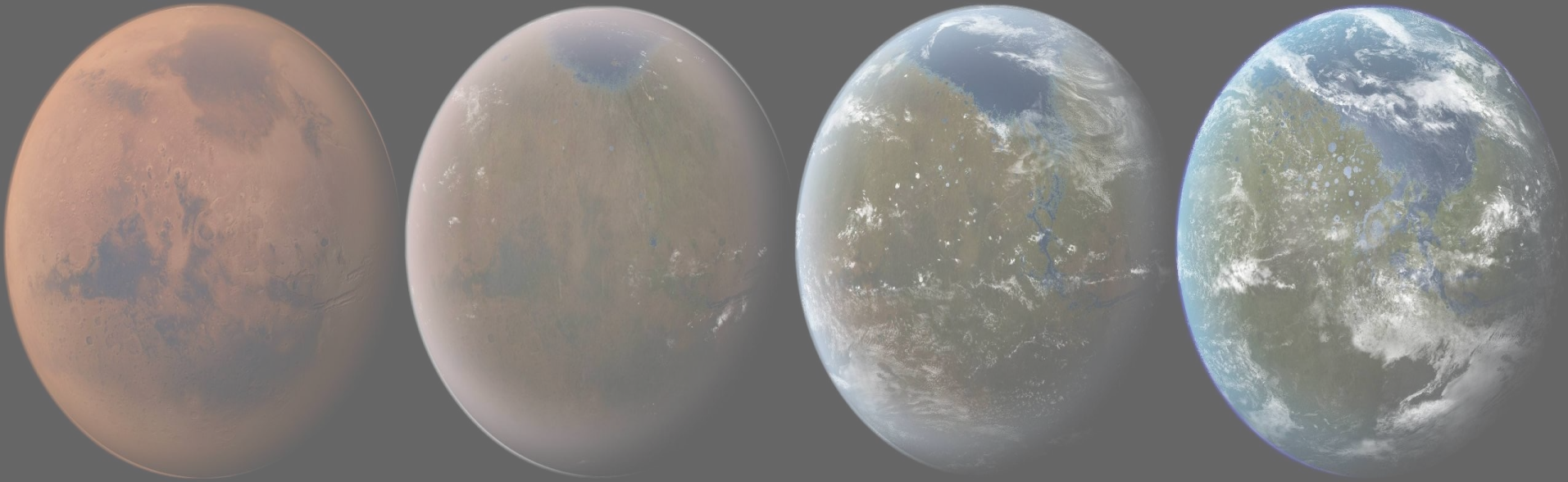
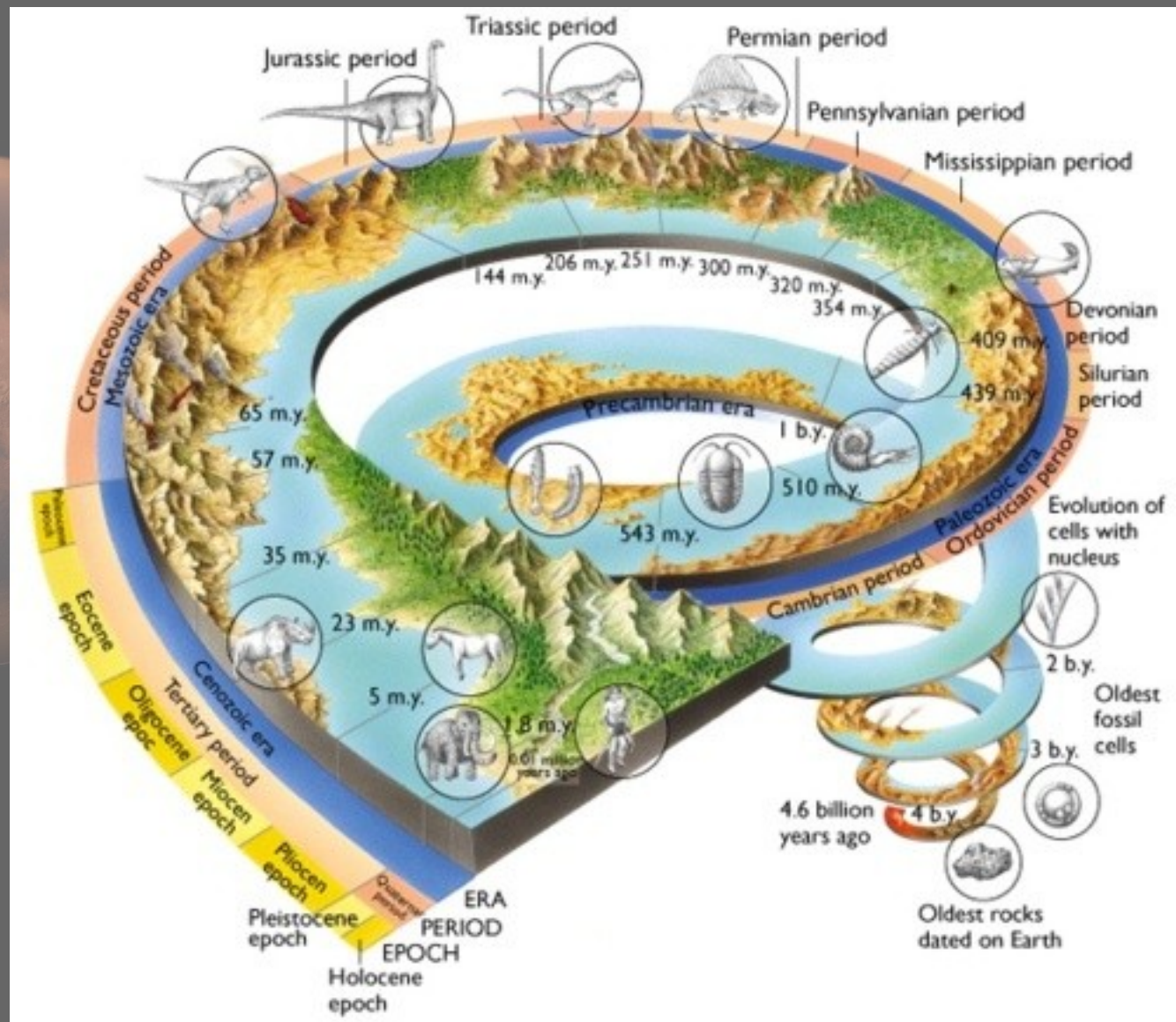


