

Out of Amazonia

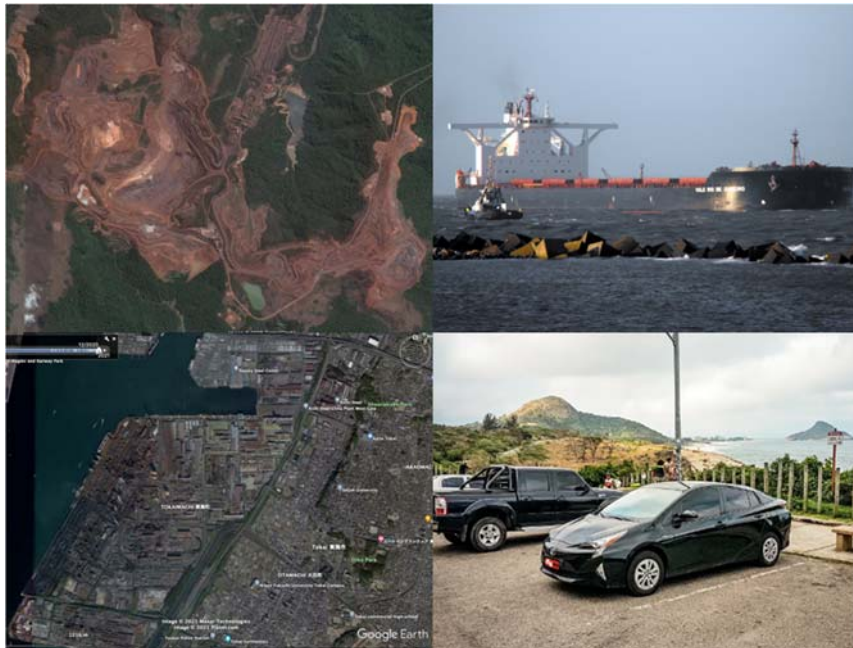
The Light and Shadow of East Asian Development in the Anthropocene Epoch

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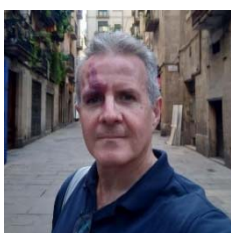
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In 1997 Toyota Motor Corporation unveiled the world's first mass-produced hybrid vehicle, intending their 'environmentally saving and energy efficient' Prius to be 'the car of the 21st century'. Exactly thirty years earlier some American geologists from US Steel had emergency landed their helicopter on a barren rock in the middle of Brazil's Amazonia. Little did they know that their near-catastrophic accident would lead to the development of possibly the world's longest, most complex, and most environmentally destructive raw materials and consumer supply chain. Beginning deep in the Brazilian jungle and assembled by Mitsui – Japan's oldest corporate conglomerate within which Toyota plays a pivotal role – this supply chain has expanded globally, drawing in countries as distant as South Korea, Australia, Philippines, and the Netherlands, and is instrumental in China's transformation into the world's second largest economy. Amid academic discussions of the Great Acceleration and the dawn of the Anthropocene Epoch, and observing from the perspective in 2023 of the UNFCCC's COP28 meeting hosted by fossil-fuel petrostate the United Arab Emirates, has the Prius fulfilled Toyota's intentions? Does it shine a light or cast a shadow over humanity's and Earth's future?



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