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International Union of Geological Sciences
International Commission on Stratigraphy

Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy
http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/workinggroups/anthropocene/
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ANTHROPOCENE WORKING GROUP: PROGRAMME FOR 2019 24

Newsletter edited by Colin Waters, Jan Zalasiewicz and Alex Damianos.

Thanks to all colleagues who contributed to this Newsletter.

Cover Illustration: Attendees at the Anthropocene Working Group meeting held in Mainz, 5-8 September 2018, hosted by the Max-Planck Institute for Chemistry. Photo taken by Neli Mihaylova (MPIC).
Dear all,

This year, considerable effort has gone into summarizing the stratigraphic evidence that the AWG and others have gathered to date, in our Cambridge University Press volume on the Anthropocene. This volume brings together in coherent form evidence that is otherwise scattered throughout many disparate publications. Although it is (of course) already out of date, hopefully it will act as a widely useful sourcebook, and springboard for our continuing activities.

Those activities have been most ably co-ordinated as ever by Colin Waters (as seen, not least, in the prompt appearance of this annual report), while a very welcome recent development has been the contribution provided by Alex Damianos, who as part of his PhD is now working as an intern for the AWG: Alex has already, for instance, revived and begun to update our long-dormant website. We also welcome two new members to the group, Neil Rose and Bill Shotyk, who both contributed greatly to the GSSP paper in Earth-Science Reviews and Neil continued with contributions to the CUP book.

Among the activities, a primary task, now begun, is to foster the search for candidate Anthropocene GSSP stratotypes. There are promising developments, for instance the Crawford Lake section in Canada where a team headed by Martin Head and Francine McCarthy have begun work, as have a team from the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research in Warnemuende (including Juliana Assunção Ivar do Sul) examining an anoxic marine basins and possibilities clearly exist among the Chinese lake sections described by An Zhisheng and Li Li at Mainz, in the high-resolution coral archive, and elsewhere. This detailed and painstaking work will undoubtedly take several years. A recent announcement that Bernd Scherer at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin has secured funding to contribute to this undertaking represents a step-change in the progress of this programme of analysis. Meanwhile, we will explore the suggestion, made at the Mainz meeting by Martin and his SQS colleague Kim Cohen, of some kind of interim status for the Anthropocene based on our now much-improved understanding of its stratigraphic character, and we hope to develop closer and more active links with the SQS in general. There is work to do, too, on exploring the potential utility of a formalized Anthropocene, and its relation to related concepts.

A highlight of the year was the meeting in September at the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry in Mainz, co-ordinated by Astrid Kaltenbach and Colin Waters, with a large, involved and enthusiastic set of participants, including Paul Crutzen on both days. This meeting was notable for the warmth, hospitality and positive collaborative spirit shown by our hosts and we hope to develop closer practical links with the MPI, not least regarding ongoing GSSP work. The meeting indeed stimulated the new AWG logo, MPI-designed from data assembled by Clément Poirier: showing change in rate of change of atmospheric CO$_2$ concentrations over 20 000 years, it all too clearly shows the Anthropocene as a vertical line after the Holocene/latest Pleistocene horizontal one.
Beyond the confines of chronostratigraphy, AWG members have been involved in the Anthropocene’s continuing wider reach, through such means as Berlin’s Haus der Kulturen der Welt’s *Anthropocene Curriculum* project, the Burtynsky film *Anthropocene*, Erle Ellis’s *Anthropocene* book and Peter Haff’s *Being Human in the Anthropocene* blog. Moreover, 2018 saw the use of the Anthropocene as a framing concept in the IPCC *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C* (thanks also to Will Steffen’s contribution to it) and the WWF *Living Planet Report 2018*. These all remind us, if reminder was needed, that our particular corner of stratigraphy is not just a thing of the past.

Jan Zalasiewicz

**FOURTH ANTHROPOCENE WORKING GROUP MEETING**

The fourth meeting of the AWG, coordinated by Astrid Kaltenbach and Colin Waters, was held in Mainz on 5th–8th September 2018, kindly hosted by the Max-Planck Institute for Chemistry (MPIC). In addition to members of the AWG, numerous speakers and attendees, notably from the Max-Planck Institute, added richly to the debate. Presentations focussed upon the some of the relevant work currently undertaken at MPIC, the key signals and potential environments which could host a GSSP, the utility of the Anthropocene as a chronostratigraphic unit and the use of the term in the social sciences and arts.

