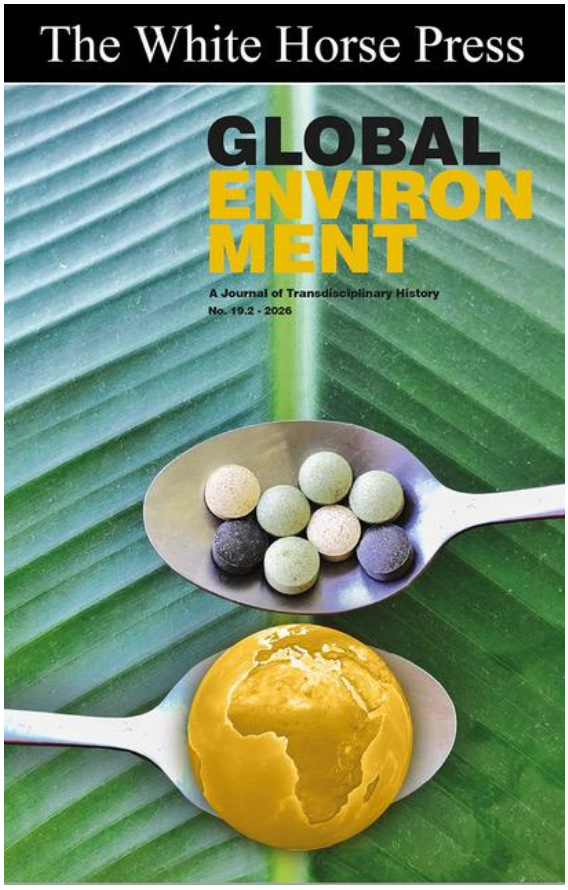
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"Controlling the Planet's Health: From Homeostasis and Geophysiology to the Planetary Health Watch"

Klassen, Lijuan

Klassen, Lijuan. "Controlling the Planet's Health: From Homeostasis and Geophysiology to the Planetary Health Watch." *Global Environment*: *A Journal of Transdisciplinary History* 19, no. 2 (2026): 297–316.



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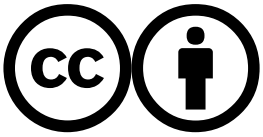
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This article demonstrates how the diagnosis of the planet as sick in the discourses on planetary

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health draws from a physiological understanding of health as an objectively definable “normal” or “optimal” state of an organism. The following traces a genealogy of this understanding through the development of the concept of homeostasis, which first emerged in early twentieth century physiology, was then applied to cybernetic machines and ecosystems by mid-century and reappeared in Lovelock’s notion of ‘geophysiology’. It argues that the prominent focus on measuring and monitoring in contemporary propositions on governing planetary health relies on a specific understanding of the Earth as a self-regulating, more-or-less homeostatic system. This view is based on a cybernetic paradigm, which argues that the world can be understood and controlled through information: a disembodied type of information, as Katherine Hayles has argued, that ‘exists independently of the substrate that carries it’. My aim is to show the limits of this physiological model of health, and the political imperative that the most viable strategy for taking care of the planet in crisis is through global Earth system governance. A strategy that depends on the accumulation of vast amounts of data, while obscuring the lived realities from which this data is extracted. (Abstract)

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