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LETTER FROM OUR MANAGING EDITOR

Oxford, February 2020

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the February 2020 issue of the St Antony's International Review (STAIR).

The ubiquitous and pernicious effects of global climate change demand robust responses from the academy, and STAIR's latest issue entitled 'Anthropocene: Embodying Climate Breakdown' aims to fulfil this responsibility. This issue intends to recentre existing discussions—as well as amplify novel perspectives—on the crucial role of the Anthropocene and human activity's role in exacerbating climate change, as well as its overdue responsibility to mitigate it. In particular, this issue examines this vital topic and its intersection with international affairs. It argues that the emergence of climate change as an unstoppable force to be reckoned with demands a shift away from the traditional international relations paradigm that views climate change as the sole province of nation-states.

Incisive interviews with Professor Gabrielle Slowey on the nexus between resource extraction, marginalised communities, and climate change, as well as documentary filmmaker Jennifer Baichwal on the process of portraying the Anthropocene in film media, both attest to the wide variety of viewpoints on the implications of reexamining climate change through the lens of human-centred activity. In addition, STAIR's three articles further examine the phenomenon of human-led climate breakdown with a study on the ontologies of the Anthropocene, a scrutiny of the securitisation dilemmas involved in climate breakdown—with a specific focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and a final article that unpacks the relationships implied by the term 'Anthropocene'. Professor Laura Rival's extended book review, as well as the five shorter book reviews, further scope out the wide array of literature in this emerging field.

As we cross STAIR's fifteen-year threshold, we intend to renew our long-standing commitment to highlighting voices ranging from emerging scholars to well-established academics and professors. In addition to the depth of our research on climate change and the Anthropocene, we feature two key articles on the lack of accountability in Nigeria's amnesty programme in the Niger Delta and the evolving Japanese discourse on memorial politics. At STAIR, we are incredibly proud of all of our contributions, and we see hard-hitting academic research as an important conduit for facilitating discourse on a plethora of contemporary issues in international affairs.

I would like to offer my personal gratitude to the entire STAIR Editorial Board for their tireless work in preparing this issue for our readers, as well as for the guidance of Senior Member Kalypso Nicolaidis. I am also grateful to all the members of the STAIR Advisory Board, St Antony's College, the Centre for International Studies, and the entire Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford for supporting STAIR.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this issue.

Warm regards,

Daniel Waqar
Managing Editor

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

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I. Theme Section

‘On the western slope of the Mayacamas’, writes the poet Ada Limón, ‘there’s a madrone / tree that’s half-burned from the fires, half-alive / from nature’s need to propagate’. The madrone is a symbolic choice; for the indigenous Saanich nations of the Pacific Northwest, this type of tree has mythic significance. In their accounts of a ‘great flood’, the madrone served as an anchor—saving lives by rooting itself into the top of a mountain. In remembrance of this, Saanich people do not burn madrone wood.¹ Yet today, along North America’s western coast, a rash of wildfires have left these trees charred; anthropogenic climate change is only making these wildfires worse.² ‘I am reminded of the righteousness I had / before the scorch of time’, reflects Limón, ‘I miss who I was’.

I miss who we all were, before we were this: half
alive to the brightening sky, half dead already.
I place my hand on the unscarred bark that is cool
and unsullied, and because I cannot apologize
to the tree, to my own self I say, I am sorry.
I am sorry I have been so reckless with your life.³

The body of the madrone tree reflects the duality of this issue—our natural impulse toward hope and survival (evident in ‘nature’s need to propagate’) is threatened and ‘half dead already’ in the face of climate breakdown. In these lines, there is also an understanding of what we lose to ‘the scorch of time’: not only our own ‘righteousness’, but momentum, and opportunity. There’s an interrogation of our agency and responsibility, too—the speaker is not only nostalgic for their own youthful advocacy and energy, but for the loss of ‘who we *all* were, before we were this’. The damage to the tree is damage that *all* of us have done; the speaker’s admitted

'recklessness' is part of a larger, collective recklessness. And finally, there is an acknowledgement of humanity's connection to the environment. Without anthropomorphising nature (we cannot 'apologize / to the tree'), there is a recognition that we nonetheless share some affinity, the same fate. In short: this is a poem of, and about, the Anthropocene.

Debate over the term 'Anthropocene' begins with geology. Has the Holocene, the geological epoch which started around 11,700 years ago, been succeeded by a new era in the Earth's history? Those in favour argue that human activity (*anthropos* being the Greek for human) has become the predominant influence on the environment, and that a new term should serve as a reminder of that predominance. The atomic era has left traces of radiation in soils around the world, while the debris of human material – what the Anthropocene Working Group calls 'technofossils' – will survive in the rock record for millions of years. Other geologists think it is too soon to say. Stratigraphers, used to sifting through the slow, sedimented evidence of millennia, are looking at what is, in geological terms, the merest sliver of time: 'two centimetres of unconsolidated organic matter', as one geologist put it.⁴ The International Commission on Stratigraphy, the body in charge of the Geologic Time Scale, finds itself at the centre of a swirling political debate. It has yet to ratify the Anthropocene.

Even so, the term has already caught on in other disciplines, leaving new debates in its wake. For Professor Gabrielle Slowey, the subject of one of our feature interviews, the word is preferable to 'climate change' as it foregrounds *human* responsibility rather than locating agency with the climate. For others, like Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, the narrative is a frustrating one, denaturalising global warming in one moment – moving us away from natural causes to human activity – only to 'renaturalise' it in the next as the culmination of innate human traits.⁵ For them, the fossil economy was not created by or for humankind in general, but by the logic of capital accumulation and by capitalists in the advanced economies of the West especially. Thus, 'Capitalocene' might more accurately reflect agency and culpability in this new geological epoch. Our review essay by Professor Laura Rival delves deeper into the Capitalocene/Anthropocene debate.

Others question the chronology of the Anthropocene. This was always a part of the geological debate, with various starting points put forward: the beginning of large-scale agriculture; the colonisation of the Americas; the Industrial Revolution; and the first atomic test in 1945 (the most popular suggestion as things stand). But some worry about the very idea of transposing geological timescales onto modern world history.⁶ As the

Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy puts it, ‘it is a central precept in chronostratigraphy that the boundaries defined are always *isochronous surfaces*, i.e. they are the same time everywhere. In other words, all divisions begin and end at precisely the same point in time throughout the World’.⁷ But if the Anthropocene becomes a cluster concept for ecological catastrophe in other fields, the synchronous boundaries of geological time start to break down. Many First Nations in North America, for example, already live in the toxic, ‘post-apocalyptic’ conditions that the Anthropocene is taken to predict: their relationship with water and nature has long been disrupted by extractive industries. In a wildfire, the flames do not always advance in a steady line. Convection currents lift floating embers ahead of the main fire, where they settle to create spot fires; radiant heat can ignite combustible materials from one hundred feet away. The ‘scorch of time’ advances more quickly in some places than others.

As Jennifer Baichwal sees it though, the concept of the Anthropocene can still help us to understand the uneven environmental effects of our developed economies. In her documentary trilogy on the Anthropocene (made in collaboration with the photographer Edward Burtynsky), she takes us to some of the places most dramatically altered by human activity, from the vast Hambach coal mine to the notoriously polluted industrial city of Norilsk. For her, the goal is to bring these sites into the minds of city dwellers, alienated as we are from global chains of production and extraction – as she reminds us, the palladium in your smartphone probably comes from Norilsk. In our interview with Baichwal, we discuss different strategies for representing the Anthropocene, from a ‘dialectic of scale and detail’ to her preference for ‘experiential understanding’.

Michael Babcock’s article adds to this debate with its call for a ‘new ontology of the Anthropocene’, accompanied by greater consideration for the metaphysical concepts central to contemporary understanding of the natural world. Babcock traces how these concepts of reality, causality, and ‘the human mind’ are steeped in Enlightenment-era philosophy, and betray the same anthropocentric biases of Kant, Hume, and Descartes. In this analysis, he conceptualises the ‘Anthropocene’ as a lens through which humans have come to frame their interaction with the environment. This lens has been constructed through a dialectical relationship between humans and the natural world in the last century; it is not intrinsic. Babcock proposes that a new ontology must reconsider the Anthropocene while avoiding the pitfalls of anthropocentrism.

Edgar Roberts’s subsequent article tackles the securitisation

of climate breakdown with a particular focus on the Israeli-Palestinian context. Many scholars working on the Middle East have proposed that climate breakdown is a ‘threat multiplier’, and that its consequences (such as reduced water resources and agricultural output, as well as desertification) are likely to increase inter-state conflict. Roberts challenges these findings, arguing that this one-dimensional analysis of the relationship between climate and security is deterministic, betraying a neo-Malthusian outlook. In contrast, Roberts offers a social constructivist approach to climate security in the Israeli-Palestinian context. He finds that while Israel interprets climate issues largely through a technocratic discourse, the Palestinian Authority understands climate and resource scarcity as secondary, but related, to Israeli occupation. Neither have ‘securitised’ climate change completely—how these actors understand climate breakdown is conditioned by their own social and political contexts.

Our final article, written by Anna Sands, returns to the unbalanced relationships that are obscured by the term ‘Anthropocene’. She argues for the creation of new ‘bodies of alliances’ at the local and global level; alliances and communities that emerge in light of the shared threat of climate breakdown. This return to the grassroots level is informative for lawmakers and signals a necessary fragmentation and granularity of engaging with the climate catastrophe. Building on Elinor Ostrom’s polycentricity, she argues that globally shared objectives and contextualised action can be harmonised. Arturo Escobar offers us such a utopian vision of a pluriverse, in which different world-views can coexist and shape the future in the Anthropocene. The essential question will be whether international norm creation and localised responses can be reconciled.

Though our interviewees and contributors may call the problem by different names – global warming, climate change and so on – we identify the issue as ‘climate breakdown’. In this, we follow the editorial intervention urged by *The Guardian* in October 2019. The word ‘change’ is value-neutral; describing this change as systemic ‘breakdown’ more accurately conveys the issue’s urgency.⁸ It also reflects scientific research on climate ‘tipping points’—environmental ‘change’ is not linear, but can accelerate irreversibly once certain thresholds are crossed (such as significant ice sheet loss; the release of CO₂ from forests and permafrost; and the disruption of the ocean circulation system).⁹ Despite their efforts to model future environmental effects, most of the scientific community agrees that the global climate is a complex system, where change compounds in ways we cannot currently predict or understand.

‘Deep in the forest’, writes the poet Tomas Tranströmer, ‘there’s an unexpected clearing that can be reached only by someone who has lost his way’.¹⁰ In context, it seems, Tranströmer is writing about the act of writing itself—that often, in the creative process, we stumble upon a moment of clarity we could not have charted beforehand. The process of editing this issue of STAIR has been no different. What has emerged in each of its component parts is the necessary interdisciplinarity of addressing climate breakdown. In the diversity of our contributions, we see several interpretations of how responsibilities (individual, collective, and global) are framed within the Anthropocene. At the heart of this issue is the question: in a time of continent-wide wild-fires, clean water crises, corporate green-washing, nuclear-energy debates, and mass medical epidemics, how are we to navigate our roles for change? Whose responsibilities are (unjustly) excluded, and whose are (unjustly) included? How do we develop reflexive solutions and discussions, both in and out of academia? As the first STAIR issue focusing on climate and humankind’s impact on earth in over ten years, we hope to leave this issue’s readers with a broader, elucidated understanding of this critical issue impacting us all. As Tranströmer observes, at the centre of the clearing, ‘the grass is unexpectedly green, and alive’.

II. General Section

Alongside the articles addressing the thematic issue of ‘Anthropocene: Embodying Climate Breakdown’, STAIR publishes a number of articles by emerging scholars across a variety of disciplines on issues of importance in international affairs. In the current issue, STAIR is proud to present original contributions on the political implications of national ‘memories’ in Japan and on the role of amnesty in Nigeria’s policies in the Niger Delta.

Kaisa Saarinen, in her piece, looks at the politics of memory in Japan, identifying the domestic factors that have triggered the Japanese government’s denial of its past in its bilateral relations with South Korea. She examines how this has transformed throughout various Japanese governments throughout time, from the 1980s to the present day. She draws attention to specific events, such as the Nanjing massacre, and their erasure on behalf of certain sects of the Japanese political elite. In exploring the importance of collective memory, Saarinen highlights the inconsistency of Japanese policy when it comes to acceptance of the past, the tensions between reconciliatory versus revisionist sects of the government, and the gap between the revisionist agenda and public opinion.

In addition, Tobechukwu Nneli examines state policy in the Niger Delta by exploring the attempts of the Nigerian government to bring stability to this valuable, oil-producing region. Nneli gives an account of Nigerian policy of the past decades and compares it to concepts of peace, justice, and social cohesion. Ultimately, the article contributes to wider scholarship on the political economy of peace and violence, and it offers a modern perspective of the political, economic, and ideological tradeoffs that governments face when it comes to policy implementation.

The diversity of these two articles, both in their topics and methodologies, reflects STAIR's enduring commitment to showcase the breadth of international relations as a field of study. In drawing together accounts of Japanese politics of memory and Nigerian state governance, this General Section provides an intriguing set of political analyses, supplementing the environmental focus of this most recent edition of STAIR.

III. Book Reviews

When STAIR released its call for book reviews in late 2019, it was immediately noticeable that the topic could not be more prevalent and contemporary. Therefore, it was no surprise when STAIR received a plethora of high-quality submissions for the current section. All of this issue's book reviews directly accompany the 15.2 Theme Section on Climate Change in the Anthropocene. This issue's book reviews offer food for thought by, at times, questioning the very concept of the Anthropocene; open up additional genres by including books that are targeted at audiences beyond exclusively academic realms; and, overall, present excellent analytical rigor and assessment by our authors. I hope you enjoy the reviews as much as we did when selecting them for publication.

The first book, *The Sustainable State: The Future of Government, Economy and Society* by Chandran Nair, is certainly suitable for a wider audience. Nair, a Malaysian businessman, questions one of the dominant approaches to curbing global warming: becoming more sustainable through higher efficiency in the use of resources. Nair classifies such an approach as the 'Western' approach and tries to offer alternatives. As the author of the review, Rowan Alcock, a DPhil student at the University of Oxford, appreciates the bold policy proposals made. However, he criticises the book's writing style. Alcock argues that the polemical nature of the book undermines the bold policy prescriptions and most important contributions of the work. Nevertheless, there is certainly a readership for the book, and Alcock's analytical evaluation and contextualisation of the book might be yet another reason for

readers to give it a read.

The subsequent book is, once again, aimed at being policy relevant. When reviewing *Come On! Capitalism, Short-Termism, and the Destruction of the Planet—A Report to the Club of Rome*, Benjamin Anders, based at New School University in the United States, welcomes this approach as an important contribution to solving the most pressing issues of our time. Even if the breadth of the volume sometimes comes at the expense of detail, as Anders asserts, he still sees the merit in the book by stimulating more academic debates. Anders's review additionally succeeds at laying out the policy propositions of the book, giving further background to the underlying concepts that the authors of the volume might (mistakenly) assume readers to know. Generally, as a work by the co-presidents of the famous 'Club of Rome', the book is worth taking a thorough look at, and it will bring up some new discussion points.

As the name *Environmental Populism: The Politics of Survival in the Anthropocene* already suggests, this volume is concerned with two of the currently most discussed phenomena: climate change and populism. Simon Dalby, a Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies at Wilfried Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada, evaluates the analytical merit for both concepts. This book has become yet more relevant over the last few months, as it looks at the two aforementioned political phenomena by embedding them in the case study of Australia. Here, the author especially shows how reluctant the political class in Australia seems to be vis-à-vis general, structural reforms. In his review, Dalby sees a weakness in the book's lack of discussion of the Anthropocene concept. Such an assessment is covered in much more depth in the two remaining books, which even question the concept itself.

In *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*, Charlie Gerstrom looks at a volume consisting of essays with varying views. Across the different essays, the concept of globalisation and the Western approach to mitigating climate change are heavily criticised for ignoring underlying power dynamics and thus preventing any meaningful change. Therefore, eco-socialism is offered as an alternative. The very thorough analysis by Gerstrom allows anyone interested, even without pre-existing knowledge in Marxist typology, to make up their mind about the book. Gerstrom flags the passages that are not easily comprehensible and discusses their underlying concepts in the review itself.

Lastly, Tariro Kamuti, based at the Centre of Africa Studies in Bloemfontein, South Africa, analyses another book discussing alternative models and eco-socialism. The book *The Climate Crisis:*

South African and Global Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives discusses several case studies, e.g. the transition of the South African energy sector. This volume once again appeals to a wider audience than only to academics, as the chapters are written by academics, activists, and leaders of social movements. Similar to the example above, this book questions whether the approach to tackling climate change by putting humans (and hence capital) at the centre is the right one. Kamuti assesses the book as an important encouragement to thinking outside the box of ideological patterns that come across as unimpeachable for many others.

As the recipient of STAIR 15.2 on Climate Change and the Anthropocene, you will be able to read cutting-edge research in the field as well as to discuss the newest developments in the discipline at large. Concerning the latter, the Book Reviews Section should be a great starting point. The reviews, as introduced above, cover a variety of issues and complement the articles from the Theme Section. Overall, we hope that you will enjoy this section, and that the issue in its entirety will spark new, productive discussions about the most pressing issues of our time.

Notes

- 1 Jim Pojar and Andrew MacKinnon, *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast: Washington, Oregon, British Columbia & Alaska* (Auburn, WA: Lone Pine Publishing, 1994).
- 2 A.L. Westerling and B.P. Bryant, "Climate Change and Wildfire in California," *An Interdisciplinary, International Journal Devoted to the Description, Causes and Implications of Climatic Change* 87, Supplement 1 (2008): 231-49.
- 3 Ada Limón, "Salvage," Greenpeace, February 2020, <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/stories/ada-limon-on-our-climate-in-crisis/>.
- 4 Nicola Davidson, "The Anthropocene Epoch: Have We Entered a New Phase of Planetary History," *The Guardian*, May 30, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/30/anthropocene-epoch-have-we-entered-a-new-phase-of-planetary-history>.
- 5 Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," *The Anthropocene Review* 1 (2014): 62-69.
- 6 Madeleine Fagan, "On the Dangers of an Anthropocene Epoch: Geological Time, Political Time, and Post-Human Politics," *Political Geography* 70 (2019): 55-63.
- 7 "Chronostratigraphy," Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy, <https://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/stratigraphic-guide/chronostratigraphy/>.
- 8 Sophie Zeldin-O'Neill, "It's a 'crisis,' not a change," *The Guardian*, October 16, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/16/guardian-language-changes-climate-environment?fbclid=IwAR3rBHQ5-tlZrjUuDoU8ZjInz4I6XCwNAuXqGuREVADHO4g_wyOGaF6QA2A
- 9 Fred Pearce, "As Climate Change Worsens, A Cascade of Tipping Points Looms," *Yale Environment* 360, December 5, 2019, <https://e360.yale.edu/>

features/as-climate-changes-worsens-a-cascade-of-tipping-points-looms

10 Tomas Tranströmer, translated by Robin Fulton, *The Great Enigma: New and Collected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 2006).

THEME SECTION

A NEW ONTOLOGY FOR THE ANTHROPOCENE: SEEING BEYOND THE ENLIGHTENMENT'S ANTHROPOCENTRISM TO RECONCEPTUALIZE REALITY, CAUSALITY AND THE HUMAN MIND

Michael Babcock

Abstract

The call for a new ontology must be accompanied by considerations of metaphysical concepts central to how people frame and interact with the natural world. Three concepts central to the Enlightenment ontology, and hence to how Westerners have historically framed and interacted with the natural world, are; reality, causality, and the human mind. The first step in arriving at a new ontology for the Anthropocene is uncovering the anthropocentric biases in these concepts, as developed in the Enlightenment era by Immanuel Kant, David Hume, and Rene Descartes. Given the debates around the concept, the fact is not that humans live in the Anthropocene; the fact is that the concept 'Anthropocene' exists. It follows that there now exists a particular 'lens' through which humans are framing and interacting with the world that did not exist prior to the twenty-first century. This lens, in several of its manifestations, has emerged due to human interactions with the natural world, and it has been abetted by Enlightenment conceptualizations of reality, causality, and the human mind. This paper reviews sociological, philosophical, and ecological literature to highlight how a dialectical relationship between humans and the natural world has brought about the concept of the Anthropocene. It posits that a new ontology for the Anthropocene must be based on non-Anthropocentric conceptualizations of reality, causality, and the human mind.

To meet the Grand Challenges, it may be necessary to identify individual and collective 'blind spots' in current thinking that 'reveal themselves in our theories and concepts in the form of deep epistemological and ontological assumptions'.

Michael Babcock, "A New Ontology for the Anthropocene: Seeing Beyond the Enlightenment's Anthropocentrism to Reconceptualize Reality, Causality and the Human Mind," *St Antony's International Review* 15. no. 2 (2020): 12-41.

To state and to solve any one of the significant problems of our period requires a selection of materials, conceptions, and methods from more than any one of these several disciplines. A social scientist need not 'master the field' in order to be familiar enough with its materials and perspectives to use them in clarifying the problems that concern him. It is in terms of such topical 'problems' rather than in accordance with academic boundaries that specialization ought to occur.

— C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*

1.1 The Anthropocene

The concept of the Anthropocene was put forth, apparently with some frustration, by the Nobel Prize winner and atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen at an academic conference in 2000.¹ Crutzen and others continued to work with the concept, and a more developed case for the Anthropocene was published by Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill in 2007.² Since then, usage of the concept has increased dramatically.

This is demonstrated in a recent research article, in which two graphs are presented detailing the use of the term 'Anthropocene' in titles of scholarly articles; the increase around the year 2010 resembles, somewhat ironically, the graphs in the Anthropocene-oriented 'Great Acceleration' project.³ Today, a Google Scholar search for 'Anthropocene' results in 128,000 results in 0.07 seconds, while a search, by comparison, for 'Darwin' returns 1,450,000 in 0.05 seconds, and "Paradigm" results in 4,390,000 results in 0.10 seconds. Thus, while the term has yet to hit the upper echelons of the research stratosphere, the growth of its use has been substantial—from zero to 128,000 in a quarter century. As more researchers pick up or grapple over the baton, much thought, debate, and thousands of research articles are being written assessing how the Anthropocene is to be articulated, re-articulated, contextualized, and re-contextualized. For example: Biermann, Frank. "The Anthropocene: A Governance Perspective"⁴; Bennett, Elena M, et al. "Bright Spots: Seeds of a Good Anthropocene";⁵ Corlett, Richard T. "The Anthropocene Concept in Ecology and Conservation";⁶ Biermann, Frank, et al. "Down to Earth: Contextualizing the Anthropocene";⁷ Brondizio, Eduardo S, et al. "Re-Conceptualizing the Anthropocene: A Call for Collaboration";⁸ Lewis, Simon L, and Mark A Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene",⁹ and Toivanen, Tero,

et al. "The Many Anthropocenes: A Transdisciplinary Challenge for the Anthropocene Research".¹⁰

This rush of research interest has also brought forth the inevitable detractors who reject the term and instead propose their own locutions. Examples include Roncancio, Ivan Vargas, et al. "From the Anthropocene to Mutual Thriving: An Agenda for Higher Education in the Ecozoic";¹¹ Moore, Jason W. "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis";¹² Preiser, Rika, et al. "Navigating Alternative Framings of Human-Environment Interactions: Variations on the Theme of 'Finding Nemo'";¹³ and Prescott, Susan, and Alan Logan, "Down to Earth: Planetary Health and Biophilosophy in the Symbiocene Epoch".¹⁴

As a result, the exact nature of the concept has become cumbersome, with debate emerging over what should be included within the definition of the concept and what the concept really means. Consequently, to proclaim that the Anthropocene is exclusively a geological or exclusively a 'this' or 'that' concept is to reductively dismiss the breadth of the debate. This paper does not join the fray and attempt to define or contextualize the Anthropocene. Instead, it takes the concept of the Anthropocene—to echo Wittgenstein—as a given.¹⁵ Whatever the Anthropocene is, it exists. The Anthropocene is written about in books and articles and discussed at academic conferences, and it is having demonstrable effects on how human beings are living their lives.

An important component in this research activity and writing—if one dares hazard criteria which the various Anthropocene appellations share—are calls for change based on processes occurring on the planet, showing varying degrees of connection to human activities. Prominent among these include: rising and irreversible carbon dioxide emissions;¹⁶ land use change;¹⁷ sustainable and purportedly unsustainable food systems and policy;¹⁸ rising global and regional temperatures;¹⁹ encroachment upon stipulated planetary boundaries;²⁰ rises in invasive species;²¹ and biodiversity loss and agencies devoted to its preservation.²² Taken together, this literature is producing an identifiable and ever-swelling current of opinion that demands change. This paper is itself a response to the call for change made by this journal; specifically, the notion that the emergence of the Anthropocene calls for a new ontology. The paper, therefore, builds on these ecological facts—which the author accepts—with a philosophical inquiry into metaphysical concepts and ontology.

Ontology is defined as 'a theory or conception relating to the nature of being'.²³ The concepts which form an ontology subtly guide how humans frame and comprehend their place in the

natural world.²⁴ Given that human activities are connected to the emergence of the Anthropocene, conceptualisations of these three concepts are also implicated. This paper uncovers the decidedly anthropocentric conception of the nature of being that emerged out of the Enlightenment—an uncovering made more prominent set against what is considered by certain scholars to be the single major ontological shift in the recorded 2500-year history of the West: the shift from an Aristotelian/Scholastic ontology to the ontology developed during the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment.²⁵

A framework capable of displaying the shift from the Aristotelian to the Enlightenment ontology was identified by American philosopher E.A. Burtt in his 1924 book *The Metaphysical Foundations of Science*. Burtt emphasizes how ‘three essential points are to be distinguished in the transformation which issued in the victory of this metaphysical view...[a] change in the prevailing conception of (1) reality, (2) causality, and (3) of the human mind’.²⁶ This paper employs Burtt’s framework to confront the task of outlining a new ontology.

Employing Burtt’s framework, it is argued that a new ontology for the Anthropocene can be envisioned by once again reconceptualizing these concepts. This is supplemented with a demonstration of how these concepts shifted in a decidedly anthropocentric manner from the Aristotelian to the Enlightenment ontology (Sections 3.2-3.5). If such a shift has occurred in the past, it can occur again today. The conclusion highlights important and wide-ranging research on reconceptualizing these concepts and adds to this literature by using Burtt’s framework to: (i) uncover the anthropocentric conceptualizations of reality, causality, and the human mind in the Enlightenment ontology, and (ii) suggest what a new ontology for the Anthropocene might look like today.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology employed is a combination of philosophical and historical analysis. Sections 2.1-2.2 use the dialectical method, a methodology which has as its most prominent exponents G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, and the Frankfurt School.²⁷ This is used to describe the process of ongoing human interactions with natural and physical environments, how this leads to new ideas, how new ideas lead to new experiences, and how new experiences and new ideas lead to changes in physical environments and institutions.²⁸ This paper then argues that through human actions and responses to a changing physical and institutional world, the concept of Anthropocene has emerged; through this concept, certain human

beings are now framing the world and altering their behaviours in response to both the world and the concept itself. In other words, experiences are creating new ideas, and new ideas are creating new experiences.

Sections 3.1-3.5 are a historical examination demonstrating the anthropocentric reconceptualization of reality, causality, and the human mind from the Aristotelian/Scholastic ontology to the Enlightenment ontology. Each section is an inquiry into each of the three major traditions of Enlightenment philosophy: Kantian idealism, British empiricism, and Cartesian rationalism.

The paper as a whole is guided by Martin Heidegger's method of *aletheia*, or uncovering. This methodology focuses on the notion that when looking for a solution to a problem, the problem-solver encounters conceptual barriers. These make arriving at a solution difficult, because it is difficult to recognize or even think about a solution at all.²⁹ Preliminary requirements for the use of such a methodology are described by Karen O'Brien:

This includes the capacity to become critically aware of one's own assumptions (and those of others), the capacity for critical reflection and open-mindedness, and the capacity to take in multiple perspectives and viewpoints, including those that challenge prevailing norms and interests (Barber, 1961; Mezirow, 2000). This involves the recognition and integration of subjective and objective realities and multiple types of knowledge, which depends on insights from the social sciences, humanities and natural sciences.³⁰

Only by overcoming prevailing conceptualizations can a new understanding be arrived at, and this overcoming results in a disclosure, or uncovering.³¹ Historically, dramatic shifts in perspective have occurred by way of such conceptual disclosure: Einstein's reconceptualization of space, time, and matter as opposed to Newton's conceptualization of these concepts; the removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and the acceptance of institutions like gay marriage; the reconceptualization of time that allowed Darwin to postulate his theory of evolutionary change; the understanding that organs did not constitute the elementary building blocks of life; and overcoming preformation theories in embryology.³²

By employing a willful and conscious blindness to that which is largely taken for granted—core assumptions, beliefs, and/or prevailing conceptualizations—this method seeks to uncover or disclose what is truly the case. However, these core assumptions, beliefs, and conceptualizations must be identified first. The method is not one of direct argumentation, though it does indeed make an argument. The impetus is not towards a 'solution,' but

towards allowing both the author and readers to see that what they have not seen before and to think thoughts that were beforehand unthinkable.³³

2.1 Humanity's Dialectic with the Natural World: Background

Human beings live in a natural world. Like other species of plant and animal, humans have the capacity to alter the natural world. Yet, on a level perhaps beyond all other species of plants and animals, these alterations result in humans' changed perspectives and reconceptualization of both themselves and the natural world. These lead to changes in human behaviour. In short, humans and the natural world engage in a continuous dialectic, one which results in changes both in human thought and the natural world.

The dialectical manner in which humans interact with and reconceptualize their world and immediate environment in concert with interactions with nature and society is documented throughout the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences. In philosophical and historical discourse, this process is referred to by post-Kantian German idealism as a dialectic: *thesis-antithesis-synthesis*.³⁴ It is central to most, if not all, scientific research. Scientists interact with, learn from, listen to, and respond to nature in a dialectical manner: scientists build instruments to run experiments and test hypotheses; these experiments lead to results which change perceptions of nature and scientific environments; and these lead to the invention of new instruments and theories, hypotheses, and so forth.³⁵

From a sociological and economic perspective, Marx argued for the recognition of how class consciousness and the technological and economic superstructure of a society directly influence personal consciousness.³⁶ He further postulated a society beyond this struggle, in which human beings, bereft of class struggles and class consciousness, would attain what he referred to as their 'species self'. Attempts to implement this vision have not been as convincing as the theory. Much has recently been written and discussed about Marx's specific environmental focus, too.³⁷ Max Weber, instrumental in founding interpretive sociology, focused in his writings on religion, institutions, and power structures and how these reflect a dialectical orientation: human beings are in constant interaction with that which surrounds them, socially, physically, and institutionally.³⁸ In surveying the conceptual foundations of Weber's work, it is evident that he was concerned to describe and understand social action and how individual actions operate in concert with bureaucratic regimes, with other individuals, and with groups of individuals within a society.³⁹

Weber, along with the Viennese philosopher Alfred Schutz, is acknowledged as a major influence on John Berger and Peter Luckmann, authors of perhaps the best-known sociology of knowledge text of the twentieth century, *The Social Construction of Reality*.⁴⁰ This work, cited below, highlights the multiplicity of ways that diverse groups interact with society and how interactions within and between different groups in complex societies function. Sociological work in this area continues with Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, with Giddens positing that 'structures shape people's practices, but it is also people's practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures'.⁴¹ He further describes structures and human agency in a decidedly dialectical manner, stating that 'structures must not be conceptualized as simply placing constraints on human agency, but as enabling'.⁴²

These ideas have been developed in regard to institutions in the work of two Nobel laureates in economics, Douglass North and Elinor Ostrom. North developed his ideas in such works as *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, while Ostrom developed hers in a number of works throughout her career, most notably her own 1990 publication, *Governing the Commons*. In concert with the dialectical human-nature interactions outlined here, she writes in her 2005 *Understanding Institutional Diversity*: 'Human decision making is the result of many layers of internal processing starting with the *biophysical structure*, but with layers upon layers of cognitive structure on top of the *biophysical components* (emphasis added)'.⁴³

These institutional applications have been incorporated into environmental research with the emergence of anthologies such as *Institutions and Environmental Change: Principal Findings, Applications, and Research*. In this book's introduction, the authors state the questions at the heart of their research agenda: 'When and how do prevailing institutional arrangements influence subjects to give them reasons to behave in a manner that is unsustainable, whether this takes the form of depleting renewable resources...or emitting pollutants into the Earth's atmosphere?'⁴⁴

An environmental approach to this dialectic is central to the discipline of environmental geography. This is particularly evident in the subdiscipline of land change systems science, a research area whose expansion endorses the dialectical view that experiences lead to new ideas which then lead to new experiences. In fact, land change systems science owes its rise to prominence specifically to the human-induced changes encompassed under the concept of the Anthropocene: '[Land change science] has been stimulated by international concern regarding global environmental change, the search for sustainability, and the recognition of the human

impress on the land'.⁴⁵

Many other influential thinkers have worked on similar ideas from an ecological perspective, including Gregory Bateson, Lance Gunderson and C.S. Holling, and Craig Allen and Ahjond Garestani.⁴⁶ However, the founder of the environmental postulation of the dialectic between humans and the physical world is George Perkins Marsh, a Vermont native, who in 1864 published *Man and Nature: Or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*. The epigraph from the original makes clear both the nature of his work, as well as the importance of underlying metaphysics, here with reference to the Bible: 'Not all the winds, and storms, and earthquakes, and seas, and seasons of the world, have done so much to revolutionize the earth as Man [sic], the power of an endless life, has done since the day he came forth upon it, and received dominion over it'.⁴⁷ (emphasis added)

Marsh's work eventually resulted in a 1955 conference at Princeton University, which then led to the publication of a tome of over 1,100 pages, consisting of fifty-four chapters written by various contributors and dedicated to Marsh's memory.⁴⁸ On this collection, a reviewer of the collection remarked at the time: 'This massive but relatively inexpensive, encyclopedic volume merits a place in all sizable school and public libraries, and it could advantageously be owned by all teachers of conservation, geography, sociology, and history'.⁴⁹ With the emergence of the Anthropocene, perhaps works of this sort could today be made available to a much broader suite of disciplines.