# **Introduction: Environment across Cultures**

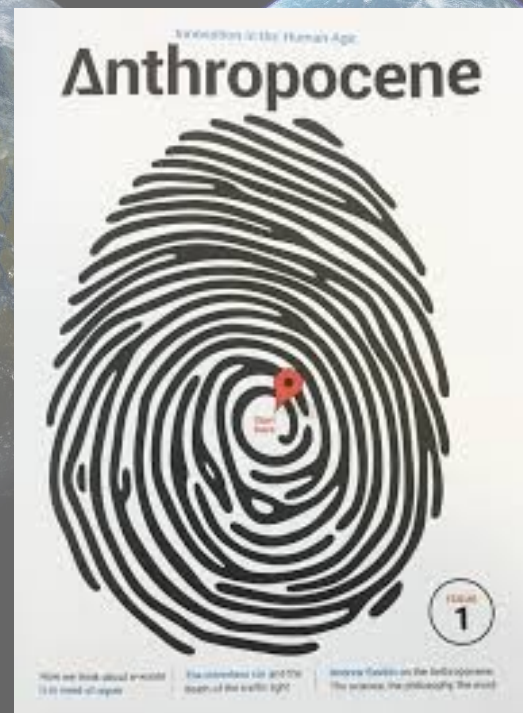
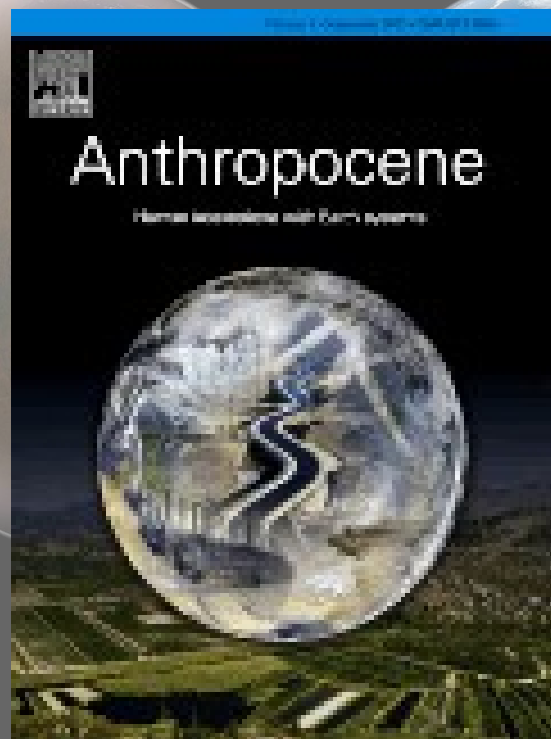
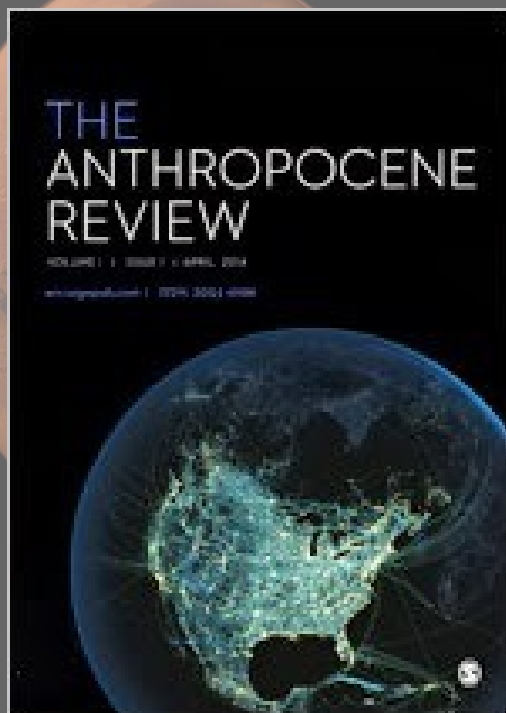


