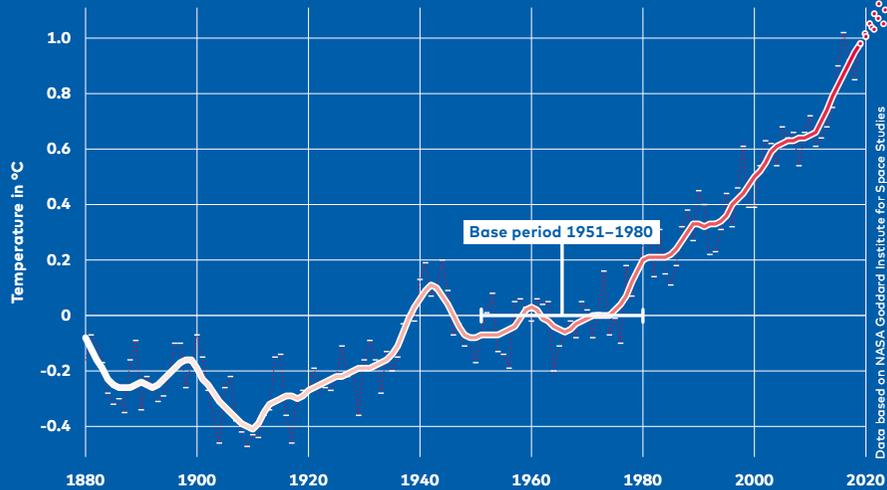




#AnthropoceneChallenge

Planet in crisis

Anthropocene



»This ship would sail without me.« The interviewee smiles into the camera, more excited about his CO<sub>2</sub> footprint than about the idea of admitting responsibility. As a viewer in front of the TV set, one lets one's gaze wander—until finally realizing that the supposed building block in the background, which doesn't leave a piece of sky or a pixel on the screen unobstructed, is the ship that was just mentioned. Cruises, budget airlines, shopping malls—the modern pillars of capitalist feel-good zones, also form the Bermuda Triangle of the so-called Anthropocene: the earth age of man, who never had such a formative and lasting effect on his environment as he does today.

The joys of our present are also the burdens of the future, as a catalyst for an »environmental crisis of the Anthropocene,« which lies at the heart of Volker Mosbrugger's research. Since the 1950s we have been observing a »Great Acceleration«: of human activities leading to an exponential increase in the consumption of all raw materials. As a result, humanity as a whole is better off than ever before, a reality reflected in the achievement of many of

the UN Millennium Development Goals for 2015 formulated in 2000. Never before has life expectancy been so high, have so many people had access to education, have so few suffered from extreme hunger. But the increasingly fast-growing influence of mankind comes at the expense of the ecosystem—with the result that we now have a whole series of environmental problems: loss of biodiversity, desertification, erosion, floods of waste, disruption of biogeochemical cycles, scarcity of raw materials, etc. As a network, these represent the challenges of the Anthropocene, or the so-called »Anthropocene Challenges.«

How can humans protect the world and themselves as its inhabitants from their own kind? Are we in need of more targeted interventions into the ecosystem, through product innovations and management plans for our natural environment? Or is the only way out of this situation to do without technology, consumption, and motorized transport? There are no unequivocal answers. However, one thing is certain: we overuse nature. Everyone is affected by the Anthropocene, regardless of social background and nationality. In other words, it is not just Mr. Schmidt alone, who can do without plastic bags in the supermarket and then drives 800 meters home by car and on the following day takes a cruise liner to the Arctic. The ship leaves the port without him. The individual is not capable of much. And yet humanity is made up of individuals. »Man« in the collective singular of his species is influential—and simultaneously powerless, so long as the abstract idea of humanity is not filled with many individuals—us—who can react and act.

Already today, more people are fleeing environmental crises than wars. Despite a growing awareness of the interdependence of different ecological and economic systems, these crises are still being dealt with separately, such as within the framework of an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or World Biodiversity Council (IPBES); however, the »Anthropocene Challenges« must be addressed as a systemic problem.

The external costs of our lifestyle, its negative effects on species and ecosystems, which are inevitably damaged by humans, regardless of their interdependencies, must be included or internalized in our actions and thoughts from the very beginning—in other words, we must take responsibility for them ourselves, instead of transferring consequences to the living environments of others. Sustainable recycling management, which not only is geared towards consumption but also recycles materials and promotes renewable energies, also offers approaches to support the regeneration of resources.