Introduction
Agri-cultures in the Anthropocene

Martin Skrydstrup and Hyun-Gwi Park

Anthropocene Dramas in and out of Greenland

Today when we think about climate change and Greenland, we do not think about agriculture, but of the melting ice. Perhaps the most evocative articulation of this connection was made in December 2015, when Paris was hosting the United Nations Climate Change Conference, or COP21. At this event, artist Olafur Elisasson and geologist Minik Rosing exhibited their art installation *Ice Watch* at the Place du Pantheon: a circle of icebergs with a circumference of twenty meters, which resembled a watch ticking and/or a compass providing orientation for the world's leaders in the palm of Paris. The ice had been transported by tugboat from the harbor of Nuuk—Greenland's capital—to France. The captain of the tugboat was Kuupik Kleist, former prime minister of Greenland, who was quoted saying: "Ninety per cent of our country is covered by ice. It is a great part of our national identity. We follow the international discussion, of course, but to every Greenlander, just by looking out the window at home, it is obvious that something dramatic is happening" (Zarin 2015).

About four hours after Kuupik Kleist's tugboat left Nuuk, it sailed along the deep green fjords of Kujataa, a subarctic farming landscape situated in the southern part of Greenland. This landscape represents the earliest known introduction of farming to the Arctic; European Norse people arrived here from Iceland in the latter part of the tenth century and cultivated the fields until 1472, when they disappeared from historical records for reasons still relatively poorly understood.[1] After "rewildling" for three centuries, the Kujataa landscape was populated once again by Inuit hunters and farming communities from the end of the eighteenth century. Today, Kujataa numbers 37 farming households, which primarily cultivate hay for their sheep. These farming communities could be characterized as *mestis* communities, a hybrid of Inuit and European settlers.

In August 2018, when I (Martin) was conducting explorative fieldwork in Kujataa, I asked one of the farmers—a remarkable woman by

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the name of Aviaja—why there was not any ice in the fjords. Aviaja lived on her farm with her husband and their three boys, who planned to continue farming in Kujataa. Aviaja said that normally at this time of the year, the fjord would be packed with ice, and she explained that there were two glaciers spitting out ice in the mountains behind Kujataa. She continued and said that she did not regret the absence of ice, as boating was easier in the fjord, and it also prevented any occasional polar bears—having lost their sense of direction—to go ashore in Kujataa. However, what really concerned Aviaja was the drought they had in the summer of 2017. That year her farm only made 160 round haystacks, whereas this summer (August 2018), it looked as if they would make three hundred: "I am thankful to nature, since our weather is always opposite yours," she said referring to the Danish summer, and continued: "This year, our summer is rainy; yours is hot and dry. Last year, your summer was wet and we had a drought." I asked her how many round haystacks she needed to feed her sheep, and she estimated that number to be six hundred, adding that last year, when they only made 160, because of the drought, she had to purchase more than half a million euros of fodder from Denmark just to keep her sheep from starvation.

This vignette illustrates that the Anthropocene can be understood as an assemblage of elite levels of discourse in political, legal, scientific and artistic genres articulated at the COP 21 in Paris, with tangible and intangible links to the iconic landscapes of disappearing icebergs, and voices of indigenous people, who are silenced in Paris. For Aviaja, something dramatic is also happening. However, looking out the window and seeing that the fjord is not as white as it used to be in summertime is not very troublesome. For her, the drama is how to feed her sheep if the rain does not come. This is just one instance of how the cosmopolitics of Greenland in Paris differ from grounded and earthbound local experience of the weather in Greenland. We may say that we face an assemblage of the Anthropocene, which consists of heterogeneous events, documents, artworks, declarations and situated voices. The question is then, where and how anthropology can engage with this assemblage.