**ENG/ENV M30: Environment across Cultures**  
**Prof. Heise**  
**Spring Quarter 2023**

# The Anthropocene Hypothesis: Stoermer & Crutzen | 2000

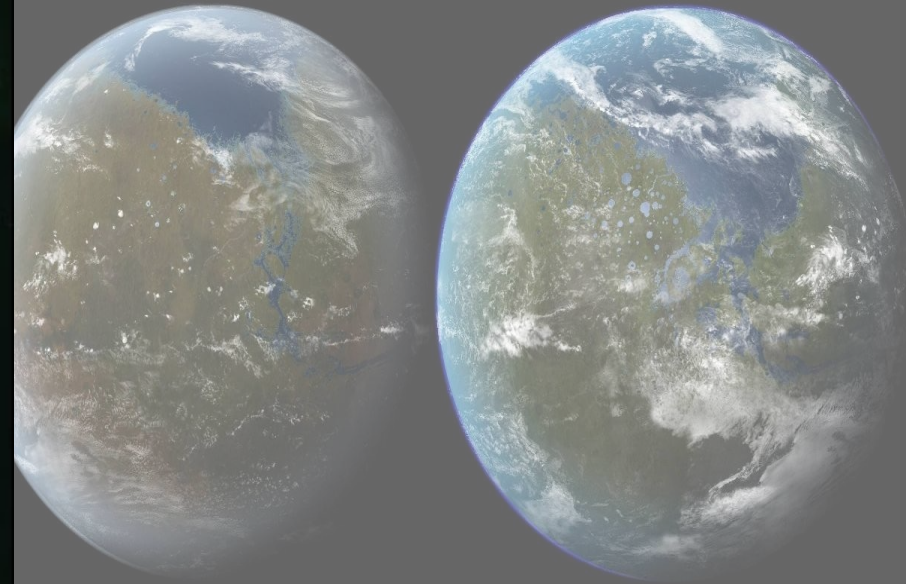


## Journals and Magazines about the Anthropocene



