

# Culture and Global Responsibility: Rethinking Habitability in the Age of the Anthropocene

Conference at the University of Warwick  
May 12-14, 2023

## Organisers:

Stefano Bellin (University of Warwick)  
Guido Bartolini (Ghent University)  
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**Deadline to submit a paper proposal:** February 10, 2023

## Call for papers:

Although the world seems to be drifting towards the conflictual opposition between large geopolitical blocs, and the pandemic and the war in Ukraine have reshaped the dynamics of globalisation, there is no doubt that many of the key issues of our time are global in nature and scope. Indeed, we could argue that the most important social and political battles of the twenty-first century are fought in the global arena. Climate change, international migrations, pandemics, neoliberal capitalist exploitation, racialised patterns of exclusion and discrimination, gentrification are just some of the global challenges that characterise our time. As Olúfẹmi O. Táíwò argues in *Reconsidering Reparations*, because slavery and colonialism fundamentally shaped the world we live in, we should be thinking more broadly and holistically about how to remake the world system. Moreover, since human beings have become a geophysical force capable of radically affecting the climate system of the planet as a whole, the 'planetary' is also emerging as an analytical category and as a matter of human concern. Indeed, as Dipesh Chakrabarty points out in *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, 'in our own awareness of ourselves, the "now" of human history has become entangled with the long "now" of geological and biological timescales, something that has never happened before in the history of humanity' (p. 7). We therefore need to connect the planetary with the global, the geologic arc of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene with the time of human history and experience, with a particular attention to the colonial, racial, and gendered oppressions that link the human world to the vast processes and timescale of the Earth system.

Bringing together literary and cultural studies, art and film studies, critical race theory, environmental humanities, and philosophy, this international conference will explore how different cultural texts might facilitate our critical and political engagement with forms of violence and injustice that are global in nature and scope. Drawing connections between the concepts and the practices of 'global responsibility' and 'habitability', the conference will discuss how different natural, social, and cultural forces shape the habitability of different environments on Earth, as well as our individual and collective responsibility for making the world not just habitable but also compatible with the flourishing of different beings.

The key questions that this conference seeks to address are:

- How can literature, film, and other forms of art help us to think through the notions of 'global responsibility' and 'habitability'?
- What makes the Earth habitable, and how does human culture, action and neglect affect that habitability?
- To what extent and in what sense are we responsible for making the Earth a place where different forms of human and nonhuman life can live and thrive?
- What are the conditions for a good life and how are these conditions represented in mass culture?
- How and to what extent can cultural work challenge political and social structures of oppression?
- How can different cultural texts and artistic media develop our political imagination and sense of responsibility?
- How does the past influence habitability and life conditions in the present?
- How do ongoing patterns of violence, injustice, and accumulation affect habitability and life's capacity to flourish?
- What does it take for life to survive and flourish?

This international conference welcomes scholars across the arts & humanities working in all geographical areas and theoretical frameworks, and encourages proposals that take an interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary approach.

Suggested topics include (but are not restricted to):

- Literature, film, art, philosophy and the question global responsibility
- Critical perspectives on what makes an environment habitable sociologically, culturally, and ecologically
- Intersectional analyses of 'global responsibility' and 'habitability'
- How the global racial empire affects 'habitability' and 'global responsibility'
- Cultural texts that address forms or patterns of injustice that are global in nature and scope
- Cultural work, differentiated solidarity, and the challenge of 'elite capture' (Táíwò 2022)
- Literature, film, art, philosophy and the struggle of 'remaking the world' (Getachew 2019)

#### **Confirmed Invited Speakers:**

- Emily Baker (UCL)
- Stef Craps (University of Ghent)
- Martin Crowley (University of Cambridge)
- Esther Figueroa (Independent researcher and filmmaker) Film screening + virtual Q&A
- Tiago de Luca (University of Warwick)

- Rashmi Varma (University of Warwick)

The conference attendees will also have the opportunity to visit the exhibition 'Our Fragile Earth' organised by the Habitability Global Research Priority, which will be held in the ruins at Coventry Cathedral from 8 May 2023 to 21 May 2023.

#### **APPLICATION PROCESS:**

The organisers invite proposals for 20-minute presentations. We strongly encourage attending the conference in-person, but in a limited number of cases it might be possible to make arrangements for an online presentation.

**Please send a 300-word (approximately) abstract, contact details and a brief bio by 10 February 2023 to [globalresponsibility2023@gmail.com](mailto:globalresponsibility2023@gmail.com)**

Please note: there will be a standard fee of £30 to help defray catering and room booking costs. ECRs (up to 5 years after the end of the PhD) and staff on a temporary contract will be charged a reduced fee of £20, while postgraduates and the unwaged can participate in the conference for free.

This conference has been made possible thanks to the kind and generous support of the [Habitability Global Research Priority \(GRP\)](#) at the University of Warwick.