2.2 Humanity's Dialectic with Nature World: Analysis

Analytically, within such a human-nature dialectic, four components are discernible: one mental, another structural/institutional, a third structural/physical, and a fourth, behavioural. Humans alter their physical environments through the act of living; this alteration of physical environments results in changes in thought; changes in thought result in changes in social, political and cultural institutions; changes in institutions result in mental and physical alterations due to now-altered institutional environments; mental and physical changes result in changes to institutions, physical environments, and thoughts, ad infinitum.

These ideas have been put forth by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, himself an early Hegelian, and they are summarized as follows:

Ideas lead to actions that produce experiences that shift ideas. Actions, and their effects on

social structure and institutions, are intervening variables in the effects of ideas on ideas. Ideas yield perceptions, moral and cognitive interpretations, and value judgments lead to choices or inclinations that produce actions that lead to the production of religions and systems of laws, art, literatures, myths, technologies, economies, states, revolutions, and wars – and all this produces experiences that shift ideas. Therefore, one cannot explain the development of ideas on the basis only of those ideas.⁵⁰

'Ideas lead to actions' is synonymous with the postulation that ideas lead to behaviours; and actions lead to *'effects on social structure and institutions'* which lead to human *'choices or inclinations'* which *'lead to the production'* of various social structures and institutions is synonymous with the postulation that behaviours affect structures (both physical and institutional). This process occurs across multiple realms with the result that *'all this produces experiences that shift ideas'*, which is synonymous with the shifting experiences and ideas occurring in the era of the Anthropocene, as witnessed by the sharp rise in academic publishing on the subject and academic journals circulating calls for research articles, such as this one. These two facts demonstrate how ideas are indeed shifting today as a result of human experiences brought on by changes in physical environments and institutional structures.

Taylor's dialectical formulation was developed earlier by John Berger and Peter Luckmann in their 1962 *The Social Construction of Reality*—ideas which are again similar to those expressed by Elinor Ostrom in 2005 (below). According to Berger and Luckmann:

A body of knowledge, once it is raised to the level of a relatively autonomous subuniverse of meaning, has the capacity to act back upon the collectivity that has produced it. For instance, Jews may become social scientists because they have special problems in society as Jews. But once they have been initiated into the social-scientific universe of discourse, they may not only look upon society from an angle that is no longer distinctively Jewish, but even their social activities as Jews may change as a result of their newly acquired social-scientific perspectives. The important principle for our general considerations is that the relationship between knowledge and its social base is a dialectical one, that is, knowledge is a social product and knowledge is a factor in social change. This principle of the dialectic between social production and the objectivated world that is its product has already been explicated; it is especially important to keep it in mind in any analysis of concrete subuniverses of meaning.⁵¹

Returning to Taylor's production of 'religions and systems of laws, art, literatures, myths, technologies, economies, states, revolutions, and wars',⁵² Berger and Luckmann describe how complex societies create and house 'subuniverses of meaning' and how these 'act back upon the collectivity that has produced it'.⁵³ They also echo Marx's refrain in stating that 'the relationship between knowledge and its social base is a dialectical one', before restating that there exists a dialectic between 'social production and the objectivated world'.⁵⁴ Their work continuously drums up the mantra of Weberian interpretive sociology and the sociology of knowledge: particular ideas and practices emerge within particular intellectual and cultural horizons in historical contexts.⁵⁵

The migration of these ideas to the twenty-first century, specifically Taylor's 'social structure and institutions, [as] intervening variables in the effects of ideas on ideas', Berger and Luckmann's 'subuniverses of meaning', and Arthur Kostler's 'holons'—'nested subassemblies of part-whole entities that comprise complex adaptive systems' (cited by Ostrom)—is found in the work of Elinor Ostrom.⁵⁶ Echoing these notions, she writes: 'Building on top of the single individual are structures composed of multiple individuals—families, firms, industries, nations, and many other units—themselves composed of many parts and, in turn, parts of still larger structures. What is a whole system at one level is a part of a system at another level'.⁵⁷

This is indeed the age of the Anthropocene, and the age of the Anthropocene is connected to human activities; human activities are structured by a multiplicity of layered structures, *gestalts*, holons, and subuniverses of meaning working backwards upon themselves, and a tangled dialectic rests upon the natural world. It follows that the emergence of the Anthropocene is a result of the interaction of diverse actors operating through multiple economic, scientific, metaphysical, social, and cultural levels.

An ontology is a system on a broad metaphysical level: it is a particular subuniverse of meaning. This paper focuses on this singular subuniverse of meaning and specific categories of metaphysics associated with it. If both the preceding analysis and the claim that there has only ever been one significant ontological shift in the history of the West are taken seriously, then this Enlightenment ontological subuniverse of meaning is clearly, though subtly, implicated in the emergence of the Anthropocene.

3.1 The Turn-to-the-self

The turn-to-the-self refers to a metaphysical way of being that swept across Europe in the Modern era, defined here as the

beginning of the sixteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth century. The term is synonymous with humanism and anthropocentrism, with the latter defined as: 'Primary or exclusive focus on humanity; the view or belief that humanity is the central or most important element of existence, especially as opposed to God or the natural world'. The final clause of this definition is particularly important for this paper.

An examination of the connection between these concepts and Enlightenment thought features prominently in French philosopher Alain Renaut's *The Era of the Individual: a Contribution to a History of Subjectivity*. In the preface, Renaut states:

Ever since the emergence of modernity, humanism had after all consisted in valorizing humanity's twofold capacity to be conscious of itself (self-reflection) and to determine its own destiny (freedom as self-determination). Historically, these two dimensions have defined the classic idea of *subjectivity* as consisting in the capacity—the quintessentially human capacity—to be the conscious, responsible author of one's thoughts and acts: in short, to be their foundation or *sub-iectum*.⁵⁹

Renaut later defines *sub-iectum* as the 'underlying reality on which everything else depends', and these distinctly modern assumptions—freedom as self-determination, authorship, and *sub-iectum*—are prominent ideals espoused in the Enlightenment conceptualizations of reality, causality, and the human mind, as we shall see later in this paper.⁶⁰

It was, of course, an unheralded confluence of historical events, discoveries, and ideas which combined during the early Modern period to give credence to these assumptions. These include the emergence of humanism, an educational agenda concerned with human nature and the study of human affairs;⁶¹ Copernicus' Revolution and Galileo's subsequent telescopic discoveries; the Reformation and its subjectivist overtures stating that each individual has the capacity to read and interpret the Bible on their own; European voyages across the world's oceans and the perception of human omnipotence associated with 'conquering' this aspect of nature; Francis Bacon's methodological and social reformist ideas expounded in the *Novum Organum* and *New Atlantis*;⁶² Isaac Newton's universal laws of motion and gravitation and the presumed human omniscience that became associated with this achievement;⁶³ and God's initially reduced status to a clock-work deity and then eventual death, as stated in Nietzsche's

These achievements and discoveries gave European intellectuals allusions to the formerly divine notions of omnipotence and omniscience.⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, the turn-to-the-self rapidly swept across Europe and was adopted and put to use by estimable philosophers, legislators, and natural philosophers: Hugo Grotius' legal work; Carl Linnaeus' taxonomy; Baruch Spinoza's ethics; Baron de Montaigne's essays; and the works of philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, a very influential thinker on both Nietzsche and Freud, who is famous today for affirming 'the world is my idea', a more hard to imagine patently anthropocentric ideal. The French encyclopedists, not to be forgotten, attempted to distil the euphoria of an epoch by categorizing and demonstrating the achievements of human knowledge. This was achieved through a collaborative effort on a variety of topics: tools, instruments, philosophy, theology, technological know-how—were all brought together in one place, all based on human reason, and all combined with the intention of demonstrating the extent of human knowledge and to teach individuals how to think for themselves.⁶⁷ It was, in a sense, the Protestant Bible of the natural philosopher, giving each natural philosopher the tools to read the world on their own without the need for an interlocutor.

The turn-to-the-self eventually extended into artistic and aesthetic realms, further contributing to this 'massive subjective turn of modern culture'.⁶⁸ Charles Taylor writes: 'The specificity of art and beauty cease to be defined in terms of the reality or its manner of depiction, and come to be identified by the kinds of feeling they arouse in us, a feeling of its own special kind'.⁶⁹ Art and beauty, too, lost their Platonic and objective qualities and became, much like the *sub-iectum* movement in general, concentrated on the *individual subject* and the feelings and expressions art, poetry, and literature arise in the *individual*.

Consequently, with the fully developed turn-to-the-self—that of the self-reflective, self-determining, autonomous human *sub-iectum*—humans came to assert their increasingly worldwide significance through greater autonomy from nature, from tradition, and from God. As Renaut summarizes: 'The humanistic man [sic] is one who does not receive his norms and laws either from the nature of things (as per Aristotle) or from God, but who establishes them himself, on the basis of his own reason and will'.⁷⁰

3.2 Historical Analysis

The turn-to-the-self within Immanuel Kant, David Hume, and René Descartes' reconceptualization of reality, causality, and

the human mind is, to borrow a phrase from Descartes, clear and distinct. Westerners today continue to live among these anthropocentric conceptualizations, both in the sense that many people frame aspects of their world through these Enlightenment concepts, and because Western thought in general, especially as articulated in universities, is unimaginable without these three thinkers. In their marked opposition to the Aristotelian/Scholastic ontology, and with the success achieved in replacing this ontology, writers, scholars, reformers, and educators who came after them were writing either in response to them or directly in their shadows. Consequently, they have been immensely influential in shaping the trajectory of Western thought, a conceptual and metaphysical trajectory that has brought humanity to the era of the Anthropocene.

3.3 Reality: From Plato to Kant

Plato's framework regarding reality has been incomparably influential in the West, both in its philosophical form and in its migration to certain forms of Christianity.⁷¹ Immanuel Kant's postulation of a different conception of reality has likewise been markedly influential in Western thought. A key difference between the two is that Kant's postulation of reality is decidedly 'this worldly', centered on human cognitive capacities, while Plato's is distinctly 'otherworldly', centered on an Eternal Realm existing beyond the world that humans inhabit.

Plato's corpus is generally divided into the early, middle, and late dialogues. The early dialogues are composed of the so-called *Socratic Dialogues*: *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, and *Protagoras*—texts centred on Socrates and the famous Socratic method, or *elenchus*. In these dialogues, readers witness Socrates' attempts to ask the purported wise people of Athens questions regarding piety (*Euthyphro*), virtue (*Protagoras*), and justice (*Crito*), and then observes as his interlocutors fail to sufficiently demonstrate their knowledge of the said concepts. Fine theatre aside, the Socratic method was fundamentally flawed, in that it led to a scepticism that Socrates himself left unanswered at his death. That is, if no one knew what piety, virtue, or justice were, neither did Socrates. Plato responded to this scepticism by developing the Theory of Forms in his middle dialogues, the *Republic*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Symposium*, and it is these 'otherworldly' Eternal Forms which give his theory the moniker of otherworldliness. Arthur Lovejoy, author of *The Great Chain of Being*, writes: 'It is through [Plato]...that the conception of the unseen eternal world, of which the visible world is but a pale copy, gains a permanent foothold in the West'.⁷²

The distinction between the visible and the unseen eternal world, that which is 'real' and represented by the Eternal Forms (such as wisdom and virtue) is demonstrated in the following quote from the *Republic*:

Then those who have no experience of wisdom and virtue but are ever devoted to feasting and that sort of thing are swept downward, it seems, and back again to the centre, and so sway and roam to and fro throughout their lives, but they have never transcended all this and turned their eyes to the true upper region nor been wafted there, nor ever been really filled with real things, nor ever tasted stable and pure pleasure, but with eyes bent upon the earth and heads bowed down over their tables they feast like cattle, grazing and copulating, ever greedy for more of these delights, and in their greed kicking and butting one another with horns and hoofs of iron they slay one another in sateless avidity, because they are vainly striving to satisfy things that are not real the unreal and incontinent part of their souls.⁷³

Forms such as wisdom and virtue are the *real*, a noun used repeatedly in this passage, and they exist in some "true upper region." These are distinct from the *unreal*, which is the visible world that surrounds humans, and which is associated with vain striving in this passage. The visible world depicted here is the "pale copy" of the world of Eternal Forms alluded to by Lovejoy.

Kant, regarded as the zenith of Enlightenment and Modernist thought, attempted to turn Plato's idealism on its head with a 'Copernican Revolution' based on his transcendental idealism.⁷⁴ Kant's Copernican Revolution marks the turn-to-the-self par excellence. Like Copernicus' Revolution, which shifted the perspective from an earth-centred universe to a sun-centered universe, Kant's revolution consisted in turning the human mind into the centre of knowledge and understanding and away from the external world. More technically, Kant built his conceptualization of reality upon the following foundations: "The *à priori* elements in our knowledge must... be brought to experience by us, and the world that we know by their means must be transcendently ideal: its reality is dependent on us and on these *à priori* conditions that have their origin in us'.⁷⁵ For Kant, the world (reality) that humans know is dependent upon the innate capacities of the human mind. The human mind creates the world/reality.

Humans bring *a priori* knowledge—knowledge prior to experience—to the world, and this *a priori* knowledge takes the form of intuitions and categories, specifically the transcendental aesthetic and the categories of understanding. It is through these intuitions and categories that humans are able to know the world. This is transcendently ideal, as opposed to the ideal of Plato's

ideal Forms, as it stipulates that humans can only know the world as it is cognized through these intuitions and categories, and they cannot know the world as it is in itself, which to Plato is the world of Eternal Forms (the ultimate reality). Plato's position is most clearly elucidated in his famous Allegory of the Cave, in which certain humans are portrayed as able to come out of the cave and 'see the light', where the light is a metaphor for the ultimate reality that is the Eternal Forms.⁷⁶ To Plato, humans can thus *partake in* the ultimate reality, whereas for Kant humans *actively construct* reality.

Kantian scholar Michael Friedman summarizes the turn-to-the-self within Kant's system, where maths, science, morality, law, culture, art, history, and religion are all subsumed under the human mental faculties of sensibility, understanding, and reason: The Kantian system, at the height of the Enlightenment, had achieved a remarkable synthesis of virtually the whole of human thought. Mathematics and natural science, morality and law, culture and art, history and religion, all found their places within Kant's intricate architectonic, based on the three fundamental faculties of sensibility, understanding, and reason. These three faculties, in turn, depicted a universal normative structure common to all human beings as such, at all times and in an all places, and thus underwrote a common claim to objectivity and intersubjective validity in all areas of human life.⁷⁷

Kant and his anthropocentric transcendental idealism were immensely influential, shifting thought unlike any philosopher since, perhaps, Plato: 'Kant radically and irreversibly transformed the nature of Western thought. After he wrote, no one could ever again think of either science or morality as a matter of the passive reception of entirely external truth or reality'.⁷⁸

3.4 Causality: From Aristotle and the Stoics to Hume

Ancient theories of causality are generally associated with Aristotle's theory of the Four Causes.⁷⁹ Somewhat less well-known are Stoic conceptions of causation. Both the Stoics and the Aristotelians focus on the notion of *ousia*, or being, and seek to provide explanations for how an entity came or comes into being.⁸⁰ This differs markedly from Hume's notion of causation, which is a psychologized, atomistic, Newtonian conception postulating cause as occurring within the human mind.⁸¹

The Stoics were a large and influential school originating in Ancient Greece through Diogenes the Cynic and Zeno of Citrium. Today, they are most well-known through the works of Roman writers Seneca, Epictetus, and the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Due

to the breadth and longevity of Stoicism, attempting to articulate *the* position on a particular matter is much the specialist's task, and this holds true for causality as well. In broad strokes, Stoic causation is based on materialist considerations and processes occurring in the natural world, and not, again like Hume, in the human mind.⁸² Much like Aristotle's Four Causes—which detail how an entity comes into being through formal, material, efficient, and final causes—Stoics postulate a process-oriented notion of causation, contrasting both Epicurean and Humean atomistic, event-based causation.

The Roman orator and legislator Cicero wrote of the Stoic Chrysippus' as postulating that:

'Some causes... are perfect (*perfectae*) and principal (*principales*), others are auxiliary (*adiuvantes*) and proximate (*proximae*).'⁸⁴ Chrysippus therefore explores causation as a detailed and process-based concept, in which multiple considerations are taken into account to ascertain how or why a certain event has occurred or an entity has come into being. Much like complex systems theory today, the Stoics hold that there are often many 'causes' implicated in an outcome, process, or event, and that it may be impossible to separate these analytically.⁸⁵

Hume posited an atomistic and Newtonian analysis of causation, an approach discernible in the subtitle of his first major work, *A Treatise of Human Nature: An attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*. In this and in other works, Hume was influenced by the mathematical and experimental achievements of Galileo, Newton, and the empiricist philosophy of John Locke. His experimental method is itself guided by Galilean methodological maxims, such as 'to test causality by empirical standards', as opposed to rational definitions which cannot be 'confirmed or denied by observation and experience'.⁸⁶ The appellation Galilean is used as an experiential maxim mirroring Galileo's dissolution of Aristotle's theory of motion, one that proceeded through Galileo's use of the inclined plane experiment in opposition to Aristotelian argumentation and definitions.⁸⁷ This further emulates Galileo's arguments regarding the Bible and natural observation from his *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*,⁸⁸ his work with the telescope and the moons of Jupiter, as well as Newton's methodological statements in the *General Scholium of The Principia*.⁸⁹

With regards to Locke, Hume follows his critical turn in

epistemology in seeking to question the limits and scope of human knowledge and understanding.⁹⁰ Such an epistemological turn is intrinsically tied to the human mind or knowing subject, and the extent to which Hume followed these ideas is detailed through his scepticism—one which resulted in Hume's infamous claim that the concept of cause itself cannot be known, as it cannot be experienced.⁹¹

Hume's conceptualization of causation posits an event-based psychologized atomism based on what Hume calls 'constant conjunction', an approach that has earned the name 'the received view of causation'. 'The received (Humean) view holds that a causal statement has the form, if C, then E, where C and E designate singulars: events, conditions, etc. The antecedent C, from an existential point of view, is an event or condition which is prior to or simultaneous with its effect and the relation between C and E is a constant conjunction'.⁹² Hume based his theory on a sensation-based epistemology centred on: (i) ideas and impressions, and (ii) his principles of association. Ideas and impressions are singular 'atoms' and the sense impressions humans received from the outside world. The principles of association are Newtonian analogs that operate to 'hold together' these ideas and impressions. Humans understand causation based on these sense impressions and the principals of association that combine these: 'The relation of cause and effect belongs, with those of resemblance and contiguity in time and place, to the principles of association by means of which Hume explains all connections of ideas... these three principles are 'the cement of the universe'.⁹³

Hume's decidedly anthropocentric turn-to-the-self is apparent in his definition of a cause in the *Treatise*: 'A cause is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other' (emphasis added).⁹⁴ Causation has thus been reconceptualized from an Aristotelian and Stoic multi-level process based on processes occurring in the natural world, to a psychologized Newtonian, atomistic mechanism operating solely in the human mind. And while research suggests that people today tend to conceptualize causality in terms of the Humean, received, linear view, it does not suggest that this conceptualization is inevitable or innate.⁹⁵ Humans can reconceptualize causality today—it has happened in the past.

3.5 The Human Mind: From Aristotle to Descartes

Aristotle offers his account on the soul/mind in his treatise

De Anima, in which he makes a distinction among the different attributes of souls, and explains that souls as animate principles of life, are manifest in plants as well as in humans. These five attributes are: 'the nutritive, the appetitive, the sensory, the locomotive, and the power of thinking'.⁹⁶ After naming these attributes, Aristotle describes how each pertains to particular functions in particular beings, and he constructs a hierarchical scheme with the lowest of beings, such as plants, endowed with nutritive through to sensory functions, while the faculty of thought—the highest attribute—is found only in certain animals: 'That perceiving and practical thinking are not identical is therefore obvious; for the former is universal in the animal world, the latter is found in only a small division of it'.⁹⁷

Regarding the mind, or the 'faculty of thought', Aristotle considers it to be a part of the soul: 'By mind I mean that, whereby the soul thinks and judges'.⁹⁸ He further develops this idea in outlining how this attribute of the soul is manifest principally in human beings, as opposed to other animals in his hierarchical scheme, stating: 'Certain kinds of animals possess in addition to the power of locomotion, and still another order like man or superior to him, the power of thinking i.e. mind'.⁹⁹ Throughout his work, he remains conscious, affirmative, and direct regarding a demarcation between humans and animals, claiming that certain 'brutes' are limited in imagination 'because of the non-existence in them of mind'. Yet, he likewise retains throughout that the five attributes of the soul are shared by plants, animals, and humans alike.¹⁰⁰

Aristotle provides multiple definitions of the soul, though several are based on concepts and terminology from his *Physics*—such as potentiality and actuality—and on his theory of hylomorphism—the combination of form and matter he claims manifest in all entities. For example: 'The soul is the first grade of actuality of a natural body having life potentially in it'; or, 'The soul is the cause or source of the living body'. He is somewhat clearer, at least to less robust Aristotelians, in response to the question, 'What is soul?' He responds with the somewhat more palatable: 'It is substance in the sense which corresponds to the definitive formula of a thing's essence. That means that it is the *essential whatness* of a body'. Therefore, throughout *De Anima*, Aristotle develops the notion that all beings have souls; that souls have different attributes; that the mind is a particular attribute of the soul found only in particular animals, namely humans; that the soul is the 'essential whatness' of an entity; and that humans embody all five attributes of the soul, as compared to other animals who possess fewer attributes.

Both Aristotle and Descartes share the assumption that an underlying 'essential whatness' exists at the core of human life, yet the differences separating the two from this postulation are substantial. Again, Aristotle assumes that the embodied soul is the 'essential whatness' of a human being, while Descartes assumes that the 'essential whatness' of a human being is mind—a thinking thing unconnected to anything else in the world. From his *Meditations*: 'I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect or reason—words whose meaning I have been ignorant of until now. But for all that I am a thing which is real and which truly exists. But what kind of thing? As I have just said, a thinking thing'.¹⁰³ Aristotle assumes that the soul, and hence the mind, are necessarily a part of the body and cannot exist without it.¹⁰⁴ Descartes famously assumes a categorical separation between mind and body, one that has bequeathed Western philosophy the infamous mind-body problem, yet one that seemingly did not bother Descartes: "Though we do find in the *Meditations* itself the distinction (the 'real distinction') between the mind and the body, drawn very sharply by Descartes, in fact he makes no mention of our mind-body problem. Descartes is untroubled by the fact that, as he described them, mind and matter are very different: one is spatial and the other not, and *therefore one cannot act upon the other*'.¹⁰⁵

The opposition of the turn-to-the-self of Enlightenment thought to Aristotelian thought are demonstrated in Descartes' works with more clarity than those examined above. In a particular passage in *Meditations*, Descartes postulates his solitary thinking mind in direct opposition to Aristotle's conception of the soul. This is not surprising, as Descartes was clear in his earlier *Discourse on Method* that he was much opposed to the university-instituted obsequiousness to Aristotelians and the Aristotelian system, and in this work, he sought after and propounds new methods of thinking about the natural world and humans' relation to it.((106)) He shares these concerns and desires with both Galileo and Locke, and in reading these three, it becomes clear that they were attempting, quite consciously, to postulate a new ontology in opposition to the Aristotelian/Scholastic ontology. The fact that they succeeded is impressive, no matter how much one may disagree with their assumptions today.

Again, Aristotle outlines the five 'psychic powers' of the soul as the 'the nutritive, the appetitive, the sensory, the locomotive, and the power of thinking'.¹⁰⁸ He develops these into a hierarchal system linking plants, animals, and humans together, with humans as the so-called rational animal—a term not used by Aristotle but one which intimations towards are found in the *Metaphysics*.¹⁰⁹ It is

apparent, then, who and what Descartes had in mind when he wrote the following in the *Meditations* (emphasis added):

What then did I formerly think I was? A man. But what is a man? Shall I say 'a rational animal'? No; for then I should have to inquire what an animal is, what rationality is, and in this way one question would lead me down the slope to other harder ones... Well, the first thought to come to mind was that I had a face, hands, arms and the whole mechanical structure of limbs which can be seen in a corpse, and which I called the body. The next thought was that I was *nourished*, that I *moved about*, and that I engaged in *sense-perception* and *thinking*; and these actions I attributed to the *soul*.¹¹⁰

Descartes rejects these points and posits, instead, his mind-body dualism, with the key to this passage being the opening words 'What then did I formerly think I was?' He then outlines this in Aristotelian language, and it is seen here how Descartes consciously postulates his system in opposition to Aristotle's. And this postulation, one which became overwhelmingly influential in the West, reduced the richness of Aristotle's soul and mind to the mental activity of a single entity unconnected to the rest of the material world.¹¹¹

Thus from an interconnected, embodied, five-fold soul—one which posits attributes that incorporate the natural world humans are dependent upon—as well as one which shares traits, much like in modern genetics, with the plant and animal communities, Descartes ushers in the anthropocentric Enlightenment conception of the human mind as an isolated, unidimensional entity with no connection whatsoever to the natural world. Humans are mind, mind is solitary, and such is the conclusion reached by Descartes' philosophy of the human mind. Consequently, whenever readers hear the oft-invoked claim that Descartes is the father of modern philosophy, they can now better understand and appreciate how intimately this is bound to the turn-to-the-self, anthropocentrism, and a rejection of Aristotelianism.¹¹²

4.1 Conclusion: the Turn-to-Nature

This paper presents a framework for thinking about how the West may exit the ontology of the Enlightenment and move towards the ontology of the Anthropocene. Burt's tripartite framework has been used to articulate the ontological shift that occurred in the

Modern era and to provide a concise framework for articulating a new ontology today.

What has come above is one aspect of the Heideggerian disclosure, the simplest part: recognizing core assumptions, beliefs, and conceptualizations. In the words of the French historian of ideas, Paul Hazard, 'Demolishing the arguments of one's predecessors [is] a comparatively simple matter. The constructive part of the business [is] *not* so easy'.¹¹³ The remaining aspects of disclosure include: (i) recognizing and understanding alternative possibilities, and (ii) formulating and then deciding, as individuals and in groups, which or if any conceptualizations of reality, causality, and the human mind are appropriate for a new ontology today. Yet, as per Hazard, deciding upon conceptualizations at the core of a new ontology is a difficult enterprise; one in which no *a priori* knowledge of what elements will best constitute the new ontology are self-evident. Ontologies must be lived—they cannot be tested in a lab nor in a computer simulation—and in such inquiries, Paul Feyerabend's maxim 'anything goes' cannot be wholly discarded.¹¹⁴

Yet reimagining a new ontology must be based on empirical understanding. The imagining must ask what type(s) of worlds humans wish to inhabit, and the empiricism must ask what circumstances have given rise to the call for a new ontology. The ideas developed in this paper make the case for the emergence of the Anthropocene. Subsequently, I call for the adoption of an ecological and environmental-oriented ontology, as this seems logically to be the answer for present circumstances, given the dialectical structure of human-nature relations. Humans are having particular effects on the natural world and the environment, and thus, ideas should change in a manner so as to alleviate such effects. If the reigning ontology is *Anthropos*-focused, the new ontology must be ecologically-focused.

This is, however, only a single proposal put forth in concert with the framework and ideas developed in this paper. For even if the human-nature dialectic, the emergence of a human-induced Anthropocene, and an ecological ontology are accepted, it must also be accepted that this postulation is not *the* answer when it comes to formulating a new ontology. As the world continually changes, human thoughts and actions continually change with it, and thus, any ontology postulated today cannot serve as the ontology three hundred years from now. In the words of Ian Hacking: 'When we get to the future, we will renegotiate our concepts as best we may, in ways that we cannot predict'.¹¹⁵

Many scholars across a diversity of fields have been working on reconceptualizing reality, causality, and the human mind, and an important selection of these are offered here so that readers may—

and it is suggested that they do—grapple with them in addition to the new ontology for the Anthropocene postulated below.

Reality

Reality is one of the most fraught and contested concepts in Western discourse. Consequently, the articulations of it or on it are varied and immense: from feminist and biological perspectives by Donna Haraway and Lynn Margulis; from epistemological and methodological perspectives by Valerie Ahl and Timothy Allen; from anthropological and cultural perspectives by Eduardo Kohn and J. Stephen Lansing; from a sociology and anthropology of science perspective by Bruno Latour and Ulrich Beck; from decolonial and political ontology perspectives by Arturo Escobar and Eduardo Vivieros de Castro; from a philosophical perspective Alfred North Whitehead, Roy Bhaskar, Michel Serres, and Arne Naess.¹¹⁶ This does not include, of course, any scientific or mathematical literature—enterprises which, throughout their history, have almost continually been associated with uncovering *the* reality.

Causality

Many scholars posit that a Humean, linear conception of causality is insufficient for understanding the complexity now acknowledged to exist in the natural and social worlds. Originally developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy and Ervin Laszlo, the prominence of this manner of thinking has been solidified by systems theorists such as Donella Meadows; ecologists Robert May and Marten Scheffer; physicist Fritjof Capra and chemist Pier Luigi Luisi; and economist Eric Beinhocker.¹¹⁷ Still the conceptualization of causality remains highly debated, particularly in philosophy, with debates leading one scholar to postulate that there exist two concepts of causation rather than one, another to posit that there are in fact three—epistemic, conceptual, and factual—and still another, the distinguished analytic philosopher P.F. Strawson, to maintain that ‘we should regard mechanical transactions as fundamental in our examination of the notion of causality in general’.¹¹⁸

Human mind

Many scholars across numerous disciplines are likewise working on the conceptualization of the human mind, including, first and foremost, Charles Darwin; cognitive scientist John S. Allen;

philosophers Peter Hacker, Maxwell Bennett and Daniel Dennett; ecologist Gregory Bateson; physicist Roger Penrose; cyberneticians Grey Walter, Ross Ashby, Stafford Beer, and Gordon Pask; and artificial intelligence scholar Matt Carter.¹¹⁹ A constant stream of scholarship is also still being articulated along Cartesian lines, as seen in Jonathan Westphal's *The Mind-Body Problem*, with this slim volume outlining the twenty-five or so schools of thought dedicated to this problem.¹²⁰

Turn-to-Nature

Taking the above literature into consideration, I posit that an ecological *sub-iectum*—one which focuses more on the biotic, abiotic, and symbiotic world humans live within—fits the current circumstances of the Anthropocene. This does not mean the abandonment of the human capacity to cognize and reconceptualize nature, nor the ability to change behaviours in response to changes in nature. Nor should it be conflated with bio- or ecocentrism. It means taking the best of what it means to be human—the capacity for concentrated thought, sympathy, magnanimity, and humility—and combining these with the current situation of the Anthropocene. Specifically: *reality* is the natural processes that humans are currently affecting as described in the ecological and biophysical literature cited in the introduction; *causality* is the systems view described above which embraces uncertainty and unknowability; and *the human mind* is fundamentally the Darwinian: from this world and of this world.