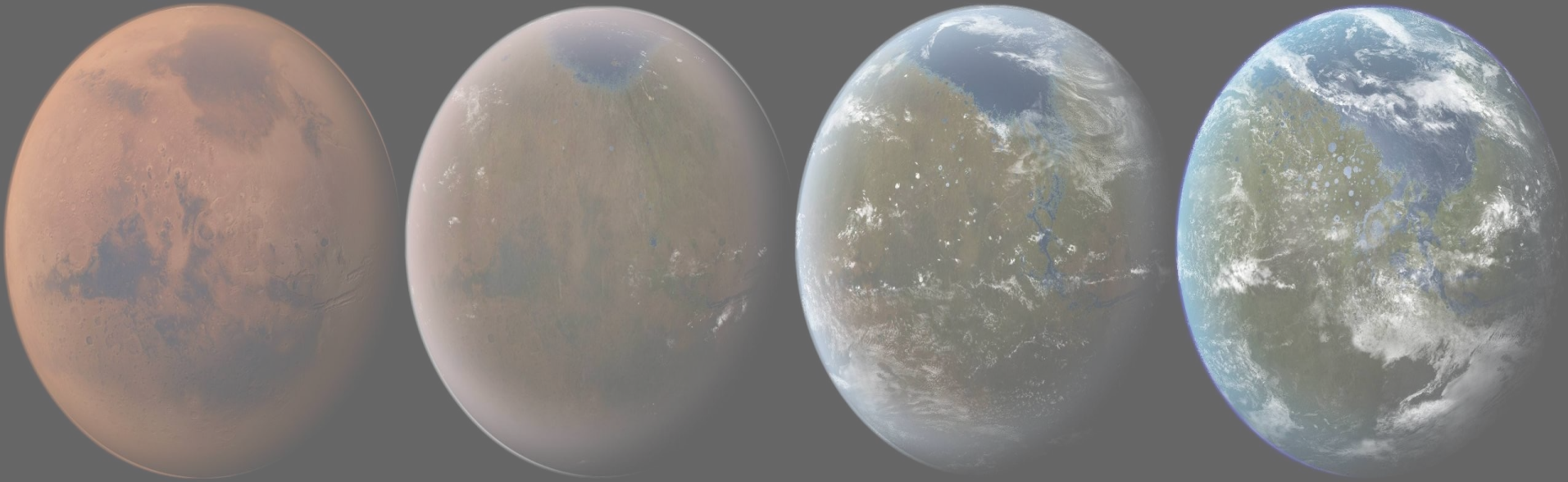


# The Anthropocene in Public Debate



# The Anthropocene Hypothesis (Stoermer & Crutzen)

<https://vimeo.com/39048998>



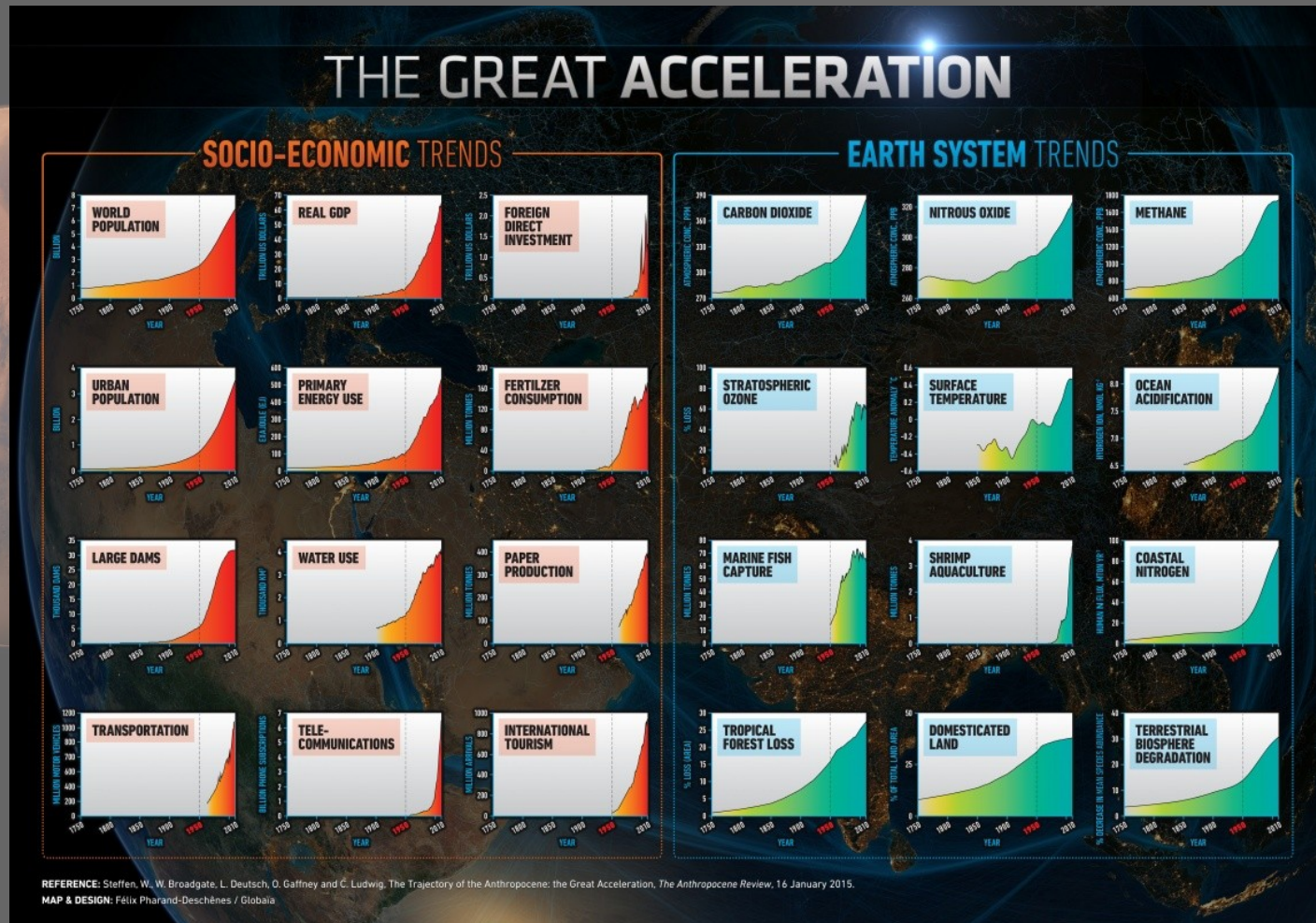
## When did the Anthropocene begin?