Anthropology and the Anthropocene

How should anthropology respond to this new geological narrative, recentering the anthropos? How has the challenge of a new grand narrative of global environmental change washing out the specifics of different places and temporalities with the message that humanity is now a geological force been taken up by the discipline? Given that the discipline often has fashioned its intellectual commitment as "anthropo-scenes," that is, as specific contextualized analytics in which anthropology makes sense of how people make sense of their environments and act upon changes in the weather as localized and territorialized, one would assume a host of counternarratives to the notion of the Anthropocene. What does anthropology have to say about agriculture in the Anthropocene?

Bruno Latour, in his distinguished lecture to the American Association of Anthropologists in December 2014, entitled "Anthropology at the Time of the Anthropocene" provided one response. Latour argued that the concept of the Anthropocene, by way of claiming that human agency has now become the main geological force shaping the face of the earth, raises the question of responsibility or, citing Donna Haraway, "response ability" (Latour 2014: 4).However, lumping oil company executives, hunter-gatherers in Amazonia, tycoons in Shanghai, and slum dwellers in Kibera, Nairobi, into one single responsible human entity is clearly not in line with contemporary anthropological reasoning. According to Latour, the Enlightenment conundrum of what exactly unites and divides humanity is raised all over again. On the very question about *who* is responsible, Latour contends that "the 'anthropos' of the Anthropocene is not exactly anybody, it is made of highly localised networks of some individual bodies whose responsibility is staggering" (ibid.: 6). So if the hallmark of anthropology is the concern with fragility, specificity, and the multiplicity of human relationships to other humans and nonhumans, how might the field grapple with the Anthropocene? On this question, Latour responds that the Anthropocene affords new vistas for anthropology to redefine time and space: "At the time of the Anthropocene, anthropology is not a specialized discipline; it is the name of what it is to reoccupy the time and space taken out of all of us by the modernizing frontier" (ibid.: 16).

What the collection of articles on the Anthropocene in this special issue of *Nature and Culture* has in common is an attempt to "re-occupy"—to borrow from Latour—the time and space of agri-*cultures* at the modernizing frontier: from watermelon farmers in the Far East of Russia to *paduk* farmers in Java to sugar beet farmers in Poland. In this way, all contributions pay heed to Latour's address, by way of framing a new set of relationships between crops, timescales, and place/terroir in the Anthropocene. On Latour's question about *who* is responsible for the Anthropocene, agriculture understood as a global sector writ large is considered one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs), but this collection shows how differently farmers are exposed to the effects of the Anthropocene. Farmers embody such paradoxes as both being responsible for the Anthropocene and meeting the GHG emission targets set out by COP21 in Paris; or, agriculture currently feeds nine billion people, and at the same time, agriculture is exposed to extreme weather events. These are largely unaddressed in anthropological work on agriculture in the Anthropocene (Hastrup and Brichet 2016). More generally, anthropological literature has shown how farmers are by no means ignorant of climate change, nor are they passive in shaping, interpreting, and responding to the challenges and opportunities that might arise from climate change (Barnes and Dove 2015). Beyond this general insight, this collection explores the relationships between crops, farmers, and the weather, mediated by complex entities such as index insurance, various bodies of expertise, and the market in its various forms. This is where this special issue claims to "reoccupy" and redefine notions of time and place for agriculture in the Anthropocene.