Discussions at the Max-Planck Institute for Chemistry, Mainz. Photos by Astrid Kaltenbach (MPIC)

This is a brief summary of the main programme of presentations. Those speakers who are not members of the AWG have their affiliation shown. For multiple author presentations, the speaker is marked with an *

**Thursday, 6 September 2018**

9:30 *Welcome to the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry*
Words of welcome by Institute director, Ulrich Pöschl

9:40 – 11:05 **Session 1: Introductions and ICS business**
9:40 Introductions by the meeting attendees
9:50 Outline of scope of meeting (Jan Zalasiewicz)
10:10 SQS progress for Holocene stage definitions (Martin Head)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 6: ‘Scientific utility’ and ‘societal (political) relevance’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:50</td>
<td>Introduction and overview (Davor Vidas &amp; Jan Zalasiewicz*)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:10</td>
<td>Utility to Earth sciences (Jan Zalasiewicz)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>Utility of the Anthropocene to the Earth System science community (Will Steffen)</td>
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<td>11:50</td>
<td>Utility Challenges of an Anthropocene Epoch for Ecology, Archaeology, and Geographic Science (Erle Ellis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:10</td>
<td>Connection between public health and climate change (Jos Lelieveld, Atmospheric Chemistry Dept., MPI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Utility beyond physical and natural sciences: the example of international law theory development (Davor Vidas &amp; Jan Zalasiewicz*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:50</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 7: Anthropocene in the social sciences and arts</th>
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<tr>
<td>14:00</td>
<td>Preview of Anthropocene film from Mercury film</td>
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14:10 Two fundamental misconceptions as primary causes of global human impacts: Open cycling of matter and the myth of unlimited growth (*Max von Tilzer, Univ. of Konstanz*).

14:25 Archaeology and the Anthropocene (*Nicole Boivin, MPI Jena*).

14:45 The Anthropocene and global environmental history (*Franz Mauelshagen, IASS Potsdam*).

15:05 The Anthropocene in culture and art: HKW example (*Bernd Scherer, Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin*).

15:30 The Anthropocene Surge, tracking the life of data in modified ground (*Katrin Hornek, Univ. of Vienna*).

15:45 Discussion

**16:20 – 17:40 Session 8: Funding, future plans and meeting conclusions**

16:20 Summary of recent and potential funding bids (*Davor Vidas & Jan Zalasiewicz*).

16:45 Summary from a journalist's perspective and communicating the Anthropocene to a non-academic audience (*Nicola Davison, Journalist*).

17:00 Future plans and logistics of the AWG programme of work for 2019 and 2020 (*Jan Zalasiewicz*).

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS**

The key AWG work over the course of 2018 has been the completion of the manuscript for the book *The Anthropocene as a geological time unit*. Compiled by the editors: Jan Zalasiewicz, Colin Waters, Mark Williams and Colin Summerhayes. ISBN: 9781108475235. Cambridge University Press aim to publish it by December 2018. An overview and Table of Contents is available [here](#).

The editors also contributed to four feature articles in Geology Today Vol. 34 (pt. 5), listed below.
The Working Group has published over 2018, or has in press the following:


Other Anthropocene-related papers/books have been published by AWG members over 2018:


KEY REPORTS BY OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES

Listed here are key reports from the past year that made extensive reference to the Anthropocene.

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC - WMO-UNEP) 2018. Global warming of 1.5°C: An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, released on 8th October 2018. Included in Box 1.1 is a discussion of the Anthropocene concept and the work of the AWG. (available online: www.ipcc.ch)


CONFERENCES/LECTURES

Mike Ellis and Peter Haff, poster at American Geophysical Union, Washington, DC.

https://agu.confex.com/agu/fm18/meetingapp.cgi/Paper/362660


Environment in conversation: The end of nature? Life in the Anthropocene. 17th April, Natural History Museum, Vienna. Presentation title "Introductory lecture: The Anthropocene - Is the Human a new geological great power?" Also panel discussion also involving Eva Horn, Christian Schwägerl and Verena Winiwarter.