- ◆ 18<sup>th</sup> century: Industrialization
- ◆ 15<sup>th</sup> century: European colonialism
- ◆ 8,000 BCE: Beginnings of agriculture

**In public discussions, the Anthropocene is often used as another word for climate change. But it really encompasses a wide range of environmental processes and crises: for example, trash, toxification, biodiversity loss, deforestation, soil erosion.**



# The Anthropocene and the Great Acceleration



# Anthropocene: The Pessimistic View

- "During the past 3 centuries human population increased tenfold to 600 million . . . 30–50% of the land surface has been transformed by human action. . . . More than half of accessible fresh water is used by mankind; human activity has increased the species extinction rate by thousand to then thousandfold in the tropical rain forests . . . and several climatically important "greenhouse" gases have substantially increased in the atmosphere . . . Furthermore, mankind releases many toxic substances in[to] the environment" (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000: 17).
- "Considering these and many other major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales, it seems to us more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology by proposing to use the term 'anthropocene' for the current geological epoch. The impacts of current human activities will continue over long periods" (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000: 17).
- "Mankind will remain a major geological force for many millennia, maybe millions of years, to come" (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000: 18).



## Anthropocene: The Pessimistic View

“Two words that probably should not be used in sequence: ‘good’ & ‘anthropocene.’ ”

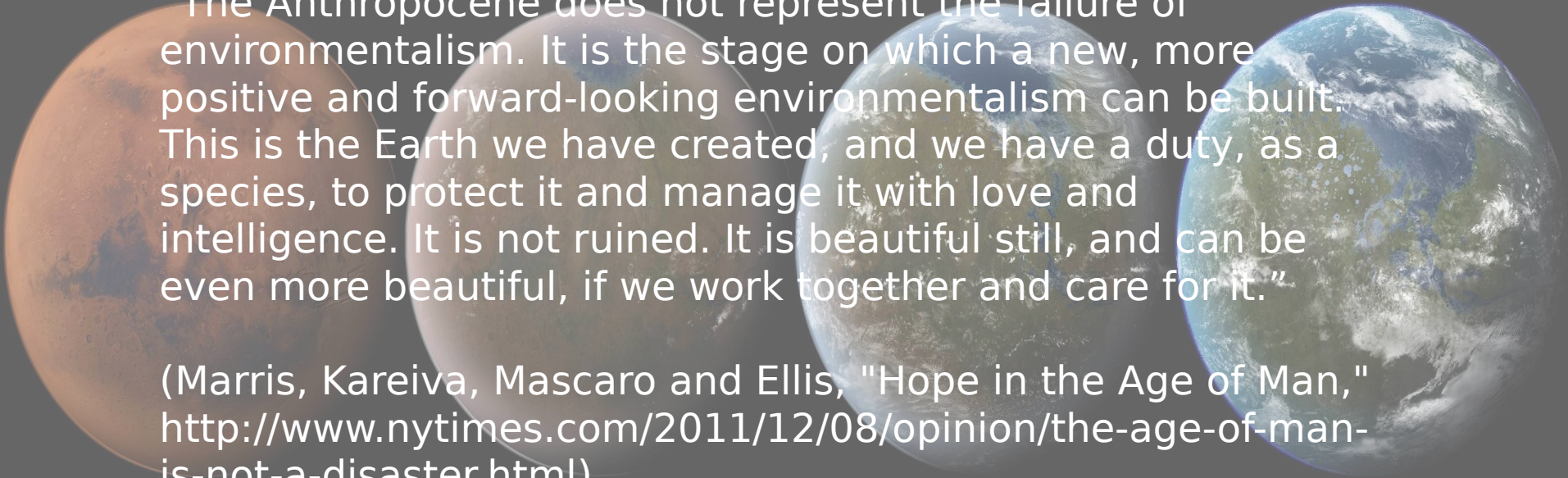
(Elizabeth Kolbert, Tweet)



