

Introduction

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/actesbranly/545>

DOI: [10.4000/actesbranly.545](https://doi.org/10.4000/actesbranly.545)

ISSN: 2105-2735

Publisher

Musée du quai Branly Jacques Chirac

Electronic reference

Laurent Berger, « Introduction », *Les actes de colloques du musée du quai Branly Jacques Chirac* [Online], 4 | 2014, Online since 13 June 2014, connection on 08 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/actesbranly/545> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/actesbranly.545>

This text was automatically generated on 8 September 2020.

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Introduction

Laurent Berger

- 1 Let's begin this second panel. I'm very pleased to open and present the different panelists who will talk about sustainable environments and new economies in Aboriginal Australia.
- 2 But first just let me say a few words about the issues we're going to deal with now. As I never did fieldwork in Australia, I would like to introduce a slight, therapeutic dose of comparatism, not little (keep quiet) in the solipsist way. Australian anthropologists seem to tackle this topic and many others. That sounds obvious. The incorporation of hunting and gathering, animal husbandry or agricultural economies into the development of capitalism and steady (?) formation, has been taking place now for 5,000 years across Eurasia, Africa, America and Oceania. Even if these processes took place according to different modalities, everywhere I think the problem was the same. First, the commodification of land, labour and currency as factors of production. Second, the monopolisation of force and the territorialisation of power and taxation. The recent Northern Territory Emergency Response Act, I think is precisely about all of that. These capitalist and territorial logics are not, of course, reducible to each other, but I think they are closely intertwined. The production, exchange and consumption of commodities, the private appropriation of this position of land, knowledge, debt, wealth, of tools, the development of wage earning and employee downsizing, the endless utilization of capital for money making profits. All these capitalist activities require sovereign territorial entities or territorial organizational forms to by force if necessary. The institutional and regiments, such as property rights, stable currency, free sovereign individual entrepreneur and consumer market laws and so on, that underpin their functioning. Moreover, the continuity and speed in the circulation of capital froze, today, the National Trust circulation of capital froze. It depends of the creative destruction of the land. I think this is a very important comment David Harvey made a couple of years ago, "Economic growth, industrialisation, urbanisation, imply in fact the conversion of a great deal of land to commercial, industrial, residential, tourist, conservationist and infrastructural use. The result is the exclusion of certain kinds of people to access of land and land use.

- 3 So, the problem is, what are the relations of power at work in these transformations? Who are the actors promoting or opposing this change? What dilemmas and debates does this change invoke and provoke? Who wins, who loses, on different sides and scales? How to definitely put all these different questions, from Australia but also from all around the world in the history of humanity together, in a way that highlights both their interdependency and their adopted particularity. These are Issues we'll discuss and deal with after this session I think, and that's why I'm looking forward to listening to our first contributor Ian Keen, who has 30 minutes to talk.
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