Particularly influential for me, and in the above, are Wendell Berry and Rabindranath Tagore. In Wendell Berry's works, one will find an ecological-inspired vision about how humans should learn to let nature be the guide to human actions, especially in regard to agriculture and food systems.¹²¹ In Rabindranath Tagore, one will discern the poetic vision of a nature-based education that led to the establishment of his own university in rural Bengal, Visva-Bharati.¹²² Both of these writers imagine the nature of being (read: ontology) as more closely aligned with earth's natural processes and in living accordingly alongside the dictates of these processes. Contrary to the Enlightenment turn-to-the-self, this does not imply superimposing humanity's dictates on the world, nor does it grant a place of significance to human beings. What it does do, however, is sever the West from its anthropocentric ideals and, hopefully, from the shackles of the Anthropocene.

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CLIMATE SECURITISATION IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONTEXT: CLIMATE DISCOURSES, SECURITY, AND CONFLICT

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Abstract

A growing academic literature in international relations examines the significance of climate change towards security in the Middle East, in particular its potential to act as a 'threat multiplier' that can trigger violent conflict. While there is a growing recognition that such research must account for the role of socio-political context in mediating the effects of climate change and shaping their significance for the politics of the region, it is only recently that analysis has considered the role of state actors' understanding of the meaning of security and the effects this has on their responses to climate change. I respond to this gap by adopting a social constructivist variant of the 'securitization theory' of the Copenhagen School of security studies and applying it to an analysis of the public statements and policy documents of actors from the Israeli and Palestinian Authority (PA) governments. Neither country, I argue, has 'securitized' climate change; in other words, framing the issue as one of extraordinary threat and urgency, as Israel interprets climate change primarily through a 'technocratic' framing, and the PA affords such enormous priority to the Israeli occupation such that few other issues are afforded security status. I show furthermore how Israeli and Palestinian discourses of climate change are best understood in the context of the political structures and the broader discourses of the environment and security in each country. These findings offer an important counterpoint to the threat multiplier thesis, showing how contextual features, most notably in this case pre-existing conflict relations among states, can actually reduce the priority that both parties will attach to climate change.

1. Introduction: Climate Security and the Middle East

Anthropogenic climate change has increasingly become recognised as an issue relevant to the study of security, owing to the manner in which it transforms dramatically the conditions for life on this planet with destructive and hazardous consequences.¹ Perhaps most famously, it has been suggested that it may increase the likelihood of interstate conflict

by reducing natural water resources and agricultural output as well as habitable land space through desertification. Climate change may thus increase interstate competition for scarce resources and act as a 'threat multiplier' in global politics.²

Such study is pertinent with regards to the Middle East due to the particularly acute effects that climate change is anticipated to have on the region: rates of rainfall in Israel may decline by more than a third by the end of this century, and by perhaps as much as sixty percent in Jordan.³ The social and political consequences of anticipated warming trends may be enormous in a region which, according to the World Bank, has the highest level of interstate water resource interdependency in the entire world.⁴ For example, an estimated rise in Israeli coastal sea levels of one meter by the end of this century could be disastrous for the sixty percent of Israel's population that lives along the Mediterranean coast.⁵ As a result, some scholars and institutions from within the Middle East have argued that climate change acts as a 'threat multiplier' for the region and so threatens the security of the Middle East and North Africa, with particular attention given to the cases of Darfur and Syria.⁶

The objective of this paper is to examine the significance of climate change for the security of a Middle East subregion already blighted by a deeply entrenched conflict: the dual-state nexus of Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA), the proto-state institution established in the occupied Palestinian territories through the Oslo Accords in the 1990s. I do so through the use of 'securitisation theory', an approach to security that accepts the social constructivist thesis that state actors behave towards one another and towards external objects according to the *meaning* that these things have for them.⁷

In this way, my research aims to make two key contributions to present debates. Firstly, it shows that the relationship between the negative effects of climate change and state behaviour is by no means unidirectional, contrary to what the 'threat multiplier' literature suggests. Instead, a social constructivist analysis indicates that social and political context, including pre-existing conditions of conflict, can contribute to 'desecuritised' discourses of climate change among state actors. Secondly, this paper adds to a small but growing literature on the securitisation of climate change in the Israeli-Palestinian context.⁸

2. Theory and Methodology

Securitisation theory contends that problems are not matters of security merely in virtue of their physical qualities, but because they are *made* security issues—are 'securitised'—by influential political actors. In the original formulation of securitisation theory developed by the Copenhagen School (CS), an issue is securitised when an actor declares it an existential threat to some 'referent object' and thus elevates it

to a state of high priority—they make a ‘securitising move’. If this move is accepted or endorsed by the audience to which it is made, the securitising actor attains the power to undertake emergency measures in order to eliminate the purported threat, leading to a state of ‘panic politics’ that goes beyond the established rules of ordinary, negotiation-based decisionmaking. To do the opposite—i.e., to frame an issue once considered an existential threat requiring emergency responses as a low-priority issue that can be resolved through normal politics—is to ‘desecuritise’ an issue.⁹

However, I will employ a theoretical perspective that differs significantly from the original CS model. I draw on recent developments towards a social constructivist interpretation of securitisation as a ‘discursive practice’, i.e., as a practice through which political actors mediate and attribute meaning to external, physical reality. This process is carried out through the employment of a ‘discourse’, or an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations.¹⁰ To see securitisation as a discursive practice is to go beyond the ‘static’ framework of the CS, where securitising moves obey only one particular logic or interpretation of security, i.e., as the legitimisation of exceptional measures by imminent existential threats. Instead, a social constructivist approach theorises securitisation as ‘an always (situated and iterative) process of *generating* meaning’.¹¹ As Matt McDonald has argued perceptively, the meaning of security is not fixed but varies across different groups in different contexts—not only insofar as different ‘referent objects’ or existential threats are invoked within a particular security grammar, but also in the sense that different values and elements of cultural significance are contained within different securitising moves.¹²

Moreover, and most importantly, a social constructivist approach to the securitisation process stresses that it can be analyzed properly only if understood as embedded within a wider social context, and so breaks from the CS’s dismissal of context as irrelevant.¹³ Stritzel has made enormous contributions to the development of such an ‘externalist’ approach to securitisation theory and has challenged, in particular, the ‘actor-centrism’ of CS scholarship in its assumption that state actors enjoy the authority to securitise. He attempts, instead, to show how an actor’s authority and the power of securitising moves are shaped by the ‘socio-linguistic’ and ‘sociopolitical’ dimensions of social context, i.e., by ‘broader structures of meaning and power’. In order for the analyst to examine the significance of these structures, both ‘synchronically’ (situating the securitising move within a wider social setting that exists at the time of its performance) as well as ‘diachronically’ (situating the securitising move within historical processes of social change), it is necessary to conduct historical and even sociological study above and beyond the analysis of discourses.¹⁴

In short, my aim is to identify the extent of climate securitisation—

the framing of climate change through societally-contingent conceptualisations of security—within the discourses of the state of Israel and the PA, and to enhance our understanding of observed (de)securitisation by situating it within the wider social and political context. I do so through an analysis of the documents and public statements of Israeli and PA governmental bodies involved in national climate policy.

Methodologically, I adopt Wilkinson's distinction between the 'proximate' and 'distal' context of securitising moves. The former refers to the 'microenvironment of securitisation' (the directly immediate features of the securitising move such as the actor(s) performing it, the 'stage' on which it is performed, the audience to which it is presented, etc.) and the latter to the 'broader sociocultural context' in which the securitising move is embedded (e.g. considerations of the social class and ethnicity of the actor(s), cultural and political settings, the sites of discourse, etc).¹⁵ I follow Wilkinson's lead in analyzing securitising moves first within their proximate context and thereafter moving outwards to the perspective of the distal context, demonstrating how particular invocations of discourses of security in Israel or the PA derive their relative influence and prevalence from the sociopolitical environment in which they are embedded.

The third section of this article provides a review of the relevant literature and explains the relevance of the analysis I conduct. Sections four and five contain an analysis of the extent of securitisation in Israel and the PA, respectively, while the sixth and seventh sections explain the significance of the proximate and distal contexts to understanding observed (de)securitisation, respectively. In section eight, I present some concluding remarks.

3. Literature Review

As noted already, many argue that climate change acts as a 'threat multiplier' in the Middle East, including in Israel-Palestine, as it increases the likelihood of violent conflict by causing interstate competition for increasingly scarce resources.¹⁶ Yet scholars have widely critiqued these claims, presenting evidence both from history and projections of future climate impacts indicating that climate change acts as, at most, an intermediate variable in the triggering of conflict—the primary cause of political instability in the Israeli-Palestinian context remaining conventional geopolitical issues.¹⁷ Voices from within the region have even argued that climate change offers an opportunity for Israel to *enhance* its national security through the soft power it can develop in sharing water management technologies with developing countries.¹⁸

Similarly, there is a now substantial and well-established literature on 'water wars' in the Middle East considering the possibility that the already scarce transboundary water resources of the region may be a cause of

interstate conflict. Scholars in the past have claimed that degradation of natural water supplies due to pollution and climate change would aggravate the Israeli-Arab conflict and that competition for control of local water resources had already been a direct trigger for conflict in the 1967 Six-Day War.¹⁹ In contrast, 'liberal functionalist' scholars have emphasised the extensive use, globally, of institutions for cooperation over transboundary water resources and have gone as far as to propose a 'spill-over effect', whereby interstate cooperation over 'low-political' issues such as water management can trigger more cooperative relations at the 'high-political' level and aid in conflict resolution.²⁰

However, as with the 'threat multiplier' literature, scholars have challenged these claims as to the causal influence of water resource scarcity on interstate relations, in particular in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Most notably, the 'hydro-hegemony' literature spearheaded by Mark Zeitoun challenges the 'water wars' literature's simplistic interpretation of state interaction on matters of natural resource use, pointing out that conflict and cooperation over water often occur *simultaneously* (the 'conflict versus cooperation paradox'); cooperation often occurs within the context of significant power asymmetries, and thus it is not necessarily benign.²¹ The arguments of the 'hydro-hegemony' literature have been refined and developed by Jan Selby, who has critiqued its approaches to modelling the conflictual and cooperative elements of interstate interaction over natural resources. He instead proposes his own model of interstate interaction, suggesting the need to include within our typology an intermediate category of interaction: domination. Selby employs this model in advancing his thesis that the Joint Waters Committee, the transnational body established in 1995 as part of the Oslo peace process for the purpose of allowing Israel and the PA to coordinate their water resource policies, is a mechanism of Israeli domination disguised as one of cooperation.²²

Overall, it is clear from the shortcomings of both the 'threat multiplier' literature and the 'water wars' literature that the relationship between environmental resource scarcity and interstate conflict or other political crises cannot be treated as unidimensional, leading straightforwardly from scarcity to conflict or cooperation, as this ignores both the mediating role of social and political context and the fact that interaction over transboundary natural resources is too complex for concepts such as 'conflict' and 'cooperation' to capture.

I aim to contribute to this effort to ground Israeli-Palestinian natural resource politics in the wider sociopolitical context through the use of social constructivist securitisation theory in an analysis of the discourses of climate change seen in the two states, a feature of regional environmental politics neglected by some of the above scholars. Selby explicitly argues against concern for such factors as 'new security thinking' in the Middle East, i.e., conceptualisations of security

besides those which adopt the state as 'referent object' and which emphasise conventional military threats, on the grounds that successful ameliorative action in Israel-Palestine relies on the transformation of the *material*, politico-economic structures of Israeli domination.²³ Yet recent research suggests that discursive factors are important in affecting the nature of interactions over transboundary natural resources in Israel-Palestine.²⁴ Therefore, the extent of (de)securitisation in Israeli-Palestinian discourses of climate change is, in fact, worth examining if we are to understand the significance of climate change to the politics of the region and to avoid the intensification of conflict.

There is a relatively new and growing body of scholarship on Israeli-Palestinian discourses of security and the securitisation of climate change in the region. Generally, it is argued that Israel invokes discourses of national security, where the nation state is the 'referent object' at risk of destruction, the threat emerging from Arab conventional military capabilities, Arab and Iranian unconventional capabilities (e.g. the possibility of the development of an Iranian nuclear weapon), and terrorism.²⁵ Similarly, the PA regards the Israeli occupation as its most immediate domestic security threat, to the point that it is almost entirely precluded from expanding its security agenda.²⁶

However, some scholars also argue that Israel has securitised local water resources, framing them as necessary for the preservation of the Jewish state and thus for national security, and leading it to place great priority on the task of maintaining control over these resources.²⁷ Moreover, some researchers have suggested that Israel has, in fact, come to securitise climate change as a threat to national security, in particular due to its potential effects on local water resources and immigration in the form of 'climate refugees'.²⁸ In contrast, the PA continues to place greater emphasis on the threat posed by Israeli occupation than climate change and arguably lacks the sovereignty necessary to securitise fully.²⁹

I hope to contribute to this emerging literature through a more theoretically robust interpretation of securitisation theory than has been employed so far in the literature on Israeli-Palestinian climate securitisation.ⁱ In particular, I believe that the adoption of a social constructivist variant of securitisation theory will produce a more fruitful analysis in allowing for examination of the context of climate (de)securitisation in Israel and the PA, as is required given the relevance

i Weinthal et al.'s theoretical approach, for example, faces shortcomings in the authors' decision to analyze the securitisation of the combined climate change-migration-water nexus, as opposed to each element in isolation, the intention being to challenge purported linear causal relationships between water, climate change, and migration (Weinthal et al, 2015: 295, 297). This leads to significant ambiguity regarding how the authors conceive of the securitisation process and the exact content of the securitisations they claim to identify, as elements in the nexus they examine can easily occupy the position of both 'existential threat' and 'referent object' in the 'securitising move'.

of sociopolitical contextual features noted in the critiques of the ‘threat multiplier’ and ‘water wars’ literature.

4. Israel

The state of Israel has, in the course of the past decade, employed a variety of climate change discourses which each suggest varying degrees of securitisation. In particular, I highlight a technocratic discourse, a national security discourse, and an environmental security discourse.

4.1. *Technocratic discourse*

I concur with Mason that the principal discourse through which the problem is interpreted in Israel is desecuritised ‘technocratic framing’, which sees climate change as a technical problem to be considered in terms of cost-benefit analyses and economic reasoning, rather than a matter of security.³⁰ A notable hallmark of this technocratic discourse is the constant reference to climate change as a ‘challenge’, rather than as a ‘threat’, as would be predicted in a security discourse. Hence, climate change is seen not quite so much as a matter of urgency but rather as a puzzle or mechanical problem. It is even claimed that it represents an ‘opportunity’ for Israel to hone its technological prowess and grow the national economy in the process of resolving this problem. To take a few examples:

‘We relate to the Paris Agreement as an economic and environmental opportunity for Israel... We showed that

climate change mitigation presents an unprecedented opportunity to become more efficient, to save, to develop innovative technologies and to position Israel as a “Start-Up Nation” in the realm of climate change solutions as well’.

—Senior Deputy Director-General for Industry at the Israel Ministry of Environmental Protection Shuli Nezer.³¹

‘The climate change story is an international economic story in which Israel must take part... opening up new opportunities for growth’.

—Senior Deputy Director-General for Planning and Policy at the Israel Ministry of Environmental Protection Galit Cohen.³²

Similarly, Israeli environmental authorities often speak with pride of their country being a ‘hub of innovation’ and with excitement about the

idea that responding with climate change will allow them to live up to this identity. To take a few examples:

‘Israel is prepared to serve as a regional laboratory and center of excellence to prepare for, and adapt to, changing climatic conditions’.

—Minister of Environmental Protection Gilad Erdan speaking at UN General Assembly, September 22nd, 2009.³³

‘Lack of natural resources and the semi arid [sic] climatic conditions of our region, have made Israel a hub of entrepreneurship and innovative technologies’.

—Israeli diplomat Lironne Bar-Sadeh speaking at the 18th Conference of Parties (COP) 18.³⁴

It has been argued in discussions of climate securitisation in the European Union that such technocratic discourses are arguably the antithesis of security discourses of any kind, in that their focus on opportunity emphasises gains that are eagerly anticipated, as opposed to losses that are feared.³⁵

4.2. National security discourse

Israel has, in multiple instances, employed a national security discourse according to which climate change represents an existential threat to the state. For example, the Israel Climate Change Information Centre (ICCIC), established at Haifa University by the Israeli government in 2011 as a research centre on climate change that may inform future policy, produced a report for the Israel Ministry of Environmental Protection in 2012 giving advice on how to respond to future increases in immigration resulting from climate change. The report warns of a ‘wave of refugees... eventually infiltrating Israel’, and recommends responding with the extraordinary measure of constructing a full-border security fence, including a new ‘sea fence’ along Israel’s coasts.³⁶

In addition, former Minister of Environmental Protection Gilad Erdan spoke at the 2010 ‘Conference on Environment and Security’ at Tel Aviv University about the potential implications of climate change for national security. Notably, he devotes great attention to harmful forces outside Israel which are only indirectly related to the issue of climate change itself, even diverting discussion to the geopolitics of energy policy:

‘For years, trade in “black gold” has lined our enemies [sic] pockets, giving them a disproportionate share of power and financing international terror that targets Israel and her

allies. An international shift to alternative and renewable energy sources aligns directly with Israel's security and political interests'.³⁷

Climate change, and its potential sociopolitical impacts in the form of refugee crises, are thus characterised as a threat to Israeli national security. This would appear to represent the incorporation of these issues into a broader and highly prevalent discourse of Israeli national security. Having remained at war, or in generally conflictual relations, with its Arab neighbours since its founding in 1948, Israel affords enormous priority to countering threats to the state institutions and national community it has established in historic Palestine.³⁸ This is reflected in the extensive influence of the military in all aspects of the country's politics. Uri Ben-Eliezer famously dubbed Israel a 'militaristic' society where 'the solution of political problems by military means' has been the historic norm; Baruch Kimmerling claimed that this amounts to a 'civil religion of security' in Israeli society.³⁹

4.3. Environmental security discourse

Israeli politicians have also exhibited what I term an 'environmental security' discourse, where, although the 'referent object' remains the state, unsustainable consumption practices which contribute to environmental degradation are identified as a source of threat. For example, Erdan, at the same Tel Aviv University conference mentioned above, explicitly challenges the priorities of Israel's modern 'culture of consumption' as based on misguided interpretations of national security:

'When we look at the long term, we have to change the way we measure success in protecting national security... What I'm saying is that we need to change our priorities... We, like most other Western countries, live in a capitalistic society and have gotten used to encouraging a culture of consumption...'⁴⁰

In challenging the culture of consumption of the developed Western world, Erdan abandons the notion of most state security discourses—that expanding a country's resources and increasing national wealth through economic growth are imperatives that should be prioritised within government policy.⁴¹ In this way, he comes close to adopting McDonald's own 'environmental security' discourse, which demands 'systematic structural change in our relationship to the natural environment' as a response to threats to the 'referent object' of environmental quality. Yet, the fact that Erdan continues to perceive the *state* as the 'referent object' of security illustrates the extent to which national security discourses are

5. The PA

PA discourses towards climate change, while taking the issue seriously, ultimately fail to securitise it directly and do not conceive of climate change as demanding urgent action in itself; they discuss it primarily with regards to Palestine's status under occupation. I identify two primary climate discourses: a discourse of vulnerability under the Israeli occupation, and another of national liberation and emancipation.

5.1. *Discourse of vulnerability under occupation*

Attempts by the PA to relate climate change to a national security logic, concerned with preservation of Palestinian proto-state institutions and with the protection of the Palestinian population, rarely devote great attention to climate change directly. Instead, the issue of the Israeli occupation is consistently afforded such high priority that it obstructs attempts to widen discourses of security to include other sources of threat. For example, the 2016 PA National Adaptation Plan (NAP) states in its conclusion that:

‘It is self-evident that as Israeli occupation compounds climate vulnerabilities by reducing adaptive capacities, it also severely constrains the State of Palestine’s abilities to adapt... Hence, unless lifting of these restrictions can be resolved with Israel, it may be much more difficult for the State of Palestine to adapt to projected climate change with potentially dire consequences’.⁴³

Remarkably, this appears to represent a reversal of the conventional ‘threat multiplier’ thesis of climate change: rather than Palestinian political circles arguing that climate change is an urgent threat which must be dealt with due to its wider repercussions, it is the Israeli occupation which is regarded as the highest priority issue due to its ability to intensify all problems facing Palestinian society. As Advisor on Climate Change to the Minister for Environmental Affairs, Nedal Katbeh-Bader, puts it, ‘the occupation is a multiplier and makes everything worse’.⁴⁴

Yet, while the NAP makes extensive mention of the Israeli occupation, it would be misleading to interpret it as securitising the occupation as such. For one thing, while the NAP identifies it as a source of harm to the Palestinian population, it does so through the specific concept of ‘climate vulnerability’. Taken from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) most recent AR5 report, the concept refers to ‘the propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected [by climate

change]’.⁴⁵ The report thus does not make any explicit claim that the Israeli occupation is an existential threat to any particular ‘referent object’. Instead, through the adoption of formal climate policy-making terminology, the NAP merely assesses that the occupation poses a risk or hazard, contributing to the negative outcomes of climate change within the PA polity.

Moreover, the NAP does not call for the execution of any extraordinary measures to free the Palestinian territories from Israeli domination. In fact, when identifying potential adaptation measures, the report’s authors agree that priority should be given to short-term measures that address issues to which the PA would be ‘highly vulnerable’ as a result of the occupation. These measures consist of changes in technology and practice in energy or water consumption.⁴⁶ If anything, that the PA prioritises investment in measures which allow for adaptation to these ‘high vulnerability’ climate change impacts suggests a degree of acquiescence to the occupation: it treats the occupation as an essentially unalterable feature of the PA’s situation in the future.

Yet the occupation has been invoked as a source of threat in relation to climate change, in a manner approaching securitisation, in other contexts. President of the PA Mahmoud Abbas, in his address to the United Nations (UN) at the historic COP21, claimed that:

‘Violations of international environmental protection law carried out under the Israeli occupation constitute a major obstacle to our efforts. In confiscating our natural resources, destroying our agricultural harvests, uprooting our trees, obstructing us from developing the infrastructure vital for our state, throwing all sorts of waste into our soils, polluting our ground aquifers; in a system of racial segregation in violation of international law [sic]... Palestine remains under Israeli occupation, the horrible crimes of its colonists, the violation of our sacred Christian and Muslim sites in Jerusalem; all carried out with impunity’.⁴⁷

Notably, Abbas does not give any such attention to the potential consequences of climate change, despite making his address at a conference whose purpose was the development of an international agreement on climate action. His focus on the threat of Israeli occupation is thus illustrative of the high priority the issue takes in the Palestinian agenda. Moreover, his far more critical and less measured language, referring to ‘horrible’ settler crimes and the ‘violation’ of sacred sites, brings his treatment of the Israeli threat closer to securitisation. However, as with the NAP, Abbas’ speech still lacks any call for extraordinary measures; in subsequent paragraphs, he calls for the international community to take

steps to ensure Palestinian statehood, appealing to UN General Assembly Resolution 181. In thus demanding that a solution be reached to the Israeli threat in compliance with international law, Abbas is speaking in direct contrast to the securitisation framework, which involves the demand to go beyond the established boundaries of political action.

5.2. Discourse of liberation, emancipation, and justice

While climate change is incorporated into discourses of quasi-securitisation that identify proto-state Palestinian institutions and the Palestinian nation as 'referent objects' under threat, it is important to highlight that the Palestinian mission of securing an independent sovereign state includes a distinctive theme of liberation and emancipation which is not found in the conventional national security discourses of developed states. This leads to frequent invocation of matters of rights and equity within Palestinian discourses of climate change. As mentioned, Abbas demands that the international community help the PA to realise sovereign statehood in his address at COP21:

'Our meeting today coincides with the 68 year commemoration of UN General Assembly Resolution 181, stipulating the partition of historic Palestine, to remind you of your responsibility in the application of this resolution in order that our Palestinian people may recover their liberty and their independence in their own state'.⁴⁸

The negative qualities of the Israeli occupation are thus framed not so much as existential threats as they are characterised as injustices: the occupation must end because it violates international law and it deprives the Palestinian people of the abstract notions of 'liberty and independence', not because it may destroy anything tangible or material. Similarly, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Riyad Mansour writes, in his article 'Palestine: a distinctive voice for climate action':

...truly addressing the challenges we face as a people in all realms... requires first and foremost ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and securing the freedom and rights that the Palestinian people have been far too long unjustly denied'.⁴⁹

First, it is noteworthy that Mansour prioritising the end of Israeli occupation as the means by which to address Palestinian vulnerability to climate change is consistent with the discourse of vulnerability under occupation mentioned in the previous section. Second, and more

importantly, Mansour characterises the occupation as depriving the Palestinian people of their rights ‘unjustly’ and so demands that they be afforded such rights. The discourse of liberation, emancipation, and justice is thus uniquely positive, as it is concerned with achieving a desired but as of yet unobtained state of being—in contrast to the logic of security, which is concerned with obviating specific threats to objects of value that actors already possess.

While it was shown in the previous section that the NAP makes frequent reference to the negative impact of the occupation on Palestinian climate vulnerability, the occupation is never condemned outright as an injustice that creates any imperative in actors to end it. Rather, it is treated as a hazard or source of risk, the effects of which must be managed. This is consistent with the precursor to the NAP, the 2010 Adaptation Strategy and the Palestinian Adaptation Programme of Action (AS/PAPA). The PA underwent an important epistemological shift in these documents, from perceiving the occupation as an injustice to perceiving it as a hazard.⁵⁰

6. Proximate Context

6.1 Proximate Context: Israel

The predominance of technocratic discourse in Israel is remarkable due to the fact that it emerges across a variety of proximate contexts: it has been invoked by a variety of actors and in both editions of the Israeli ‘Environment Bulletin’, the official public relations publication of the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), as well as in the setting of UN conferences. It is likely that the appearance of this discourse primarily in Israel’s communications with the international community and in the publicity materials of the MEP indicates that the technocratic discourse—which allows Israel to present itself as a world leader in climate action—is invoked for the immediate purpose of maintaining a positive image for the Israeli government, both for stakeholder Israeli citizens and the international community.

It may also reflect, in part, the background of the actors who have invoked the technocratic discourse. It is worth noting that, prior to taking the position of Minister of Environmental Protection, Erdan worked as chairman of the Economic Affairs Committee, and he perhaps drew on this experience in arguing that ‘[a] sustainable, economical, low-carbon economy is a profitable one, so we should be moving toward that goal anyway, even without a commitment [to international climate change agreements]’.⁵¹

In the case of the national security discourse, it is noteworthy that it has been invoked primarily in academic contexts: in a report by the ICCIC, a research centre whose function is merely to inform policy, and in Erdan’s address at an academic ‘Conference on Environment and Security’. In practice, at least, the MEP has been reluctant to securitise

climate change. Erdan reacted to the ICCIC report on 'climate refugees' by outright rejecting the solution of border fences, stating that it 'is not a solution' and that the development of 'cooperative [initiatives] with neighbouring countries and international agencies' would be more productive.⁵² Thus, the securitisation of climate change according to a national security discourse is, in fact, uncommon in Israel.

As for Erdan's use of a quasi-environmental security discourse at the Conference on Environment and Security, the singular uniqueness of this securitising move likely indicates that it arises from Erdan's deep personal commitment to environmental politics, which has been described as unique among Israel politicians.⁵³ Attempts to widen the concept of security beyond the narrow national security logic in Israel have failed consistently, and so Erdan's invocation of an environmental security discourse represents an essentially isolated incident.⁵⁴

6.2. *Proximate Context: PA*

The difference in the extent of securitisation between the NAP on the one hand and the public statements of Abbas and Mansour on the other reflects primarily the differences in purpose between the modes of communications of each of these sources. In the case of the NAP, this, like its predecessors the 2010 AS and PAPA, was drafted with significant assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), one of the main funding bodies that has supported Palestinian environmental development programmes in the past.⁵⁵ The NAP was thus written primarily as a PA communication intended for an audience of international donors; hence the NAP, like its predecessors, is written in English and features detailed costings alongside its proposed adaptation measures.⁵⁶

This explains the measured and desecuritized language of the NAP: the pressures of international donors, on which the PA relies for necessary infrastructure projects, have necessitated that the PA exhibit compliance with neoliberal 'good governance' norms, leaving little room for inflammatory security discourses.⁵⁷ Moreover, the apparent acquiescence to the occupation seen in the NAP reflects the need for the PA to reduce uncertainty with regard to all climate-related risks in its policy-making in order to create an image of reliability for international donors. Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins notes how this leads to an apparent paradox in PA climate policy-making, where the PA simultaneously 'performs' its anticipated sovereignty—through the practice of developing its climate adaptation plans—and shows a certain resignation to its present situation by treating the occupation as a fixed, given element of climate change projections.⁵⁸

In contrast, the more politicised discourses found in Abbas' address at COP21 and Mansour's article can be explained by their being released

in forums where the audience is the international community at large—in particular, foreign heads of state. This reflects the PA's position of extreme vulnerability within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its reliance on the intervention of the international community to achieve a just resolution, such that it takes any opportunity available to call formally for international efforts to end the Israeli occupation and to aid the Palestinians in achieving statehood. In addition, the absence of any specific donor pressures in Abbas' address at COP21 or Mansour's opinion piece removed the imperative to de-politicise their language. Moreover, in both cases, Abbas and Mansour made their statements in the context of high-profile political developments where they were likely to gain a great amount of attention: COP21 was, of course, a conference of momentous importance in which the international community was deeply engaged, and Mansour's article was published as a celebration of the PA's accession to the UNFCCC in March 2016.

