



# CIES 2020 MIAMI EDUCATION BEYOND THE HUMAN

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## EDUCATION BEYOND THE HUMAN: TOWARD SYMPOIESIS

*"Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means "making-with." Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing... earthlings are never alone. That is the radical implication of sympoiesis. Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with..."*

— Donna J. Haraway, "Staying with the Trouble" (2016)

We live in a moment of epochal precarity. Altering life on the entire planet, humans have become the dominant force behind irreversible ecological catastrophe: natural resource depletion, water and air pollution, human overpopulation, species extinction, and a fundamental breakdown of the ecosystems that have sustained life on Earth for millions of years. Various called Anthropocene, Capitalocene, or Chthulucene, this new era signals the end of human exceptionalism and (neo)liberal individualism – the core concepts of Western philosophy and the foundations of modern political economy – as a single vision for surviving on a damaged Earth. **What is required is an urgent redefinition of what it is to be human and a radical reconfiguration of the relationship between human and Earth. The central concern of CIES 2020 is what these planetary changes – and their political, economic, social, and environmental consequences – entail for education.**

How should education respond to a world of shifting planetary boundaries, collapsing ecosystems, and emerging visions? How might we learn from this uncertain time to construct new comparative genres that extend beyond mere reruns of Western metaphysics (and Western Man)? What education policies, practices, and pedagogies can help re-situate the human within the relational flow of life where everyone and everything – both human and non-human – are deeply interconnected? How can comparative education bridge multiple worldviews – and hence worlds – to turn divides into living contrasts that illuminate our everyday entanglements? CIES 2020 invites the comparative education community and our colleagues in related fields – scholars, artists, policymakers, development aid professionals, and education practitioners alike – to step up to the planetary challenges we face and explore a broad range of questions pertaining to the adequacy of our vocabularies, theories, methods, practices, movements, and ways of being in these precarious times.

**We see Miami as a fitting place to contemplate where we now stand.** When the effects of a 3°C rise in global temperature become real, which is conservatively [estimated](#) to happen by 2100, Miami will be completely underwater. Even at 2°C global warming, which may happen as soon as the 2030s, [forecasts](#) show almost the entire bottom third of Florida – currently home to more than 7 million people – submerged in ocean water. Forecasts are equally devastating for other major cities across the world - from the Hague to Rio de Janeiro, Osaka, and Shanghai - which are declared 'the most vulnerable major cities in the world' to flooding. While radically redrawing the map of the world, these irreversible changes will contribute to resource shortages, cause famines, and trigger mass migrations of climate refugees on a global scale, threatening the lives of the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations and ultimately disrupting life for everyone, everywhere.

From this perspective, the location of the 64th Annual Conference of CIES serves as a stark and timely reminder that our current preoccupation with global education trends – student achievement tests, competitive education league tables, global ranking exercises, and “best practices” – needs to be carefully reexamined and put into a broader, planetary and more than human perspective. **Our own survival on the damaged Earth will depend on our capacity to engage with and learn from a wide range of interdisciplinary research and education practices, drawing on diverse voices, sources, methods, theories, evidence, and perspectives.** While some may seek immediate solutions within current education paradigms, others will explore comparative education as a space of attuning to and engaging with multiple, more-than-human worlds - the worlds of Nature’s seasons and spirits, of ecosystems and environments, of cyborgs and goddesses, or artificial intelligence and ancestors - the worlds that at present remain beyond the horizon of mainstream comparative education. CIES 2020 will feature a set of highlighted sessions related to the conference’s main theme, as well as provide an opportunity for aesthetic experiences and artistic interventions to explore alternative ways for thinking about and experiencing the world we live in.

## Conference participants are invited, but not required, to address any of the following themes:

### Education and Planetary Challenges

- Empirical elaborations of the relationships among education, environment, and planetary changes
- Critiques of the ‘business-as-usual’ approaches to post-2015 educational governance, including attention (or lack thereof) to environment issues in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the aid to education initiatives that support them
- Potentials and limitations of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), including programming that goes beyond the focus on cognitive skills and knowledge and rejects methodological individualism, nationalism, and populism
- Earth-friendly research initiatives, including technological and social alternatives to the current high-carbon research practices that would lead to a cultural change

### Education and (Post)Human Futures

- Reevaluation of human rights and humanism - their traditional roles, objectives, and constructions – in the context of climate change and the human/environment interface
- Approaches in comparative education that engage with ontological alterity, including education policy framings, pedagogies, practices, and spaces that decenter the human
- The role of Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies in reimagining - and remaking - processes of governance, research, and learning, including creative alternatives opened by posthuman futures

### Education as Sympoiesis

- Multiple knowledges and worlds, political dynamics, and power relations in the educational production of epistemologies and ontologies, including non-Western, indigenous, feminist, and marginalized ‘Others’
- Educational engagements with more-than-human-worlds, both in terms of the kinds of imagination necessary to conceive them (science-fiction, speculative fabulation, string figures, speculative feminism, science fact) as well as formal and nonformal educational practices of crossing (to interact with artificial intelligence, multispecies, spirit worlds).

Extreme times call for extreme measures – and opening of spaces for new ideas and practices. Comparative educators are encouraged to use the conference space to traverse epistemological and ontological boundaries that have kept the field largely insulated from discussion of the catastrophe that is unwinding us, and begin to reimagine life - and education - on a damaged Earth.

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