

Environmental Futures in Asia Network

The Jeju Workshop: Presenters & Current Research

Jieun Cho *Postdoctoral Associate, APSI*

Microchipped Companionship: Exploring a Commons Approach to Japan's Stray Pet Crisis

Abstract: This presentation explores the analytic potential of the “commons” framework in understanding the dynamics that shape human-animal companionship, focusing on the recent introduction of mandatory microchipping for controlling animal populations in Japan. In Japan, contact-based control, which is premised on mass breeding and killing of animals, has contributed to the “stray pet crisis,” earning the country notoriety for its high rates of euthanasia of abandoned animals. The government attempts to mitigate this situation by microchipping “pets” (dogs and cats) into the family registry system. Outlining the legal, social, and technological ecologies of stray pets, this talk examines how the notion of commons may be helpful in developing a responsible approach towards multispecies habitation amidst shifting landscapes.

Seung Hee Cho *Research Professor, Research Center on the Commons and Sustainable Society at Jeju National University*

The carbon-free exhibit: Experimentations with electric vehicles on Jeju Island

Abstract: In Jeju, the largest island in South Korea, an experimental policy named “Carbon-Free Island” is underway. Since 2012, the Jeju Provincial Office has been aiming to cut down all carbon emissions on the island to zero until 2030. To make this happen, Jeju is promoting electric vehicles (EVs). The EV is one of Jeju’s Carbon-Free plan’s most heavily funded items. The Jeju local government has given public incentives to residents willing to purchase and own EVs. The government has also been popularizing EVs through annual expos, magazines, and the phrase, “Jeju, the Mecca of EVs.” Jeju’s carbon-free plan focused on making Jeju a “test bed” of green futures with low-carbon vehicles rather than the wellness of drivers. Here, “test bed” refers to places that serve as experimental sites to see whether a local society can attune to new technologies and infrastructures and achieve a sustainable future.

In this project, I suggest that sustainable futures require experiments. Focusing on Jeju’s electric vehicles, I suggest “exhibition” as a central practice of sociotechnical experiments. Although such experimental sites for innovation seem to be producing promising results, the ultimate goal of test beds is not completing a futuristic mission to 100 percent but instead demonstrating that a particular future is possible. Through ethnographic fieldwork research in Jeju Island, I investigated three different scenes of exhibition: promotions of EVs at a local expo, research demonstrations in a science park on Jeju’s tourist grounds, and the Jeju drivers’ everyday adjustments to carbon-free vehicles. Ultimately, I argue that exhibition is a central practice of practicing futuristic technology.

Hyun Choe *Professor of Sociology; Director, Research Center on the Commons and Sustainable Society, Jeju National University*

Community Building Based on the Commons and Steady State Economics

Abstract: The Research Team on the Commons and Sustainable Society was established in September 2011 as a reconstruction of the concept of the commons based on Korean commons and its application to South Korean society. Later, it expanded to include theoretical reconstruction of the commons through interdisciplinary research on Asian commons as well as studies on the commons and sustainable society. *Commons Perspectives in South Korea: Context, Fields, and Alternatives* was published by Routledge in March 2022. It was designed to introduce to a global audience the research achievements of the Center, which has been leading Korean commons research for the past decade, and to lay the foundation for the institutionalization of commons for the endogenous development of the region, which is required at this stage of Korean commons research.

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Chi Yeung (Jimmy) Choi *Assistant Professor of Environmental Science, Duke Kunshan University*

The invisible connection – how migratory birds connect people along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Abstract: Hundreds and thousands of migratory birds travel tirelessly along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway annually, with some of them covering a distance of more than 29,000 km a year, passing through countries like South Korea and China to reach their breeding and wintering destinations. In this presentation, I will introduce the remarkable journeys that migratory waterbirds in our region undertake, the challenges that they face, what we can do to help the birds overcome those challenges, and how they have connected people along the route for the research and conservation of migratory birds and their wetland habitats.

