



FRONTIERS OF HUMANITY AND BEYOND

TOWARDS NEW CRITICAL
UNDERSTANDINGS OF BORDERS

P06 - NEW MATERIALISMS, NEW REALISMS, AND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE HUMAN

ORGANISERS

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ABSTRACT

This panel aims to bring together studies that challenge the boundaries – both conceptual and physico-geographical – between humans and nonhumans established by humanism. As the literary critic Predrag Cicovacki reminds us, ‘The Latin word *definitio* means a boundary. To define means to bound and determine, to limit and fix the essence of something.’ At odds with the modern humanist tendency to internalize the universe as a mere reflection of the human psyche, the biophysical world continues to manifest its autonomous existence at every step of humanity’s journey. Volcanoes, hurricanes, and tsunamis continue to destroy cities and towns, insect pests continue to devastate crops, soils continue to erode, and water gets increasingly polluted and scarce in the largest urban settlements. Climate change, mass species extinction, the COVID-19 pandemic, and several other phenomena at the regional level attest to the failure of human-exceptionalist frameworks in making sense of people’s place in planetary ecologies, turning clear the reductionism of categories such as nature, environment, and technology. Countering that, in recent decades, several studies – often artificially categorized under different labels such as Materialist Feminism, Multispecies Studies, Object-Oriented Ontology, Speculative Realism, and Critical Post-humanism – point to new ways of (un)bounding the Human by exploring how people and nonhuman beings and things affect and produce each other in their entanglements. We invite submissions that focus on how boundaries are negotiated in more-than-human assemblages rather than imposed by people and how these transactions shape history, the arts, and all those other dimensions of life which humanist frameworks would consider as purely ‘social’ activities.

Diogo de Carvalho Cabral is Assistant Professor in Environmental History at Trinity College Dublin. Before that, he was a British Academy-funded Newton International Fellow based at the Institute of Latin American Studies/School of Advanced Study, University of London. His academic awards include the Journal of Historical Geography Best Paper Prize (2016) and an honourable mention in the Milton Santos Prize (2017). Diogo completed his Doctoral Degree at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, where he also obtained his Master's and B.A., though in different programs (geography and history). For the past fifteen years, he has been working on the environmental history and historical geography of Brazil, with a particular focus on the pre-industrial period.

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