## Anthropocene: The Optimistic View

“The Anthropocene does not represent the failure of environmentalism. It is the stage on which a new, more positive and forward-looking environmentalism can be built. This is the Earth we have created, and we have a duty, as a species, to protect it and manage it with love and intelligence. It is not ruined. It is beautiful still, and can be even more beautiful, if we work together and care for it.”

(Marris, Kareiva, Mascaro and Ellis, "Hope in the Age of Man," <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/08/opinion/the-age-of-man-is-not-a-disaster.html>)



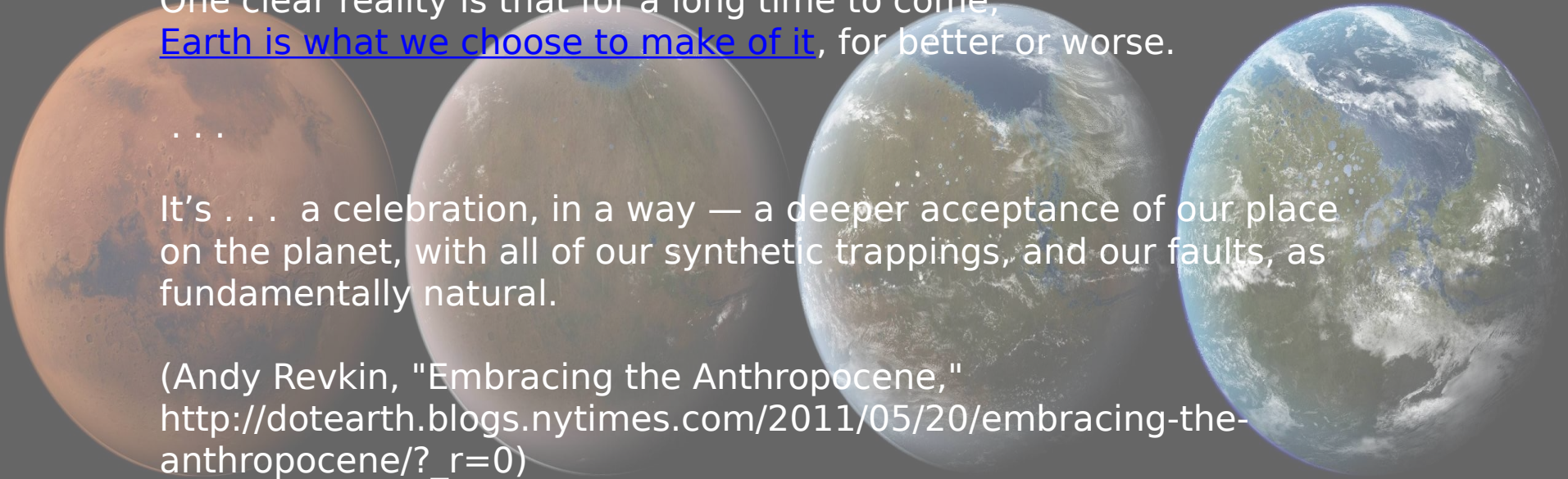
# Anthropocene: The Optimistic View

One clear reality is that for a long time to come,  
[Earth is what we choose to make of it](#), for better or worse.

. . .

