

Nature as Curriculum: Education in the Anthropocene – Exhibition and Workshop, 9-12 September 2024 Tobago.

The workshop "*Nature as Curriculum: Education in the Anthropocene*" was held on Thursday, 12 September 2024, at the Scarborough Library's AV Room. It brought together experts, academics, and community members to discuss the critical role of education in addressing environmental challenges and fostering sustainability. The day-long program was structured into three panels and featured various presentations and discussions.

The workshop began with a welcome address by Professor Vinita Damodaran, who set the tone for the day by emphasising the interconnectedness of education, nature, and sustainable development. The first panel, chaired by Dr Rita Pemberton, opened with a presentation by Renown Botanist-Shane Ballah, who examined the ecological significance of Tobago's Main Ridge Forest Reserve. His talk highlighted the role of plants and bryophytes in maintaining biodiversity and environmental balance. Dr Stuart Peters followed with an engaging discussion on reimagining education to prepare societies for the challenges of the Anthropocene. He argued for innovative approaches that prioritise sustainability and resilience.

After a brief break, the second panel, chaired by Dr Stuart Peters, shifted focus to global and local education strategies for sustainability. Mr. Trevor Isaac began by sharing insights on educational initiatives in Tobago to foster environmental stewardship among young people. This was followed by Mr Dedan Danie, who discussed strategies for reconnecting communities with nature, emphasising the importance of fostering a personal and cultural relationship with the environment. Dr Angelos Theocharis concluded the panel by presenting the threats to indigenous forest practices in Cambodia, shedding light on the intersection of cultural heritage and conservation efforts.

The afternoon sessions resumed with the third panel, chaired by Dr Anindita Saha, which focused on practical applications and challenges in conservation and sustainability. Ms Pathleen Titus opened the session with a compelling case for sustainable food production in Tobago, highlighting the importance of integrating traditional knowledge with modern practices. Here, she engages with Tourism and the food industry in Tobago. Mr. Darren Henry discussed the challenges the Main Ridge Forest Reserve faced, including ecological threats and the need for robust conservation strategies. Mr. Linford Beckles expanded the discussion by exploring the balance between environmental conservation and socioeconomic development within the Northeast Tobago Biosphere Reserve. To conclude the panel, Ms. Maria Bristol-Darlington presented a reflective poem that captured the day's themes and emphasised the emotional and spiritual connections to nature.

The workshop concluded with a keynote presentation by Professor Rohan D'Souza, who challenged the audience to rethink the concept of nature through the lens of environmental history. He argued that nature is not a static or singular concept but is shaped by human perceptions and historical narratives. Professor Vinita Damodaran then summarised the discussions, synthesising key takeaways and insights. The event closed with an assessment and interactive dialogue, followed by refreshments, allowing participants to network and reflect on the ideas presented.

This workshop underscored the importance of education in addressing the pressing environmental challenges of our time. It combined academic discourse with cultural and practical approaches to foster a deeper connection between people and the natural world.

The workshop is part of the extension of the Centre's ongoing and successful project in marginal environments in the Sundarbans, India. The Centre has long-standing research on climate heritage, botanical history, and colonial archives, which has created new, long-term collaborations between cultural institutions, groups, and individuals in the UK, India and globally and enabled them to reach new audiences.

Media coverage of the workshop with School children in Tobago can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=R6E28M5B-vg&ab_channel=TobagoUpdates

Additionally, for more resources, please see <https://sussex.app.box.com/folder/294043607915>