Michael Wagreich presentation at the XXI International Congress of the Carpathian Balkan Geological Association (CBGA), University of Salzburg (Austria), September 10-13, 2018: Colin N. Waters, Michael Wagreich, and the AWG. Candidates for Global Boundary Stratotype Section and Point (GSSP) for an Anthropocene chronostratigraphic unit.
Other specific presentations:

Alejandro Cearreta:
“The Anthropocene”. Summer School on Climate Risk and the future of International Climate Policy, University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU and Basque Centre for Climate Change, Bilbao (E), 4 July 2018.

Expert Reviewer of the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C Global Warming (SR1.5, Second Order Draft).


Agnieszka Gałuszka:

“Should a new epoch in the Earth's history be declared?” An open lecture to the public presented in the Centre of Geoeducation in Kielce, Poland on May 17th 2018.

Reinhold Leinfelder:


The Future of Reefs in the Anthropocene. Integrated high-resolution stratigraphy as a monitoring, assisting and predictive tool


19 Sep 2018: The Anthropocene revisited - Conceptional levels, new narratives and future pathways. Summerschool at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Potsdam.


13 Dec 2018: Das Anthropozän - von der geowissenschaftlichen Analyse zur Zukunftsverantwortung. Vortragsreihe "Mensch-Umwelt", Geographische Gesellschaft München, Department für Geographie, LMU München,

Reinhold Leinfelder was member of the Advisory Council for the exhibition "MenschenWelt“ of the German Federal Foundation for the Environment (DBU), also presenting the opening talk: 28 Aug 2018: Planetare Leitplanken als Wegweiser der MenschenWelt. Eröffnungsvortrag zur Ausstellung "MenschenWelt" am DBU-Zentrum für Umweltkommunikation, Osnabrück

J.R. McNeill:

"Environmental History in the USA and the Anthropocene," Encuentro Anual de la Red Española de Historia Ambiental, University of Granada (8 November)

“The Anthropocene and a Spanish Coastal Delta,” LSU College of the Coast and Environment (9 February)

“The Anthropocene Debates,” Arizona State University (25 January)
Will Steffen:

“The Anthropocene: Where is the Earth System going?” University of the Third Age, Canberra, Australia, 15 February.


“The Anthropocene: Rising Risks, Critical Choices”, University of Queensland public lecture, Brisbane, Australia, 7 March.

“The Anthropocene: Rising Risks, Critical Choices”, The Australian National University Emeritus Faculty seminar series, Canberra, Australia, 4 April.


“Rethinking Design and Planning for the Anthropocene Transition”, Anthropocene Transition Project, University of Technology - Sydney, Sydney, Australia, 27 August.

“The Anthropocene: Challenges of the Human Age”, University of Technology-Sydney public lecture, Sydney, Australia, 28 August.

“The Anthropocene: Challenges of the Human Age”, University of Technology-Sydney public lecture, Sydney, Australia, 28 August.

Anthropocene: Rising Risks, Critical Choices”, Australian Intercultural Foundation, Sydney, Australia, 29 August.


Colin Summerhayes:

“Welcome to the Anthropocene – Can we Engineer our Planetary Future?” Guildford Institute Climate Change Course Lecture, July 23, 2018

“The Anthropocene: How Humans have Changed Our Earth”. Three Counties Science Group, WI, Shalford, Surrey, October 22, 2018.


**J.P. Syvitski** with contributions from the Anthropocene Working Group:


**Davor Vidas:**

“International Law and Sea Level Rise: the mandate and the work of the ILA Committee, 2012-2018”. Speech by the Committee Chair at the 78th Biennial Conference of the International Law Association, Sydney, Australia, 19-24 August 2018.


**Michael Wagreich:**


Collaboration on Dossier of Austria Pres Agency “Das Erdzeitalter der Menschen” (05/2018): [https://science.apa.at/dossier/Das_Erdzeitalter_der_Menschen/SCI_20180528_SCI78995083642464394](https://science.apa.at/dossier/Das_Erdzeitalter_der_Menschen/SCI_20180528_SCI78995083642464394)


The Anthropocene was also featured at the Long Night of Research of Austria, which took place on Friday April 13th.

**Colin Waters:**


“Human transformation of the planet and the inception of the Anthropocene” Leicester Skeptics 20th February 2018.