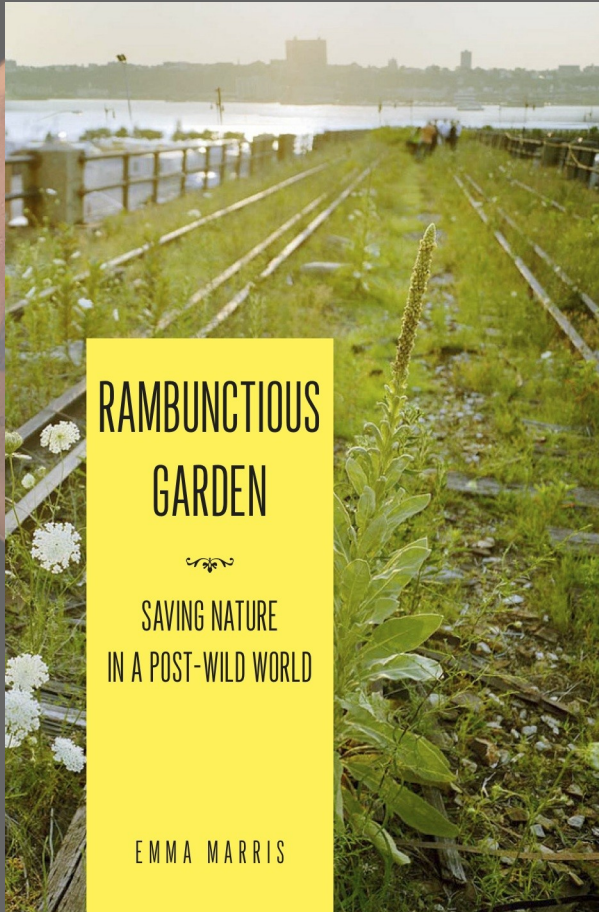
It's . . . a celebration, in a way — a deeper acceptance of our place on the planet, with all of our synthetic trappings, and our faults, as fundamentally natural.

(Andy Revkin, "Embracing the Anthropocene,"  
[http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/embracing-the-anthropocene/?\\_r=0](http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/embracing-the-anthropocene/?_r=0))





# Anthropocene: The Optimistic View



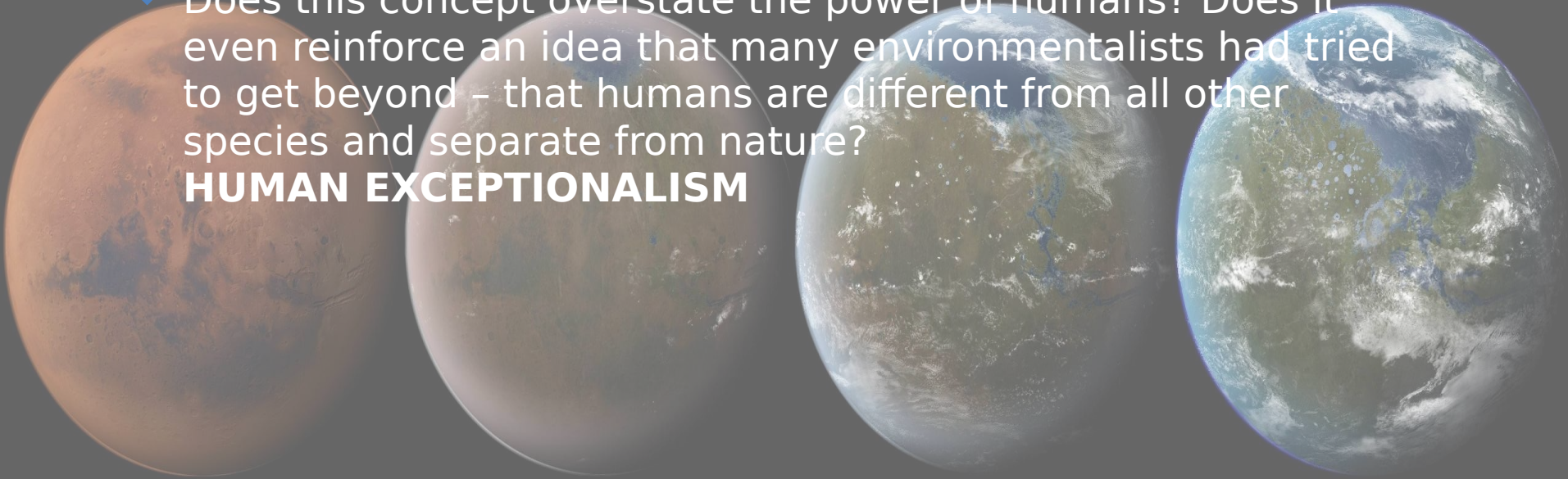
We've forever altered the Earth, and so now we cannot abandon it to a random fate. It is our duty to manage it. Luckily, it can be a pleasant, even joyful task if we embrace it in the right spirit. Let the rambunctious gardening begin.