The Contributions

Yunita T. Winarto, Sue Walker, and Rhino Ariefiansyah do this with reference to farmers in Java, by exposing the role of the so-called science field shops, which make farmers into agrometeorologists capable of better understanding the relationships between "clouds and roots" and consequently adapting to the effects of the Anthropocene. Moving to the modernizing frontier in Senegal, Sara Angeli Aguiton traces how risk caused by "rainfall deficit" is circulated in the name of "index insurance," showing how market devices and the larger political economy of development is refitted with climate risks. Gaële Rouillé-Kielo returns to Latour's grand question about *who* is responsible for the Anthropocene, but transposes it to a very different scale: the Lake Naivasha water basin in Kenya, where a new system known as payments for environmental services (PES) is redistributing the responsibilities for environmental degradation between upstream and downstream farmers. Staying within Kenya, but building thematically on Winarto, Walker, and Ariefiansyah's contribution on agro-meteorology, Martin Skrydstrup explores a participatory scenario planning (PSP) workshop, albeit very different from the science field shops in Java. Skrydstrup argues that the PSPs serve to redistribute responsibilities for the effects of El Niño and integrate local knowledge with scientific expertise to generate public trust in the metrological services of the predictive postcolonial state. Moving to the modernizing frontier of Poland and by way of deploying the semiotic concept of indexical orders, Dong Ju Kim's contribution shows how farmers are coping with the prolonged and unpredictable dry spans in the spring by resisting and acknowledging new EU policy measures of banning certain herbicides and pesticides in the name of "sustainability." Kim unpacks this paradox by juxtaposing practical knowledge defined as "parental care" for soils/crops, with symbolic knowledge defined as a register of multilayered localized meanings and histories. The final contribution, by Hyun-Gwi Park, returns to the temporal and spatial boundaries of the Anthropocene, by way of rendering an ethnographic puzzle: why do watermelon farmers in the Far East of Russia continue their cultivation, when they apparently lose out to bad weather conditions and volatile market prices? Park solves this enigma, by rescaling—or, with Latour, "reoccupying"—the temporary and spatial dimensions of the Anthropocene, as her ethnography shows that the cultivators are pursuing a scenario where they have a good harvest at the same time as their neighboring farmers fare poorly, because of less than optimal weather conditions. In such a season, a single farmer can make 10 million roubles (USD 350,000) from 15 hectares of watermelons, whereas the neighboring farmer may become insolvent. Park's ethnography shows that we have to rethink the spatial and temporal boundaries of weather with relation to crops. Marilyn Strathern's Postscript brings "timescales of intervention" to the focus and it conjures up responsibility in anthropological sense, based on her ethnobotanic understanding of the mutuality between horticulturalist in Melanesia and the crops they cultivate. If we recall Aviaja's drama from Greenland, we may say that this collection of ethnographies of agricultures in the Anthropocene advances our understanding of how global environmental change is very particular. It has implications for how anthropology can "reoccupy" the spatial and temporal dimensions at the modernizing frontier.

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Martin Skrydstrup holds an Associate Professorship of Globalisation and Sustainabiity at the Department of Management, Society and Communication, Copenhagen Business School. In 2010, he completed his PhD in cultural anthropology at Columbia University, New York City. Martin's research combines insights from cultural anthropology and science and technology studies (STS) to explore, writ large, how sustainability certification regimes in the agro-food complex emerge and evolve as a new mode of global environmental governance. Empirically, his ethnographic fieldwork targets the people and technologies that get agricultural commodities from farm to market, specifically tea in East Africa and palm oil in Southeast Asia. Martin's earlier work dealt with the making of climate knowledge on the evidentiary terrain of the Greenland ice sheet. Martin's research has been supported by a number of excellence awards, such as the Sapere Aude DFF Starting Grant (PI, lead applicant); the Wenner-Gren Foundation (lead applicant); the European Research Council, Advanced Grant (coapplicant); and the National Science Foundation (USA). E-mail: msk.msc@cbs.dk

Hyun-Gwi Park teaches Anthropology at Humanitas College of Kyung Hee University. She completed a PhD in social anthropology from the University of Cambridge. Since the early 2000s, she has conducted ethnographic research in the Russian Far East, with a particular interest in postsocialism, borders, migration, and political ecology. Her monograph, *The Displacement of Borders among Russian Koreans in Northeast Asia*, was published in 2017, and her articles have appeared in *Asia-Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, *Inner Asia*, and *Asian Perspective*. E-mail: hyungwi@gmail.com

Note

1. See Jared Diamond (2005) for the maladaption/collapse thesis and Dugmore, Andrew J., Thomas H. McGovern, Richard Streeter, Christian Koch Madsen, Konrad Smiarowski, and Christian Keller (2013) and Christian Koch Madsen (2008) for a different collapse theory in terms of the flux of world market prices for ivory.

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