

International Conference

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Session 4: "Defining the Scale and Scope of Enquiry"

Session 4 aimed to re-examine our disciplinary-bound scale and scope of enquiry and create a scientific approach to “humanosphere” in the broad sense through an intensive dialogue among disciplines. All four speakers challenged the limitations of a disciplinary-bound scale and scope, to suggest new perspectives on their respective topics. The first speaker Prof. Anthony Reid from Kyoto University and Australia National University, a historian of Southeast Asia, attempted to re-describe the social history of the region by incorporating research findings on long-term geospheric cyclic movements, which sometimes escape from the historian’s attention. The second speaker Dr. Miyako Koizumi from the Research Institute of Humanity and Nature, Kyoto, brought out the logic of natural science through comparing Linnaean biological taxonomy with indigenous ethnobiological knowledge. Her argument heads toward creating a common language to speak about environmental problems for both natural and social scientists and citizens. The third presenter Prof. Sanga-Ngoie Kazadi, from Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Oita, focused on wildebeests as a key species for both the local ecosystem and people of eastern Africa, and provided a prediction of their migration routes by integrating multiple data on the remote sensing map. This is an ambitious approach to coordinate the logics of three spheres, from our point of view. The last presenter Prof. Sing Chew, from Humboldt State University, dealt with an extraordinarily long time span for a social scientist. He analyzed the dark ages as “system crises” and reconfigured the history of the world system in terms of a long-term interaction between nature and culture. In the discussion part, we tried to discuss research strategies that make it meaningful to move between different scales of enquiry, in terms of time and space, considering what things were made visible and invisible in their attempts.