

# Entangled Stories of the Anthropocene

## Multispecies Conflicts / Multispecies Futures

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### QUESTIONS

The Anthropocene is predominantly known as an era witnessing the greatest biodiversity loss. However, it is also an era that is negatively impacting and violently excluding the most marginalized human communities, often under the guise of biodiversity conservation mechanisms. Located within one such contested and socio-ecologically entangled context is the studio site in Koshi Tappu, Nepal.

With this in mind, in this studio, we will start by asking ourselves how to restructure our design processes to acknowledge, understand, and document the complex, conflicted, and entangled lives, stories, and experiences of the region's most marginalized human and nonhuman stakeholders. Furthermore, through the second half, ask how to begin shifting and perhaps even speculating towards an inclusive future that brings together the voices of the many inhabitants of the Koshi.

### PROMPT

The studio will be situated in the Koshi Tappu buffer zone, a heightened multispecies conflict zone, fraught with increasing daily human-wildlife conflict as a result of over 80,000 people living directly adjacent to the 176 sqkm Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR).

The establishment of KTWR in 1974 followed a Western colonial fortress conservation model, which directly resulted in the displacement of over 12,000 indigenous inhabitants. And along with them, they discarded the intergenerational socio-ecological relationships of the inhabitants with their landscapes. Furthermore, located in a sensitive geopolitical context next to the border of India, macroeconomics, political tumult, and ongoing ethnic conflicts further heighten these daily pressures and spatial conflicts.

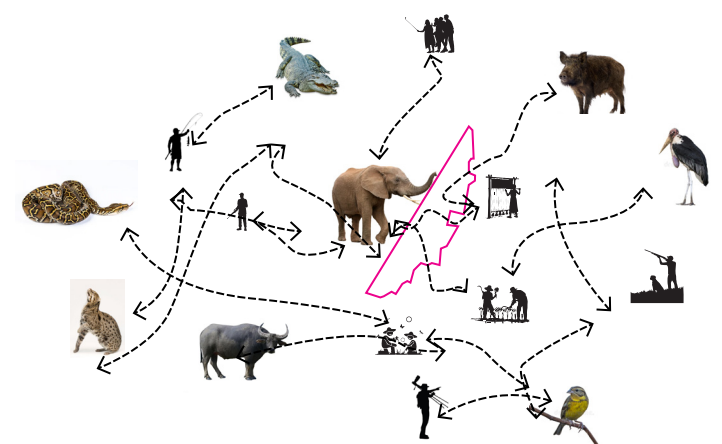
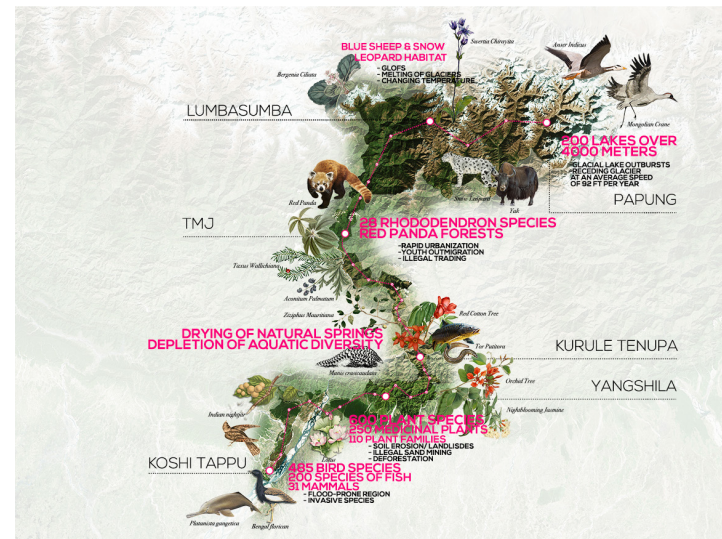
In the Journal of Architectural Education (JAE) 's issue on "Pedagogies for a Broken World," the editors write about how "breakdowns have world-disclosing properties" and an opportunity to reveal "the real limits and fragility of the world." Adopting this lens, we can begin to unpack and disclose the larger macro-level structural pressures and historic inequities beneath the current buffer zone's conflicted context.

Furthermore, they also mention how "architecture is thus deeply entangled in both the brokenness of the world and the potential for its reframing."

