

## Call for Papers

**Special track at the 20th conference of the Society for Philosophy and Technology, June 14-17, 2017 – Darmstadt, Germany**

### **A New Planetary Orientation for Philosophy of Technology in the Anthropocene?**

Track Chairs: Vincent Blok (Wageningen University), Pieter Lemmens, Jochem Zwier, Hub Zwart (Radboud University of Nijmegen)

Although both ignorance and denialism still persist in some quarters, it can hardly be doubted anymore for anyone with the slightest awareness of the *Zeitgeist*, that humanity is about to enter a phase in its history which will be characterized by massive changes in the earth's biosphere, i.e., in the global ecological system that has up until now silently and robustly supported its cultural-historical projects ( Greer 2008, Martenson 2011, Crutzen & Schwägerl 2011, Barnosky et al 2012). Humanity's largely destructive influence on its unique planetary life support system has gained such a momentum lately that geologists and Earth System scientists have suggested for some time now that we have entered a new geological epoch, the *anthropocene*, in which the human has become the most influential geological (f)actor, trumping the natural ones in every respect (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000, Steffen et al. 2011, Latour 2014, Schwägerl 2014, Bonneuil & Fressoz 2016). The prime significance of the anthropocene, which presents us with a biosphere that is fundamentally different from that of its microbial and metazoan stages due to the technosphere produced by human technological evolution (Williams et al. 2015), is that it sets a different trajectory for the planet or what is called the Earth system nowadays (Waters et al. 2014, Hamilton 2015, Davies 2016).

Whilst the anthropocene attests to the enormous if not uncanny power of a technoscientifically potentialized humanity (a power Dominique Janicaud has called a 'hyperpower') to radically disrupt the earthly ecosystem upon which it fundamentally depends for its very survival, it simultaneously, and even more crucially, brings to light the ultimate impotence of that power (Janicaud 1994). However that may be, what is clear, as the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler points out, is that the anthropocene reveals the toxic and entropic character of the process of capitalist industrialization and that the big challenge it imposes on us is how to exit from it and invent a negentropic, curative and attentive technological *modus vivendi* (Stiegler 2014, 2016), if possible (Blok 2015). And since we are massively unprepared for this unprecedented challenge, we might do well to start 'thinking the unthinkable', as the American philosopher of technology Langdon Winner has stated using a famous phrase by cold war nuclear conflict theorist/futurist Herman Kahn (Winner 2013).

In this track, we aim to explore the question how philosophy of technology should respond to this challenge, i.e., to this new and unprecedented 'human condition' that is bound to seriously disrupt the agendas of philosophical and social inquiry in the decades to come and that we would like to characterize as the anthropocenic condition. In particular,

we aim to explore what it would mean for philosophy of technology to engage with the earth system and its principles of composition, to consider different technical modalities of fostering and maintaining them, and to adopt an explicitly planetary orientation (Lemmens & Hui 2016, Lemmens 2017).

Possible questions and themes to be explored include:

- What exactly does the anthropocene – sometimes also referred to as the technocene – as a new and unprecedented planetary condition mean for the philosophy of technology? What are its implications for this discipline? Should it be the cause for a renewed reflection on its aims, goals, focus, methodologies, paradigms, presuppositions, organizational structure, educational guidelines, ‘engagement’, etc.?
- What would a planetary orientation, assuming humanity as a ‘geological agency’ (Chakrabarty 2009), imply for philosophy of technology? What should ‘taking care of the earth’ (Steffen et al. 2011) or a ‘reconnection with the biosphere’ (Folke 2011) mean technologically? How should we attune our technologies, for instance the global digital network technologies, the NBIC technologies or the technosphere and noosphere more generally, to this new situation? What would it mean technologically to heed the ‘planetary boundaries’ crucial for the ‘operating space of humanity’ (Rockström 2015).
- What kind of new technologies and social institutions should be invented to deal with the impending energy crisis and climate catastrophes and what kind of changes in our technological thinking are needed for this new age of the anthropocene?
- What kinds of technopolitics and ecopolitics are needed and what can we already see emerging on the horizon? How should we include nascent technopolitical movements such as open source, peer-to-peer and commons into an ecological perspective on techno-evolution?
- What should we think of proposed solutions like geo-engineering, ecotechnics and atmo-design, and what of new technological paradigms like homeotechnology, biomimicry (Blok & Gremmen 2015) and the biobased economy (Zwier et al 2015)?

## Literature

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### **TO CONTRIBUTE...**

350-word abstracts for individual papers should be submitted by Dec 5 at <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=spt2017>. When submitting, please tick the option "Special Track: Anthropocene (V. Blok, P. Lemmens, J. Zwier, H. Zwart)". Abstracts should include a cover page with author details (name, affiliation), contact info, talk title, and reference to the conference track: Anthropocene (V. Blok, P. Lemmens, J. Zwier, H. Zwart).

### **Timetable**

- December 5<sup>th</sup> 2016: Deadline for the submission of abstracts
- March 1, 2017: Expected notification of acceptance
- June 14-17, 2017: Conference dates