7. Distal Context

7.1. Distal Context: Israel

An important element of historical context that can explain Israel's desecuritisation of climate change in recent years is the country's discovery of offshore Mediterranean natural gas reserves from 2009 onwards. These reached their peak in 2010, with the discovery of the enormous Leviathan Field, and offered an easy means by which Israel could achieve energy security, an important goal given its vulnerability as an 'energy island' with no connections to the grids of its neighbours. Moreover, the preponderance of control over Middle East oil reserves lies with Arab states with whom Israel is on hostile terms—a feature of the region's geopolitics that renders Israel highly vulnerable to energy shortages and thus creates an incentive to exploit relatively cheap local energy resources.⁵⁹ While natural gas has a considerably lower emissions rate than coal, Israel's previous primary source of fuel, the extensive exploitation of any fossil fuel, is in conflict with a serious commitment to climate action. This led to the Israeli government deprioritising climate change in the national agenda, which may explain the dominance of desecuritisised discourses in discussing the issue.⁶⁰

An important component of the broader institutional context of Israeli climate policy is the MEP's limited power and resources, and hence its lack of influence in high-priority state security politics. Analysts have described the MEP as a 'small and resource-starved' ministry.⁶¹ Moreover, it is important to note that the MEP has historically been marginalised to the benefit of Israeli security institutions, which are concerned with Israeli security as conceived within a conventional state-centric formulation. The MEP has been involved in recurrent disputes with the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) regarding the applicability of national

environmental legislation to the Israeli military; the Israeli government has never conducted a formal investigation into the environmental damage generated by IDF operations—for example, the enormous Jiyeh Power Station oil spill unleashed in the 2006 war with Lebanon.⁶²

However, this pushes the question of the contextual factors contributing to the deprioritisation of environmental issues in Israel. This leads us to consider, finally, the environmental discursive structures in which climate policy is formulated in Israel. Alwen Rouyer notes that, in the earliest years of Zionist immigration to Israel at the time of the Second Aliya, the Zionist political aim of establishing a Jewish nation state was tied to the spiritual aim of ‘improving the land and climate and returning what they saw as a wasteland to its Biblical description as a “land of milk and honey”’.⁶³ Similarly, Avner De-Shalit observes that early Zionist thinking about the environment was dominated by a conservative and nostalgic ‘romantic ruralism’ that interpreted settlers’ intimate contact with their ancient homeland as a process of self-emancipation and purification. This reflects the additional aim within Zionism of attaining peace, stability, and an end to wandering for the Jewish people.⁶⁴

However, De-Shalit argues that, while anthropocentric attitudes towards the environment have persisted in Israel, they have since taken on a more modern form that abandons any sense of the significance or non-instrumental value that ‘romantic ruralism’ identified in the land. At the time of the major influx of immigrants brought about by the rise of Nazism and the subsequent establishment of the state of Israel, ‘romantic ruralism’ was replaced with an ‘ethos of development’. This ethos emphasises the need to exploit the natural environment for purposes of social and economic development, with goals of ‘rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, [and] economic growth’ that run counter to the principles of environmentalism.⁶⁵ This aim was achieved through ambitious engineering schemes aimed at manipulating local natural resources—for example, the 1953 National Water Carrier transferring water from the Sea of Galilee in the north of the country to the arid territories in the south.⁶⁶

Thus, there is a set of discourses surrounding the natural environment that have long been prevalent in Israel—identifiable in the efforts of the first Zionist settlers to construct a Jewish state—which emphasise the environment’s instrumental value in fuelling Israeli societal goals. This may account for the general deprioritisation of environmental issues such as climate change in the Israeli technocratic discourse. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, in the case of Israeli discourses of water resource management, an important development in the 1990s was the rise of a neoliberal discourse that treated water as a mere commodity best subject to market valuations. This logic is similar to the technocratic discourse and in contrast to the ethos of development, which at least emphasises the special significance of local water resources for the advancement of

7.2. *Distal Context: PA*

In the case of the PA, the primary contextual detail of relevance is the Israeli occupation. The destructive consequences of the occupation for the Palestinian population simply leaves little room within national politics to devote significant attention to the ambitious issue of climate change mitigation. An EcoPeace Middle East analysis notes that ‘climate change is not the Palestinian National Authority’s (PNA) number one priority... it is generally forced to focus on fulfilling the basic and immediate needs of the people’.⁶⁸

The overwhelming significance of the occupation to PA politics explains, in part, the Palestinian discourses of vulnerability and justice, which, as noted, interpret climate change as a danger primarily through its relation to the occupation. The Palestinian perspective of climate change in terms of significance to the occupation simply reflects the immediate priorities they must have in the face of their present political situation. The real constraining effect of the occupation on PA

climate policy-making can be seen in the fact that, while the PA has begun to develop national climate policy, and it is able to participate in international climate politics as a member of the UNFCCC, these efforts—and all major PA policy-making—rely on the extensive support of international donors. Moreover, climate change has been incorporated into the PA agenda under circumstances that are unimaginable in the developed world. Initial climate forecast reports were prepared in 2008 and 2009, at the same time as some of the deadliest Israeli attacks on Gaza and the lifting, after several years, of multiple sieges on West Bank cities.⁶⁹ Moreover, the PA attended COP21 to make its application for accession to the UNFCCC in December 2015, a month that saw twenty buildings demolished by the Israeli occupiers and fifty-five instances of settler violence.⁷⁰

As in the case of Israel, PA discourses of climate change can also be

ii I should emphasise that Israeli discourses of the environment are by no means monolithic, and the above discussion of the logics of environmental resource use in Israeli state-building through history is by no means intended to characterise Zionism as inherently anti-environmentalist. Indeed, a key finding of this paper has been that there are multiple competing discourses of climate change in Israeli society, including one of environmental security. Moreover, as the above account shows, Israeli discourses of environment are by no means fixed; instead, they are contingent products of political practice that evolve over time. The point, rather, is that one prevalent set of discourses present in the foundation and construction of Israeli society has placed emphasis on the exploitation of natural resources for specific political goals, and these may form a wider discursive structure in which the current technocratic discourse lies.

understood in the context of discursive structures of meaning. Samer Alataout notes that Palestinian NGOs have long treated the Israeli occupation as the primary, if not the sole, source of environmental destruction, in keeping with a territorial conception of power and as seen in the discourse of vulnerability in the NAP.⁷¹ In addition, Stuart Schoenfeld has studied the types of environmental narratives employed in Israeli-Palestinian politics and identified a progressive narrative of environmental justice, concerned with overturning unjust systems of oppression that contribute to environmental degradation.⁷² Indeed, studies have shown that Israeli policies aimed at maintaining territorial control and the illegal settlement programme contribute to the depletion of water resources, desertification, and deforestation due to the construction of new infrastructure and the unsafe disposal of industrial and domestic waste.⁷³ The narrative of environmental justice is particularly common among Palestinian NGOs, but it is also seen in high-level state policy, such as in the provision on Palestinian water rights in the Oslo Accords—a provision that was included only with serious effort from the Palestinian negotiators.⁷⁴

This environmental justice narrative is, according to Schoenfeld, often conjoined with a romantic narrative similar to that propagated by the early Zionist settlers, through which Palestinians yearn for reconnection with and return to their homeland, a 'Lost Garden' that they once knew as their home.⁷⁵ This fusion is seen in the Palestinian cultural symbol of the olive branch and its use in anti-colonialist activism—for example, in the mass planting of olive trees in the occupied territories to prevent Israeli land reclamation. In being a symbol both of solidarity in the campaign for Palestinian sovereignty and of Palestinian life prior to the Naqba, the olive branch 'links the pastoral memory of the past to the suffering of the present and the struggle of resistance against the Occupation'.⁷⁶ This dual emphasis on the harms endured from the Israeli occupiers and on the positive project of resistance against oppression corresponds to the dual discourses of vulnerability and of justice and emancipation identified in Abbas address and Mansour's article, suggesting that these discourses of climate change are situated within broader discursive structures of environmental degradation generated by the occupation.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, neither Israel nor the PA has securitised climate change. While there have been select instances in which it was interpreted through partially securitising discourses, climate change has not obtained any extraordinary priority within the national agenda of either polity, and it is generally not regarded as meriting emergency responses. The state of Israel interprets climate change primarily through a desecuritised technocratic discourse that understands the issue through a detached

cost-benefit evaluation, emphasising even the economic opportunities presented by action on mitigation and adaptation. In the case of the PA, climate change is ultimately interpreted as an issue related to, but also secondary to, the Israeli occupation. A discourse of vulnerability emphasises the manner in which the Israeli occupation compounds the threat of climate change to vulnerable Palestinians, and a discourse of justice and emancipation draws attention to the injustice of Israeli actions that damage the Palestinian environment.

These findings contribute to the debate on the significance of climate change for the Middle East's security, most notably through their inversion of the predictions of the 'threat multiplier' thesis: rather than interstate conflict being exacerbated by climate change, climate change is desecuritized within Israeli-Palestinian discourses precisely due to such conflict being the context of these state actors' behaviour. As noted, the desecuritized technocratic discourse of Israel likely reflects broader instrumentalist environmental discourses connected to the historic construction of the modern state of Israel, while PA discourses of vulnerability and justice reflect the constraining influence of the Israeli occupation on PA policy-making. This affirms the need to account for the role played by sociopolitical context in mediating the impacts of climate change in future research.

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STRIVING FOR UNIVERSALITY FROM THE BOTTOM-UP: MOVEMENTS FOR THE RIGHTS OF NATURE AND COMMON OWNERSHIP AS AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF GLOBALISATION

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Abstract

Recognition that we live in the Anthropocene increases understanding about how actions in one part of the world impact other parts of the world, and how climate change is a truly global problem. At the same time, the inadequacy of existing international structures for dealing with climate breakdown has become apparent. Yet times of crisis are also times of opportunity, and new ‘bodies of alliance’ are emerging. These are grassroots movements with a transnational outlook, and they are promising examples of how it is possible to build global networks while respecting the diverse ontologies these movements operate under. Speaking to literature on political ontology, this article argues that it is possible to reconcile the coexistence of diverse ontologies with striving for universal values; that international cooperation—necessary to face the challenges of the Anthropocene—can be achieved in a pluriverse, a world where many worlds fit. Further, it uses Elinor Ostrom’s polycentricity framework to illustrate how this relationship between common goals and autonomous worldviews can be achieved. These aspects are discussed based on the examples of the rights of nature movements and movements for the commons. This article also shows how some of the insights from these movements can already be found within legal systems and proposes some directions for future development of international laws to facilitate such movements based on a polycentric approach. Following Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ sociology of emergence approach, the article argues that movements for the rights of nature and the commons can teach us not only about what is, but also what can be, broadening our imagination of future solutions to the challenges of the Anthropocene.

1. Introduction

We live in a time of climate breakdown. Human impact on the Earth’s ecosystems has been so radical that as many as one million

plant and animal species are now at risk of extinction.¹ Extreme weather events are becoming increasingly frequent, forcing millions of people into displacement. Rising sea levels have already caused some islands to disappear, and others are likely to vanish in the near future.²

Yet times of crisis are also times of opportunity. The word ‘crisis’ comes from the Greek word ‘to decide, to separate’; we can think of a crisis as a turning point at which important choices are made, and the possibility for taking new paths arises.

One of the ways in which the Anthropocene is leading to the creation of new paths is through the appearance of new types of collaboration and new ‘bodies of alliance’. These challenge existing forms of globalisation, while striving for certain common principles and goals. They are grassroots movements with a transnational outlook, and they are promising examples of how it is possible to build global networks through a bottom-up approach whilst respecting the autonomy of the movements from different parts of the world. The ‘rights of nature’ movement, developed in collaboration between actors in the Global South and the Global North, continues to collaborate for the recognition of the inherent value of nature in different parts of the world.³ Common ownership itself isn’t new—it has a long history both in the Global North and in the Global South. But what is emerging is the recognition of ‘commoning’ as a successful way of dealing with the climate crisis.⁴ Different movements around the world have pursued commoning initiatives simultaneously, whilst adapting them to their specific contexts. Movements forming part of grassroots globalisation do not wait for policymakers to solve problems but take matters into their own hands. Their activism is prefigurative—it aims to bring into existence what these movements perceive to be a more just world here and now.⁵

Speaking to literature on political ontology, this article argues that it is possible to reconcile the coexistence of diverse ontologies with striving for universal values; that international cooperation—necessary to face the challenges of the Anthropocene—can be achieved in a pluriverse, a world where many worlds fit (part a). Further, it uses Ostrom’s polycentricity framework to illustrate how this relationship between common goals and autonomous worldviews can be achieved (part b).⁶ These aspects are discussed based on the examples of the rights of nature movements (section 2) and movements for the commons (section 3). This article also shows how some of the insights from these movements can already be found within legal systems and proposes some directions for future development of international laws to facilitate such movements, based on a polycentric approach (section 4).

1.1 Creating a world where many worlds fit: A review of political ontology literature

This article builds on the literature of political ontology, which aims to problematize the universalizing ontology of dominant forms of modernity, the so-called 'One-World World'.⁷ The term 'political ontology' was coined by the anthropologist Mario Blaser and developed by de la Cadena and Escobar.⁸ It refers to the different existing ontologies, or 'worlds', and ways in which practices of power allow the functioning of these ontologies. Apart from being a part of critical academia, it also relates to the struggles in which communities attempt to defend their way of life, their way of conceptualising the world (ontology), and their territory, against forces that seek to 'modernize' or 'develop' them.

The practice of development is perceived by Escobar as a form of discourse that fixes the categories and concepts which may be used to describe people's experience of the world and, in particular, their needs.⁹ It divides the world into 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' countries, the latter perceived as lacking in important aspects attained by the former. 'How to develop' becomes the dominant question for the countries categorised as underdeveloped and pervades their politics, determining how problems are conceptualised and the scope of solutions available.¹⁰ It also reduces people's agency to define their problems in their own terms. For instance, as Adele Mueller writes with regard to the international development sector's focus on women: 'The Women in Development discursive regime is not an account of the interests, needs, concerns, and dreams of poor women, but a set of strategies for managing the problem which women represent to the functioning of development agencies in the Third World'.¹¹ There is no scope for women to express their concerns to the development institutions, as the problem is already defined before the institution even comes into contact with them.

This scope for agency is therefore a crucial concern for political ontology. It is only when issues are defined by the actors themselves that they can become true subjects, rather than objects of change. A particular ontology, or vision of the world, cannot be imposed from above; it is necessary to talk about bottom-up movements that can bring in new ways of defining the world. For this reason, this article focuses on grassroots movements, rather than top-down organisations. Although there is scope for top-down activism to include marginalised voices, the bottom-up perspective is necessary for actors to maintain their agency. Otherwise, they cannot be the authors of their own way of viewing the world.

What concerns Escobar and the other authors writing on political

ontology is the possibility of creating a world that allows this type of agency to exist through the coexistence of many worldviews. They call it the 'pluriverse'—that is, a world which allows the existence of many ontologies. It is a world which respects the diversity of life, 'a world in which many worlds fit', to quote the Zapatistas.¹² This article is centred around the concept of the pluriverse, as it argues that the creation of such a world does not need to entail an abandonment of universal values, but that it is possible to pursue common values whilst maintaining ontological autonomy.

But if the development discourse dominates the conversation on social change, what is the scope for alternative ontologies to appear? Is it even possible for this to take place? Although it is difficult to completely understand the pervasive discourse, Escobar writes that it is possible that new discursive practices are slowly emerging, and that we find ourselves in a transitional period.^{13 14} New practices are already appearing, which allows us to widen the scope of our imagination. As de Souza Santos writes: 'Through analysing the newly emerging movements, initiatives, and organisations that offer alternatives to dominant forms of politics, we can observe possible trends that would otherwise be easily discarded'.¹⁵ Santos calls this the sociology of emergence, which 'consists of undertaking a symbolic enlargement of knowledges, practices, and agents in order to identify the tendencies of the future ... upon which it is possible to intervene so as to maximize the probability of hope vis-à-vis the probability of frustration'.¹⁶ This article uses Santos' methodological approach to show the possibility of new types of 'bodies of alliance' being created, where shared values can be pursued while allowing the scope for different worldviews to coexist. This article therefore takes a certain normative stance in analysing the chosen movements, as following the sociology of emergence approach, it aims to go beyond the most common trends *in the present*, and look towards the trends that could bring about positive change *in the future*.

These emerging practices, which offer alternatives to current dominant politics, are often represented by social movements which have entered upon new terrain in the last several decades, both in Latin America and beyond. Whilst old types of social movements focused on opposing certain projects or policies, Fals Borda argues that new social movements are moving from *protest to proposal*.¹⁷ They are also moving from a micro approach, focusing on particular issues or problems that they are contesting, to a macro approach, in which they challenge how politics are conducted in the wider sense and create proposals for change through coalitions that they form. This creates new networks of

power, or 'bodies of alliance', which can lead to the inclusion of alternative worldviews into politics.

One can question whether it is possible for such social movements to effectively challenge dominating worldviews. It is argued that what is possible is a certain reinterpretation of these worldviews, which is the first step to creating new ones. Escobar writes: 'Social movements necessarily operate within the dominant systems of need interpretation and satisfaction, but they tend to politicize interpretations; that is, they refuse to see needs as just *economic* or *domestic*. This contributes to the consolidation of social identities on the part of subaltern groups, especially if they manage to invent new forms of discourse for interpreting needs'.¹⁸ Therefore, a movement can advance its autonomy even through a partial reinterpretation, and that is a step toward the creation of alternatives to the dominant worldview. Whilst this article seeks to emphasise what is possible (building on the sociology of emergences), it must not be forgotten that the sustaining these alternative movements is a constant struggle. It is precisely in the context of these marginalised groups that the struggle for an autonomous way of doing politics is of great significance.¹⁹

Whilst building on the literature on political ontology and the emergence of alternatives to dominant worldviews, this article seeks to reflect on the pluriverse in the context of the climate crisis. Given that climate change is a global problem, an effective response requires international collaboration. This is necessary as the challenges we are facing—especially climate change and the degradation of biodiversity—take place at a global scale, and action taken in one part of the world will often have consequences in a completely different part of the globe. Furthermore, maintaining a world where many ontologies are possible necessarily requires developed forms of collaboration, in order to protect communities from being dominated and the natural environment from being destroyed. This article's contribution is to show, through the examples of existing movements for the rights of nature and commoning, how striving for shared goals can be reconciled with the creation of a pluriverse. Further, it also discusses how certain legal frameworks can already enable this type of collaboration and help bring about the pluriverse.

1.2 Polycentricity: A framework for reconciling international cooperation with the pluriverse

The success of the movements for the rights of nature and commoning in reconciling international cooperation with creating a pluriverse can be understood through the use of Ostrom's

polycentricity framework.²⁰

The definition of polycentricity (attributed to Vincent Ostrom) resonates closely with Escobar's vision of the pluriverse: a polycentric order is defined as 'one where many elements are capable of making mutual adjustments for ordering their relationships with one another, within a general system of rules where each element acts with independence of other elements'.²¹ It envisions a system in which the smaller scale and the larger scale elements interact and enable each other. The elements are independent, but they are also capable of adjusting to cooperate on a larger scale. In the same vein, Daly and Farley write that one of the principles for the design of environmental policy should be striving towards attaining the 'necessary degree of macro-level control with the minimum sacrifice of micro-level freedom and variability'.²² This means that although there will be goals that will require large scale coordination (i.e. limiting emissions of CO₂ to a sustainable level), policies should allow for more scope in choosing on a lower level (i.e. it should be decided locally where the cuts to emissions should come from).

Using the polycentricity framework is also helpful for ensuring that the development of the movements does not lead to, on the one hand, a loss of autonomy of certain movements for the sake of others, or, on the other hand, the breaking apart of the alliances due to too much divergence. Decision-making at the local level should be the default, as it is what allows 'micro-level freedom and variability', and thus best protects the autonomy of the grassroots movements.²³ The acceptance of a diversity of approaches in reaching common goals will also help to prevent the disintegration of movements as a result of their divergence in specific actions chosen to pursue these general objectives.

Striving to create a pluriverse and scaling action to the problem at hand by employing the polycentric model are two sides of the same coin. Large scale coordination can be reconciled with smaller scale difference. The next sections discuss how this has been achieved by some existing bodies of alliance.

2. Rights of nature movements

The concept of the Anthropocene characterises the epoch in which humanity is recognised as a significant geophysical force, which has led to fundamental changes in the Earth System.²⁴ The formalization of the term in the 2000s has led to growing research interest on human-nature relations.²⁵ It is high time to rethink the dominant ideas regarding society and nature. The rights of nature movements question the perception that nature has instrumental

value only insofar as it benefits humanity. They advocate for the recognition of the intrinsic value of nature, often by granting it legal rights (i.e. treating it as a legal person). These movements question the prevailing discourse on nature, which is that of treating it as *natural capital*, which involves measuring the economic value of natural goods and services and making environmental policy based on a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of the trade-offs between natural, social, and economic goods.¹ Regardless of whether commercialization of nature leads to more or less exploitation, a monetary evaluation of nature cannot capture its entire value. It may be argued that putting a price tag on nature is the only way to disincentivise its exploitation. However, whether or not that is the case, it is important to think about the protection of nature in a broader framework, extending beyond the use of market mechanisms.

2.1 *The intrinsic worth of nature*

To elaborate on why the natural capital and cost-benefit analysis approach does not adequately capture the value of nature, two arguments are raised: (1) it would oppose our prevailing moral intuitions to treat nature as having value merely due to human preferences, and (2) the values embodied by nature may not be commensurable with other values. A philosophical thought experiment shows why (1) is true. Nozick poses the question as to whether animal welfare is only valuable if it is useful to humans or whether it has value in itself. He asks whether torturing a herd of cattle for no reason (without any potential benefit to humans in the form of food, for example), would be acceptable if no one were aware of it (and thus, if no one would be negatively emotionally affected by it). It seems that the only answer which would not be contrary to prevailing moral intuitions would be no, which suggests that there is at least some value intrinsic to animal welfare and not merely dependent on human preferences, even if it may be outweighed by other considerations. Similar questions can be asked of the survival of other species, suggesting that it would not be morally neutral for them to die out even if there were no impact on human welfare.²⁶

Another reason why the CBA approach to nature is not sufficient is that it does not allow for decision-making regarding conflicting values that are not commensurable (2). How many years of energy provision would compensate for the extinction of a certain species?

i See, for example, the UN and EU Natural Capital Accounting Project, which aims to assist its partner countries in improving accounting systems to value biodiversity.

What is the adequate price for a country in the Pacific disappearing underwater? Many people would be averse to applying a CBA to choices regarding friendships, the valuation of human life. Why should CBA be uncritically accepted in the valuation of nature? Following O'Neill, it is necessary to look for other methods of valuation that are more appropriate to decision-making regarding incommensurable norms.²⁷ These can include forms of deliberation which involve public participation and allow people most closely connected to the issue to raise arguments for why a certain trade-off should be made in the particular circumstances.

Acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of nature had not been invented by the rights of nature movement; there are many examples of non-industrial, indigenous communities that share an understanding of nature as a living being and value it for its own sake. They protect areas and ecosystems without obtaining any direct benefits from doing so (in the utilitarian understanding).²⁸ They seem to be driven to protect nature through nothing more than *biophilia*, an attitude of love and respect for life, in the words of the social psychologist Erich Fromm, which is captured in the sacredness of lakes, groves, and species.²⁹

2.2 Learning from communities in the Global South

Buen Vivir (Spanish for the good life), which grew out of indigenous cultures in Latin America, can be seen as an expression of the biophilia attitude to nature. *Buen Vivir* refers to a plurality of different indigenous traditions, which have been brought together as an alternative paradigm to the Western idea of development. The unifying traits of the different traditions are that well-being is understood as only being possible within a community, which is conceived of as including nature.³⁰ This approach transcends the nature-society dualism by seeing non-humans as part of the social world, and humans as inseparable from the natural world.³¹ For example, in the Andean concept of *ayllu*, well-being does not only refer to humans but also to crops and cattle. Whilst there are common threads to the different indigenous traditions, the conceptions of *Buen Vivir* are plural and context specific; they don't aim to create a unified discourse applicable to all communities.

The *Buen Vivir* movement promotes an alternative ontology—one that recognises the inherent value of nature and the importance of human-nature relationships. It emerges as an alternative worldview to the dominant perception of nature as natural capital, which quantifies nature's value in economic terms, and only perceives it as valuable insofar as it serves human needs. Stemming from indigenous traditions in the Global South, the

Buen Vivir paradigm has inspired movements across the world to look beyond the dominating worldview of nature as natural capital.

2.3 The Earth Jurisprudence movement

Another movement which since its origins has been inspired by indigenous traditions, like *Buen Vivir*, is the Earth Jurisprudence movement, which seeks to bring about a shift in legal philosophy to accept the rights of nature itself. One of the most influential figures in the movement, Thomas Berry, developed his idea for recreating a new human story to recognise the central role of the Earth and nature in human flourishing, through gathering insights from religions and indigenous traditions from across the world.³²

Rather than imposing the worldview from one society in a top-down manner on another, the Earth Jurisprudence movement has developed as a collaboration across many societies and cultures; it is the fruit of cooperation between lawyers, activists, and researchers from the Global North and the Global South with traditional communities in Africa and Latin America. The African Biodiversity Network, which played a very important role in the movement, ran courses on African customary law and culture, using traditional practices as inspiration to create a renewed understanding of environmental law.³³ Dr. Vandana Shiva, a prominent Indian environmental activist engaged in the movement, emphasises the links between Earth Jurisprudence and notions originating from Indian traditions, such as the ‘*asudhaiva kutumbkham*’ (the Earth family), or the community of all beings supported by the Earth’.³⁴

The research and advocacy of these activists and lawyers who have been part of the movement in the Global North have been guided by insights from traditions of the Global South. They have also been asked to participate in legal developments in developing countries, providing guidance from the Global North to the Global South. The incorporation of the *Buen Vivir* paradigm in the Ecuadorian constitution, an unprecedented move, was a celebratory moment for the movement. The creation of the constitution resulted from the collaboration between indigenous people’s organisations, environmental organisations, and politicians in Ecuador. Thomas Linzey, a lawyer from the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund who had worked extensively on community and nature rights in the US, was invited to assist in crafting the legal framework of the constitution. These types of collaborations show how the international and local struggles for the recognition of nature’s value are linked, and how the recognition of the rights of nature is emerging from the bottom-up pursuit of common goals.³⁵ In this way, the pursuit of recognition of the rights of nature can

be perceived as a way of building the pluriverse, where worldviews such as *Buen Vivir* coexist with Western Earth Jurisprudence. In the later part of this article, I will explain how different legal frameworks can be used to adapt the recognition of the rights of nature to diverse contexts.

3. Common ownership

Advocating for the commons is another area that brings together the transition movements of the Global North and the Global South, showing that international cooperation is possible whilst maintaining diverse worldviews.³⁶ The commons are generally understood as being neither public nor private property but belonging to a group who holds them as a community in various forms.³⁷ They are not a new institution—in medieval times, much of what is now public or private property in Western countries belonged to the commons, such as the forest, the village, and the artisan guilds in the cities.³⁸ Similarly, the commons constitute the main type of organisation for many non-industrial communities today.³⁹ However, what is new about commoning initiatives is the recognition of their importance in addressing climate change.

3.1 A common framework for collective action

For much of the last century, the prevailing attitude towards the commons was scepticism; the popular argument was that opening up access to property would lead to its degradation, as no one would have sufficient incentives to use it sustainably (the so-called ‘tragedy of the commons’).⁴⁰ However, this argument assumes open-access to property, whereas common ownership does not require the property to be available to everyone; rather, it may be held in common by a defined group of people. Ostrom’s framework of collective action provides an explanation of the factors that allow commoning initiatives to lead to the sustainable use of land and property.⁴¹ It emphasises the importance of local level initiatives, as they enable effective monitoring built on social trust and respectability, as well as effective communication. Other variables that allow effective communication in managing a commons include: the perception of the common resource as important for the individuals’ own goals in a long-term horizon, the existence of social norms that reward trustworthiness and reciprocity with a good reputation, and effective informal monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms of norms of cooperation.⁴² Many successful commoning movements which have led to the sustainable use of land, in diverse parts of the

world, exhibit the characteristics that Ostrom identified. Applying this framework to these movements shows how initiatives which developed independently across the globe strive for a shared goal—a more sustainable use of property through ownership by a community—whilst maintaining diversity in their worldviews.

3.2 Success stories in the Global South

There have been many success stories of the creation of the commons leading to improved protection of the environment in the Global South. The community-owned forests in Nepal are an instructive example of a successful social movement that led to the institution of commons that has had a positive impact both on the protection of the environment and on the livelihoods of its inhabitants. Following a widespread movement for democratisation, communities put pressure on the government to gain control over the forests, leading to a 1978 regulation transferring the management of some of the forests to local bodies.⁴³ Community groups were granted management rights over the forests and could use them for subsistence, but the act did not permit the clearance of forests for agricultural use. The state nonetheless retained ownership of the forests.⁴⁴ There have been very positive effects on the environment (increased forest cover), as well as on livelihoods and food security. The community-owned forests have generally performed better than state-governed forests in terms of ecological conditions.⁴⁵

Chchatre and Agrawal gathered data on eighty forest commons in ten countries on several continents in an attempt to determine which factors lead to larger environmental and social benefits.⁴⁶ They found that greater autonomy in rule-making at the local level and larger forest size were both positively associated with higher carbon storage and livelihood benefits. This suggests that decentralisation and giving communities more local autonomy is beneficial for the environment as well as for the community, supporting the argument that Ostrom's collective action framework can explain the factors leading to the success of those initiatives.

3.3 Success stories in the Global North

Whilst it is often the case in commoning initiatives in the Global South that property is owned by a community as a whole, commoning initiatives in the Global North need to be substantially different in order to be effectively adapted to the legal context. Aiming to overhaul the concept of private property would most

likely be unsuccessful in many places in the Global North; rather, the successful initiatives show that it is possible to adapt existing ownership structures to make them more communal and to improve the sustainable use of property and land. Kelly writes about community land trusts in the US, where families own the houses they live in, but a community organisation owns the land on which the houses stand. This significantly improves the situation of the families, as they are not required to pay back very demanding mortgages, and thus have a greater capacity to take care of their children, get involved in the neighbourhood, etc. A different initiative, community wind, whereby communities own wind power generation facilities, has been effective in terms of sustainability improvement. This significantly increases local support for the facilities.⁴⁷

Commoning has also been used to create certain types of purpose-driven businesses that are driven by the demands of workers, customers, and local communities instead of the interests of shareholders in maximising profit. Kelly describes *Upstream 21*, a company which adopted articles of incorporation that state the “best interests” of the company include not only the shareholder interests but also those of the environment, customers, suppliers, and local communities. This is reflected by the voting rights of the firm: Those who have a living stake in the firm—employees and initial direct investors—have more influence on the direction of the company than those who purchase company stock second-hand.⁴⁸ This can also lead to changes in how sustainable the operations of the company are, as it is no longer driven primarily by the generation of profit, but may prioritise other values that are important to its stakeholders, such as sustainable use of resources. The appropriate way to create forms of common ownership will differ depending on the social, cultural, and economic context. While there is a need for flexibility, overarching principles—found within Ostrom’s framework for collective action—are necessary to allow movements to learn from one another and to decide what is generalizable and what is context-specific (applying Ostrom’s polycentric approach). The next section discusses how insights from the rights of nature and common ownership movements can already be found within existing legal systems, and it suggests further directions for development in international law to enable a polycentric approach to sustainability politics.

4. Application in international and national legal frameworks and possibilities for future development

The intrinsic value of nature has already been recognised in

many legal systems, sometimes through the explicit creation of the rights of nature (e.g. Colombia), and other times through an implicit recognition of its worth through other legal mechanisms (e.g. France). The different approaches reflect the polycentric nature of solutions to the recognition of the worth of nature.

4.1 Recognising the intrinsic value of nature through legal systems

Colombia has seen some of the most progressive court judgements on the intrinsic value of nature. In 2017, the Constitutional Court found that the Atrato River has legal personality.⁴⁹ Flowing through the Pacific rainforest, the river and the communities that rely on it had been endangered through illegal gold mining, and the decision was an important step towards adequate protection. In 2018, the Colombian Supreme Court accepted a claim brought forward by twenty-five young plaintiffs against the government and several corporations. The Court found that the deforestation of the Amazon violated the plaintiffs' future rights to a healthy environment, and the Colombian Amazon was recognised as a subject of rights. Had the court's reasoning been delivered in a European court, it would have shaken up the foundations of Western legal jurisdictions. For instance, the Court stated that the ambit of the protection of fundamental rights is not only every person but also the 'other', which includes other animal and plant species. Environmental rights of future generations are made concrete through the moral duty of solidarity to these species, and the intrinsic value of nature.⁵⁰ There are several reasons why this very progressive judgment is more adapted to the Colombian jurisdiction than it would be to many other jurisdictions. First, the recognition of the broad rights of nature may have been possible due to the strong presence of indigenous minorities in Colombia, for many of whom the interrelationship between human and natural flourishing is very clear. Second, the Colombian Constitution allows a very wide definition of fundamental rights, opening the doors to recognising rights of future generations (for instance, the constitutional right to health has previously been held to put concrete obligations on the government).⁵¹

Innovations in the French legal system show that it is possible to recognise the intrinsic right of nature in a much less expansive way, which may be more adapted to the current context of many Western jurisdictions. The law on civil responsibility contains the *prejudice écologique pur*, which is the delict of harming the environment itself and not merely harming people through destroying the environment.^{52 53} The delict recognises the intrinsic worth of nature, as it is not, like other delicts, linked to a form

of harm inflicted upon a human being, or to someone's property. Rather, it is constituted if damage occurs to an ecosystem or a species. Standing to bring a court case for this delict is accorded to the state, local authorities, or associations, conditional on the damage occurring on the territory that concerns them, or on being related to the goal of the organisation. This means that certain manifestations of the state and particular organisations are allowed to become nature's advocates, which—although it does not go so far as to directly recognise the rights of non-human species—is an important method of protecting nature's intrinsic worth.

