

Transnational and interdisciplinary crossroads: initiating a conversation across borders and disciplines

Reflections on the workshop "Resources, Infrastructures and the Anthropocene: Dialogues between the Global-North and the Global-South" (18-20 September 2019; hosted by *Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia da Universidade NOVA de Lisboa*, the [GREASE](#) project, and the [EURES](#) project)

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The "Resources, Infrastructures and Anthropocene" workshop engaged in a unique conversation between scholars from and doing research across the global North-South divide. The workshop brought together a highly inspiring group of scholars, identified shared challenges and discussed collaborative research opportunities.

Most of us have hybrid identities—with regard to our geographical belonging, with regard to our empirical focus and with regard to our disciplinary backgrounds. This hybridity resulted in very rich discussions, as we were able to relate to a wide variety of points of view and understandings. We study both "up" – elites and those in power – and "down" – those who are often considered victims of global structures - and are keen to interrogate and reflect on the political "why" of both our own and others' work. Finally, we share a caring ethic: although we may for example disagree about what "empowerment" may be and for whom, we ultimately perform our research with the aim of making other people's lives better, even if highly indirectly.

We also learned that we face serious challenges and that we have work to do in order to start collaborating. Research funding is distributed highly unequally across the globe, and (archival) sources are not always available, especially for historical research that takes global South perspectives as its starting point. We are not always sure who can and should ask which questions, particularly in the face of unequal access to education, research (funds) and in-depth understandings of local specificities. We have work to do with regard to exploring the differences and overlaps between our different disciplinary backgrounds: where can and should we learn from each other, and in what ways may we clash? At the same time, we also realized that our epistemologies and ontologies bear strong similarities and that truly equitable research may require us to challenge our own perspective by working more intensely with both scientists from very different backgrounds and with societal actors. Yet, this also means that we may want to be selective in what we "open up", "complexify" or "multiply" and train ourselves to articulate the relevance thereof in collaboration with others outside our comfort zone. Finally, our interests in connections on the one hand and the deconstruction of concepts such as the anthropocene, nature and society on the other hand may not necessarily go well together. Do we want to redraw the analytical boundary, or render explicit or even create connections between pre-existing entities? And where do we draw the line with regard to what is in- and excluded in our analysis?

To end, we realized that there is a lot for us to do in terms of research. Engaging with the questions above may lay the foundations to create more equitable transnational project collaborations and non-academic collaborations. We share an interest in doing so, for example in order to investigate the role of a wide range of powerful concepts at different places and throughout history; to study how socio-ecological challenges at different locations emerged in relation to each other; to develop radically novel research methodologies suited for historical, transnational and global North-South analyses; and to develop new, entangled theories that are not solely emergent from or applicable to contexts in the global North. For the shorter term, we also realized that we have a lot to gain from bringing together existing and ongoing empirical investigations in order to probe the nature of the connections between these multi-sited developments.