

Review of: "The Anthropocene Borderline Problems"

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This article was strong, interesting and fairly convincing on the internal Geological body debates around the 'borderline' problem of the Anthropocene - i.e. the when/what of the phenomenon. There were however problems that undermined the paper for me, almost all of which were when the author was writing away from his primary research field/knowledge and with regard to terms he bandied about without precisely identifying the senses he used them in (+ their histories) and/or their metaphorical and/or allusive aspects.

There is a substantial body of work on temporality that the author could have usefully drawn on and referred to. This would have given the author a springboard to consider and discuss precisely what an "epoch" is - etymologically and with regard to its different uses in (certain) sciences and in Humanities/more popular discourse. Without this we have a fuzzy concept being batted around. The concept of the "episode" also needs similar address and what is precisely meant by a "suite" - as in "suite of events" - as these create more "fuzz" in discussions. (We also have the word "aeons" dropped in later,) The author does attempt this (somewhat unconvincingly/tokenistically) in the Conclusion, which is precisely the wrong place to try and define key concepts - the Introduction is the place for that.

Other specific points:

Section 2.1. The sentence starting "The enquiry presented..." is significant but not so evident in the article Abstract, there is a slight discrepancy there.

2.2 Final paragraph - the quotation "exodus from the Holocene" needs comment as "exodus" is obviously not a scientific term but a Biblically derived and often emotively used one. What does it mean to just toss this in here?

2.3. Openings sentence is totalising and generalistic. What is meant by "contemporary societies"? Developed world societies, presumably? If so, say so. Isolated hunter-gather societies (and there are still some) are less obviously part of a single world entity. It is also debatable what degree of single world entity North Korean manual workers and Florida retirees share and how broad and complex that entity might be. Ditto comments about the "worldwide ergosphere"

Same paragraph - 'People purposefully design...the economic intersections with planet Earth... Which people? And how

does this account for accident, byproduct, unintentionality in general. The planet's systems are not that ordered - chaos, mild chaos and muddle are just as much features as purposeful design.

2.3 4th paragraph. Various comments "these societal contexts" - what are "these"? The journal citation of the concept and a vague reference to "public visibility" ? If so, just state that. It's a very debatable point as to whether concepts "offer" messages. How do they do that? It's not a facetious question, what mechanism do they deploy to "offer" these? If there isn't one then it is not the concepts themselves that "offer", it is more a question of interpretation and application.

2.5. At the end of paragraph 1, we finally get an acknowledgement that metaphors are being used, some discussion of how this works with the scientific orientation of the paper would appear to be necessary.

2nd paragraph ' re "contemporary citizens" (what exactly are these) and their "power" (what is this?) and what about their powerlessness too?

3rd paragraph "anthropogenic global change is tamed as a framework of shifting baselines" - nice, colourful and reader-friendly phrasing but what does this actually mean?

3. Paragraph 1 - sentence beginning "Subsequently..." This is all very rosy - what about mischaracterisation and wilful distortion etc.

3.2. Paragraph 2, re the characterisation of 'the Great acceleration' as "the final stroke." "Final stroke" of what? Are we in the end time? Or is something different coming? And if so, what?

Final word of final paragraph of 3.2. "Anthropoyan" needs explaining first time it is used (and particularly as it isn't used again)

3.3 Paragraph 2 "we broke it, finally" - colourful figure of speech but what does it mean? What did we break? And what are the implications of the breakage? - if the phrasing was "we disrupted the global eco-system" or some such this would at least be comprehensible.

Summary - if the above issue were attended to, this would be a very useful and well cited piece, which it deserves to be given the quality of its discussion of Geology-focussed politics and conceptualisations