Our ultimate goal of the studio is to find ways to reframe and reorient toward a future that is, hopefully, pluralistic and inclusive for all marginalized human and nonhuman inhabitants of the Koshi.

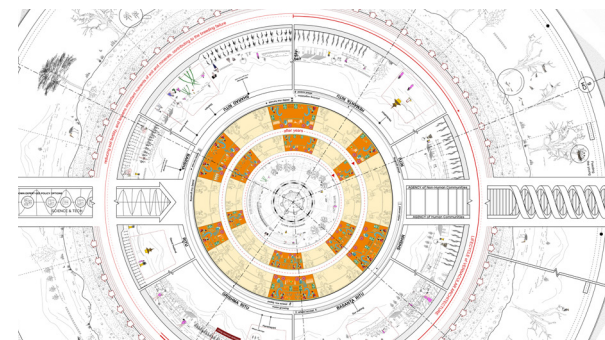
### CONTEXT

The studio emerges from a decade-long field work by the instructor, much of it spent while co-founding and co-creating the "Vertical University" project, which starts from the lowest plains of eastern Nepal in Koshi



above: The Vertical University proposal KTK-BELT studio

below: Entangled relationships diagram KTK-BELT studio



above: Entangled Stories of the Anthropocene, a collection of work by students and community members exhibited as part of the Care pavilion, London Design Biennale, 2023

below: Indigenous Ecological Calendar by the farmer and Lesser Adjutant communities of the Koshi

The material that will be covered in class can be challenging, and sometimes uncomfortable. Therefore, as empathetic as we need to be towards the various stakeholders we'll encounter in the studio, we must also direct that empathy towards ourselves.

The class will also incorporate views, feedback, and voices from the community members, Vertical University Professors, living and working in Nepal. Respect and care needs to be extended to all voices.

The studio's questions emerge from live interactions and engagements with the site, and stakeholders, so there is a possibility to continue the work beyond the studio if students are interested.



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Tappu at 67 meters above sea level to the roof of the Himalayas at 8,586 m in Mt. Kanchenjunga. The project serves as a framework to support local indigenous communities living within this terrain to steward conservation efforts in their biodiversity-rich landscapes.

The studio will focus on the lowest node in Koshi Tappu and will be a part of a live project in collaboration with the local partner, Koshi Tappu Learning Grounds (KTLG).

### PROGRAM

The studio will follow a multispecies design methodology for conflict species based on the research of the instructor. The semester will be divided into two phases: the first phase, multispecies conflicts, will immerse students with understanding the existing context, conflicts, and entangled relationships between the human and nonhuman stakeholders of the Koshi. The second phase, multispecies futures, will begin to hopefully shift and perhaps even speculate towards an inclusive future that changes the current narrative of conflict and competition to that of sharing resources.

Guest lecturers will include professors of the Vertical University from indigenous farmers, fisherfolks, weaver women, and builders. Along with them, global multispecies design experts will also be invited to give an overview of their projects, methods, and lessons. In addition, Nepal based team members, fellows, and staff will be continuously engaged through online communication throughout the semester aiding students to gain grounded insights into the context.

The studio will also continue and expand the work of ten students from CMU who tested and experimented with new methods, tools, and storytelling techniques. The outputs helped push forward new ways of thinking, drawing, and designing with conflict in mind. As a part of the larger goal, the outputs and the stories generated from the studio will be further disseminated through a book of anthologies, exhibits, lectures, and, most importantly, some projects may also find their way back to the field.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this studio you should be able to;

- Understand the complex socio-ecological entanglements inherent in the Anthropocene through various readings, lectures, and design exercises.
- Identify, and understand key terms related to the course topic-e.g., biodiversity, Anthropocene, multispecies design, inclusive design, nonhuman, extractivism, human-wildlife conflict, Capitalocene.
- Use various multispecies design methods and tools available to integrate requirements of multiple species in the design process
- Hopefully, be able to empathize with both the human and nonhuman stakeholders by mapping the macro structural pressures behind the conflicts and competition.
- Develop strategies that are interdisciplinary, integrated, phased, and scalar.
- Respectfully engage with materials and communicate with stakeholders (both human and nonhuman) in Nepal
- Use storytelling as design methodology to both document the conflicted current relationship between the human-nonhuman stakeholders as well as project speculative inclusive futures.