What possibilities do the existing ways of recognising the rights of nature create future developments? Applying de Souza Santos' sociology of emergence approach, observing the current emerging trends can allow us to perceive possibilities for positive change in the future.⁵⁴ We can imagine ways in which these currently alternative movements could become more prominent, leading to more large-scale change. First, more states could recognise the intrinsic value of nature in their legal systems, either through direct legislation, or through expanding existing delicts and crimes to include harm caused to nature itself. Second, developing the rights of nature on an international scale could also be promoted. There is an existing initiative of International Rights of Nature Tribunals, which render non-binding judgements based on the Earth Rights Declaration, a document proclaimed by the participants of the People's World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of the Mother Earth in Bolivia in 2010. This resulted from the attempt to circumvent the impasse of the Conference of Parties negotiations on climate change, by filling the gap in the protection of the environment in international law.⁵⁵ These initiatives could be developed to become binding in international law, creating a system of the protection of nature's rights on an international scale. In order to maintain the polycentric approach of prioritising micro-scale decision-making, the system would need to allow for a wide scope of interpretation of ways to protect these rights. This can be achieved through the mechanisms that I will describe later in this section.

Regarding the legal framings of common ownership, it is beyond the scope of this article to survey all emerging tendencies, due to the diversity of potential forms of ownership. Nevertheless, one crucial area in which there have been some developments, and many more are needed, is the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights to land and resources. Although the recognition of the rights to land of indigenous peoples' does not have protection of the environment as its direct objective, it often results in more sustainable uses of land, as it makes control over the land

more localised and enables monitoring of its use through social norms, creating the conditions identified by Ostrom (as discussed above).⁵⁶

4.2 Recognising common ownership for indigenous peoples

The struggles that indigenous peoples face with regard to maintaining their ancestral lands show that, to achieve Escobar's vision of a pluriverse, where such communities would be able to define their own ways of life, some form of international action is needed. There are some legal developments recognising forms of collective ownership of indigenous people which could provide a direction for the development of international law in the future. For example, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, a supranational tribunal, recognised the collective rights of the Mayagna (Sumo) community of Awas Tingni to their land, resources, and environment in the Nicaraguan Caribbean coastal region.⁵⁷ The Court found that the community's rights to property had been violated by the Nicaraguan government, due to the concessions it had granted to a lumber company to log on the community's traditional land, without attempting any consultation with the community. The Court also found that, based on the American Convention on Human Rights, the Nicaraguan government has a legal obligation to recognise the community's ancestral and historical title to the land. It recognised that the meaning of the land to the indigenous community is not merely a question of possession and production, but it is also of spiritual significance.⁵⁸

Aside from the American Convention on Human Rights, other international legal treaties also recognise the rights of indigenous people to their lands, territories, and resources. These include the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (art. 3 and 26) from 2007, the protective measures of the International Labour Organization's Indigenous, and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169, and its predecessor Convention No. 107. A United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues which advocates for rights of indigenous peoples was also founded in 2000.⁵⁹ Collective rights of indigenous people to land are therefore receiving increasing international legal recognition. Nonetheless, the struggles many indigenous peoples face with regards to respect for their rights to land and resources remain severe in many parts of the world. In order to work towards Escobar's vision of a pluriverse, where communities are able to maintain their identity and define their own goals, these rights need to be assured, on both the international and national levels.

It is necessary to create binding international commitments, both to protect nature's intrinsic value, and to protect forms of ownership of indigenous communities. However, the difficulty lies in maintaining the polycentric nature of action: how can we maintain a bottom-up, localised approach, whilst creating effective international legal commitments?

The legal concepts of *subsidiarity* and the *margin of appreciation* are both useful mechanisms for this purpose. Subsidiarity is a principle which exists, for example, in the EU legal system and which stipulates that decisions be made on the most local level when it is competent to do so. This ensures that the default position is to make law at the level closest to the citizens, unless there has been a previous decision that an area should be dealt with at the supranational level. The margin of appreciation is a frequent concept in human rights law which allows for scope for interpretation of a universally binding right. It means that states can all agree to protect certain rights while maintaining a certain amount of autonomy in defining them. Applied to the rights of nature, this could mean that states and local authorities would be obliged to protect the rights, but they would be able to define those rights themselves, within a certain scope of possible interpretations.

5. Concluding thoughts

The transition movements advocating for the rights of nature and redefining ownership through reviving the commons show that it is possible for global 'bodies of alliance' to advocate for universal principles whilst maintaining a diversity of ontologies, paving the way towards the pluriverse. Nature has an intrinsic value, and although the expression of that value should be adapted to context, the very fact of its recognition creates a common principle that unites the struggles of the Global North and the Global South. Ownership may look very different in different cultures, but an emphasis on reinstating a form of the commons, with the help of frameworks such as Ostrom's to determine how to manage it, is an important step towards a less profit-driven and more purpose-driven future.

In the context of the Anthropocene, the discussion of initiatives responding to the climate crisis is a method for perceiving the possibilities for future change. In the spirit of the *sociology of emergence* approach, current alternative trends show us not only what is but also *what can be*, widening the scope for imagining the

future. Insights from the movements for the recognition of the rights of nature and the promotion of the commons can already be found in legal frameworks, both national and international. Countries such as France and Colombia have recognised the intrinsic value of nature in their legal systems in distinct forms. There have also been some initiatives to take legal recognition of the intrinsic value of nature to the international level, and their development should be supported. Regarding the issue of ownership, in the last couple of decades, there has been increasing awareness of the need to protect the collective ownership rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral land and resources. Much remains to be achieved, but this is the first step towards a world where diverse identities and forms of life are protected.

The challenge involved in creating international legal mechanisms to pursue these objectives is to maintain the autonomy of the movements from which they originated, preventing their co-optation. Part of the response to this challenge lies in creatively using legal mechanisms such as the margin of appreciation and subsidiarity. These principles aim to redirect decision-making to the level which is most appropriate for the specific issues, with the most local as the default level.

Whilst climate change is an enormous challenge facing humanity, it is also an opportunity to reshape global politics. New bodies of alliance are created, and these can unite movements in the Global North and the Global South in a more grassroots-driven, context-sensitive way. Times of crisis are also times which enable new sources of creativity to flow. As Thomas Berry, the father of the Earth Jurisprudence Movement would say, climate breakdown is also the chance to break down the human story as we have told it so far and to tell a new one. The hope is that this new story, which can redefine our relationship to nature and to each other, will follow the paths of success presented in this article, and that it will bring about a more inclusive global narrative based on equal dialogue and open to the insights of many different societies and cultures.

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DOCUMENTING THE ANTHROPOCENE: AN INTERVIEW WITH JENNIFER BAICHWAL

In this first feature interview, STAIR Theme Section Editor Agnes Yu speaks with Jennifer Baichwal, director and producer of documentaries for over 20 years, on her recent documentary project entitled *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch* (2018). Third in a trilogy after *Manufactured Landscapes* (2006) and *Watermark* (2013), the film is a cinematic meditation of how humanity has dominated and changed the Earth's systems more than all natural processes combined. The documentary follows the research of the Anthropocene Working Group, and was filmed over 3 years, 2 months and 22 days, at 43 locations in 20 countries, with 50.77 TB (202 hours and 57 minutes) of raw footage. In conjunction with the film were exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario and National Gallery of Canada, with the exhibit now touring globally. *Anthropocene* won two Canadian Screen Awards in 2019 for Best Feature Length Documentary and Best Cinematography in a Documentary, and received the Rogers Best Canadian Film Award from the Toronto Film Critics Association and Best Canadian Documentary Film from the Vancouver Film Critics Circle.

Jennifer's films have played all over the world and won multiple awards nationally and internationally, including an International Emmy, three Gemini Awards and Best Cultural and Best Independent Canadian Documentary at Hot Docs, for features such as *Let It Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles*, *The Holier It Gets*, *Act of God*, and *Payback*. *Manufactured Landscapes* won, among others, a Genie, TIFF's Best Canadian Film and Al Gore's Reel Current Award. It played theatrically in over 15 territories worldwide, and was named as one of '150 Essential Works In Canadian Cinema History' by TIFF in 2016. The feature documentary *Watermark* (2013) premiered at TIFF 2013 and won the Toronto Film Critics Association prize for Best Canadian Film. It has since been released in eleven countries. In recent years, de Pencier and Baichwal have expanded into film installation work, and have exhibited at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Hamilton and Nuit Blanche. Baichwal and de Pencier were also co-directors of *Long Time Running*, a feature documentary on the Tragically Hip's poignant final tour. The documentary premiered as a Gala at TIFF 2017, was released by Elevation Pictures, and was broadcast by Bell and Netflix. Baichwal sits on the board of Swim Drink Fish Canada and is a member of the Ryerson University

School of Image Arts Advisory Council. She has been a Director of the Board of the Toronto International Film Festival since 2016 and is a passionate ambassador of their Share Her Journey campaign, a five-year commitment to increasing participation, skills, and opportunities for women behind and in front of the camera.

STAIR: Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us. To start off, could you tell us a little bit about your documentary work and the drivers behind that work?

Jennifer Baichwal (JB): I've been making documentaries with my husband Nick for over twenty years now. I started out as an academic; I studied Philosophy and Religious Studies at McGill [University] and I did a Master's in Theology, and then I decided to turn to a more lateral medium to explore those ethical questions that I was coming up against. Epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, personal identity — how to behave in the world — those things were really interesting to me. But I found that the method of enquiry in academia was too narrow and I wanted another way to explore these questions. The first film I made was a meditation on the problem of personal identity, and it was all of these women trying to describe themselves and failing. It was almost like a thesis. It was the first film project I had ever done; I didn't go to film school. The film was my school. But when I started doing it I immediately knew that I had found my vocation, and I knew that this was the form that I wanted to use to continue to explore all of the questions that had fascinated in my academic work.

So each one of our films, in a way, is a meditation on a problem. *The True Meaning of Pictures* is about the problem of representation in documentary and photography. The Paul Bowles film [*Let It Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles*] is about the impossibility of biography — about a complex character who had never really come across in attempts to represent him. This trilogy with Burtynsky [*Manufactured Landscapes*, *Watermark*, and *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*] has been about the possibilities of experiential understanding rather than through didactic information.

STAIR: Telling the story of climate degradation through film has always been a political act, going back to documentaries like Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. How do you and your film-making partners, Nicholas de Pencier and Edward Burtynsky, navigate this pairing of art and politics in your trilogy?

JB: What first struck me about Burtynsky's photographs, before

we made *Manufactured Landscapes*, is that they take you to places you are responsible for but would never normally see, and present you with these landscapes without polemic, without argument. How could we extend this into the time-based medium of film? *Manufactured Landscapes* was an attempt to do that. Just showing photographs in the medium of film would have been ridiculous – why would you do that, why not just go to a gallery and see those photographs? – so it was about how to extend them intelligently into another medium. Scale only has meaning when it is paired with detail, so all of the films with Edward [Burtynsky] have been a dialectic of scale and detail in one way or another, which got harder as he started to shoot more aerial photographs, in *Watermark* in particular, and also in *Anthropocene*. You probably already know that there's a critique of anthropogenic representation – that it's often omniscient or diagrammatic, from above. For me, that perspective is meaningless without the forays into detail, and not just these but the perspectives of the people and other species that are part of that context and inhabiting that landscape. In all three films, there are very few experts that pontificate: it's not like you look at something and then an expert says: “and, by the way, this is what's happening here”. What you learn from that context comes from the people within it, or, in *Anthropocene* especially, the other species, like the elephants, or the critically endangered or extinct-in-the-wild species of the London Zoo. This speaks to ethics of representing places that you are not of, which we can talk more about later.

When I look back on Al Gore's film, as a film, aesthetically and formally – and no offence to Davis Guggenheim – it's completely simplistic. It's a lecture, and then you see him in his car, working on his computer. This sort of banal B-roll. It's not formally interesting at all. But his passion, and the message, was so important that people responded to it – to the political urgency of it. And many environmental films are diatribes. They're polemics because they have to be – because they're trying to signal urgency. What our work has always done is the step before that: opening up consciousness through experiential understanding, through being in these places, so that you come to the conclusion yourself. It's the precursor to action. Many environmental films and treatises urge activism or some kind of response, some kind of act, and we've been criticised for not hitting that hard enough, not stressing the emergency hard enough. My perspective has always been, and I think Ed [Burtynsky] and Nick [de Pencier] share this, that you're preaching to the choir when you engage in that kind of polemic; the people who you might want to engage, who may initially disagree with you, just turn away immediately. A more experiential, more

STAIR: Before I watched *Anthropocene* and saw that huge terra-forming excavator in Germany [the Bagger, Earth's heaviest land vehicle], I definitely didn't know machines like that even existed. How did you manage to gain access to places like the Hambach surface mine and Norilsk [Russia's most polluted city]?

JB: It took us over a year to get access to Norilsk. In Germany, Nick became friends with a guy who said no to him twenty times before he finally said yes. Both for ethical and legal reasons, we never lie about why we're coming. We say look, you have the biggest land machine on the planet and we want to show what that looks like. This is an archetype for all the other open-pit coal mines around the world. Yours is the biggest open-pit mine in Germany. So we want to show it for what it is. In this case they eventually relented through a connection we had in Cologne.

In Germany it was the people who were part of that context who spoke on film, both the Bagger operator and Nicole, the farmer who's being displaced. They provide the perspective. But the logistics of getting into these places is very complicated and in Norilsk, we went under artist visas, not journalist visas. I really wanted to talk to three women who were crane operators in the copper smelter there. Immediately, we got detained by the authorities for interviewing people, because "that's what journalists do; artists don't do that." So we got into this semantic standoff of what constitutes an artist, what constitutes a journalist, and they kind of tailed us for the rest of the trip. It was complicated being there, but it's a fascinating place for many reasons. We often say in screenings, the chances are that the palladium in your cellphone comes from Norilsk because it's the biggest producer of palladium in the world, which is in every single cellphone, and you would never know that this place existed. So think about that woman [a crane operator working in the Norilsk copper smelter] who talks about the beauty of a flower pushing through the stone when you're texting somebody. The disconnect is so profound. In the urban environments we live in, we don't understand that every single thing we do every day is taking from nature on one level or another. The goal is to try to make that connection.

STAIR: That really makes sense. While we're discussing the semantics of art versus journalism versus political works, did you know when you were brainstorming The Anthropocene Project that there was going to be a gallery exhibition alongside? How was the whole thing orchestrated? Did the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) reach out?

JB: The whole thing started with the Anthropocene Working Group. We started with scientists there – Colin Waters and Jan Zalasiewicz – who we went to interview very early on. At that point, five years ago, there was still a chance that the epoch might have been officially ratified by the International Commission on Stratigraphy while we were in production, and we wanted to follow the process. We spoke to the chair at that time, the geologist Stan Finney, who was adamantly opposed to the Anthropocene as an epoch. The debate was interesting. But midway through, when we realised that ratification might take another five years or ten years – that the vote might not happen in time – it became more interesting for us to look at the research of the scientists, and to use their research categories as our research categories and to follow them. We were trying to make their research compelling and comprehensible to most people. I don't know if you've seen their book – it's very dense. Normal people will not read that book! But they might see this film. So it started with them. And from the very beginning we knew that it would be multidisciplinary. In the past Edward has always had an exhibition of photographs that go with the film in some way, and often they're released at the same time, and people go to see the work and go to see the film. In this case we wanted to take the collaboration that exists in the film into the museum context, and to have video installations side by side with the photographs as two different ways of understanding the same thing. In the exhibition, for example, you go through the Gotthard Base Tunnel [in Switzerland], the longest railway tunnel in the world, and it gives you this sense of scale and time, of duration. We also wanted to explore new media. We made a number of 360° VR [virtual reality] films which are part of the educational programme, and we also wanted to use augmented reality to bring experiential understanding into the museum context. You could literally walk around a virtual sculpture of the biggest tusk pile before it was burned. You can even see all the nicks and cracks and writing on the tusks, because it's highly detailed. There's also a virtual sculpture of the last male Northern White Rhino, who tragically died in 2018. We started doing all of these things at exactly the same time: the photographs, the books, the museum exhibition, and the film. Whenever we went anywhere on location, we were working in the different formats required for each iteration.

STAIR: *Anthropocene* was clearly an interdisciplinary project then, informed by the Anthropocene Working Group and their research. In the process of your research and filming, what lessons did you learn about how to communicate and collaborate between artists

and academics? And what advice do you have for academics who are hoping to communicate their findings more effectively with the public?

JB: Interestingly, Nick and I spent a lot of time with the scientists. We went to two plenary meetings that they had, and we interviewed a number of them independently. And we made a choice early on to not use their explanations in the film. We could have used them, and in *Watermark* we did have ice core scientists in the film from Copenhagen – Jorgen Pedder Steffensen and Dorthé Dahl-Jensen. But that represented one part of the film: there weren't a bunch of water experts talking. I struggled with it [in *Anthropocene*] because the whole film could have been about the group and their attempts to have the epoch ratified. By the end of our production, almost everyone was on board for the Anthropocene. Before that, there were people who were still sceptical. They would say "What's wrong with the Holocene? The Holocene's fine."

Immersing ourselves in their research and understanding what they were doing, that was one element. To then move on and say okay, how do you make this visual? How do you make this experiential? A number of collaborations happened. Jan and Colin wrote an essay for the book, and we fact-checked everything we had brought up with them before it went into the narration and the book. I wanted to make sure that the research was correct. That was an enormous amount of work for everyone. In the back of the book are all the research captions: where what was, how it relates. They helped us with that.

Interdisciplinary relationships are incredibly fruitful in this time that we're living in now, because they open up each discipline to the unexpected: to possibilities beyond that discipline. And that was what we were trying to do in the exhibition, in the film, in the book. What I love about scientific research is how mostly democratic it is, and how you can make crucial but incremental changes over years. There's not really the need for a grand gesture. In art there often has to be something more grandiose in order to move people or get their attention, so you're trying to create those moments, those bigger gestures. There's a humility in the way that scientific research works that I really love. What we have to be careful about in the realm of art is to not be reductive: to make complex ideas comprehensible without reducing them to platitudes or banalities. In the film, the reason that we used a narrator, which we rarely do, is that we needed to convey even just the definitions of these categories. People don't know what anthropurbation or technofossils are. Narration was a way of trying to convey more information without impacting the experiential nature of the film

too much. It's a delicate balance.

STAIR: The score of this film was also quite understated in the way that it comes in and out, allowing the viewer to feel for themselves. You've spoken in other interviews about how the score for *Anthropocene* was created almost exclusively by female composers. How else did the lens of gender influence the approach that you took towards these films?

JB: I'm an Ambassador for 'Share Her Journey', which is a Toronto Film Festival initiative trying to amplify the role of women behind and in front of the camera. The numbers are still pathetic, in terms of directors, cinematographers, editors, and composers, especially in dramatic films. There is almost gender parity in documentaries though – I think because they usually have small budgets, because they generally don't make any money, and because they're often small crews where you're working with two or three people. They're much more suited to a quieter investigation—the opposite of the cliché of the baseball-cap-wearing male director who's bossing everybody around the set. That dreadful caricature. So I really wanted to have female composers for the film. And it was hard to find them. There isn't a database you can go to called: 'Incredible Female Composers'. We found them on Soundcloud and other audio-sharing sites.

We have always worked with composers at the very beginning of the editing process – sometimes even before editing – so that it's more of a conversation. In many scoring situations, the composer scores to a picture-locked film, so the film is finished, they watch it, and then compose to those scenes. It's a one-sided conversation, and that is why it can sometimes feel contrived or much too present. I believe that leading or signalling emotion through music is usually problematic in documentary, because documentaries are about reality and the content should be primary. So when I sense score asserting itself in documentary – a repeating theme, or something that swells at a time when the viewer is supposed to be emotional – it really bothers me, because it feels like it is manipulative.

As for gender, I am a female director who has been working now for over twenty years. Whenever I go on location somewhere – and of course we go all over the world – at the beginning no one ever thinks that I'm the one in charge. It's often a very interesting situation, a process of learning and understanding, because when people eventually figure it out, their perception of what a woman can do changes. Collaboration is everything in film, and so the idea of asserting your vision for the sake of asserting it –

situation, a process of learning and understanding, because when people eventually figure it out, their perception of what a woman can do changes. Collaboration is everything in film, and so the idea of asserting your vision for the sake of asserting it – you know, the directorial vision, the singularity of that—is total bullshit, especially in documentary. I always remember something from Michael Ondaatje’s book, where he interviews Walter’s Murch [*The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*]. Murch talks about the director being the immune system of the film, and this is a perfect description of the documentary director’s role. You let in everything that makes it stronger, and keep out everything that makes it weaker. It is an overview of all of these different parts that are moving all of the time. But it is not a position of authority. It is a position of humility, and involves engaging meaningfully with context. We travel all over the world, to places that we are not from, and this requires the most profound humility, and openness to what that context has to tell you about itself. We’ve never worked with a traditional script. We do an enormous amount of research in advance, and then try to forget all of that when we get to a place and let it speak to us. We have huge shooting ratios for that reason, because we’re always exploring. It’s almost an existential attitude: of having a plan but being ready to abandon it at any moment. Being able to turn on a dime if the context changes. You can’t expect something from a place or context, and just go there and execute it. Then you’re not seeing what’s happening; you’re not engaging authentically with what is happening. But it’s a very odd way to live, because it’s about constantly relinquishing control, not being in control. Being ‘in control’ often means, not really seeing what is around you. This is the most important dimension of our work: the ethics of engagement with the people and the places we are representing. It’s an act of aggression to simply show up somewhere with a camera and put it in someone’s face. There has to be some kind of authentic exchange of vulnerability somehow, and that involves a certain way of being, an openness, that you have to keep reminding yourself of.

STAIR: The entire project sounds very immersive for all of you. So how did filming this trilogy – or filming documentaries in general – influence your everyday life afterwards? How do you reconcile flying to these places with the films themselves?

JB: Well, just on the carbon footprint level – it’s huge. I’m constantly asking myself: were the effects of this project enough to offset the enormous amount of energy we expended in creating it? All of our projects since *Payback* have been carbon offset. They’re

completely carbon neutral. We're very diligent in doing that, which means we calculate our footprint: we calculate our flights, car journeys, hotels, electricity, and even the release – how much carbon is used in the theatres. Then we invest in offsetting. Trust me, it is not as good as it sounds. I struggle with our footprint a lot. Offsetting is one way that we answer that. Trying to disseminate our work enough that it justifies our energy output is another.

In terms of its effects, it's an enormous privilege to do this work. Every single film we make is like doing a mini Ph.D. in the subject: it's completely immersive. They usually take anywhere from two to five years. Anthropocene is the longest most complex project that we've ever done. The luxury of sustained reflection on one's subject and the ability to expand out in all of these different iterations is very gratifying. So I feel really lucky that we are able to do this work in such an in-depth and multifarious way. Of course, when we go into these environments we're not going to the beautiful tourist places. We're going to the most hard-hit places, difficult environments, and I think while there, first: we're here for four days but there are people who live here their whole lives. And second, what you take away from that? We're all environmentalists, we all work with various groups — Environmental Defence, Eco-Justice, WWF, Swim Drink Fish and Waterkeeper, The Stop. It does awaken a sense of urgency, and in our personal lives we try to have as low a carbon footprint as possible. We drive a little electric car. My kids now won't get a cup of coffee if they don't have their own cup with them. These are small gestures. But it certainly has impacted us. We have openly supported here in Canada governments that have a progressive environmental policy, like the Liberals with their carbon tax or 'price on pollution', as they're calling it. They're not perfect as a government but that's the most comprehensive plan that anybody's ever put forward, so we support it. And the educational programme is partly an answer to that too. We have curricula for grades four to twelve that will travel all across Canada for the next two, three, maybe even five years, and students will be able to put on headsets and suddenly be at the Dandora landfill, or [at] the Tusk Burn, or [in] the Carrara marble quarry. There are lesson plans about plastic and avoiding single-use plastic. Trying to communicate to the generation that is inheriting all our mistakes.

STAIR: I'd like to return to the term Anthropocene itself. As you have mentioned before, there has been a very heated debate surrounding the term, and not just scientific debate on whether or not the Anthropocene has replaced the Holocene. There are a lot of scholars, in particular Indigenous scholars, who argue that the Anthropocene doesn't account for Indigenous experiences. In many

cases, for Indigenous peoples, the 'Anthropocene' has occurred for multiple decades and centuries, having already (disproportionately) lived in polluted, 'post-apocalyptic' conditions the Anthropocene illustrates, where their relationship with water and nature has been long disrupted. Social justice scholars also talk about how the Anthropocene implies that the entirety of humankind is responsible, whereas they would say that specific industrialised cultures are responsible for the impacts. How did you reconcile these critiques with using the term?

JB: There's a feminist critique as well. As I mentioned before, there's a critique of Anthropocene representation as being very omniscient, very much from above. In terms of answering that in our work, that was a no-no: it's not just from above, we're going right down; we want to be in those places. The truth of a context is only understandable in relation to the people and species affected: you can't just fly above it and understand it; you can't just float above the continent. So our approach was a response to that.

All of those critiques are totally valid. I agree with all of them. Certainly the Indigenous, the feminist, and the sociopolitical critique that a tiny percentage of industrial nations are basically driving all of the anthropogenic change that is occurring. So when you look in the film, there are people who are...you know, there's a limitation in the concept if you consider it from a purely geological standpoint. The AWG research shows that we are now at a time in history where humans change the systems of the earth more than all natural processes combined. We could say 'some humans', not all humans. So I guess you could argue that there is an inherent limitation in the term. But the evidence of human impact is profound and real. The debate speaks to how we talk about the relationships between social and environmental justice. The way we talk about responses to the climate emergency, the way we talk about what we were discussing before, and our own carbon impact in making this project.

The main point of The Anthropocene Project is to create a space for sustained reflection on this idea. And then, what are all the elements that come off of that? We could have made a very different film that took that idea, the term, and completely unpacked and critiqued it from all of these different perspectives. I don't think it's our place to do that. That's the place of the Indigenous scholar, the feminist scholar, the sociopolitical scholar. Somebody who is coming from a context [who] can legitimately unpack and critique that. The starting point is that humans – *some* humans – have tipped the planet outside its natural limits. That's where we are now. And it was crucial that the final narration of the film refer-

enced the fact that we are all implicated, but some of us far more profoundly than others. There is no question that there are deep, deep inequalities to be parsed and acknowledged.

STAIR: I guess that answers the question [about] the merits of using the Anthropocene in terms of encouraging debate and looking at it through a geological standpoint—

JB: —Well also, many people who live in urban environments, specifically in the Global North, have little understanding of all the ways that everything they do every day impacts on natural landscapes. Extraction, terraforming, garbage, technofossils. We don't think about these things because we don't have to go to Hambach to get the coal to put in our stoves to warm ourselves. We just turn up our thermostats. We turn on the tap to get water. We throw our garbage into a bin, then take it to the curb and someone hauls it away. Hopefully the exhibition travels to different countries – so far it's only been in Europe and North America. To countries in the Global South that are recipients of the change rather than the creators of the change.

But having said that, creating a space where you can think about your relationship to all of these places is part of the concept of the Anthropocene project. This is something that Edward has always said: we used to be dwarfed by nature as humans. We were *afraid* of nature. Now we are the sublime force that is changing everything the most. You were overwhelmed by the Bagger; you had never seen anything like that. But this is not an extraordinary landscape. This is business as usual. These places operate twenty-four hours a day. This is what it takes to maintain the way that we live in the Global North. So I think that the Anthropocene is useful for that as well.

STAIR: There seems to be a huge dissonance between what urban life and what is actually going on. Do you think that cognitive dissonance has changed at all since you began the trilogy? Have you perceived any social change in terms of how people understand their own impacts?

JB: One of the reasons that we continued on from the first to this last project together was very much because the experiential understanding – the invitation to experiential understanding – struck a chord with many people. And all three films have been released around the world: they've been seen by thousands and thousands of people. People would be looking at the Made in China labels on their clothes after the *Manufactured Landscapes* screening. What

does that mean, you know? In *Watermark*, again, it was musing on the luxury some have of turning on a tap and having water come out. That doesn't exist everywhere. What does that mean? These things that we take for granted. So I do feel like there's been an impact on the raising of consciousness. Whether that raising of consciousness then translates into a change in behaviour – that's the point where the activists pick up. People have shared with us that the films have changed the way that they behave, after changing their understanding. Once you know something, you can't go back to not knowing it. In that sense, I hope that they have had sufficient impact to justify the work and the energy use.

STAIR: 'In the middle of the forest,' writes the poet Tomas Tranströmer, 'there's an unexpected clearing that can only be found by those who have gotten lost.' In context, it seems, Tranströmer is writing about the act of writing itself—that often, in the process of creating art, the artist stumbles upon a moment of clarity or a sudden realisation that they could never have predicted or planned. In the process of creating *Anthropocene*, did you experience any such moments of discovery? How did the process change your understanding of the crisis, or humanity, or yourself?

JB: When I mentioned the way that we work, which is a lot of research, with no script, we are experiencing those moments all of the time. And one of the greatest joys of this work is that by moving out of your comfort zone – by constantly going into places which are totally unpredictable and finding ways of authentically engaging with them in some way – you are always going to be surprised. It is the way that you respond to that uncertainty – that's the ethical part, but it's also the part that is so rich about art. Art has this capacity to move people viscerally, intellectually, and emotionally all at the same time. And that also happens to us, while we're making it. Our films take around a year to edit. We're working with hundreds of hours of material. And in that sifting process that I go through, sitting in an editing room with our editor [Interviewer's Note: Roland Schlimme has edited all three of these films] it is a magical process of discovery. We find the story in all of that material. We do long assemblies—say four or six hours for one scene, and then slowly whittle it down to what is essential about that place, but hopefully not reductive. It's like putting a 1000-piece puzzle together without ever seeing the picture of what the puzzle is meant to depict. You don't know what it is going to happen. That is exciting, and sometimes scary, but always incredibly gratifying in the end.

FEATURE INTERVIEW: PROFESSOR GABRIELLE SLOWEY

In this second feature interview, STAIR Theme Section Editor Agnes Yu speaks with Dr Gabrielle Slowey, Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and Director of the Robarts Centre of Canadian Studies at York University, Ontario. The focus of their conversation is on Indigenous experiences with climate change and the Anthropocene. A settler scholar – a first-generation Canadian of Irish immigrants – Professor Slowey has worked with and in Indigenous communities over the past twenty-five years; including, the Miqmag and Malisset communities of New Brunswick, the Mikisew Cree First Nation of northern Alberta, the James Bay Cree of Northern Quebec, the Ngai Tahu and Tainui of New Zealand and the Vuntut Gwitchin (along with a host of other Yukon First Nations) of Old Crow.

Professor Slowey's research explores the nexus between (un)conventional resource extraction, local resistance, environmental/ecological integrity, duty to consult, land claims, self-government, and Arctic politics. Focusing on community-based and community-driven research, Professor Slowey is involved in a Partnership Development Grant (2018-21) from the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for a project entitled 'Aandse: Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and the Transformation of University-based Knowledge'. In 2018-2019 she and Kwanlin Dun Elder Judy Gingell received a SSHRC Connection Grant on Indigenous Research Capacity and Reconciliation for a project titled 'Spirit and Intent: The Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement Today and Tomorrow'. Her previous book publications include *Navigating Neoliberalism: The Mikisew Cree First Nation* (2008). In 2016, Professor Slowey was awarded the inaugural Fulbright Chair in Arctic Studies, and took up the position at the Dickey Centre for Arctic Studies at Dartmouth College in early 2017.

STAIR: Professor Slowey, your research centres on the question of how indigenous populations negotiate climate change. How did you settle on that topic?

Gabrielle Slowey (GS): I initially went to the University of Toronto (UofT) because I wanted to be a constitutional lawyer, but I ended up taking a course in my senior year called Politics of the Northwest Territories with Graham White at UofT. The timing was ideal – it was right when the Northwest Territories was being divided to provide

space for the formation of a new territory, Nunavut. I remember, at the time, I thought the division of the territory offered a perfect opportunity for the Northwest Territories to re-envision governance in the region, specifically because half of the population is Indigenous. And at the heart of that lies the question: what would self-government look like?

Unfortunately, these territories did not develop their own model of self-government at that time. Instead, Nunavut is a 'public government' with 85% Inuit population and in NWT, they kept the traditional government structures and apparatuses. In the NWT, First Nations self-government agreements have only begun to come on line in the last few years.

