

**FERAL TECHNOLOGIES:  
Making and Unmaking Multispecies Dumps  
Anthropocene Campus / HKW 2016**



This image of a broken shard of glass shows one example of waste materials that are largely overlooked. We use it to represent a dump, our seminar's conception of the technosphere.

**CO-CONVENERS**

Elaine Gan, Bettina Stoetzer, Anna Tsing

**DESCRIPTION**

In the seminar, we conceptualize the technosphere as a dump, an unruly landscape full of multispecies relationships that emerge from reckless war and global migrations, toxic industry and trade. While the dump is an undeniable result of human-induced disturbance—a quintessential landscape of the Anthropocene—the dump may also be considered through *feral technologies*. These are novel capacities for making and unmaking that arise from histories of multispecies interdependence. In a dump, humans

## FERAL TECHNOLOGIES, 2

are no longer in control, but are best considered as one force that endures relentlessly and contingently among many that are always and already biological, environmental, and technoscientific. In a dump, nature and culture cannot be taken apart; a dump is composed of radical hybridities and lively indeterminacies. Following from this, the technosphere cannot be considered apart from the biosphere and geosphere. This seminar invites participants to begin with the simple question: what if we consider technology as a more-than-human capacity for change? How then might we understand the technosphere? Might we brain-dump new spatiotemporal tools, within the very brief time of two workshop days together?

The seminar proposes a few tools, drawing from the multiplicity of interdisciplinary projects on feral landscapes and ruderal ecologies represented by co-conveners, guest speakers, and Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene (AURA):

*First*, we take a feminist approach and propose landscapes as a unit of analysis that allows close attention to situated practices of knowing, as well as making;

*Second*, we insist that there is no singular god's eye view to the landscape, but a plurality of encounters, histories, dimensions, and durations. We will go on a group field trip to a former "dump" in Berlin: *Schöneberger Südgelände*, a former switch yard for trains (*Rangierbahnhof*) that is now a nature park teeming with feral technologies;

*Third*, we focus on processes of change and modes of multispecies coordination. Who and what makes and unmakes our site's ecology and history? We invite participants to consider how a mix of natural history observation, environmental anthropology, and experimental documentary practices might be used to describe the multispecies dynamics of a dump;

*Fourth*, we take an interdisciplinary and playful approach, combining the arts, sciences, and humanities, combining thinking *and* making.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- (1) Explore the concept of feral technologies, or novel and weedy capacities that are more-than-human and emerge from war and industrial contamination.
- (2) Articulate different entangled histories and social rhythms that may be observed during our field visit.
- (3) Collaboratively develop a speculative language for representing the technosphere, not as an effect of human activities, but as a web of social rhythms and spatiotemporal patternings between species, environments, and machines.

## FERAL TECHNOLOGIES, 3

### SEMINAR ACTIVITIES

#### Day 1: April 15

Morning Session: 2 hours, 11am-1pm

Introductions, 40 participants + 12 guests/conveners x 1 minutes = 50-60 minutes  
*We ask all participants to prepare a 150-word introduction and bring one representative image. Please say something about yourself and a significant nonhuman. We request that you keep your introduction to one minute to allow everyone time to speak.*

On the concept of "Feral":

Berlin's Ruderal Ecologies, 20 minutes: Bettina Stoetzer (MIT)

Slow Violence, 15 minutes: Soyoung Yoon (New School for Social Research)

Multispecies Temporalities, 10 minutes: Elaine Gan (UCSC / AURA)

Feral Atlas, 10 minutes: Anna Tsing (UCSC / AURA)

Afternoon Session: 4 hours, 2-6pm

Participants break up into groups of four for a field trip to Schöneberger Südgelände. (*Participants will have pack lunches and eat along the way.*)



#### Day 2: April 16

Morning Session: 2 hours, 10am-12pm

Each group makes a multispecies clock or game, 2 hours

Afternoon Session: 12:30-2:30pm

Presentation of clocks: ten groups x 2 minutes each = 20-30 minutes

Discussion and wrap-up, 1 hour 30 minutes

## FERAL TECHNOLOGIES, 4

### READINGS

#### Required

- Tsing, Anna. "A Threat to Holocene resurgence is a threat to livability." In *Anthropological Visions of Sustainable Futures*, edited by Marc Brightman and Jerome Lewis. Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming.
- Tsing, Anna. 2013. "More than Human Sociality: A Call for Critical Description." In *Anthropology and Nature*, edited by Kirsten Hastrup. New York and London: Routledge, 27-42.
- Stoetzer, Bettina. 2014. "Boar." In *To See Once More the Stars: Living in a Post-Fukushima World*, edited by Daisuke Naito, Ryan Sayre, Heather Swanson, Satsuki Takahashi. New Pacific Press, 15-19.
- Gan, Elaine. 2015. "Rhythms and Cycles: Aleatory Attunements of Miracle Rice." Paper presented at *Engineered Worlds* conference, University of Chicago, October 2-3, 2015.
- Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard. Introduction and Chapter 7 (pp. 1-44, 199-232)
- Kowarik, Ingo and Andreas Langer. 2005. "Natur-Park Südgelände: Linking Conservation and Recreation in an Abandoned Railyard in Berlin," In *Wild Urban Woodlands*, edited by I. Kowarik, and S. Korner. Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 287-299.

#### Suggested

- Agard-Jones, Vanessa. 2014. "Spray": <http://somatosphere.net/2014/05/spray.html>
- Crary, Jonathan. 2013. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. NY: Verso.
- Crosby, Alfred. 2009 (1986). *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. NY: Cambridge.
- Gabrys, Jennifer. 2013. "Plastic and the Work of the Biodegradable." In *Accumulation: The Material Politics of Plastic*, edited by Jennifer Gabrys, Gay Hawkins, and Mike Michael. London and New York: Routledge.
- Haraway, Donna. 2003. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Masco, Joseph. 2013. "Side Effect": <http://somatosphere.net/2013/12/side-effect.html>

**FERAL TECHNOLOGIES, 5**

Misrach, Richard and Kate Orff. 2014. *Petrochemical America*. NY: Aperture.

Tsing, Anna. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. NJ: Princeton.