Keynote presentation at Manchester Municipal University School of Science and the Environment Research Day 7th June 2018.

“The Anthropocene Epoch: the expression of the human footprint on the Earth”.
Groundwork Gallery King’s Lynn
Theories of the Earth - interactions between history, science and artistic practice 30th November.

AWARDS

**Catherine Jeandel** received the Georges Millot Award and Medal from the French Academy of Science “for her outstanding contribution to the study of the behaviour of metals and rare earths in the ocean.” She has also been made a fellow of the American Geophysical Union.

**J.R. McNeill** received the Heineken Prize in history from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, awarded every two years for ‘outstanding contributions to historical research.’

**Jan Zalasiewicz** received the Prestwich Medal from the Geological Society of London. This Medal is awarded every three years to persons ’who shall have done well for the advancement of the science of geology’.

MEDIA

**Specific media output related to work by members of the AWG include:**

**Alejandro Cearreta:**


Interviewed in “Today the Technosphere has more "species” than the Biosphere” (in Basque) published in Berria newspaper, 14 August 2018. [https://www.berria.eus/paperekoa/1857/004/001/2018-08-14/egun_biosferan_baino_espezie_gehiago_daude_teknosferan.htm](https://www.berria.eus/paperekoa/1857/004/001/2018-08-14/egun_biosferan_baino_espezie_gehiago_daude_teknosferan.htm)

**Matt Edgeworth:**

Erle Ellis:

Peter Haff:
Peter has developed a blog titled “Being Human in the Anthropocene”:  
http://blogs.nicholas.duke.edu/anthropocene/

Reinhold Leinfelder:
Feature on plastics and the Teufelsbergs in ARTE TV, Plastik überall - Geschichten vom Müll. 3 Apr 2018 (several rebroadcasts)


The search for salvation: Geobiologist Reinhold Leinfelder and his team study the adaptability of reefs.


Deutschlandfunk, zur Neundefinition des Holozän und dem Verbleib des Anthropozän. In Forschung Aktuell, Mediathek. 24 Jun 2018,


Reinhold Leinfelder's blog "Der Anthropozäniker" now also has a (mostly automatized) translation feature into English and other languages: https://scilogs.spektrum.de/der-anthropozaeniker/ English version available here.

Michael Wagreich:

Interview with Standard Newspaper and contributed to their science papers (in German) https://mobil.derstandard.at/jetzt/livebericht/2000085765001/chat-am-mittwoch-geologe-wagreich-beantwortet-ihre-fragen-zum-zustand-der-erde

Colin Waters:


BBC Radio 4 Inside Science (Thursday 8th November 2018):
https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000118s (interviewed from 7m38s)

BBC Radio 4 Science in Action (Thursday 8th November 2018):
https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3cswmq9 (from 44s)

NEWS

- Bernd Scherer, Director of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin has secured funding from the German government to allow a significant contribution to the phase of GSSP analysis. Funding will commence in January 2019 and last for two years. This funding will help support examination of existing sites being considered, and allow collection and analysis of core from additional sites, providing a broad suite of proxy analysis across diverse environments and globally distributed locations.

- Michael Wagreich & Katrin Hornek: The Anthropocene Surge - evolution, expansion and depth of Vienna’s urban environment. Research project at University of Vienna.

- Alejandro Cearreta: The Anthropocene sedimentary record in coastal settings of N Spain. Research project at University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU (Bilbao, Spain).

- Colin Waters has been awarded a visiting Professorship at the University of Vienna from 15th March to 14th April 2019.

- Edward Burtynsky received award for Photo London’s Master of Photography for 2018; Jan Zalasiewicz and Colin Waters went to Somerset House on 17th May for the award ceremony and exhibition of his work on the theme of the Anthropocene. https://photolondon.org/event/photo-london-master-of-photography-edward-burtynsky/
• Andrew Revkin, former AWG member has joined National Geographic and in May published a new book: Weather: An Illustrated History: From Cloud Atlases to Climate Change (Sterling Illustrated Histories).


• 15th Spanish National Meeting on Quaternary, to be held July 1-5, 2019 in Bilbao (Spain). The session “Sedimentary record of the Anthropocene”, convened by Alejandro Cearreta and Juan Remondo, University of Cantabria (Spain). 