My first real job was working as the self-government officer for the Mikisew Crew First Nation which is located in Fort Chipewyan Alberta (immediately downriver and north of the oil sands). It's the most northern and remote community in Alberta and can only be accessed by plane or (when possible) winter road. Once I landed in Fort Chip, from the very beginning, I was immersed in the life of the community and was educated by the Cree. I learned a lot through that perspective of being welcomed in as a visitor/employee in their territory. Once my time at Mikisew ended, I started my doctoral studies at the University of Alberta. That timing also coincided with the rollback of liberal politics in Canada. Sitting in a classroom learning about neoliberalism as being bad for labour, for gender, for the state- I couldn't help but wonder: how does it affect First Nations? I then decided to write my Ph.D about this community and how it could navigate neoliberalism.

And from there on, I was curious about how different First Nations communities deal with the pressures of resource extraction, especially if extraction has a detrimental effect on the environment and the community itself. At the core of this is the question of how communities make decisions. How do they govern? In many situations, what I see and found is that they are balancing complex interests and demands while also striving to maintain cultural integrity.

STAIR: Given that you work closely with the communities themselves, how has your work been perceived by the First Nations?

GS: Two days ago (December 2019), the grand chief of NAN (Nishnawbe Aski Nation) dm'd [direct messaged] me on Twitter and asked me to call him. So I did! During the call he told me that he was aware of my work and wanted to ask me for my help. His organisation is going to present a case at the United Nations in April 2020 and he wanted to know whether I could help his staff write a two-page briefing note that they could submit. I work with a lot of different

Indigenous communities, and in many cases, and where I can, I try to be available to assist them directly.

STAIR: Could you give us an example?

GS: One of the projects I'm currently working on is in the Yukon, and it is based on the idea that Indigenous communities are at the forefront of climate change. Old Crow declared a climate emergency, which is, to my knowledge, the earliest First Nation in Canada to do so. The federal government then followed suit and also declared an emergency. I was talking to the Grand Chief of NAN, Alvin Fiddler, and told him that when people think about climate change, they tend to think of polar bears on a piece of ice melting into the ocean. They don't think about the people who are affected by it. Just last month (November 2019), Bearskin Lake First Nation had to evacuate their citizens. That is something that has never happened before at that time of year.

Citizens in downtown Toronto are worried about whether there will be a white Christmas and how to recycle. But people rarely think about or realise the impact of that their daily decisions have on communities in the North of Canada. The reality is that First Nations contribute the least to global climate change but they are acutely affected. They are on the frontlines of it and they are experiencing climate emergencies as a result.

STAIR: Which mechanisms do the First Nations have to react to this?

GS: One way First Nations governments and leaders are raising attention is using public forums to draw attention to the dire situations they find themselves in. One forum to voice these concerns are the United Nations bodies that deal with climate change as well as those that deal with violence against Indigenous peoples. The challenge is to frame the issue in such a way that climate change becomes viewed as a real threat in the same way as shooting with guns at unarmed Indigenous populations is a threat. The notion that climate change can be a threat and has to be addressed is only slowly being accepted. Most institutions see it as qualitatively different from other kinds of threats. Changing that perception is a challenge that Indigenous populations face.

STAIR: That ties into a wider debate on whether the term 'Anthropocene' is, in fact, the wrong term to describe the future. The implied notion of a coming disaster for some indigenous peoples is already reality.

GS: One of the key problems with the phrase ‘human impact’ is that it ignores, and this is very important when working with First Nations, the relationship with the land, animals, and the environment. It’s an artificial separation that has to be taken into account. The hierarchy of climate change, which places humans at the top and animals at the bottom, does not apply in many of the communities who have lived with nature all their lives and who see the land as their relation and the animals too. The relationship to the land and animals and waters is one of necessity, and the impact of climate change is therefore much more tangible in their everyday lives. In urban centres, where most universities are located and where most Canadians live, people rarely interact with nature at all and it is easy to forget that it is the basis for the life of millions of people around the globe.

A second concern is that the ‘anthro’ in the term suggests that the primary focus should be cultural study and research. For the communities I work with, it is not about study or research; rather the question is what do I offer that can be used to benefit them. The focus is on change, not inquiry. The term suggests that you can study without recognising the need for action. While that is typical of academia, it is particularly dangerous in this case and to be honest, it is outdated.

A final concern with the term Anthropocene is that it suggests a universalisability. But if you look closer at what is actually happening in the communities, it is quite clear that local histories are key to understanding the processes and challenges that are being confronted.

STAIR: It also obscures the fact that some groups are more responsible for climate change than others, and that some communities are more affected than others.

GS: I agree. Yet, I would still use the term. It creates a feeling of responsibility that is very healthy for the discourse and, overall, too rare. The alternative, climate change, locates the agency with the climate. That overlooks the human responsibility in bringing the crisis about and dealing with the existing and coming challenges.

STAIR: The First Nations in Canada face various crises, of which some are caused by the government itself. On the other hand, the Canadian government claims to represent a green approach to climate politics on the international stage. How do you pressure the Canadian government into changing their approach towards the First Nations?

GS: The answer is showing how the Canadian government is directly responsible. Canada is proud of its image on the international stage, where it is often viewed as a safe haven for international refugees

and it prides itself on being viewed as a diverse country that manages multiculturalism so people can live together peacefully. Pointing out the inconsistencies – that Indigenous communities don't have clean drinking water and may be climate 'refugees' in their own land – threatens that international perception. The fact that [international climate activist] Greta Thunberg visited Montreal to lead a climate rally and, if you watched it on television, the two people standing beside her were First Nation leaders – Assembly of First Nations regional chief for Alberta Marlene Poitras and regional chief for the Yukon Kluane Adamek – is a poignant example of one way that the First Nations are drawing international attention to the situation in Canada. Those are particularly powerful moments, because they point to the less pretty parts of Canadian environmental policy which aren't working to protect First Nations from the reality and real impacts of climate change.

STAIR: Do you think this shaming strategy would work for different actors, too?

GS: Yes, although the situation in every community is different there are some elements shared across and between them.

STAIR: You've been part of a project that explores the Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement [UFA], which was finalised in 1990. What has been learnt since then?

GS: It was a landmark agreement that impacts policy in the region and continues to inform policy making and governance today.

The challenge currently is that the young generation does not understand why the agreement was negotiated in 1990, partly because they have grown up with it so they don't know any different. The UFA has always been there for them. It is internalized and the struggle that led to it is slowly becoming a faint memory. So instead of discussing this agreement, I assisted in the organization of a 'modern treaty simulation' forum. In November 2019 some of the original negotiators and twenty-seven young representatives from the different First Nations across the Yukon came to Whitehorse to learn about and discuss the different chapters of the UFA. This was an exercise in knowledge mobilisation, sharing the experience and teaching the next generation about how to negotiate an agreement with an eye to achieve the outcomes your community needs.

STAIR: In your book, *Navigating Neoliberalism*,¹ you note that neoliberalism is a dual-edged sword for Indigenous populations. On the one hand, it drives oppressive government policy while also giving

GS: It started with a book by Murray Angus, titled *The Last Shall be First*,² which I had read. In it, he argued that the last group admitted to the welfare state, which in Canada's case were the First Nations, would be the first to suffer the rollback of the welfare state. To confirm that hypothesis I returned to Fort Chip and spoke with community representatives, who, unexpectedly all agreed that the neoliberal changes of the last years had had a positive impact on their communities. What they told me was that the less governmental control, the better. It was, in some ways, the perfect storm: the state wanted to retract and Indigenous populations wanted more control.

Initially that was a counterintuitive finding. You would imagine that the welfare payments were especially relevant to these communities. That was not the case. Instead neoliberalism was rolling back a lot of barriers to the economy, for example by allowing these communities to raise capital and participate in the market economy. Across most interviews this argument was the most salient. The state, not the economy, was seen as the barrier to community development. As a consequence of writing about this and sharing this perspective I was accused of being an advocate of right-wing market reforms, which I disagree with. Just the opposite maybe! The important insight is that the picture is not black and white. The challenge both then and now is how to navigate these neoliberal policies in a way that best serves the needs of the community.

STAIR: That takes us to the role of the role of Indigenous communities in liberal institutions. You teach a class on Canada and the Arctic. Indigenous populations participate in the Arctic Council. Do you think it is a good example of allowing their voices to be heard in policymaking?

GS: The decisions at the Arctic Council are made by the member states: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the US. I personally believe that granting the First Nations observer status was a good decision. They can hold these states accountable, simply by being present in the room. However, it is unfortunate that they do not have voting rights. They bring different concerns to the table. From my interviews with representatives, it is clear that climate change is a much larger concern for local northern First Nations than say, the role China may want to play in the Arctic. The focus of national governments and southern scholars on the latter is unfortunate because it often eclipses or comes at the expense of the concerns of the Indigenous representatives.

STAIR: As an academic, how do you feel the academy has navigated the challenge in dealing with Indigenous populations?

GS: I personally feel that academics in general have not been very good. Academics tend to be descriptive and prescriptive and dwell on data and offering new models. The one thing academics are not good at is listening. Academia by its nature trains people to become subject matter experts and grants them a platform to be viewed as the experts. Most mainstream academics I know haven't engaged sufficiently with Indigenous populations and haven't created the space for their stories. That is a failure of academia that I think and hope is changing, even if it is slow and taking some time. I am hopeful and optimistic that academics can become better listeners and better versed at working with Indigenous communities, including students and colleagues.

STAIR: What advice would you give to non-Indigenous students and researchers working on environmental justice and resource extraction?

GS: Acknowledging your positionality in the debate is a first step. Part of that involves acknowledging that not only does one not have all the answers, settlers also created the majority (if not all) of the problems in the first place. The most important step, however, is to move beyond one's own research context and engage in a meaningful way with the communities at the frontlines of injustice and extraction. What are their concerns and challenges? And how can we use the tools or skills or knowledge we have at our disposal to help them? Instead of approaching communities with questions, it's time to step back and listen and allow them to set the terms of the discussion. That, to my mind and judging from my experience, is the most fruitful approach, and to be frank, just the way things are being done now. Any other approach is really rather antiquated and out of touch with the changing landscape- and by landscape I don't just mean the way climate change is changing the actual land but the way the research terrain is changing and the ways First Nations are requiring researchers engage with them. It is common today for communities to set the terms and ask the questions and for researchers to follow their lead and ensure their work benefits the communities and not just the academy or what have you. And it's about time too.

Notes

- 1 Gabrielle Slowey, *Navigating Neoliberalism: Self-Determination and the Mikisew Cree First Nation* (2008, University of British Columbia Press).
- 2 Murray Angus, *The Last Shall Be First: Native Policy in an Era of Cutbacks* (1991, NC Press).

ARGUING FOR SYSTEM CHANGE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE: A REVIEW ESSAY

Laura Rival

The Great Derangement. Climate change and the unthinkable. Amitav Ghosh. 2016 (The University of Chicago Press). *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism.* Jason W. Moore (ed.). 2016 (Kairos PM Press). *The Progress of this Storm. Nature and Society in a Warming World.* Andreas Malm. 2018 (Verso).

The potentially catastrophic acceleration of climate change has motivated researchers to publish numerous books and studies on the subject. Many authors have chosen to inform the public about the predictive science that warns against the dangers of delaying action in the face of climate change. Others have preferred to help people take stock of the fact that we, as a species, together share some responsibility for overheating the planet and causing its irreversible degradation. While fully endorsing the recent calls of climate and earth scientists to act urgently, the three books reviewed here go further by probing the causal links between global capitalism and climate change. In so doing, they advance our thinking on what exactly has changed since August 2016, when the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) of the sub-commission on quaternary stratigraphy (part of the International Commission on Stratigraphy) took the decision to designate the Anthropocene a new geological epoch. The AWG has now also decided that 1950 should be the start date for the onset of the Anthropocene.¹ Even if the proposal to formalise the Anthropocene has yet to be officially ratified, the scientific community as a whole agrees on the objective presence of markers of anthropogenic stratigraphic materials from the 1950s onwards, as well as on the distinctiveness of this recent stratal record.² These officialised facts causally link the new geological epoch to the development of the atomic bomb, the spread of radioactivity during the Cold War, and the rise of atomic energy. For Andreas Malm, author of the prized *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam-Power and the Roots of Global Warming*,³ artificial radionuclides from atomic bomb testing, plastics, and persistent organic pollutants are all causally related to the hegemony of a global system he calls 'fossil capital'. Dipesh Chakrabarty, by contrast, opines that the Anthropocene is hotly debated within the humanities and the social sciences not so much as a term of geological periodisa-

tion, but as an attempt to measure the extent of human impact on the planet.⁴ To what extent can (or should) globalised capitalism be apprehended as causing the temporal merging of Earth history with world history?

In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh comes to terms with the geological imprint left on the planet by humanity as someone speaking from the viewpoint of Asia, the most populous region on earth. If Asia is set to be hit hard by extreme weather events, it is already hit at least as much by accelerated environmental degradation in the form of severe air pollution, water contamination and scarcity, arable soil loss, and natural resource depletion. Ghosh's thoughtful engagement with humanity's predicament combines academic expertise in world history and literature with a political positioning as a cosmopolitan intellectual with Indian roots. As he remarks, Asia appears in climate crisis discussions as victim,⁵ perpetrator,⁶ and redeeming agent,⁷ all at once. This leads him to remark that 'no strategy can work globally unless it works in Asia and is adopted by large numbers of Asians'. Like Chakrabarty, Ghosh endorses the meaning of the Anthropocene as a change in climate directly attributable to the unintended consequences of *Homo sapiens*' very existence.⁸ This leads him to ask important questions regarding the role of writers and artists in awakening us from lethargy and jolting us into action. The climate crisis being a crisis of imagination above all, it is up to writers to find better ways of portraying humanity's deranged relationship with the natural environment.⁹ What we need are new forms of storytelling. Ghosh takes inspiration from stories that are not centred on humans, such as Melville's *Moby Dick*, or the ethnographic works of anthropologists who have learnt to listen to cultures that are attuned to the non-linguistic signs with which non-humans communicate.¹⁰ Rather than wasting time on implausible apocalyptic science fiction tales, writers should explore new forms of realism that are alive to the unpredictable forces of nature.¹¹ Climate crisis realism also demands exposing the root cause of the modern, Western cultural crisis, in particular its twin adulation of possessive individualism and compulsive consumerism.¹² If the modern novel eulogises the moral journey of singular, heroic individuals, the climate change novel would do well to help us find 'a way out of the individualising imaginary in which we are currently trapped'.¹³ Ghosh's latest novel, *Gun Island* (a sequel to *The Hungry Tide*, published in September 2019), puts these precepts into practice.

A powerful synthesis of East/West and North/South geopolitical considerations, *The Great Derangement* can be read as a manifesto for global climate justice. Like Ribot's uncompromising rebuttal of the thesis that the 'Anthropocene divide' obscures rather than

clarifies understandings of human-environmental relationships as forming a complex continuum over time and space;¹⁴ Ghosh is keenly aware of the vulnerabilities that put people at risk. With a discerning grasp of the moral and political implications of 'contraction and convergence', Ghosh feels free to approach three interrelated themes: first, the imperialist legacies that have constrained the endogenous development of India, China, and Burma; second, the histories of resistance to capitalism in India and China, 'the two nations that are now often blamed for precipitating the climate crisis';¹⁵ and third, the non-modern forms of knowledge that industrial civilisation has tried time and again to render obsolete. The author comes back to the central thesis that Capitalism and Empire are dual aspects of a single reality, including that of the Great Derangement.¹⁶ Whereas different groups of people have contributed to climate change in vastly different measures (a fact accurately reflected in the terminology of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', adopted by the United Nations),¹⁷ the rich have much more to lose than the poor.¹⁸ Whether speaking from Asia, the 'Global South', or any of the world's disempowered communities, the public intellectual is thus able to demonstrate that modern 'lifeways' can only be practiced by a small minority of the world's population,¹⁹ a realisation fully embraced by anthropologists Paula Ebron and Anna Tsing.²⁰ Any attempt by powerful minorities to resist a radical restructuring of global power will accentuate the climate crisis, Ghosh warns: 'if the world's most powerful nations adopt the politics of the armed lifeboat explicitly or otherwise, then millions of people in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere will face doom'.²¹ To avoid such a catastrophe, we must urgently rearticulate the language of freedom and liberty,²² while recovering the many languages of solidarity, collective action, collective experience, and social justice, and extend them beyond the confines of our species.²³

Anthropocene or Capitalocene critically re-engages the term Anthropocene, which Jason Moore had rejected as a misnomer in his 2015 *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. Exemplary of a number of recent social constructionist and post-humanist works, the edited volume revisits the Anthropocene as a productive concept to interrogate capitalism, 'the pivot of today's biospheric crisis'.²⁴ Contributors are tasked with providing answers to the question, 'how does modernity put nature to work'²⁵ at a time when 'the conditions of life on Planet Earth are changing rapidly and fundamentally'?²⁶ As Moore explains in the introduction, he still thinks that the Anthropocene is inadequate as a historical, rather than geological argument,²⁷ but he is open to taking into consideration the concept's scientific influence and

media popularity. In part one, Eileen Crist and Donna Haraway critically engage the Anthropocene concept: Crist by fronting ecozoic arguments against the domestication of the earth; Haraway by furthering her radical post-human sociological propositions. In part two, Moore starts by re-asserting that we live in the age of 'Capital' (understood as a specific set of practices and assemblages of resource extraction, trade patterns, and capital accumulation) and that such acknowledgement gives us a better chance to overcome obstacles to effective climate action. In responding to his critiques, Moore explains his wish to deepen the conversation around the broad issue of how humans and their organisations fit within the web of life.²⁸ Although he still feels that Capitalocene is a better concept than Anthropocene, he is keen to widen the debate, both analytically and politically, perhaps accepting Chakrabarty's (2018) conceptual critique regarding the problematic issue of folding the geophysical concept of 'force' into the human-existential category of 'power'.²⁹ McBrien builds on Moore's insights to explore the 'necroenic' aspects of capitalism's drive to exclude and destroy, while Altvater offers his own Marxist interpretation of capitalism's fundamental contradictions, not least the irrational rationalisation of attempts to master an 'external world'.³⁰ Part three brings culture and politics to bear on the notion of Capitalocene, with Hartley's examination of cultural fixes such as geoengineering, and Parenti's reflection on the role of the modern state in safeguarding Capital's cheap nature.

As Andreas Malm summarises them in chapter six of *The Progress of this Storm*, the conceptual innovations introduced in *Capitalism in the Web of Life* seek to break the Cartesian dualism of Nature and Society, which, according to Jason Moore, prevents thinkers and activists alike from understanding the true nature of capitalism as 'world ecology'. In the age of Capital, the world's biophysical reality has been gradually subsumed within the social sphere of market power and finance. Being a faithful heir to Immanuel Wallerstein and Gunder Frank, Jason Moore dates capitalism back to the sixteenth century, thus retaining some of the gradual and continuous historical development dear to Baur and Ellis.³¹ Unlike Baur and Ellis, however, Moore is interested in a particular political economy: capitalism. As capital penetrates the fabric of life, it becomes an organic part of nature. As a result, the Marxian distinction between first and second nature – 'humanity-in-nature' and 'nature-in-humanity' – collapses. History becomes the co-produced, relational history of bundled hybrids of humanity, living organisms, and nature *in nature*. In other words, living in the Capitalocene means living in a world where the domestication

of nature by humanity is fully achieved. Capitalism then appears as the continuation of humanity's progressive domestication of nature with its vast array of anthropogenic effects. This is one of the reasons why Moore apprehends 'humanity-in-nature' as a 'world historical process'. There is, however, an inbuilt ambiguity in Moore's argument. On the one hand, he refutes the common understanding of the Anthropocene as resulting from humanity's evolving existence as such. On the other hand, he advances the idea that capitalism has historically resulted in the endless expansion and unlimited growth of itself, which is what causes the accelerated, global transformation that threatens the planet today. As I understand it, Moore's methodology relegates Karl Polanyi's double movement (that is, any resistance to the full commodification of land and labour) to a long-gone historical past. As for the form of exploitation David Harvey has called 'accumulation by dispossession', Moore envisages it as a generalised, pervasive movement intrinsic to the great economic acceleration that fossil fuels have enabled since World War II. What fossil capitalism succeeds in appropriating, in fact, is the very capacity of life to reproduce life – that is, all the unpaid work done by everything alive that uses energy to go on living. For Moore then, the current law of capitalist value is the law of cheap nature by which 'four cheaps' are continuously produced and reproduced: food, energy, labour, and raw materials. Therefore, and contra the studies of resilience theorists such as those of Johan Rockström and the Stockholm Resilience Centre, there can be no planetary boundaries, for there are no natural limits. In Moore's relational theory, society and nature have never existed as pure, separate entities. Instead, they have been co-merging for a very long time and are now forming a single, dynamic process of transformation.

The Progress of this Storm advocates an entirely different approach to the Anthropocene than the one championed by Moore. Ironically, both Moore and Malm agree that capitalism is responsible for the climate emergency. Moore even confides to the reader that the term, 'Capitalocene' ('an ugly word for an ugly system'), was first coined by Malm in 2009,³² who prefers to cling to the term 'Anthropocene'. Malm's primary reason for preferring 'Anthropocene' has to do with the existing scientific consensus regarding the major change to the history of Planet Earth that is currently being stratigraphically recorded.³³ Malm thus fully embraces the argument advanced by Zalasiewicz et al. regarding the fact that a trajectory out of the Holocene epoch has clearly begun for the Earth system as a whole and is now accelerating.³⁴ Of course, the term is far from perfect, but it matters that it is used by the likes of Paul Crutzen³⁵ or Will Steffen and colleagues.³⁶ Earth scientists

use the term specifically to signify the new reality of humanly-induced climate change. The distinct geological strata and remains they examine all clearly point to the dominance of a reality that is of *recent* human origin. Therefore, even if imperfect, 'Anthropocene' is appropriate both from the perspective of physical geology and from that of human history. The term raises important political issues, as the contributors to *Anthropocene or Capitalocene* make plain, but these are not terminological problems, at least as long as the scientific term, 'Anthropocene', is kept clearly distinct from popular renderings that equate the term with vague notions of a 'human age' or 'the era of humankind'.³⁷ The issue with such notions is that they enlarge the Anthropocene concept to encompass the many ways in which humans have transformed and domesticated nature over the ages. Malm would thus be in strict agreement with Zalasiewicz et al.³⁸ contra Bauer and Ellis' broad approach to the Anthropocene as a manifestation of on-going and cumulative anthropogenic influence. For Malm, all substitutes for 'Anthropocene' proposed by social scientists and researchers in the humanities equally create confusion, including Capitalocene. The specific problem with the latter term is that it merges the long historical, social, and economic development of capitalism into one single and continuous process, all the way from the early sixteenth century down to the drastic transformations of recent decades. Along with fellow eco-socialists, Bellamy Foster³⁹ and Ian Angus,⁴⁰ Malm categorically rejects such amalgamations. If capitalist political economy is six hundred years old, the earth system epoch scientists call the Anthropocene is no more than sixty years old. Put differently, capitalism existed for hundreds of years before the Anthropocene began, and the Anthropocene will continue to exist as a geological epoch for many centuries to come.⁴¹ The chief problem with Moore's view of the world, according to Malm, is that it is fundamentally capitalocentric. Ecological crises for Moore exist only insofar as they represent economic crises for Capital, a conception akin to an advanced form of reductionism, at once anthropocentric and economistic.⁴² In Malm's view, an obsession with historical causation and dating blinds us to the forces unleashed by geological causation from now into the future, as well as to what is to be done politically to muster collective action. Malm therefore concludes that we must clearly differentiate the geological epoch (the Anthropocene) from the political and economic system (capitalism).

It would be interesting to know whether Ghosh would add to Malm's criticism that Moore's view is also (by necessity) particularly Anglo-American-centric. Ghosh would also certainly be sensitive to Hage's argument that the ecological crisis arising from

'generalised domestication' is inseparable from racism.⁴³ The history of the rise of steam power in England, narrated by Malm in *Fossil Capital*, covers some of the same historical ground as Ghosh's *The Great Derangement*. Similarly, Ghosh's historical analysis of the imperialist roots of capitalism complements Malm's analysis in both *Fossil Capital* and *The Progress of this Storm*. While stressing the dysfunctions resulting from the British Empire's political machinations, Ghosh's genealogy of the carbon economy examines the impact these have had on the unequal spread of technological innovations and trade operations around the world. Malm's study, meanwhile, focuses on social property relations – a theme he comes back to in chapter five of *The Progress of this Storm* – along with the huge military advantage the British gained from mastering coal. Moreover, Ghosh would certainly agree with Malm that Moore's intent to utterly dissolve nature into society and society into nature does very little to help us comprehend the elemental forces that nature has unleashed on humans in places like the Padma River in Bangladesh, the Sundarbans in the gulf of Bengal, or indeed, north Delhi, where Ghosh himself withstood a freak tornado on 17 March, 1978. It is thus likely that Ghosh would endorse Malm's effort to grasp the asocial nature and separateness of such elemental forces.

Malm's systematic defence of nature's autonomy from society in *The Progress of this Storm*, however, goes much further than the mere acceptance of the fact that we need to reckon with nature's powers in order to best protect ourselves from them. What Malm argues is that even if capitalism strives to dissolve the nature/society binary, it cannot and will not achieve this, even if its continued existence requires such dissolution. As capitalism cannot exist without something external to it that it can trash, exploit, or both, nature will never be subsumed by society. By putting profit before anything else, including life, capitalism is an inherently anti-ecological system: a system that cannot but continually cause environmental crises. All attempts to further capital accumulation by forcing the incorporation of nature into the market price system are bound to end up destroying the planet as a living system. So, whereas Moore would have us believe that the co-produced history of humanity and of the planet is unfolding towards greater unity, exactly the opposite is occurring. With metabolic rifts multiplying, humanity and nature are set on a dangerous course of separation.⁴⁴ Politically, the priority is to change the social, political, and economic system that is causing climate change as quickly as possible. Such politics requires that we reach epistemological clarity on the fact that nature and society exist separately and autonomously of each other. Inspired by Perry Anderson, Malm dedicates

chapter three to a systematic critique⁴⁵ of Latourian extensions of agency to non-humans, a rejection that also animates Ribot's critique of Bauer and Ellis (2018). Both Malm⁴⁶ and Ribot⁴⁷ are adamant that agency is a uniquely human attribute. Malm further argues that the mutual externality of nature and society allows for beneficial interdependence in the shape of multiple combinatory ways of producing diversity and sustainability within the planet's natural limits. In other words, it is through dialectical relations, and not hybrid fusions, that humanity will redefine liberty and reinvent freedom, and, in so doing, achieve full emancipation. That authors as diverse as Moore, Chakrabarty, and others keep creating new dualisms as they try to dissolve old ones is to Malm indicative of the fact that binaries are necessary, especially the fundamental separation – and partial autonomy – of nature from society and vice-versa.

Readers will have to evaluate Malm's polemic against Moore, Latour, the new materialists, and many other contemporary thinkers on its own merit, as well as his diatribe against those who smudge our thinking about the Anthropocene and end up making capitalist fictitious markets and symbolic values seem more real than nature itself. I doubt that calling neoliberals anti-realists will necessarily get us out of the political agency crisis Malm rightly identifies.⁴⁸ As the climate heats up, so does the political debate. Who amongst the 'hybridists' and the 'dualists' will offer the mightiest resistance against the climate injustices of today and those to come?

Readers may opine that furthering the debate productively demands getting back to Ghosh's iteration of what looks like a general consensus: climate change is displacing, and will continue to displace, people in harmful ways. Whatever happened in whatever time in the past, there is no disputing the fact that those most at risk in the near and not so near future (whether we call it the Anthropocene or not) are the communities, groups, and individuals most marginal to the circuits of capital. As Ghosh remarks, those who have no means of gating themselves in the sheltered exclusionary zones created by and for the wealthy cannot easily avoid being pushed into the dangerous wastelands that global capitalism has created all over the planet:

Inasmuch as the fruits of the carbon economy constitute wealth, and inasmuch as the poor of the global south have historically been deprived of this wealth, it is certainly true, by every available canon of distributive justice, that they are entitled to a greater share of the rewards of that economy. But even to enter into that argument is to recognize how deeply

we are mired in the Great Derangement: our lives and our choices are enframed in a pattern of history that seems to leave us nowhere to turn but toward our self-annihilation.⁴⁹

For Ghosh, history as politics of resistance stands in the way of efforts to naturalise ‘money flows toward short-term gain’. What the world needs today is something akin to ‘the powerful Indigenous resistances of many different kinds’ which met industrialism and consumerism in India and China in the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ Malm, who contends that the radicalisation of political polarisation is absolutely necessary today, might agree with Ghosh. For Malm, in any case, ‘the contradictions between the apex of wealth and the conditions supporting human existence are reaching catastrophic intensity’.⁵¹ He marshals evidence derived from a recent paper by Chancel and Piketty to support his assessment of how unbearable the polarity has become:

One tenth of the human species accounts for half of all present emissions from consumption, half of the species for one tenth. The richest 1 percent have a carbon footprint some 175 times that of the poorest 10 percent; the emissions of the richest 1 percent of Americans, Luxemburgians and Saudis are two thousand times larger than those of the poorest Hondurans, Mozambicans or Rwandans.⁵²

The three books under review help us conceptualise Nature, Society, and Capital as partly autonomous forces locked into a dynamic (rather than perpetual) ‘dance of agency’.⁵³ Dualist theories enable us to grasp why Society is not something that stands in opposition to Nature, but which represents a certain way of relating culturally, economically, and politically to what exists outside human reach.⁵⁴ In *The Progress of this Storm*, Malm defines Nature as ‘that which has come into existence, continues to exist, and finally disintegrates (decays), thereby going out of existence [...] entirely independent of human volition or intentionality’ – in other words, as an autonomous force capable of regulating its own behaviour, and, as such, beyond human control, manipulation, and intervention.⁵⁵ Earlier in the book, as already mentioned, Malm defends the idea that humans are exceptional in having political consciousness, hence our capacity for autonomous, independent, and ‘reflexively intentional collective acts.’⁵⁶ In the same way as Nature has its own laws, Society sets itself its own norms and rules. Malm relies on both Marxian and Polanyan ideas to argue that the po-

tency, vitalism, and energy of both Labour and Nature will always remain autonomous – at least in part – from Capital.⁵⁷ When Malm remarks that the way in which Nature as an autonomous system behaves depends on how humans behave in relation to it (and the same goes for Labour in relation to Capital),⁵⁸ he actually comes close to thinking like Moore and other hybridists. Nature need not be fully subsumed under Society (or Capital?) to recede and give way to anthropogenic environments. Both ‘dualists’ and ‘hybridists’ acknowledge that Nature, Society, and Capital may combine in many different ways to give shape to more or less dangerous outcomes. If there is no ‘after Nature’ (the dualist position), there is no purely wild, untouched environment either. I wish to argue that both ‘dualists’ and ‘hybridists’ can illuminate the fundamental biophysical contradictions of the current economic regime. Either way, we are still talking about tremendously vague generalisations when referencing Nature, Society, and Capital.

What role could social scientists play to prevent us from being mired in sterile abstractions, which may prevent us from facing reality and addressing climate change in a politically meaningful way? I find hope in Ghosh’s essay, which succeeds in avoiding fetishised and vague generalisations. Malm’s dualism also helps us reckon with natural forces we cannot control, arguing that people should start moving away from flood plains and eroding coastal areas instead of embarking on expensive rebuilding projects animated by obstinate desires to master, control, and subdue. It helps us reckon, too, with social powers that are never given, but always under construction. As for Moore’s hybridism, it does help us acknowledge the autonomous dynamism of capital flows. Surprisingly, Moore has very little to say about artificial intelligence or the digital revolution more generally. Yet, we can all sense that these accelerated technologies are the capital forces animating the future-laden contemporary, whether we call it the Anthropocene or not. The three books under review give us a good historical account of energies like coal, fuel, and nuclear fission. We now need to understand better how artificial intelligence and quantum computing will reconfigure Nature and Society.