(Marris, *Rambunctious Garden* [2011]: loc. 3230)

# Critical Questions about the Anthropocene

- ◆ Does this concept overstate the power of humans? Does it even reinforce an idea that many environmentalists had tried to get beyond – that humans are different from all other species and separate from nature?

**HUMAN EXCEPTIONALISM**



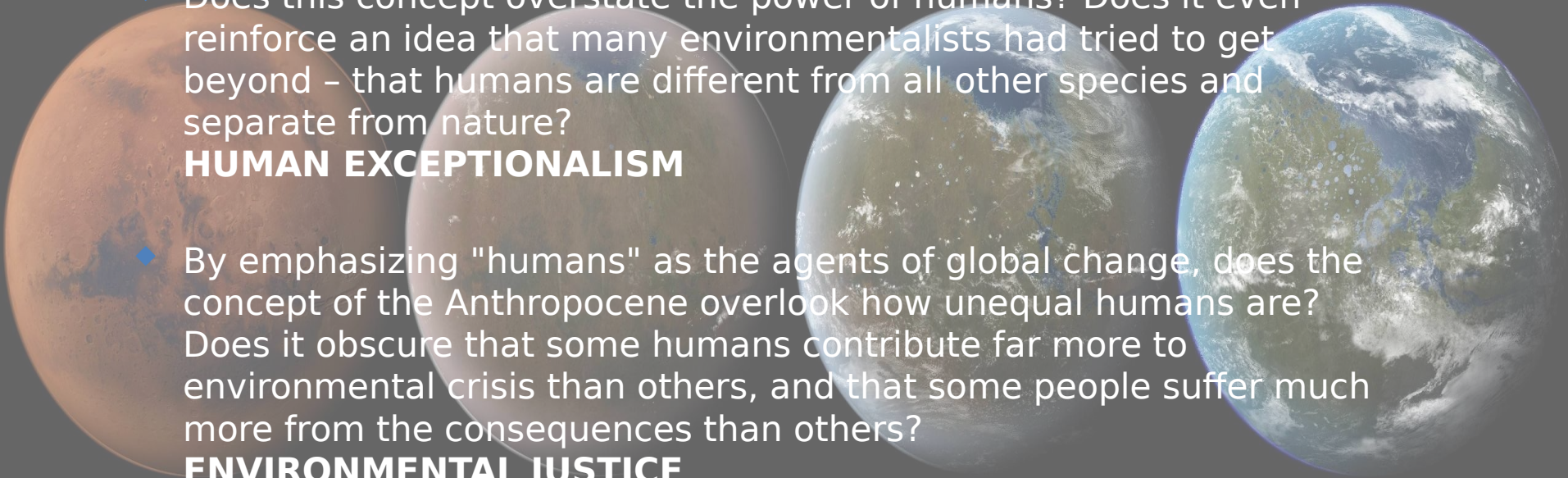
# Critical Questions about the Anthropocene

- ◆ Does this concept overstate the power of humans? Does it even reinforce an idea that many environmentalists had tried to get beyond – that humans are different from all other species and separate from nature?

## **HUMAN EXCEPTIONALISM**

- ◆ By emphasizing "humans" as the agents of global change, does the concept of the Anthropocene overlook how unequal humans are? Does it obscure that some humans contribute far more to environmental crisis than others, and that some people suffer much more from the consequences than others?

## **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**





# The Anthropocene across Cultures

- ◆ **The concept of the Anthropocene has reshaped environmental thinking and environmentalist organizations in Australia, Europe, and North America.**
- ◆ What look like similar or even identical problems when viewed from a scientific and technological perspective – pollution, waste, deforestation, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, climate change – are very different problems when viewed from the perspective of different languages, cultural frameworks, historical memories, and social institutions.

