dialectic that is dramatically extended across human history and ecology. In this, climate agency becomes a new encompassing historical force, with a reach far into the future.

Psychoanalysing the Androscene
Ariel Salleh

The Anthropocene is a profoundly sex-gendered imaginary. It demands more than thinking in 'deep geological time'. Ecological awareness demands a capacity to imagine humanity-nature relations in 'deep libidinal time'. Drawing on notions of affect and non-identity from Adorno and Kristeva, the paper takes an embodied materialist lens to the ecocriticism of US environmental humanities scholar Tim Morton.

1.00-130pm Lunch
1.30-2pm Exhibition launch, ‘Rana Plaza: Murder Not Tragedy’, A photographic exhibition from Drik Gallery, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Speakers include Prof. Heather Goodall CCS, Nujhat Nawseen Kabir, Honours Graduate from University of Sydney, present in Dhaka, Bangladesh during the Rana Plaza Collapse, and Josh Cullinan from Australia-Bangladesh Solidarity Network that brought the exhibition to Australia.

2.00-3.30pm, Panel 3: Governance

America’s Pacific Century and the Global Imaginary
Manfred B. Steger
Focusing on Hillary Clinton’s 2011 Foreign Affairs article on the U.S. role in the Asia-Pacific region and the Obama administration’s 2015 National Security Strategy of the United States, this presentation examines the construction of the global imaginary from within national and regional dynamics. In particular, I argue that some central arguments in Henry R. Luce’s seminal 1941 Life essay on ‘The American Century’ have been condensed into contemporary security and market language to form the new master narrative of ‘America’s Pacific Century’. In other words, the construction of this master narrative involves crucial processes of ‘condensation’—the production and engagement of discourses, ideas, spaces, performances, and images that compress and reconfigure familiar local, national, and regional tropes and scalings while orienting them toward the global imaginary. Countering influential global interpretations of America’s decline and growing Chinese influence in the world, this transnational construct of ‘America’s Pacific Century’ plays an important role the semiotic integration of the entire Asia-Pacific region according to the American conceptual and ideological framework of neoliberal globalization. My critical discourse analysis of this new master narrative—as articulated by Clinton and other influential American ideological codifiers—suggests that the epochal transformation we call ‘globalization’ is a gradual and messy process that occurs not merely at the obvious supranational level of global institutions and transnational market arrangements, but also in good part inside national and local settings that are seemingly at odds with the imperatives of globality. Ultimately, this presentation contends that the decoding of vital processes of ‘condensation’—such as those at work in the discursive production of ‘America’s Pacific Century’—yields critical insights into the formation of the rising global imaginary.

Business Interest in the Environmental Crisis
Kanchi Kholi and Manju Menon
There is unprecedented clarity that we are in the midst of an environmental crisis. Large businesses are on the dock for their role in overuse of natural resources, degradation of habitats and social impacts of industrial expansion. With profits and credibility at stake, formal dialogues are being set up at international conventions and global congregations proposing a range of solutions. Our paper takes a close look at the principles that underlie the dominant responses of governments, businesses and civil society actors to the environmental crisis in various sectors including water, forests, biodiversity, fossil fuels and landscape restoration. It analyses how particular policy responses define the problem of environment crisis and seek to address it through the creation of rights, agreements and valuation of nature.

3.30-4.00pm Afternoon tea

4.00-5.30pm, Panel 4: Political Imagination

Ol’ King Coal and the production of collective radical subjectivities: a case study of Bentley Blockade
Francesca Da Rimini and Virginia Barratt
In 2014 an uprising of disparate activist nodes comprised of Indigenous sovereign nations people, hippies, itinerants, farmers, town workers, agents and spies, occupied Githabul land on the invitation of farmer John Scarebolloti. The mission was to force the revocation of Metgasco’s license to frak farmlands seeking tight sands gas. The occupation lasted five
months, created memetic affective zones, and could provide a hybrid methodology of resistance to other Australian struggles over the commons.