Notes

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- ocene (response to Bauer and Ellis)," *Current Anthropology* 59, no.2 (2018): 220-223.
- 3 Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital. The rise of steam-power and the roots of global warming*. (London: Verso, 2016).
- 4 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Anthropocene Time," *History and Theory* 57, no.1 (2018), 7.
- 5 Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement. Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (The University of Chicago Press 2016), 88.
- 6 Ibid, 91.
- 7 Ibid, 92.
- 8 Ibid, 114-115.
- 9 Ibid, 9-10.
- 10 Ibid, 82.
- 11 Ibid, 12-15.
- 12 Ibid, 25.
- 13 Ibid, 135.
- 14 Jesse Ribot, "Ontologies of occlusion in the Anthropocene. (response to Bauer and Ellis)." *Current Anthropology* 59, no.2 (2018): 218-220, and Andrew M. Bauer and Erle C. Ellis, "The Anthropocene divide. Obscuring understanding of social-environmental change," *Current Anthropology* 59, no.2 (2018): 209-227.
- 15 Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, 114.
- 16 Ibid, 149.
- 17 Ibid, 158.
- 18 Ibid, 148.
- 19 Ibid, 144.
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- 22 Ibid, 119.
- 23 Ibid, 162.
- 24 Jason W. Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Kairos PM Press, 2016), xi.
- 25 Ibid, 5.
- 26 Ibid, 1.
- 27 Ibid, 3.
- 28 Ibid, 2, 5.
- 29 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Anthropocene Time," 12.
- 30 Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*, 149.
- 31 Bauer and Ellis, "The Anthropocene divide."
- 32 Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*, 5.
- 33 Andreas Malm, *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London: Verso, 2018), 150-152.
- 34 Zalasiewicz et al., "The geological and earth system reality of the Anthropocene (response to Bauer and Ellis)," 221.
- 35 Paul Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind". *Nature* 415, no.3 (2002): 23.
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- 37 Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*, 109-11.
- 38 Zalasiewicz et al., "The geological and earth system reality of the Anthropocene (response to Bauer and Ellis)," 222.
- 39 John Bellamy Foster, "Marxism in the Anthropocene: dialectical rifts on the left," *International Critical Thought* 6, no.3 (2016): 393-421.
- 40 Ian Angus, *Facing the Anthropocene. Fossil capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016).

- 41 Malm, *The Progress of this Storm*, 72-77 and Chapter 3.
- 42 Ibid, 190-196.
- 43 Ghassan Hage, *Is racism an environmental threat?* (London: Polity, 2017), 132.
- 44 John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010).
- 45 Ribot, "Ontologies of occlusion in the Anthropocene. (response to Bauer and Ellis)."
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- 47 Ribot, "Ontologies of occlusion in the Anthropocene. (response to Bauer and Ellis)."
- 48 Malm, *The Progress of this Storm*, 100-101.
- 49 Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, 110-111.
- 50 Ibid, 111-115.
- 51 Malm, *The Progress of this Storm*, 188.
- 52 Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty, "Carbon inequality: from Kyoto to Paris" (report presented during the Iddri-PSE conference on Environmental inequalities, Paris, November 3, 2015), <http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/files/ChancelPiketty2015.pdf>
- 53 Andrew Pickering, "The ontological turn. Taking different worlds seriously," *Social Analysis* 61, no.2 (2017.): 134-150.
- 54 For a first attempt to theorise this 'within' vs 'without' the social), see Laura Rival, "Anthropology and the nature-society-development nexus," in *The Anthropology of Sustainability: Beyond development and progress*, eds. Marc Brightman and Jerome Lewis. PP. 183-186. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017).
- 55 Malm, *The Progress of this Storm*, 198.
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- 57 Ibid, 196
- 58 Ibid, 200.

GENERAL SECTION

THE FACTIONALISATION OF MEMORY IN JAPAN: FINDING REASONS FOR THE CONTINUED SALIENCE OF 'HISTORY PROBLEMS'

Kaisa Saarinen

Abstract

This paper argues that the Japanese domestic discourse on memory politics has been primarily controlled by a revisionist faction of the political elite, while the Korean discourse has been more mass-led. This issue is highly relevant to Japanese-South Korean bilateral relations, where persistent 'history problems' have been a continued source of tension. The paper advances this argument primarily by analysing Japan's domestic discourse. The paper is thematically divided into four sections, forming a preliminary thesis regarding the core reasons for Japan's continued inability to normalise its relations with South Korea. The first section analyses the content and support bases of the conflicting domestic discourses on history problems in Japan, as well as the positions taken by the Japanese leadership from the 1980s to the present. The second section seeks to qualify the current Abe administration's position on these issues, while the third section turns to quantify and explain the mass-elite gap in history perceptions in Japan. Finally, the fourth section applies the framework of symbolic politics and employs the theory of the Japanese mass-elite gap to explain why history problems cannot be definitively resolved without a shift in Japan's political culture.

Introduction

The politics of memory remains a controversial field in Japan and wider East Asia. Since the early 1980s, the debate on how Japan should address its past has continued to trouble Japan's bilateral relations with neighbouring countries. There are specific issues that have become known domestically as 'history problems' (*rekishi mondai*) due to their persistence; among others, these include 'comfort women' and the Nanjing massacre. South Korea and China, in particular, accuse Japan of not taking responsibility for these wrongdoings during the Japanese occupation of Korea and the Second Sino-Japanese war. While Japanese leadership has,

Kaisa Saarinen, "The Factionalisation of Memory in Japan: Finding Reasons for the Continued Salience of 'History Problems'," *St Antony's International Review* 15 no. 2 (2020): 120-135.

in fact, issued an abundance of apologies over several decades, the core problem lies with the perceived inconsistency of its policy line regarding its past of war and occupation.¹ Sincere expressions of apology have received revisionist backlash that has demanded the bulk of the media attention in South Korea and China, effectively causing more harm than good. This paper argues that this vicious cycle of repeated controversies over the same history problems is primarily caused by the influence of a strong revisionist faction within the Japanese government. These historical revisionists are constrained by the reconciliatory factions in government, as well as the more moderate public opinion. Nevertheless, their continued presence and recurring actions continue to raise tensions, obstructing the true recovery of bilateral relations between Japan and its neighbours. This can be observed in the 'trade war' that kicked off between Japan and South Korea in July 2019, and the near-termination of their intelligence-sharing pact GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement) in November of the same year.

Although the focus of this paper is on Japan's domestic discourse and its bilateral relationship with South Korea, many aspects of its thesis are also applicable to Japan's relations with other Asian states. This paper will begin by examining the different domestic-level narratives that have been formulated in Japan and identifying their main bases of support. It will then attempt to trace the position of the Japanese government, and to qualify whether the Abe administration can be rightly categorised as 'revisionist'. The paper will subsequently use secondary data to analyse whether a gap exists between how the past is construed by the political elite and the Japanese public; evidence from opinion polls suggests an affirmative answer. To explain this gap, the paper will utilise the framework of symbolic politics, drawing secondarily upon South Korea as a contrasting case study. However, the main focus will be on the Japanese experience. The paper will thus provide an overview of the narratives and issues that are relevant to this debate, finally attempting to evaluate the future prospects of a resolution of the history problems and a full recovery of Japan's bilateral relations with its neighbours.

Who dominates the discourse? Domestic narratives in conflict and the fluctuating position of the Japanese government

In Japan, there is no unified narrative on history, and the domestic level debate continues to be a driving force for the international level conflicts in memory politics. This contrasts with the South Korean case, which will be discussed in section 4.

In recent decades, comprehensive apologies have become routine for Japanese politicians. Despite the high number of apologies, however, the vocal faction of unapologetic revisionists in Japanese politics continues to spoil the constructive resolution of history problems. Lind argues there is a 'contrition-then-backlash' pattern which effectively emboldens the revisionists more than the apologists.² At the core of this vicious cycle is the fragmented domestic discourse on war, which has made it impossible for Japan to reach a consensus on how to approach its neighbours on its difficult history. It must be noted that this fragmentation is not a negative phenomenon in itself, given that robust discourse is a key tenet of democracy; it is the more extreme expressions of hard-line revisionists that have caused negative repercussions for Japan's bilateral relations.

In Japan, the post-war discourse on the 'problematic' periods of history can be roughly categorised into three distinct narratives: one focusing on the inevitability of war and thereby absolving the state and military of guilt; another portraying the state and military as guilty of unjustifiable actions; and a third focusing on the suffering of the victims, portraying the war as a human tragedy. Each of these narratives has been promoted by different groups of people, and none of them have achieved clear dominance. However, the narrative on the war as inevitable has been used by a vocal faction of revisionists in Japanese politics, provoking controversy and magnifying its importance in the overseas media.

In the following sections, I will examine the key points of these narratives and attempt to identify their core support bases in order to clarify the power relations between them.

1. War as inevitable

The advocates of the 'war as inevitable' narrative do not consider the Second World War a war of aggression. Instead, the war is conceptualised as an inevitable war to defend Japan and wider Asia from the increasing colonising influence of Western powers.³ This narrative tends to be advocated by historical revisionists and linked with the view that Japan needs to stop dwelling on the past in order to assume a more assertive international role.⁴ Because this narrative aims to invalidate the claims of those who demand Japan should take a more reconciliatory position, it tends to be the primary source of controversy with China and South Korea.

2. War as misguided national policy

This narrative conflicts starkly with the narrative of an inevitable

war. Like the inevitability narrative, it places Japan's actions in an international context, but views them in a very different light. Instead of accepting the claim that Japan was trying to protect or liberate Asia, advocates of this narrative see Japan as an Asian counterpart of the Western colonising powers – a power-hungry state trying to exploit the very states it was ostensibly liberating. Therefore, this narrative recognises that Japan committed unjust actions and needs to repent through appropriate means, be that an official apology, monetary compensation, or something else. In politics, advocates of this narrative tend to take a reconciliatory approach, which is opposed to the revisionist one. To date, few Japanese political leaders have fully embraced this approach. A rare exception is Yukio Hatoyama, the first prime minister representing the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in 2009–2010, whose foreign policy vision was explicitly centred on pursuing historical reconciliation.⁵ Hatoyama struggled with opposition from both revisionists and more pragmatic progressives, however; both his cabinet and his foreign policy line proved extremely short-lived.

3. War as a human tragedy

This narrative focuses on the victims of war, and particularly on the suffering of the Japanese people. War is portrayed as a 'generic evil', removing the need to identify the guilty parties.⁶ Especially in the immediate post-war period, the memories of war were relatively depoliticised and discussed on a personal level. Moreover, scholars such as Takenaka have argued that Japanese people felt collectively victimised and deceived by their own government and military with regards to the war, contributing to the mass-elite gap and lack of political participation that will be discussed further on. According to this argument, this victim mentality became a coping mechanism for the post-war generation. However, in the current context in which China and South Korea demand repentance from Japan, narratives that focus only on the 'victimhood' of Japanese people may be perceived as insensitive. A representative example is the Showakan, a national museum focused on the suffering of domestic civilians during the war. Military artefacts and historical contextualisation are markedly absent from its exhibition. This approach has been criticised for ignoring the agency of the Japanese military in inflicting this suffering, as well as the fact that its scope extended much beyond Japanese homes; the discourse demonstrates that it is no longer feasible to conceptualise collective war memories as 'apolitical'.⁷

Nevertheless, the 'war as a tragedy' narrative in itself is an

instrument that can be utilised for many purposes. While the first and second narratives are in conflict with each other, the 'human tragedy' narrative is compatible with both, and advocates of the first and second narratives have utilised it for their own ends. For example, revisionists employ it to justify the amendment of Article 9 in the post-war Japanese constitution, which states that Japan will 'forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation'. They argue that Japan was a victim of the US occupation, which restrained its sovereignty by imposing a pacifist constitution. Conversely, advocates of the second narrative, such as Tomiichi Murayama in his 1995 statement⁸, routinely refer to the suffering of war victims of all nationalities to argue that the Japanese government should accept responsibility and take a more reconciliatory approach.

The fluctuating position of the Japanese leadership

Owing to both domestic and international factors, such as the focus on economic development and Cold War power relations, the Japanese government was largely able to avoid confronting its war responsibility in the immediate post-war period. However, during the 1980s, changes in both internal and external factors forced the Japanese leadership to face its 'history problems'. Since then, the tally of apologies has risen significantly, yet an effective resolution to these problems remains elusive. A key reason for the continued tension is the inconsistency of the Japanese government's statements and actions on memory politics. Since the history debate became increasingly active in the 1980s, the Japanese leadership has tended to shift between the conflicting first and second narratives, depending on who is in power. The dominant factions of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has been in government for most of Japan's post-war history (with the exceptions of 1993 to 1995 and 2009 to 2012), have largely held revisionist views on history. This is apparent from the fact that all clearly reconciliatory prime ministers have represented parties other than the LDP. Upon seizing power from the LDP in 2009, the first two Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administrations demonstrated a reconciliatory position towards South Korea. However, the last DPJ prime minister before the LDP's return to power, Noda Yoshihiko, 'completely suspended' the reconciliatory policies instigated by his predecessors.⁹ This reversal originated from the ongoing failure to harmonise the 'deeply divided' historical narratives within Japan, as well as Noda's own historical perspective, which was closer to the revisionists than the reconciliatory views of Yukio Hatoyama and Naoto Kan.¹⁰ In the 1990s, there were two non-LDP prime ministers (Morihiro

Hosokawa, 1993 to 1994, and Tomiichi Murayama, 1994 to 1996), who were notable supporters of the 'war as misguided national policy' narrative and whose legacy still influences the practices of official war commemoration today.

Both Hosokawa and Murayama are remembered for offering official apologies for the actions of imperial Japan, and their reconciliatory contributions shaped the language of subsequent LDP prime ministers by raising the bar. In 1993, Hosokawa became the first prime minister to explicitly use the term 'war of aggression' (*shinryaku sensou*) regarding Japan's actions in Asia.¹¹ Before him, others had used the term, but in a more indirect way. For example, in 1982, LDP prime minister Suzuki Zenkō stated in a press conference related to a controversy regarding history textbooks used in schools: 'It is necessary to acknowledge that there exists a criticism of "a war of aggression".'¹² Two years after Hosokawa's statement, Murayama gave the speech on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war's end, in which he apologised for the suffering caused by Japan to other Asian nations during the war. He explicitly supported the second narrative, stating, 'during a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, *following a mistaken national policy*, advanced along the road to war only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations'.¹³ He also employed the 'victimisation narrative' to support his reconciliatory position, portraying both the Japanese people 'ensnared in a fateful crisis', and the Asian peoples oppressed by the Japanese colonialism and warfare as victims of Japan's 'mistaken national policy'.¹⁴ At the time, his statement was considered the most explicit recognition of Japan's war responsibility to date, and held up as a 'landmark apology'.¹⁵ In addition to these prime ministerial statements, the early 1990s saw a high profile statement from Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno Yōhei (LDP), who in 1993 published a statement explicitly acknowledging that the Japanese military was guilty of coercing women into sexual slavery during the war.¹⁶

However, government officials supporting the second narrative have been the exception rather than the norm, and apologetic politicians like Hosokawa and Murayama also have faced significant opposition during their time in the office. For example, Hosokawa's statement was countered by revisionist critics, such as Nagano Shigeto, who claimed, 'I still think it is wrong to define [the Greater East Asia War] as a war of aggression... Because Japan was in danger of being crushed, the country rose up to ensure its survival. We also sincerely believed in liberating Asia's colonies

and establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere... The objective of the war was a justifiable one, which was permissible in those days'.¹⁷ Along similar lines, Murayama's sincere statement and his proposal to adopt an accompanying 'apology resolution' were marred by harsh criticism and counterstatements from the revisionist camp¹⁸, while the Kōno statement also became a target of criticism from revisionists, including Abe Shinzō.¹⁹ Yamazaki has described these counterstatements as 'anti-apologies' which are effectively used as a defence strategy by the revisionists.²⁰ She writes, 'perhaps nothing was more damaging to the persuasive impact of Japanese apologies than the frequency with which high-level government officials behaved or made statements that seem to contradict the basic premises of apology, that is, condemnation of Japanese militarism and war'.²¹ Her argument supports this paper's contention that the vocal minority of revisionists in the Japanese government is the driving force of the ongoing bilateral tensions regarding history problems'.

Despite these consistent revisionist backlashes, the legacy of reconciliatory figures like Hosokawa and Murayama has left a trace on Japanese politics. For instance, the Murayama statement has been formally endorsed by all subsequent prime ministers.²² Despite this formal endorsement and routine apologies, however, many of these successors (including Tarō Asō and Shinzō Abe) have strong links to the revisionist faction. This contradictory position is most clearly demonstrated by their involvement in the Nippon Kaigi, a revisionist right-wing organisation which operates through numerous national and local level branches committed to specific causes, such as promoting 'patriotic education' or attacking gender equality policies.²³ The Nippon Kaigi provides an important support base for the LDP, but the links between the government and these revisionist groups appear contradictory with Japan's purported commitment to recovering relations with neighbouring countries. Particularly during his second administration (2012 to present), Abe has been pragmatically maintaining good relationships with the Nippon Kaigi, while taking care to avoid appearing revisionist to the general public: something that will be further analysed in the following sections.

Because so many of the contemporary prime ministers, including the long-running Abe, have advocated the first narrative, there is an increased likelihood that it is perceived as the official Japanese view by foreign media. However, there is substantial domestic opposition to the revisionist narrative, and opinion polls suggest that the majority of the Japanese people do deem the war a 'war of aggression'.²⁴ Therefore, claiming that it is truly the dominant domestic narrative is a misperception. While the discourse has

changed with each period and administration, it has always been both nuanced and fragmented.

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Qualifying the revisionism of the LDP and the current government

The LDP, the party that has held power for most of the latter half of the twentieth century since its founding in 1955, has complicated internal dynamics. Despite its name, the LDP tends to support economically liberal but socially conservative policies. While it is certainly not a leftist party, determining the LDP's position between centrism and the right wing is a demanding task. This is mostly because its membership encompasses a wide spectrum of views ranging from moderate centrism to extreme revisionism. The LDP is not a monolith. For most of its history, it has been characterised by conflict between various factions, making it hard to define a collective agenda for the party as a whole.²⁵ Regarding memory politics too, there is clear discord between the hard-line revisionists and more pragmatic politicians. An example of this is provided by the minor controversy between Abe's special aide, Eto Seiichi, and Chief Cabinet Secretary, Suga Yoshihide, in 2014. After the United States had stated it was 'disappointed' in Abe's decision to visit the Yasukuni shrine, Eto published an online video criticising it for bowing to pressure from China. This video, in turn, was criticised by Suga, who stated that Eto's views do not represent those of the Japanese public, asking him to withdraw his remarks.²⁶ Later, Suga's predecessor Machimura Nobutaka had more explicitly critical words for Eto, saying they created 'a hundred problems and not a single benefit', going as far as asking, 'what kind of Prime Minister appoints these sorts of people?'.²⁷ Although this was a relatively minor and quickly forgotten gaffe, it reinforced the fact that the LDP continues to be far from united in explicit hard-line revisionism.

Moreover, the Abe government strongly rejects being labelled as 'revisionist'. This was demonstrated by an angered response from a Ministry of Foreign Affairs press secretary to columns accusing Abe's revisionism of needlessly harming Japan's relations with its neighbours. In his response, titled 'Abe is not a nationalist nor a revisionist', press secretary Maruyama Norio wrote: 'Abe's so-called nationalism is an unsubstantiated assumption... In fact, the Prime Minister has repeatedly called for Japan to sincerely reflect on its history. For example, on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, Abe made a comprehensive statement pointing out that "we Japanese, across generations, must squarely face the history of the past", and that "we have the responsibility to inherit the past, in all humbleness, and pass it on to the future";

Maruyama concluded by arguing that instead of a misleading focus on history problems, the apparent success of Abenomics should be celebrated instead.²⁸

However, despite the fragmented party line of the LDP and the lack of an officially revisionist government agenda, there is evidence that the Abe cabinet implicitly supports the revisionist side of the debate. Abe's support for revisionism is most clearly indicated by his and his cabinet's links to the far-right revisionist Nippon Kaigi.²⁹ Despite making fewer controversial remarks in office than some of his predecessors, Abe has been involved in a number of parliamentary and civil society groups which seek to shape the narrative of history in this revisionist way. For instance, he has advocated for an educational reform to make the official curriculum more 'patriotic'.³⁰ This became a point of media attention due to the scandal surrounding Moritomo Gakuen, a school with a right-wing revisionist curriculum, which had allegedly been receiving preferential treatment from the Abe family.³¹ A more minor but noteworthy scandal was the appointment of Abe's wife, Abe Akie, as honorary principal of Tsukamoto Kindergarten, another institution emphasising 'patriotic education'; the principal of Tsukamoto Kindergarten is the representative of the Nippon Kaigi's Osaka chapter.³² This indicates the prime minister's spouse is catering to the Nippon Kaigi in instances where it is politically impractical for the prime minister to take action. During Abe's second administration, he has increasingly demonstrated this 'pragmatic' approach towards the hard-line revisionists. For example, after 2013, he has respected his promise not to visit the Yasukuni shrine in person, yet he has made the symbolic gesture of sending offerings to the shrine.³³ Although Abe has responded to criticism by claiming that these actions have not been conducted in an official capacity but as a private person, the fact that he has offered gifts containing the inscription 'Prime Minister' makes this claim problematic. Moreover, Abe Akie has continued visiting the Yasukuni shrine after 2013, possibly placating revisionists.³⁴ These events demonstrate that the LDP leadership continues to curry favour with the hard-line revisionists while denying explicit support to them. While this balancing act continues to work for Abe in terms of maintaining his domestic support, the contradictions are readily apparent to anyone who cares to look. This makes Japan's reconciliatory gestures seem less trustworthy.

Of course, Japan is a democracy, and the personal views of Abe or any other prime minister are not equal with 'Japan's view'. Nevertheless, because the speeches and actions of politicians gain more visibility abroad than the actions of other actors, the LDP-revisionist view often gets represented as 'Japan's view' in other

East Asian countries, as well as the wider world.³⁵ Therefore, the fact that the Japanese leadership sways towards the revisionist narrative has important implications for the future of the political battles regarding memory in East Asia. Abe has evidently learned to downplay his revisionist opinions in order to secure electoral support. Despite scandals related to his contradictory political agenda, Abe has managed to maintain a relatively consistent level of popularity over his second term as prime minister.³⁶ In the next section, this paper will analyse the gap between elite and mass perceptions on history; a phenomenon that helps explain the relative lack of critical political engagement within Japanese civil society, as opposed to its South Korean counterpart. The gap between elite and mass perceptions on history in Japan

As discussed in the previous section, Japan's political elite, particularly within the dominant LDP party, tends to skew towards the revisionist narrative of the war. However, as survey data discussed later in this section indicates, the revisionist discourse is not supported by a majority of the general public, pointing to a rift between the political elite and the general public. This rift has, in itself, been deeply politicised in the post-war period. In the immediate post-war period, the narrative of war as a 'human tragedy' was often congruent to a narrative of betrayal by one's own government. For a time, this discourse was prevalent enough to be taught in classrooms; a textbook published by the Ministry of Education in 1947 explicitly stated that the underlying reason for war was the fact that the government's views diverged from the will of the people.³⁷ Over the subsequent decades, this 'betrayal' narrative came to be challenged for its tendency to exclude non-Japanese victims of the war and to deflect from individual responsibility.³⁸ Instead, the reconciliatory faction emphasised the need to create a new Japanese subjectivity that would recognise the roles of both 'victim' and 'victimiser'.³⁹ In spite of this gradual shift, an anti-militaristic distrust of both the state and the military remained a salient feature of Japanese civil society until at least the 1970s.⁴⁰ Akiko Hashimoto argues that the collective memory of 'broken trust' between the state and the people continues to influence Japanese identity and state-society relations today.⁴¹

Existing surveys indicate that the general population does not support historical revisionism. For instance, a 1993 poll of the general readership conducted by Asahi Shinbun found only 15% of respondents disapproved of the Murayama statement, while 67% approved of it.⁴² More recent opinion polls have also offered evidence that a majority of the Japanese population support the second narrative of the war as misguided national policy, agreeing with the term 'war of aggression' as well as the statement that

the war could have been avoided with a different national policy.⁴³ However, a high number of respondents also claimed they did not know enough to answer the questions on historical issues. This could be seen as a symptom of the high levels of political apathy and non-involvement amongst the Japanese population, but even more likely it is a result of the failure of the education system to provide adequate information on history issues.

It is evident that a significant gap exists between the elite and the mass level of memory politics. While a vocal faction of the political elite supports the revisionist narrative, opinion polls suggest that a majority of the citizens do not share this view. This is symptomatic of a larger gap between politicians and their constituents in Japan, and a self-reinforcing lack of civil participation in the political process. It is precisely because of the elite-driven nature of the discourse on memory politics that the prospects of full recovery of bilateral relations still appears a distant goal. Seaton⁴⁴ finds that despite commanding the support of a majority of the public, advocates of the reconciliatory narrative have failed to turn this support into political power, thereby allowing the revisionist lobby to continue controlling the 'official' narrative in government. Although the revisionist faction is restrained by opposing forces in Japanese politics and civil society, this opposition is not strong enough to turn the tide in its favour. The framework of symbolic politics is helpful in further elucidating the dynamics of this mass-elite gap in Japan. In the following section, it will be applied to both the Japanese and the South Korean case in order to understand the difference in the memory-political process between these countries.

Symbolic politics: why the mass-elite gap in Japan is so detrimental to recovery of relations with South Korea

In this final section of this paper, I will utilise Ji Young Kim's⁴⁵ framework of symbolic politics in the Japan-South Korea relations to explain why the mass-elite gap in the Japanese discourse holds so much significance for the recovery of bilateral relations with South Korea. In this context, 'symbolic politics' refers to a sentimental politics based on ethno-national myths. To quote Kaufman, it is 'any sort of political activity focused on arousing emotions rather than addressing interests'.⁴⁶ In Kim's framework, there are three conditions for a 'symbolic politics' which are fulfilled in the South Korean-Japanese case: 'the existence of group myths that justify hostilities, fear of group extinction, and symbolic-political chauvinist mobilisation'.⁴⁷ When these conditions are fulfilled, the outcome tends to be ethnic conflict, such as the 'memory war'

between nationalists that flares up again and again.

The core of Kim's argument is that the defining group myth of Japanese nationalism was officially given up in 1945, but the revisionist faction of the political elite continues to hold on to it. This group myth was the *kokutai* system, wherein the divine Emperor was regarded as the father figure of the racially superior Japanese ethno-nation. Although the imperial Japanese leadership officially advocated Asian liberation and a 'co-prosperity sphere', this ideology had implicit undertones of racial superiority; something that cannot be discussed in detail here but has important implications for the legacy of the *kokutai* system.⁴⁸ Kim argues that in the post-war era, the Japanese elites have retained the 'Japanocentric', *kokutai*-based identity. She sees evidence of this in several of the historical narratives proposed by the political elite, including the denial of forced sexual slavery, the insistence on legitimising the Yasukuni shrine as a place of prayer, and the implicit support for Tsukurukai, an organisation promoting the use of revisionist school textbooks. In stark contrast, the defining Korean group myth is one of victimisation by Japan. The building blocks of modern Korean identity are construed as the suffering, fear of further victimisation and resentment caused by the very atrocities denied by Japanese revisionists. It follows that these two myth-symbol complexes are fundamentally incompatible, and as long as the Japanese revisionists continue to discredit the Korean discourse, there will be no end to hostilities over the 'history problems'.

In this framework, the mass-elite gap is a particularly important phenomenon to study, because it provides a possible way out of the 'vicious cycle' described by Kim.⁴⁹ The processes of memory politics in Japan and South Korea have mirrored each other. Japanese public discourse has been largely dominated by the elite, due to the lack of effective civil society mobilisation and a paralysis caused by too many conflicting narratives and not enough trusted information. On the other hand, South Korean discourse has been mass-led, as the narrative has been unified enough to mobilise civil society in large-scale protests. Of course, the mass-elite relationship can be conceptualised as bidirectional; political elites have benefited from propagating the victim-based group myth for the purposes of strengthening national unity and deflecting from internal divisions.⁵⁰ The Korean Hall of Independence can be interpreted as the prime symbol of this myth construction. In the process of being perpetuated by the elites however, group myths gradually grow beyond the top-down narrative, allowing instead the mass public to put pressure on the government in sometimes unpredictable ways. In South Korea today, the masses

are the more aggressive force pushing the government into taking a harder line on Japan's perceived wrongdoings. By contrast, the Japanese political elite tends to be more hawkish than the masses, which, despite their low level of mobilisation, acts as a moderating restraint. The discourse on comfort women provides one useful example. While the political elite has skewed towards the revisionist narrative, as demonstrated by the backlash against the Kōno statement, a variety of reconciliatory groups have emerged in civil society to show support for the comfort women's cause. However, because the LDP revisionist factions' line is the most high-profile expression of 'Japan's view', the progressive voices of Japanese civil society do not reach the South Korean masses. Conversely, the South Korean media and civil society groups have consistently organised strong protests and demands, urging their government to take a more aggressive stance on Tokyo. While the voices of civil society in South Korea and Japan may find common ground for progressive reconciliation, the Japanese mass-elite gap effectively prevents this from happening.

4. Conclusions

The politics of memory continue to cause tensions between Japan and its neighbours. This paper has attempted to examine the narratives and dynamics behind these tensions in order to analyse whether they are irreconcilable. Japan's discourse on 'history problems' is a source of both domestic-level and international-level tension, as there are three different narratives supported by different groups of people. However, the revisionist faction of the LDP, currently led by Abe Shinzo, has maintained a stronghold on political power for a relatively long period. Moreover, the level of mobilisation in Japanese civil society is relatively low, further entrenching the perception that the government's view enjoys wide support. In fact, a significant gap exists between the revisionist agenda and public opinion, effectively restraining the former. With the help of this restraining effect, as well as certain reconciliatory politicians who have left their mark on the process of commemoration in Japan, some progress has arguably been made towards recovering the bilateral relations between Japan and its neighbours. However, as this paper has illustrated by applying the framework of symbolic politics to the case of Japan and South Korea, full recovery is not possible in the current model of Japanese politics led by a revisionist elite. An implication of the analysis in paper is that a full recovery of Japan's relation with South Korea and China would require the adoption of a consistently reconciliatory view by the Japanese government. This

would, in turn, likely require a sea of change in the way Japanese people engage in politics – something which, in the light of history, appears unlikely.

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50 I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this important point.

PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE: NIGERIA'S AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN THE NIGER DELTA

Tobechukwu Nneli

Abstract

During the 2000s, violence and criminality in Nigeria's Niger Delta region peaked. There were numerous cases of ransom-kidnapping, industrial-scale oil theft, violent clashes among ethnic militias and between these militias and state security agencies. The ineffectiveness of strategies such as the use of force or region-focused development programmes, and declining oil production from the region affected by the violence made the Nigerian government to introduce the Amnesty Programme. Though the policy led to relative peace and improved oil production in the Niger Delta, there has been recurrent violence within the region as sabotage and oil theft by criminal groups subsist. Relying on secondary data, this paper examines the peace without justice situation in the Amnesty Programme. It identifies the absence of accountability and justice in the formulation and implementation stages of the policy as flaws that explain the continuous violence in the region. If the policy were to ensure sustainable peace, justice in this sense could have been restorative involving both offenders and victims. The paper notes that restorative justice could be effectively used as a tool to give the people of the region a sense of belonging within the Nigerian state and enhance social cohesion. It concludes that until justice and accountability become component parts of the peace process, the cycle of violence and criminality is likely to continue.

Introduction

Amnesty, as a soft power approach to peacebuilding, reinvents the consequentialist versus moralist debate in both local and international contexts, pitching peace enthusiasts against human rights advocates. The former emphasises the potency of amnesty to end conflict (especially when traditional methods of confrontation have failed) serving the interest of local populations, while the latter refers to the non-accountability implications of such mechanisms, describing them as potential incentives for cyclical violence and criminality.¹ Nonetheless, amnesty has been deployed in conflict and conflict situations such as Argentina, Colombia, Chile, El Salvador,² South Africa, Uganda, and Rwanda,³ and has been projected as a possible strategy for nation building in

post-conflict societies.⁴

Within the Nigerian context, amnesty has been adopted by government in conflict and post-conflict situations. For example, the declaration of 'no victor no vanquished' by General Yakubu Gowon's government after the Nigerian-Biafran war (1967–1970) was meant to indicate the Nigerian government's willingness to pardon those that fought on the other side and focus on nation building.⁵ The same spirit partly influenced the introduction of the Amnesty programme in the Niger Delta⁶ and due to how it reduced violence in the Niger Delta, the same idea has been suggested as a solution for managing present security challenges of the country such as Islamic fundamentalism, farmer-herdsmen crisis, and banditry.