Juliette Duara *Senior Fellow, Kenan Institute for Ethics; Senior Lecturing Fellow, Duke Law School*

Considering a ‘Rights of Nature’ Approach to Environmental Preservation and Restoration in Asia

Abstract: For many humans the realization that our species are ensnared in the anthropogenic plundering of nature has come belatedly. Efforts to save Earth from the pollutants humans have released into the water and air and other anthropogenic activities are multitudinous. In this presentation I discuss but one, the Rights of Nature Movement (RoN). I assert that when it comes to Earth and the environment, human rights face a paradox. Human rights, a set of anthropocentric legal concepts, cannot be achieved without recognizing that other beings and ecosystems have rights independent of their utility to humans. This re-conceptualization of rights combines the international human rights framework with the cosmologies at the heart of many indigenous communities which recognize that nature and natural entities have moral importance deserving of respect and protection. Building on Christopher Stone’s 1972 article, “Should Trees Have Standing? – Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects”, as well as subsequent writings by both Stone and other authors, I briefly summarize what it would mean for nature to have rights and give examples of states that have moved toward recognizing nature’s rights within their legal systems. These states include Ecuador, some states within India, and New Zealand. I conclude that RoN is for much of humanity a vital reconceptualization of the relationship between humans and nature, as well as an essential instrument in the neoliberal, legalistic world which most of us inhabit.

Prasenjit Duara *Oscar L. Tang Family Distinguished Professor of East Asian Studies, History; Director, Asian/Pacific Studies Institute*

Water Infrastructures, Risks and Uncertainties in 21st Century East and Southeast Asia

Abstract: How do colossal dams and other large-scale water and deforestation projects affect local ecosystems and particularly local knowledge along the Mekong River. The financialization by global investment companies of these projects produces new forms of risk and uncertainties that reverberate from local communities to global scales, posing challenges that extend beyond individual regions to planetary implications.

Wumeng He *Assistant Professor of Environmental Economics, Duke Kunshan University*

A Tale of Two Lakes: The Cultural Value of Natural Landscape

Abstract: How cultural values of natural landscape are created? By examining two cases in China, the West Lake of Hangzhou and the East Lake of Wuhan, I explore how cultural value could become a dominant reason for natural preservation and how Chinese were deliberately constructing cultural values in history and in present. It reflects the Chinese traditional view of nature's value that emphasizes the presence of human activity and how people can embed personal legacy in natural landscape. This offers a new perspective on natural conservation effort today.

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Binbin Li *Assistant Professor of Environmental Science, Duke Kunshan University*

What's under the forest? The understanding of livestock grazing and tea plantation in the forest ecosystem

Abstract: Biodiversity and cultural diversity often coincide geographically, notably in regions that are also faced with socioeconomic disparities. The conundrum of reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with the imperative for local socioeconomic advancement is not only pressing but multifaceted in nature. In this context, I delve into two livelihood practices prevalent among minority communities in the provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan, China: the traditional free-ranging of livestock and the cultivation of ancient tea gardens beneath forest canopies. This inquiry seeks to elucidate the repercussions of unregulated livestock grazing on the habitats of the giant panda and to identify the catalysts behind the proliferation of livestock within these forested domains. Furthermore, this examination extends to devising sustainable livestock management strategies that synergize with community involvement within these biodiversity hotspots. Turning to the domain of tea cultivation, I aim to dissect the potential for fostering conservation-compatible tea production in Yunnan's tropical region. Within this landscape exists a tapestry of tea production methodologies, ranging from the modest, minority-operated ancient forest teas to expansive, commercialized terraced tea plantations. A paradigm shift from terraced to forest-based tea cultivation has the dual potential to facilitate forest restoration and create ecological corridors. Nevertheless, this transition is not devoid of pitfalls. The forthcoming discourse aims to unfurl the complexities and tease out the inherent challenges of these endeavors.

