NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY SINGAPORE | Max Planck-NTU Centre for Biocultural Worlding
College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Press Release

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Max Planck–NTU Singapore Centre for Biocultural Worlding Launches Seven Projects Connecting Culture and Biodiversity

From turtle stories and Thari traditions to Indigenous forest foods, Orang Seletar knowledge, and traditional medicine in the age of AI, these projects address new ways to build shared futures through the integrity of biodiversity and cultures.

The seed projects bring together knowledge-holding communities and academics, artists, curators, and practitioners in law, the sciences, and humanities. Based in India, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Germany, and the wider Indian Ocean region, the projects use oral histories, storytelling, film, sound, photography, mapping, and material practices to create new forms of knowledge and multimedia that can remain with communities, reach wider publics, and open up new conversations.

Projects Develop New Approaches to Biocultural Research

The projects are outlined below. A full list of collaborator names and details about each project can be found on the CBCW website: http://www.bioculturalworlding.org/projects/.

Calling Sharks, Rewriting Laws from the Landscape: oral histories, film, and photography bring shark-calling traditions in Papua New Guinea into conversation with legal questions, creating space for community knowledge and legal inquiry to inform one another.

Mapping Biocultural Assemblages: Orang Seletar communities and collaborators use film and mapping to document buildings, places, and ecological knowledge, creating an archive shaped by the community.

> "Bagi saya ini adalah satu projek komuniti masyarakat Seletar yang harus di kekalkan, supaya generasi akan tahu berapa pentingnya adat dan budaya masyarakat kami. Melalui hasil kerjasama dapat meningkatkan lagi hasil dalam perubahan dalam komuniti kami. Dengan harapan orang luar tahu budaya dan masyarakat kami. Berapa pentingnya adat resam sesuatu kaum."
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> – *Jefree Salim,* Seed Project Member, *Seletar Cultural and Arts Society*
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> *In English, this may be translated as: For me, this is a Seletar community project that should be preserved so that future generations will understand the importance of our community's customs and culture. Through collaboration, we can bring about further positive changes in our community. We also hope that people outside our community will learn about our culture and understand the importance of each ethnic group's customs and traditions.*

Thinking and Being Like a Honeybee: Kattunayakan knowledge holders and collaborators record oral knowledge and honey-hunting practices through a multimedia documentary archive, exploring how knowledge about relationships between people and honeybees is practiced and passed between generations.

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Turtle Radio: Collaborators co-create a listening platform weaving together histories, memories, and stories of turtles through oral histories, sound recordings, and storytelling across the Indian Ocean.

When AI Meets Ancient Knowledge: brings together computational research, law, and the humanities to explore how traditional medicine knowledge can be protected and how communities can share in its benefits as drug discovery changes.

Worlding with Boreendo, through Boreendo: Thari communities in Pakistan's Thar Desert and collaborators co-produce stories, sounds, and material practices surrounding *Boreendo,* creating new forms of documentation and expression to contemplate relationships between people, places, and embodied knowledge.

Forest Foods of Jharkhand: Adivasi (Indigenous) communities and collaborators in Jharkhand, India create films and oral archives documenting knowledge of food, medicine, and forest practices rooted in relationships with local landscapes.

> "I intend to start conversations about what Indigenous knowledge can do to understand life, living, and collective wellbeing. My hope is to invite people to reflect on their relationship with nature. What I value about CBCW is the biocultural foundation that views nature and culture as collaborators that can co-exist meaningfully, which is the biggest strength of the project and for humanity at large."
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> – *Jyoti Shukla,* Cultural Researcher and Seed Project Member, *Indigeneity*

The seed project approaches reflect key aspects of how the CBCW commits to its work:

> "The CBCW brings the history of science into conversation with cutting-edge curatorial and artistic research, allowing us to think about community-based ecological knowledges and cultures afresh. It invites us to reconsider who gets to shape these stories and define new modes of learning and doing research together."
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> – *Lisa Onaga,* CBCW Co-Deputy Director

About CBCW

The Max Planck–NTU Singapore Centre for Biocultural Worlding (CBCW), established in April 2026, is a joint initiative of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG) and the Nanyang Technological University Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (NTU CCA). The Centre brings together communities from cultural practices, knowledge-holding traditions, the arts, law, sciences, and the humanities through equitable partnerships across the Asia-Pacific and around the world. It works to bring new approaches to knowledge, responsibility, and biocultural *shared futures* that center artistic, curatorial, and community-based research and integrate biocultural perspectives into public dialog, collaborative initiatives, and other spaces beyond academic boundaries.

Links

- About the CBCW, seed projects, and collaborators: https://bioculturalworlding.org/projects/

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