

## ● エイブラムス・カヴネンコ サスキア 特定准教授

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研究課題：プラスチックの宇宙論

(Plastic Cosmologies: Radical Permeation and the Self)

専門分野：文化人類学 (Anthropology)

受入先部局：人間・環境学研究科

(Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies)

前職の機関名：フンボルト大学 (Humboldt University)



I am an anthropologist who is interested in exploring human lives from a broad perspective. My research encompasses the more-than-human, economic and climactic changes, toxicity and pollution, the mundane, the invisible, and the sublime. I use ethnographic methodologies to examine these situations through a broad lens, engaging extended cosmologies which encompass the more-than-human, vicissitudes of economic and climactic shifts, toxicity and pollution, charismatic events, the banal, the invisible and the sublime.

I have long been extremely concerned by the deteriorating conditions of the planet's ecosystems. In my first monograph, entitled *Enlightenment and the Gasping City* (Cornell University Press 2019), I engaged how, as a physical constant throughout the winter months, the murky and obscuring nature of air pollution in Ulaanbaatar had become an active part of Mongolian ritual and religious life. By focusing on daylight,

its intersections and its oppositions, the book illuminated Buddhist practices and beliefs as they interacted with the pressing urban issues of air pollution, postsocialist economic vacillations, urban development, nationalism and global warming.

I have published on the topics of plastics, global warming and pollution, doubt and materiality, Buddhism, shamanism, postsocialism, and economic anthropology as they have been experienced in Mongolia, Australia and India. My recent work engages the materiality of plastics as they interact with and co-constitute ecological, cultural, and religious spheres. My project at the Hakubi Center for Advanced Studies is entitled 'Plastic Cosmologies: Radical Permeation and the Self.' It will look at how people ontologically (re)orient themselves in a world permeated with plastics.

### Plastic Cosmologies

Materially distinctive in the ways that they transform daily life and behave as pollution, plastics require new forms of engagement. Plastics enter contemporary life on many scales, from the dramatic journeys of ocean plastics, to the more mundane arrival of a shipping container or a grocery truck. Once present, plastics play many roles, both intended and accidental. They now form such a key part of the scaffolding of contemporary life that they can be difficult to even notice. To encounter a material so common that it has become largely invisible, this project will utilize ethnographic methods to denaturalize the presence and influence of plastics. Beginning with research on Christmas Island, an Australian external territory whose beaches are inundated with plastics, this multi-sited ethnography will later turn its attention to Japan, looking at the use of plastics, as well as religious and scientific understandings.

The first fully synthetic plastic was invented in 1907. Expanding in its applications and production, by the mid 1980s global plastic production had hit 100 million tons per year. By 2017 this figure had more than quadrupled, reaching an estimated 438 million tons per year. In 2017, the UN estimated that half of the virgin plastics ever produced had been created since 2004. Plastics are now present in the deepest parts of the ocean, in rainwater, the soils in which we grow our food, and the air we breathe. They have become a part of our bodies, being found in human lung tissue, the brain, and within people's blood.

At this crucial moment in their history 'Plastic Cosmologies' will engage the insistent materiality of plastics as they interact with and co-constitute cultural, ecological, and religious spheres. As we are increasingly coming to recognise, plastics and their attendant chemical retinues bridge the distance be-

tween creation and being, infiltrating and influencing our hormonal systems, bodies, and the experience of being human.

In this context the study of plastics takes on a deeply intimate role as the study of the industrial and synthetic materials we have made that now, in turn, make or unmake us. Alongside technical, political and infrastructural innovations, if humanity is to surmount the current concatenation of global and local crises a major reconceptualization of what it is to be human is necessary. At the heart of the ‘Plastic Cosmologies’ project is the dynamic response of human societies to questions of permeation and the nature of being, that are profoundly posed by the insistent and persistent actuality of plastics.

In extending new forms of material and cultural engagement with environmental questions, this project will work to resituate the study of humanity where it has always already been: deeply enmeshed, deeply open and deeply vulnerable to the world that we have made.



Figure One: Greta beach on Christmas Island



Figure Two: Plastic debris from the Indian Ocean