Edmund Malesky *Professor of Political Science; Director, Duke Center for International Development*

The Provincial Green Index: Measuring Economic Governance and its Impact in Vietnam

Abstract: The PGI was initiated by VCCI, USAID and private partners to assess the importance of environmental protection in Vietnam's growth trajectory and has been developed over the past five years. The PGI aggregates the perception of businesses into a common voice to communicate their views on environmental policy to national and local decision-makers. A province that performs well on the PGI is one that makes an effort to combat pollution and environmental accidents (subindex 1), designs and implements reasonable regulations that ensure compliance without creating overwhelming burdens (subindex 2), provides appropriate guidance to firms on green operations and operates environmentally friendly procurement (subindex 3), and incentivizes green operations through targeted incentives and subsidy programs (subindex 4). The goal of the PGI is to provide actionable policy advice to national and subnational officials about the appropriate policy goals to reduce the impact of climate change and pollution on business performance and longevity. Statistical analysis demonstrates that excellence in these measures is associated with less pollution and greater climate resilience. Provinces, that have shown improvements in PGI measures, have experienced measurable changes in exposure to measurable pollutants. A ten-point improvement in the PGI is associated with a twenty-five percentage point decline of nitrogen dioxide in the atmosphere and an eight percentage point decline in nitrogen dioxide in the troposphere.

Margaret McKean *Professor Emerita of Political Science*

Commons Institutions for Large-Scale Cooperation

Abstract: The world's population has grown more than eightfold (from about 700-800 million in 1750 to 8 billion today) since the industrial revolution, and we are now faced with dwindling carbon sinks, rapid climate change and sea level rise, shrinking resource banks, irreversible extinction of species, international movements of increasing numbers of environmental refugees, and cement and microplastics everywhere. But it was the traditional commons institutions that were sensitive to social and environmental costs and to the risks of non-sustainable consumption. We are belatedly realizing that the restraint, sustainability, humility, caution, and

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coordination embedded in these traditional institutions is what we badly need again now, at all levels, everywhere. I will try to draw on my studies of common property regimes in Japan and elsewhere to evaluate how the features of traditional commons institutions – particularly their attention to incentives, cheating, boundaries, and federation -- might help us improve coordination, monitoring, and environmental outcomes at larger scales, including the international level.

Young-Gyung Paik *Jeju National University*

The Multiple Crises of Ecology, Care, and Population in South Korea and the Prospective of the Commons

Abstract: The objective of this study is to reveal the paradoxical necessity of expanding the commons perspective into social protection, care, and welfare instead of limiting the commons discourse, as is done today, to the management of natural resources only. Commons are most commonly and naturally understood as physical resources, whether natural or manmade, like land, water, forests, and spaces, whose use “should remain open to all potential users according to social norms” and which, “when overused by users, diminish in quantity and quality for other users”. Commons thinking and the specific discussions it has spawned, however, inspire people with their solidarity- and sharing-based principles that may be applied as much to social relations as to material resources. Commons thinking, in fact, plays a significant role in a variety of movements worldwide that arise in resistance against the neoliberal violation of welfare and against the collusion of the market and the state to invade people’s daily lives. Participants of these movements look to common thinking to find inspiration for alternative and better ways of life. Despite this phenomenon, little systematic analysis has yet been done on how the commons can answer the crisis of social reproduction and the attendant problems, such as the crisis of care and the demographic cliff.

Suh-Hyun Park *Research Professor, Research Center on the Commons and Sustainable Society at Jeju National University*

Social Movements and the Commons

Abstract: How do movements like the 1999 Seattle struggle against neoliberal globalization and the 2008 Occupy Wall Street movement relate to the commons? These movements featured solidarity based on mutual trust between occupiers, the management of space through autonomous and democratic decision-making, and other aspects. They were without representation in the interest of creating more autonomous social relationships in the sense that participants did not delegate their power to others. Is it therefore possible to understand these movements as parts of the commons movements? Although temporary, the Seattle and Occupy Wall Street movements show us there is a way of life that is not based on private ownership or possessive individualism that neoliberalism increasingly intensifies. In this sense, such commons movements can be understood as critical experiments in questioning the current system and exploring alternatives to it.

