

ISCHE Standing Working Group
“Histories of Education Beyond the Human: Debates and Quandaries”

REPORT 2025

The Standing Working Group “Histories of Education Beyond the Human: Debates and Quandaries” convened by Karin Priem (University of Luxembourg), Inés Dussel (DIE-Cinvestav, Mexico), and Matthew Keynes (University of Melbourne) was approved by the General Assembly at Lille ISCHE 46 in July 2025, and it has just started its work. Our mission statement can be found by following this link: <https://www.ische.org/about-ische/standing-working-groups/histories-of-education-beyond-the-human-debates-and-quandaries-2025-2030/>. Before being approved as a SWG, we organized a successful symposium on “Disruption and Recovery: Transitions, Transformations and Trends in Histories of Education” at ISCHE Budapest, and published a special issue of the Journal *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* (vol. 25, no. 1; see also <https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/encounters>) entitled “Consequences of the Past and Responsible Histories of Education for the Future.”

This year we prepared a Call for Papers for Athens ISCHE 47 that was distributed through ISCHE’s channels and through social media. We copy the first three paragraphs of this CFP:

The convenors of the Standing Working Group *Histories of Education Beyond the Human: Debates and Quandaries* seek to initiate a first discussion among historians of education about how we might rethink and reevaluate some fundamental assumptions underpinning how we analyze the past. This implies revisiting deeply established thought patterns of Western historiography that have reified anthropocentrism, including questioning the modernist conventions that have configured archival collections, educational ideas, and education systems, and produced the great bifurcation between nature and society (Stengers 2020). The reevaluation of the past under this lens brings together the posthuman shift and the preoccupations with the persistent legacies of colonialism and imperialism, as the history of Western epistemologies and educational systems is entangled with a planetary history cut by colonial wounds. As Amitav Ghosh has shown (2016), the ongoing entanglement of liberal capitalism with planetary climate change is rooted in histories of extractive colonialism, which shaped the physicality of environments, the world of man-made objects, human interactions, ecological relations, human desires and imagination and, most importantly, the ways we think about and practice education.

In this CFP, we invite papers that explore histories and legacies of colonial powers, and those cultures and people targeted by “Western” visions of education, ‘progress’, and ‘civilization’, with a posthuman sensibility critical of Anthropocentrism and concerned about the worlds that we co-create with a multiplicity of beings. By rewriting histories of education, we want

to surface the disruptions and damage caused by colonial quests of cultural hegemony, universalism, and economic progress, and their dismissal of non-human beings. This implies analyses of the long-lasting dynamics of colonialism and its consequences as rooted in on-going geopolitical and epistemic hierarchies and the negligence of the broader-than-human world. Terms like “The Great Derangement” (Ghosh 2016) and “The Great Acceleration” (Steffen et al. 2015) theorise humans as a disruptive geological force that greatly impacted education and colonial thought patterns. We would like to invite historians of education to take a critical look at the stratifying aims and promises of education systems in their disregard for the broader-than-human-world, and how these were rooted in disruptive geological agendas of colonial powers. In this CfP, we invite papers that look at:

- how education was developed “extraterritorial” to nature and landscape in different locations;
- how colonial and postcolonial education was framed by particular views on what the human was and what it excluded;
- how were human-environment relations conceived in different knowledges and educational practices;
- how were non-human beings conceived in different knowledges and educational practices.

References:

- Ghosh, A. (2016). *The Great Derangement. Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Steffen, W. et al (2015). The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration. *The Anthropocene Review* 2 (1): 81-98.
- Stengers, I. (2020). *Réactiver le sens commun*. La Découverte.

For 2026, we expect to have two panels and a at ISCHE 47 and discuss collective publications with the submitters, as well as future directions for the SWG.