Critical modes of existence
Ghassan Hage

Early anthropological research into socio-cultural spaces that lay outside capitalist modernity have highlighted two important modes of existence: the order of the gift and the order of mutuality. Both were seen as pointing to forms of life that still exist in minor ways among us speaking critically to the order of capitalist domestication that dominated in our societies. The talk explores what it means to take the interaction of these three modes of existence as a ground for a critical political imagination.

6.00-8.00pm, Public Lecture:

Dipesh Chakrabarty

‘The Human Condition in the Anthropocene’

Chaired by Mary Spongberg
Refreshments from 6.00. UTS Tower, Building 2, Level 3 (Lower Ground), Room 17 (CB02.03.17)

830-10.00pm, Dinner
TBC (Caysorn Thai Restaurant, Level 1 8 Quay Street Haymarket NSW 2000)

PARTICIPANT DETAILS:

Virginia Barratt, University of Western Sydney’s Writing and Society Centre. Her work in the area of experimental poetics remediates certain embodied practices from pathological narratives, describing new philosophical and strategic spaces of urgency and agency. She has worked in the fields of gender and technology, performance, writing and academia. She was involved in Bentley Blockade and is an activist choosing to live and work in an ethics of sustainability. Her poetic and performative works are forthcoming: Stein and Wilde and Writing from Below.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, University of Chicago. His books include Historical Teleologies in the Modern World (Bloomsbury Press, forthcoming 2015); Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference (Princeton, 2000; 2008); Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies (Chicago, 2002); Cosmopolitanism (Duke, 2000); From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition (Oxford, 2007). He is currently working on two books, provisionally entitled The Climate of History (Chicago) and History and the Time of the Present (Duke).

Kathy Gibson, Institute for Cultural and Society, University of Western Sydney. Her books include The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy (Blackwell, 1996); A Postcapitalist Politics (University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities (University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

James Goodman, UTS. His books include Justice Globalism: Ideology, Crises, Policy (Sage, 2013), and Climate Upsurge: An Ethnography of Climate Movement Politics (Routledge, 2014); Crisis, Movement, Management: Globalising Dynamics (Routledge, 2014); Disorder and the Disinformation Society (Routledge, 2015).


Paul James, Institute for Cultural Research, UWS. His books include Urban Sustainability in Theory and Practice: Circles of Sustainability (Routledge, 2015); Sustainable Development, Sustainable Communities (University of Hawaii Press, 2012) Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism (Sage, 2006); Global Matrix:
Nationalism, Globalism and State-Terrorism (Pluto, 2005); Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community (Sage, 1996); and 16 volumes mapping the field of globalization in series called 'Central Currents in Globalization' (Sage 2004–2014).

Kanchi Kohli, independent researcher, New Delhi. She brings experience of close to 15 years in environment and forest governance-related issues. A campaign and research advisor to national-level networks and organizations related to impacts of industrial expansion as well as issues related to agro-biodiversity. She regularly lectures and gives presentations at several national and international universities and research centers.

Manju Menon, Centre for Studies in Science Policy, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and visitor at the Anthropology Department Yale University. She researches environmental law-making and implementation processes related to infrastructure projects. She was awarded the Nehru-Fulbright fellowship in 2011; is a member of Kalpavriksh, an environment research group since 2000; and author for the popular media.

Francesca da Rimini is an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Technology Sydney (Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology). Her work over the past 25 years as a cultural activist, writer and academic has employed a range of creative platforms and modalities to investigate the radical political, social and psychological potential of information communication technologies. She is a co-author of Disinformation Society: The Dynamics of Networks and Software (Routledge, 2015).

Ariel Salleh, Political Economy, University of Sydney, is a long time feminist environmental activist and Fellow in Post-Growth Societies at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena. Her books include Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology (Pluto Press/Spinifex, 2009); and Ecofeminism as Politics: nature, Marx, and the postmodern (Zed Books and St Martins Press, 1997).