

## What have they done to the rain?

[What have they done to the rain?](#) So sang the troubadours of the 1960s. Now there is still more cause to write such lines, with the world beset with challenges. Last week the IPPR ran an event to discuss ‘[Policy and the Anthropocene: The politics of a non-linear world](#)’, calling for a politics ambitious and holistic enough to face the challenges of the Anthropocene: the ‘overwhelmingly negative aggregate impact humans are having on the environment’.

As if President Trump needed any more evidence of climate change, his own Palm Beach estate has now been battered by hurricane Irma: while experts patiently explain how global warming has increased storm intensity. Meanwhile a truly massive monsoon season has left far more people homeless in northern India and Bangladesh, and the Greenland ice cap is covered in heat-absorbing bacteria.

But of course that's not what the troubadours were singing about: they referred to radiation-poisoned rain following nuclear catastrophe. And here too the storm clouds are gathering, most particularly in the Far East.

Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump throw threats at each other across the Pacific, but it is China, Russia, South Korea and Japan who have the real cause for worry, real cause to fear. The image alongside shows population density around North Korea as night-time light intensity (North Korea itself is almost wholly black and invisible).

Be in no doubt, the reason why Presidents Xi Jinping and Putin want a negotiated solution is not that they hold some sympathy towards Kim Jong-un but because their huge urban populations are in mortal peril from nuclear war.

So perhaps we should start looking at the North Korean situation as a terrorist state holding human shields to ransom, just as so many recent individual terrorist incidents have involved hostages, and ask ourselves how such hostage situations are resolved without loss of life.

So the IPPR has plenty of cause to be concerned about the Anthropocene. But why are the world markets so sanguine, appearing to be more concerned about tight liquidity in the US money market than they are about global disaster? Perhaps we've all allowed virtual reality to detach us from actual reality, now that so much of our week is taken up with glancing at instant soundbites and clips on the news apps as we peruse our emails.

And where is the energy and sensitivity of millennium generation on these issues? In the past it was always the young who expressed outrage first, but now there appears to be no alternative for them but to concentrate on the hard realities of life as student debt builds remorselessly.

Or could it be the media downplay the protest movements of today?

On this the anniversary of 9/11, we still have much to concentrate the mind.