

Thinking Through the Anthropocene in Southeast Asia: Animals, People, Landscapes

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The Anthropocene is a popular term to express the idea that we are entering a new geological epoch in which humans have become the preeminent global geophysical and biological force, although there is considerable disagreement about when such an era may have begun and what it means. I argue in this talk that mainland Southeast Asia as a region provides a chance to see human influences on their environment, and the breakdown of clear distinctions between ‘nature’ and ‘culture,’ throughout a long entangled history of mutual interaction between animals, people, and landscapes. In other words, *there has never not been an Anthropocene in Southeast Asia*. To illustrate this, I will present two case studies from a new book I am writing on biodiversity and conservation in Indochina: one on the impact of hunting on charismatic megafauna during the French colonial era, and one on contemporary captive breeding and the attempt to reintroduce an extinct species, the Siamese crocodile, back into the wild in Vietnam.

Pamela McElwee is an associate professor in the Department of Human Ecology at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. For the past 15 years her research interests have concerned human adaptation to global environmental change, broadly defined, with particular expertise in biodiversity conservation and climate change in Asia. Her work focuses on how individuals and households respond to changes in the physical environment, and how their responses are shaped by external policies, markets and other constraints. Most of McElwee's research combines qualitative and quantitative household-level social analysis of environmental decision-making and resource use, with most of her fieldwork focusing on Vietnam. Prior to joining Rutgers, McElwee was an assistant professor of Global Studies at Arizona State University. She has also worked in the White House, US Senate, and US EPA on environmental policy. McElwee earned her Ph.D. in Forestry & Environmental Studies and Anthropology at Yale University in 2003. Graduate Faculty Affiliations: Department of Geography, Department of Anthropology, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, and Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.

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