• Committee on International Law and Sea Level Rise of the International Law Association (ILA) presented the final report of the first phase of its mandate (2012-2018) at the 78th ILA Biennial Conference in Sydney, Australia, 19-24 August 2018. A section on the Anthropocene concept has been included in a part discussing the background for the Committee. The 2018 ILA Report is available online, at the ILA website, at: http://www ila-hq.org/index.php/committees


NEW MEMBERS

2018 saw the introduction of two new working group members and the first AWG intern.

• Alexander Damianos has joined as the first AWG intern, assisting with the website and administrative management of the group and their activities. He is a PhD candidate at the law department of the London School of Economics & Political Science researching decision-making procedures in geology.

• Neil Rose is Professor of Environmental Pollution and Palaeolimnology at University College London (UCL). After completing his undergraduate degree in Chemistry with Geochemistry at the University of Leicester, he worked as a freshwater scientist with the British Antarctic Survey, spending over two years on the Signy Island base in the South Orkney Islands. His PhD and post-doctoral research has primarily focussed on the spatial and temporal distribution of pollutants, especially fly-ash particles, in natural archives focussing on lake sediments. His recent research has highlighted the role of climate change on the remobilisation of legacy pollutants from lake catchments, the toxic effects of combined contaminants on aquatic organisms and the potential for fly-ash to act
as a stratigraphic marker for the mid-20th century. Neil has over 30 years’ experience in palaeolimnology and has undertaken research fieldwork in upland and mountain regions in many areas of the world. In the coming years he hopes to continue his work on fly-ash stratigraphy, expanding datasets into currently data-sparse areas of the world, especially the southern hemisphere, and to develop fly-ash records in marine sediments, peat sequences and, stemming from new collaboration within the AWG, explore the possibilities of the fly-ash record in corals.

- **William Shotyk** received his B.Sc. (Agr.) in Soil Science and Chemistry from the University of Guelph and a Ph.D. in Geology from the University of Western Ontario. Following postdoctoral research at the University of California, Riverside and UWO, he worked at the University of Berne in Switzerland where he completed a Habilitation in Geochemistry, in 1995. He became Professor at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, and Director of the Institute of Environmental Geochemistry, in October of 2000. He joined the Department of Renewable Resources at the University of Alberta in October of 2011, as the Bocock Chair in Agriculture and the Environment. With more than 230 publications, he was awarded the Philippe Duchaufour Medal for Soil System Science by the European Geoscience Union (2013) and was recently elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (2018). He is the founder and President of the Elmvale Foundation, a federally registered charity for environmental education which hosts the annual Elmvale Water Festival (www.elmvale.org). Over the past 40 years, with the help of family and friends, he has planted 25,000 trees (more than 50 species) on his family farm property near Elmvale, Ontario.

**MEMBERSHIP TO DATE**

*Listed here are names of members to date and their contact details (as of 1st December 2018).*

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Scott Wing
ANTHROPOCENE WORKING GROUP: PROGRAMME FOR 2019

• Consolidate work on potential GSSP site assessments with support from HKW project funding.
• AWG to hold vote on interim definition of Anthropocene and communicate result to SQS so that they can hold a binding test vote. The ICS and SQS may be open to interim proposals for an Anthropocene epoch if sufficient evidence is compiled soon.
• Arrange next AWG meeting to be held in New Orleans, 7-8th November, to be followed by the Anthropocene River Campus.
• Review composition of the AWG membership to incorporate new members with specialisms not currently covered by the group that are necessary for analysing proxy markers and remove non-active members.
• Pursue work on analysing and articulating the utility of the Anthropocene as a formal part of the International Chronostratigraphic Chart.
• Finalize ideas about best strategy for initial communication to SQS and ICS; potential involvement of members of both bodies in future AWG meetings.
• Aim to convene multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary session on the Anthropocene at EGU2019 (8-12th April). Michael Wagreich coordinating the University of Vienna interdisciplinary workshop (Anthropocene - challenging the disciplines) on 8th April.
• Aim to present on progress to Strati2019 in Milan (2-5th July)

Jan Zalasiewicz (Chair)
Colin Waters (Secretary)
December 2018