

Dangers of Deep Time

An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Anthropocene Temporalities

Hosted by Campion Hall, the Laudato Si' Research Institute, and Pembroke College, University of Oxford & ECODISTURB, University of Oslo

9th/10th November 2023, Campion Hall Lecture Room, University of Oxford

Key Questions

- What are the challenges and risks of deep time?
- How do we conceive of time and reconsider temporality in the Anthropocene?

Rationale

Several recent publications have invoked the idea of 'deep time' as a way of thinking about human impacts on the long-term planetary future. Scholars suggest that we ought to rethink human and social temporalities in the context of planetary timescales. What is more, decisions made now and in the coming decades may well determine the trajectory of the Earth system for millennia. By expanding our temporal horizons, deep time thinkers aim to encourage reflection on sustainable practices in the present.

In this symposium, however, we want to investigate the *dangers* of deep time. Is this concept able to generate the sort of behavioural change needed if global society is to address the ecological crisis for current and future generations? Or is the concept vulnerable to co-option by those seeking to perpetuate the existing trajectory? There are dangers that exist in the long-term future, but also dangers entailed in employing the concept of deep time.

So, what are the threats to the Earth's future—including those with an anthropogenic cause—and how do they impact our sense of time? How might our notions of time be said to collapse under the pressure of envisioned catastrophe? And what sort of temporalities are invoked by the new geological epoch of the Anthropocene?

At the same time, what are the risks associated with this interest in long-term thinking? How might concepts such as deep time do more harm than good? And what are the dangers of advocating for this so-called 'geological turn' in the context of plural and interlocking human crises?

Schedule

Each 90-minute panel will consist of two 30-minute papers and a 30-minute discussion.

9th November 2023

- 14.15 Welcome
- 14.30– 16.00 Panel 1 (Chair: [Tess Somervell](#))
[Bron Szerszynski](#): *Rethinking the "Deep" in "Deep Time"*
[Marius Timmann Mjaaland](#): *Deep and Shallow: Deep Ecology and Deep Time*
- 16.00 – 16.30 Coffee/Tea Break
- 16.30 – 18.00 Panel 2 (Chair: [Emily Qureshi-Hurst](#))
[Celia Deane-Drummond](#): *Situating Human Evolution in Deep Time: A Theological Critique of Evolutionary Explanantia*
[Dag Hessen](#): *Perceiving the Risks of Climate Change and Nature Loss in the Deep Future; Are there Evolutionary Constraints?*
- 18.00 – 18.30 Drinks Reception for all Attendees
- 19.00 Dinner for Speakers Only

10th November 2023

- 09.00 – 10.30 Panel 3 (Chair: [Sarah Dry](#))
[Cecil Abungu](#): *A Theory of African Traditional Thought on the Long Term Future*
[Richard Irvine](#): *"So far into the abyss of time": Responsibility and Nihilism as Time Horizons Dissolve*
- 10.30 – 10.50 Coffee/Tea Break
- 10.50 – 12.20 Panel 4 (Chair: [Stefan Skrimshire](#))
[Tim Middleton](#): *"Conjoined Histories": Liberation Theology in the Anthropocene*
[Simone Kotva](#): *Is Deep Time a New Apocalypticism?: Perspectives from Contemporary Ecotheology*
- 12.20 – 13.30 Lunch at Campion Hall for all Attendees
- 13.30 – 15.00 Panel 5 (Chair: [Jeremy Kidwell](#))
[Michelle Bastian](#): *The Dangers of Charismatic Mega-Times*
[Helge Jordheim](#): *The Anthropocene and the Politics of Self-Periodization*
- 15.00 Concluding Discussion