Youngpyo Seo *Professor of Sociology, Jeju National University*

A New Paradigm of Knowledge in the Era of Climate Crisis: Towards Non-Reductionist Naturalism as Human Capacity

Abstract: Many voices in the broad perspective named new materialism have been galvanizing new thinking beyond human exceptionalism. It has been suggested that things such as non-human species should be regarded as agents or actants. The key idea is the hybridity of all beings in the world. Donna Haraway and the late Bruno Latour are the well-known protagonists in this new ontological turn. While their idea of hybridity and interdependence are welcome, there are some questions to be solved.

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My question is epistemological: the worldview of hybridity is normatively good and, as they argued, all beings on our planet are intermingled in the web of life, but the beings that recognize and define the hybridity are human beings. In this context, the epistemological question is fundamentally political. Despite being aware of the complexity of life at the normative level, all of us are caught within the ideology of developmentalism and productionism. We must change our way of living and thinking. There must be political interventions in terms of human experiences of suffering and vulnerability. At the same time, the political practices are the learning processes that result from cultural and historical capacities of humans.

In order to connect the ontological and normative ideas to epistemological and political questions, we have to focus on the social formation called capitalism, and then on how it has been threatening our life as natural beings. It is a naturalistic critique of capitalism resonant with new materialism. However, we, natural beings are interrelated with nature as our inorganic body politically changes our institutional or structural conditions, which is dependent on our cultural and political capacities. The latter is never given naturally, but must be politically and culturally achieved by us as social beings. It can be coined as non-reductionist naturalism following Ted Benton's *The Natural Relations*, and broad ecological thinking based on critical realism.

Matthew Shutzer *Assistant Professor of History*

Subterranean Property: Nature, Capital, and the Rise of Fossil Fuels in India and the World

Abstract: Contemporary accounts of the climate crisis locate its origins in the global production and consumption of fossil fuels, the primary cause of unsustainable carbon emissions that threaten to destroy the biosphere and life on this planet. This production-centered focus has generated many different strands of ecological thinking in recent years, stimulated in particular by ideas of "degrowth" and "decarbonization" as ways of both reducing the global throughput of fossil energy or transitioning the global energy system towards renewable energy technologies like solar and wind, respectively. In my first book, I try to tell a different story about the globalization of fossil fuels and its consequences. By decentering narratives of production and growth, my work instead focuses on conflicts over the rise of "subterranean property" - the legal and normative basis by which fossil fuel natures have become objects of private wealth and value since the nineteenth century. This category of property has had far-reaching implications for determining the structure of the global fossil economy, often in ways that supersede the imperatives of productive or industrial infrastructures and growth-oriented economic policies. Focusing on property returns the environmental history of climate change to considerations of the legal and social structures that shape human orientations to nature - a form of critique that seeks ultimately new means by which more-than-human natures can be valued otherwise.

Sun-Jin Yun *Seoul National University*

Who has the right to use the sea?: Conflict between fishermen's right to catch fish and offshore wind farmers' right to harness the wind

Abstract: South Korea's coastal waters are owned by the state and formally belong to all citizens, but until now, fishing rights have been granted to fishermen who are members of fishing communities. Korea's fishing rights system grants property-like rights by license, almost free of charge, and allows fishermen with fishing rights to use the waters exclusively. However, as energy transition is promoted to cope with the climate crisis, the social need to install and operate offshore wind power is increasing. Coincidentally, the maritime wind power location area and major fishing grounds overlap, causing the fishing rights of fishermen and the development rights of offshore wind power operators to collide. When the two rights conflict, whose rights should be prioritized for what reason, through what procedures? This study raises these questions and seeks to explore how wind power and fishing can coexist in a time of climate crisis. It also argues that biodiversity must be an integral part of these decisions, and that the ocean commons must be managed with the goal of achieving a sustainable life and a sustainable future for all people and even all members of the world.

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