Over the years, the socio-political and economic landscape of Nigeria has generally been blighted by violence and cries of marginalisation. Such can be attributed to the failure of successive governments to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality among ethnic nationalities. This has been very evident in the Niger Delta, an oil rich region situated in the southern part of the country, which has seen years of mineral exploration by multinational oil companies (MNOCs) typically operating some form of joint venture which the government is part of.⁷ The region, which is said to have accounted for over 90% of Nigeria's export earnings since 1975,⁸ has been neglected by both the state and the multinational companies operating in the region.⁹

This situation has led to confrontations between the people of the Niger Delta and the Nigerian state,¹⁰ which from the 2000s grew into full-scale violence orchestrated by militant groups, formed by disenchanting locals.¹¹ The confrontations since the 2000s, rooted in anti-state and resource control rhetoric such as the Kaiama declaration of 11 December 1998 by the Ijaw Youth Council (an ethno-nationalist group), increased as Nigeria transitioned into a democracy in 1999. Politicians leveraging on these discontents by the locals and ethnic militias, funded and equipped some of them with arms that largely served their political interests, especially during elections.¹² Consequently, more militant groups emerged in the Niger Delta leading to increased violence and criminality.¹³

In response, the Nigerian government adopted different strategies and policy instruments to address such situation. This ranges from the militarisation tactics of the President Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999–2007), to the conciliatory strategy of the President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua government (2007–2010) that eventually led to the introduction of the Amnesty Programme. The programme was launched in 2009 to reduce violence and

criminality as well as increase the overall oil production within the Niger Delta.¹⁴ President Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015) continued with the policy and by 2012, more than thirty thousand ex-militants were reported to have taken part in programmes connected to the policy.¹⁵

Though the policy led to relative peace and improved economic activities in the region, scholars have established that it did not address the root causes of the initial violence.¹⁶ Other established flaws of the policy include its perceived promotion of impunity,¹⁷ the mismanagement of the funds meant for handling reintegration programmes of the amnesty policy,¹⁸ and the absence of the principles of accountability and justice in the formulation and implementation stages of the policy. The above, combined with the continuous perception of marginalisation in the region, could explain the renewed anger and violence in the Niger Delta as new sets of groups have emerged post-2015 with new and unmet grievances.¹⁹

This paper examines the extent to which the Amnesty Programme led to peace in the Niger Delta. It argues that the absence of justice and accountability in the amnesty programme has led to a peace-of-the-graveyard situation in the Niger Delta. Following this introduction is an explanation of the key concepts related to the paper. Next is an overview of efforts by the federal government to govern insecurity in the Niger Delta with a special focus on the amnesty policy. The fourth section interrogates the peace without justice situation in the Niger Delta and its effects, while the last section concludes.

Conceptual and Analytical Framework

Amnesty

Amnesty refers to executive laws and policies which lead to pardon from punishment for criminal or rebellious actions hitherto committed, usually against the state.²⁰ It encourages peaceful negotiation²¹ and is 'a period during which people can admit to doing something wrong without fear of punishment'.²² Historically, amnesty has been used as state pardons for coup planners, military deserters, rebel forces, criminals, political prisoners, and even by leaders to shield themselves from prosecution (especially after regime change).²³

However, justification for amnesty under international law varies depending on the nature of the crime committed.²⁴ While crimes against humanity such as genocide and human rights violation are often less considered for amnesty, politically-driven crimes like rebellion are more acceptable to be amnestied, since it

is considered that such will be an expedient strategy of ensuring peace.²⁵ In most cases, amnesty comes with a price, either for the state, the offender(s), or the victim(s). For the state, a justice-deficit may be created, depriving it and its institutions some legitimacy; for the victim, the expectation of retribution may not be satisfied; for the offender, some form of retribution is required.²⁶ This necessitates that an amnesty policy should have both peace and justice components; otherwise, its successful implementation becomes difficult.²⁷

In other words, non-accountability creates an incentive for poor commitment to the terms of amnesty, leading to cyclical conflict.²⁸ Geoff Dancy suggests that an amnesty policy must be embedded into a larger peace framework and not be a reactive, haphazard measure that only responds to immediate issues, but seldom builds trust. Also, a design that completely absolves combatants from serious crimes and human rights violations rarely achieves lasting peace.²⁹ This forms the basis for the position of human rights proponents and institutions like the United Nations, who discourage mediators from promoting amnesties in situations where crimes against humanity, genocide, and gross violation of human rights are involved.³⁰

Proponents of the peacemaker model, however, suggest amnesties are necessary for ensuring immediate peace, but that it also does not mean denial of crimes already committed. Thus, it should not only prevent the application of the penalties associated with crimes, but recognise that they had been committed, thereby creating social transactions that can engender long term peace.³¹ However, amnesty could potentially lead to adverse selection in conflict situations, especially where the state is up against rebel fighters who often operate from the peripheries and rely on guerrilla and terror-inducing tactics and are thus not easy to decimate.³² Also, an offer of amnesty shows that the actions of rebels are more political than criminal, giving them the recognition they desire and projecting the willingness of the state to end hostilities.³³

Peace

The definition of peace is relative. While some define it as the absence of violence, others define it as the state of stability and equilibrium.³⁴ This paper adopts Johan Galtung's conceptualisation of peace as a non-linear concept that has two major typologies: positive peace and negative peace.³⁵

Negative peace is the actor-oriented explanation for peace, often conceptualised as the absence of violence and war. It is engineered by a reactive process most likely adopting violent means and, in

most cases, is only relevant in providing short term solutions.³⁶ On the other hand, positive peace is engineered through non-confrontational means; it is preventive and seeks to address conditions and structural issues that could engender violence within the society.³⁷

Galtung³⁸ uses the concepts of direct and structural violence to explain how negative and positive peace work. Structural violence is gradual and represents the institutionalisation of violence through social, cultural, and economic institutions that systematically promote injustice and consequently lead to violence. On the other hand, direct violence is immediate and, in most cases, physical. In terms of a solution, while it is easier to respond to issues of direct violence, structural violence requires a systematic process to be dismantled.

In other words, negative peace is driven by the zeal to end direct violence but is often a short-term approach. Positive peace does not emerge through a single event; rather, it is systematic and processual, seeking to ensure social justice and promoting cooperation and integration within the society. This means that positive peace is longitudinal, interrogating violence at all levels of the human society with none considered more important than the other.³⁹

Justice

In relation to the concept of justice, two typologies dominate the peacebuilding literature: retributive justice and restorative justice. Retributive justice is driven by the principle of punishment for offenders.⁴⁰ It is often adopted in response to violations of the law; it involves prosecution and it is aimed at the implementation of the stated penalties for the crime. Restorative justice, on the other hand, defines crime not only in terms of the harm done to people and relationships, but recognises the possibility of forgiving an offender and places premium on restitution, which can be achieved through acknowledgement of the wrong that has been done.⁴¹

Also, while retributive justice often sees only the state as the offended, restorative justice recognises other victims apart from the state and seeks to engender peace within the society by reconciling the victims with the offenders.⁴² It also demands accountability from a range of actors, which in some cases, might include the state.⁴³ Due to the idea of admitting crime and asking for forgiveness, restorative justice restores human morality by humanising the victim and re-humanising the offender.⁴⁴

The literature refers to different contexts where amnesty has

been used as a tool for ensuring peace and justice. In most of these cases, two key programmes are adopted: Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and Reconciliation and Truth Commissions. DDR is used in relation to conflicts that emerge out of rebellion against the state, as found in Uganda (the Lord's Resistance Army)⁴⁵ and in Colombia (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).⁴⁶ Reconciliation and Truth Commissions which tow the path of restorative justice have been proposed or set up in countries like Colombia, South Africa, Rwanda (*gacaca*⁴⁷), Liberia, Aceh, Timor-Leste, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁴⁹

Social Cohesion

The concept of social cohesion relates to having a sense of belonging and trust.⁵⁰ It focuses on the extent to which inclusivity and fairness is promoted in a society. It can further be defined as the extent to which unity and harmony exists within a society.⁵¹

Arnim Langer et al. identified three dimensions of social cohesion: the extent of perceived inequalities, the level of societal trust, and the strength of peoples' adherence to their national identity.⁵² They further noted that social cohesion in a society is a function of the extent to which members of the society can identify with these mutually inclusive dimensions. Whichever is the case, when there is social cohesion in a society, the possibility of conflict is often minimised.⁵³

Weak cohesion in a society therefore makes it difficult for the effective implementation of developmental projects in the area and often leads to slow economic growth.⁵⁴ Given the role of the state in shaping socio-economic outcomes, it is very important that the people trust the state, because if the people do not believe that government will ensure fairness in the distribution of resources and power, it will be difficult for them to buy into any developmental projects initiated by such government, and worse still, they may rise up against the state.⁵⁵

Amnesty Policy in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta can be described as the pivot of the Nigerian economy. The area accounts for over eighty percent of government revenue, ninety-five percent of foreign exchange earnings, and forty percent gross domestic product.⁵⁶ The region has over six hundred oilfields, 5284 oil wells, ten export terminals, 275 flow stations, and is the take-off point of over seven thousand kilometres of pipelines across the country.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the Niger Delta is

estimated to have 37.2 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and 188 trillion standard cubic feet of natural gas, making it one of the largest hydrocarbon deposits in Africa.⁵⁸ However, amidst all this plenty, the region has key developmental challenges, lacking basic utilities such as potable water, electricity, and health facilities. Communities in the region bear the consequence of oil extraction and production in Nigeria, such as massive environmental degradation, which not only has health implications, but also affects traditional means of livelihoods (for example fishing and farming) in the Niger Delta.⁵⁹ Also, in the course of the scramble for access to oil proceeds, values have been increasingly distorted in these communities, leading to disregard for hard work, chaotic social relations, and horizontal inequalities.⁶⁰

This situation has led to different forms of agitations since the 1980s and earlier by people of the Niger Delta, anchored on the consistent and persistent neglect, marginalisation, and environmental degradation.⁶¹ Some of these agitations took a violent form, as the non-violent approach of groups like the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in the 1990s was met with violent state repressions.⁶² Subsequent groups such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Vigilante Service, and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), whose formation occurred largely during the first half of the 2000s, became so violent that at the peak of the militancy in 2008, over one thousand lives had been lost while Nigeria's oil production reduced drastically from about 2.6 million to 700,000 barrels per day (bpd).⁶³ It is important to note that most of these militant groups had affiliations with the political class, such that they were also mobilised for political thuggery during elections and subsequently became very influential in local politics.⁶⁴

Since the discovery and commercial production of oil in the Niger Delta in 1956, the Nigerian government has made various efforts to manage the relations between the people on the one hand, and actors like the state and MNOCs operating within the Niger Delta on the other. Rotimi Suberu, cited in Oluduro and Oluduro, categorised these efforts into redistributive, reorganisational, and regulatory measures.⁶⁵

Reorganisational policies are aimed at the reconfiguration of the administrative structures related to the Niger Delta in order to accommodate group grievances. For example, it influenced the creation of new Niger Delta states like Akwa Ibom (1987), Delta (1991), and Bayelsa (1996).⁶⁶ It also led to the emergence of special institutions such as the Niger Delta Development Board (1960), Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission

(1992), the Niger Delta Development Commission (2000), and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, meant to address the socio-economic and developmental challenges in the Niger Delta.⁶⁷

Redistributive policies use dispensation of resources to segments and stakeholders in the region to ensure peace. This was what led to the increase in the constitutionally recognised derivative formula in favour of states within the Niger Delta from 1.5% to 3% in 1992 and 13% in 1999. Furthermore, such measures played a role in the emergence of Dr Goodluck Jonathan, first as the Vice President and later President of Nigeria.⁶⁸

The state had also adopted regulatory measures which were more confrontational and placed sanctions on individuals or groups perceived to be acting against state interests. Such measures often took repressive forms, as exemplified in the execution of some of the Niger Delta agitators like Ken Saro Wiwa and nine other Ogoni elders in 1995, as well as the Umuechem, Ogoni, Odi, Odioma, and Gbaramatu massacres of 1990, 1993, 1999, 2005, and 2009, respectively.⁶⁹ Similar measures led to the formation of the military Joint Task Force (JTF), commissioned to 'enforce' peace within the Niger Delta. These have not been very effective measures as they increased citizens' grievances, alienating them from the state and engendered more violence in the form of kidnapping, hostage taking, bunkering and oil theft, pipeline vandalism, bombings, oil-facility sabotage, destruction of properties, and assassinations.⁷⁰

Recognising that the efforts of the past had failed, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's government decided to set up a technical committee headed by Ledum Mitee, President of MOSOP, to make fresh recommendations on how to effectively manage insecurity in the Niger Delta and restore high economic activities in the region.⁷¹ The recommendations of this committee, as well as the subsequent framework of the Presidential Committee on Amnesty and Disarmament of Militants in the Niger-Delta (headed by Godwin Osagie Abbe), led to the proclamation of the Amnesty Programme on 25 June 2009, pursuant to section 175 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.⁷²

The offer of amnesty was predicated on the willingness and readiness of the militants to give up all illegal arms in their possession, completely renounce violence in all its ramifications, and depose to an undertaking to this effect. Also, the federal government promised a monthly stipend for each ex-militant while arrangements were made for them to be rehabilitated and re-integrated into society.⁷³ Consequently, a budget of fifty billion naira (later increased to sixty-eight billion naira) was announced in support of the Post-Amnesty Programme in July 2009.⁷⁴ By

the end of 2012, an estimated two hundred billion naira had been spent in implementing the programme,⁷⁵ while the key oil companies had been asked to contribute \$188 million USD to the programme.⁷⁶

The implementation phase of the programme commenced with the payment of millions of dollars to leaders of the militant groups in exchange for weapons. These 'generals' also received multi-million-dollar contracts from the federal government to guard and maintain the oil pipelines they used to attack, transforming them from militants to millionaires. For example, in 2011, individuals like Government 'Tompolo' Ekpemupolo, Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, Ebikabowei 'Boyloaf' Victor Ben, and Ateke Tom received \$22.9 million, \$9 million, \$3.8 million, and \$3.8 million USD respectively from the state-owned oil company, Nigeria National Petroleum Company as annual pipeline security contract dues.⁷⁷ As for their foot soldiers, most of them were moved to rehabilitation camps both in Nigeria and abroad and were entitled to a monthly stipend from the state. By the end of 2012, about thirty thousand ex-militants had surrendered their weapons and embraced the amnesty programme.⁷⁸ However, the implementation of the policy was not without some controversies as issues of corruption, embezzlement of funds (which led to the non-payment of budgeted allowances for the ex-militants), and poor provision of logistics within the camps arose.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, the immediate gains of the amnesty policy became pronounced as the 'boys' left the creeks and relative peace was restored, leading to improved economic activities in the Niger Delta.⁸⁰ For example, petroleum exports, which were around 700,000 bpd in mid-2009, increased to 2,400,000 bpd by 2011.⁸¹ Such relative peace continued until recently, when criminal and violent activities such as threats, sporadic attacks on oil installations, kidnapping, oil bunkering, and electoral violence, re-emerged.⁸²

Peace without Justice: Realities with the Niger Delta

Regardless of the immediate gains of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta, this paper identifies flaws, such as non-accountability and absence of a justice framework in the formulation and implementation of the policy, as explanations for the resurgence of militancy in the region.

First, the amnesty programme did not take measures that will make the offenders (militants, law enforcement agents, and multi-national companies) responsible for the conflict in the Niger Delta; to account for their actions even if it meant acknowledging

that their actions were wrong. Instead, most of the militants who admitted to perpetrating direct violence like armed robbery, rape, kidnapping, assassinations, murder etc., were granted blanket pardon in addition to financial benefits from the state.⁸³

Similarly, none of the law enforcement agents, especially the JTF, who perpetrated numerous human rights abuses including gang rape and extra-judicial killings, were held accountable.⁸⁴ Also, none of the operatives of multi-national companies, who have been serially accused of fuelling human rights violations and destroying livelihoods through environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, were held accountable. Such actions heighten impunity and make violence attractive. This could explain the renewed tensions in the Niger Delta, because relatives of victims of such crimes and human rights abuses, who were not factored into the amnesty programme, could have decided to avenge their loved ones or to assume a violent disposition in order to be recognised by the state.⁸⁵

Related to the issue of non-accountability and selective identification of the offenders in the Niger Delta, is the exclusion of the true victims of the violence in the region by the amnesty programme. Due to the reactive nature of the policy, which was geared towards reducing socio-economic losses and not necessarily to address the perceived grievances in the Niger Delta, the amnesty programme made no attempt at restoration of justice, especially for the individuals and communities who were directly affected by the conflict. Some of the victims included wives and children of killed breadwinners, people who were rendered homeless and their sources of livelihoods destroyed, those who lost their personal wealth paying ransoms in cases of kidnapping for instance, and so forth.⁸⁶

Similarly, persons who suffered trauma as a result of the fierce engagement between militants and law enforcement agents at the peak of the armed struggle and serial oil wars were not considered by the policy.⁸⁷ Thus, unlike the Sierra Leonean case where women and other victims of violence were marked for inclusion in the decision-making and peace process, Nigeria's amnesty policy ignored this group and made minimal efforts to promote social cohesion, nor did it attempt to reconcile victims with the perpetrators.⁸⁸

Consequently, the amnesty policy seemed to be a palliative measure that postponed the crisis temporarily, because most of the core issues such as socio-economic marginalisation, youth unemployment, resource control, environmental degradation, and relative poverty which led to the agitations in the first place were not addressed. The amnesty programme therefore brought about

a type of negative peace in the Niger Delta.

The reality of the graveyard peace brought about by flaws in the formulation and implementation of the amnesty policy is becoming manifest, as emerging reports show that crimes like oil theft, sea piracy, and ransom-kidnapping have resurfaced in the region.⁸⁹ Iro Aghedo argues that one of the reasons for the violence that the state has reaped, after sowing 'peace' through the amnesty programme, is its role in shifting the motive of the militants from grievance to greed. Due to the largesse that ex-militants had access to in the wake of the amnesty programme and the subsequent ostentatious lifestyle that most of them adopted thereafter, crime became more attractive both to the ex-militants and non-participants in the initial struggle. This could explain the increase in cyclical crimes like ransom-kidnapping, which targets not only oil workers or expatriates but also community leaders, business moguls, and even clergy men. The trend has spread beyond the Niger Delta and is one of the key security challenges of the Nigerian state in recent times.

Another indicator of the negative peace brought about by the amnesty policy is the proliferation of militant groups in the region. With the de-emasculation of former militant giants like MEND, NDPVF, etc., 'new' groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers, Red Scorpions, and Niger Delta Greenland Justice Movement have emerged from the Niger Delta and currently use, or threaten to use, similar violent strategies in engaging the state.⁹⁰ The emergence of these groups has re-ignited the insurgency, constituting a fresh concern to the state and private companies operating in the region. For example, Shell Petroleum Development Company and Aiteo had to declare a *force majeure* in April 2019 due to a fire outbreak (suspected to have been occasioned by sabotage) which damaged parts of the Nembe Creek Trunk Line.⁹¹ Before this, intensified attacks by members of the Niger Delta Avengers in 2016 led to a twenty-two-year low output reduction for Nigeria, making it momentarily lose its position as Africa's largest oil producer.⁹² Following the evacuation of Exxon Mobil's workers in 2016, it was estimated that the country lost about 2.79 billion naira (\$14 billion) daily to the closure of the Exxon-Mobil-operated Qua Iboe terminal.⁹³ Analysts argue that this may be connected to the termination of pipeline security contracts, the prosecution of ex-militants like Tompolo for contract fraud, and the cut in the funding of the amnesty programme by the President Buhari administration.⁹⁴ Recently, with dwindling oil prices and new attacks by militants, the economy of Nigeria has been highly affected. Moreover, the renewed violence has increased insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, further reducing the interest of foreign

Conclusion

Several Nigerian governments have adopted various measures to reduce insecurity and violence in the Niger Delta. The amnesty programme is the most recent and could be considered the most effective effort, as it succeeded in reducing the incidence of violence, leading to an increase in oil production in the region. However, the fact that the federal government prioritised increasing oil production and ignored key components of peacebuilding like accountability and justice in the implementation of the policy, has led to a negative peace situation in the Niger Delta. The manifestations of such a form of peace are reflected in the resurgence of militancy in the region, part of which can be attributed to the minimal commitment of the President Buhari administration to oiling the negotiated deal between previous governments and Niger Delta militant chiefs.

This paper posits that the restorative model of justice could be adapted within the Niger Delta by involving the hitherto ignored victims of past militant activities in the region. Furthermore, structural violence should be dismantled through a systematic process that will address the root causes of violence in the region. If properly implemented, these strategies could give the people of the Niger Delta a sense of belonging and could engender positive peace within the region.

Notes

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BOOK REVIEWS

CHANDRAN NAIR, *THE SUSTAINABLE STATE: THE FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY*, SAN FRANCISCO: BERRETT-KOEHLER PUBLISHERS, 2018.

Rowan Alcock

Chandran Nair, born in Malaysia and educated as a chemical engineer in the United Kingdom, was a successful businessman in Thailand who 'led one of the largest environmental consulting firms in Asia'.¹ He is Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Global Institute For Tomorrow, a Hong Kong-based think tank based which aims to promote 'a deeper understanding of the shift of influence from the West to Asia'.² He is also on the Executive Committee of The Club of Rome, a group with a mission 'to promote understanding of the global challenges facing humanity and to propose solutions through scientific analysis, communication and advocacy'.³ In *The Sustainable State: The Future of Government, Economy and Society*, Chandran Nair identifies fundamental issues the developing world is facing due to climate change in the Anthropocene.

Nair's basic thesis is that the 'western' model of development is unfit for developing countries to follow in a time of global climate change, yet there are no alternatives to this unsustainable model. His suggestion is 'the sustainable state': a 'strong' state that protects the rights of the majority to a decent life and maintains the environment for future generations. *The Sustainable State* is polemical, and Nair is unafraid to face controversial issues head-on, attacking the ideology of economic growth for growth's sake, 'the west', 'free-markets', and liberalism. He begins by telling the reader who this book is for. It is for 'non-Western elites' (p.vii) who have been educated in elite Western institutions, it is for potential 'young leaders who have ambitions to make a difference' (p.vii), and it is for those who must forge a new path for the developing world and 'must reject the West's unsustainable economic and political systems' (p.ix).

Nair takes aim at the current global conversation on sustain-

ability and argues it is aimed at 'how to make our increasing production and consumption more resource efficient when we should actually talk about how a global population of ten billion by 2050 must produce and consume less' (p.22). He argues the reason the debates on sustainability have strayed so far from what is needed is due to 'our understanding of development, which is too tied to free markets, business-friendly policies, and the Western historical narrative' (p.23). Nair further argues it is unlikely that there will be a technological solution to the problems inherent in 'free markets'. In chapter three he takes aim at the mainstream fixation on growth (p.39). Here power dynamics are briefly introduced and Nair argues the 'free market' 'cannot be truly sustainable' as 'it does not include the effects of power' therefore 'without some way to resolve this power gap, overconsumption will continue, as those who benefit will fight to preserve their privileges and offload their costs on the wider population' (p.48). Nair argues 'bottom-up' environmental movements and global resolutions are unable to take the lead in creating a sustainable development due to not having sufficient capacity 'to directly exert governance themselves' (p.64). This leads to his main argument that the state should take a more active role.

As someone generally receptive to state intervention to deal with the climate emergency, believes the evidence suggests there is no technological solution on the horizon that will solve our collective environmental emergency, questions so-called 'free' market principles and reliance on economic growth as a proxy for social progress, and one that generally accepts that 'developed' countries have an unsustainable economic model that forces unjust damage onto 'developing' countries, I ought to have enjoyed this book. However, *The Sustainable State* is often a frustrating read because of its polemical nature.

Being polemical rather than academic is not necessarily something that ought to be criticised. Grand polemics can be useful in putting forward bold ideas – as this book does – beginning a debate that can be further scrutinised when it has taken hold in the social imaginary. However, Nair, in putting forward his general thesis, neglects detail on core concepts and overgeneralises. Terms such as 'the west' or 'western' are not explicitly defined. Is the 'west' referring to a geographical area, and if so, where? Is it alternatively a hegemonic discourse originating from a certain philosophical tradition? This issue becomes important when Nair talks about places like Hong Kong. Is Hong Kong a 'western' city as its economic model has been informed by Anglo-American discourse, or is it distinct from the West due to its geographical location? Of course this issue is more complicated than this binary distinction I

present, but Nair does not grapple with these complexities.

Nair praises certain geographically 'western' countries – specifically, Germany for its state intervention in making the energy industry more environmentally friendly as well as supporters of the New Deal who intervened in the United States economy during the Great Depression. He also references numerous institutions or organisations set up in 'the west' such as The Club of Rome and Greenpeace, while simultaneously suggesting 'to look to the West and its institutions for solutions is the height of folly' (p.6). Nair suggests the nation-state, a construction originating in 'the west', is the solution to the climate crisis for the developing world, yet argues for a 'reject[ion of] the West's unsustainable economic and political systems' (p.ix). The overly polemical nature of the book, without sufficient definition of terms, therefore creates confusion and contradictions and avoids productive development of interesting complexities.

Nair eventually, implicitly, seems to define 'the west' as 'free-market' and liberal. However, this groups places like France – with high levels of state intervention, which enabled a large-scale nuclear industry – with places like the United States, which seem to be the target of most of Nair's ire. This bundling creates confusion when Nair seems to implicitly praise French President Emmanuel Macron as someone 'with fresh ideas and a desire to take the mantle of European and global leader' (p.9), but was thwarted by a 'French population [that] has gotten used to privileges' (p.9). However, Macron is a liberal reformer, and in 'trying to reform France's old labor laws' (p.9) he was trying to create a more liberal 'free-market' environment to increase market led growth – something Nair suggests in the rest of the book as problematic. The Sustainable State contains a number of generalisations and terms that are not critically unpacked. The term 'free-market' for example is not deconstructed. It is arguable whether a 'free-market', as defined in introductory economics classes, has ever existed in reality or can ever exist. If this is the case, what does Nair actually mean when he employs the phrase? A definition that examined the complexities and contradictions inherent in free market ideology would be useful in the context of describing the United States as 'free-market': a state that spends billions of dollars a year on farming and fossil fuel subsidies, not to mention has the biggest state army the Earth has ever seen. However, it is Nair's definition of a 'strong' state that is most confounding.

Nair's solution to the global environmental crisis in the 'developing' (and the 'developed') world is the 'strong' state. 'Strong' here is not a term that only means having the ability to achieve stated goals, but also has normative dimensions. The state,

somehow, must become enlightened to what Nair believes are the necessary policies due to our decent into the global environmental crisis. The state must constrain the 'overconsumption' of the richest in society while expanding quality of life for the poorest. This is of course a worthy aim, and while Nair puts forward numerous policy proposals to achieve this, it is not clear how government itself – especially in non-democratic countries – comes to this revolutionary change. While constraints to this change in democratic countries are made clear – that, especially in the United States, vested interests prevent the radical policies outlined – there is less engagement with how developing countries are also blighted by vested interests. A number of the leaders of non-democratic developing countries, many of whom are often multimillionaires and the very people who over-consume, would seemingly have to come to a sort of self-consciousness that their very existence needs to be regulated. They would then have to regulate themselves, their family, and many of their friends—not to mention the people that prop up their power—out of the existence to which they have become accustomed. How to get leaders to this enlightened position is unexplored.

In spite of the fact that Nair is not clear on a pathway to achieve the policies of the 'Sustainable State' he outlines, and his generalisations are not sufficiently interrogated, this book does hold value. Its polemical nature may be easier for some to engage with than a more academic book. Further a businessperson questioning GDP growth and business as usual could be persuasive to some that may ignore academics articulating similar positions. Chapters nine and ten, which cover two case studies regarding Asian environmental issues, demonstrate Nair's expertise in environmental consultancy in that region. The book is scattered with numerous important policy proposals. However, chapter eleven on China as a 'strong' state is again over-generalised. The march of the market into rural China and the contradictions for livelihood and environment justify more than a fleeting glance. Potentially, a better approach for the book would have been to engage with fewer ideas more deeply.

Finally, although Nair's general thesis is important and timely and his policy proposals come from a deep engagement with the places he works in, the state-versus-market narrative and his reference to Ronald Reagan-Margaret Thatcher era neoliberalism (p.76) seem to be yesterday's battle (as he partly acknowledges in his conclusion). The new struggle taking place in much of the developed and developing world occurs between a populist right-wing unafraid to use the mechanisms of the state to attack minorities, intervene in markets and suppress criticism on one

hand, and more progressive moves hoping to grapple power away from these demagogues and use the state to radically redefine the economy on the other. US President Donald Trump is happy to intervene in global markets for political gain, while the US Democratic Party is happy to articulate a Green New Deal which includes state intervention. The UK Conservative Party is happy to 'take back control' of immigration from the market, while the UK Labour Party articulates a bold Green Industrial Revolution. The fact that Brexit and Trump's brand of populism is contradictory, led by multi-millionaire elites, is just another representation of the contradictory nature of neoliberalism which was always a state-led project to create a so called free market. Neither the developing nor the developed world will attain Nair's 'Sustainable State' without a formula for getting rid of these plutocrats, a formula Nair, even at his polemical best, avoids articulating.

Notes

- 1 Alfred Romann, "A GIFTed man," *China Daily Asia*, September 7, 2012, accessed February 7, 2020, http://www.chinadailyasia.com/news/2012-09/07/content_116334.html
- 2 Global Institute for Tomorrow, "About GIFT", accessed February 7, 2020, <https://global-inst.com/about-gift/>.
- 3 Club of Rome, "About Us," accessed February 7, 2020: <http://www.clubofrome.org/about-us/>.

ERNST VON WEIZSÄCKER AND ANDERS
WIJCKMAN, *COME ON! CAPITALISM,
SHORT-TERMISM, AND THE DESTRUCTION
OF THE PLANET: A REPORT TO THE CLUB
OF ROME*, NEW YORK: SPRINGER, 2018.

Benjamin Anders

In 1972, the Club of Rome rose to global fame following its *Limits to Growth Report*.¹ Famously, the report conceived of the planet as a finite source of natural resources and argued that the meteoric economic growth that had enveloped the earth in the century-and-a-half prior to the report's publication was an unrepeatable historical process. The report argued that this process was premised on the commodification and circulation of limited reserves of the planet's natural capital, which many environmental scholars and United Nations bureaucrats would call the unsustainable use of 'ecosystem services'. Through a series of now primitive computer models, the co-authors of the report argued that such ongoing growth was on a collision course with the finite carrying capacity of the planet.

The Limits to Growth (LTG) models, at the time of their unveiling and after, received a scornful yet ultimately vindicated series of criticisms for underestimating the effects of technological innovation on the aggregate of human resource use over time. However, the basic philosophical argument of the report, if not its prognostic power, has also proven prescient. The multiplicity of interlocked and worsening ecological crises faced by humanity today – ranging from climate change to biodiversity loss and ocean acidification – is now conceived as an 'Anthropocene' phenomenon; all components of nature are shot through with the ruinous effects of human industrial activity. Much of the global governance literature refers to the restrictions on human activities set by closed planetary systems in the rather politically correct terms euphemisms like 'planetary boundaries,' which echo the original vocabulary of the LTG report albeit through a glass darkly.

In other words, the report's critics were correct in forcefully rejecting the claim that the planet imposes iron-clad laws that set absolute controls on human activities, particularly in a global capitalist civilisation founded on self-sustaining and continuous scientific and organisational innovation. Nevertheless, the basic

LTG philosophical tenet that it is irrational and possibly suicidal to regard economic growth—defined as linear increase in the number of goods and services produced on the planet over time—as a cascade that can continue indefinitely into the future remains a claim that raises questions for us that are philosophically alive in the “Anthropocene.” Certainly, the warning of the 1972 report to the effect that we cannot bracket out the adverse downstream effects of growth as ‘externalities’ remains confirmed by subsequent global history. As the authors of the 1972 LTG report told us at that time, an economy where private enterprises are able to treat a finite supply of natural resources as infinite and pass on the cost of their exploitation to the planetary commons while pocketing short-term profits is by definition, *pathological*. Any viable future economic system must find a way to factor in the costs of the products it generates into the transactions carried out by the actors who produce and consume them.

Since the publication of its first report in 1972, the Club of Rome has served as a point of contact and cooperation between iconoclastic economists, political scientists, and systems theorists, as well as politicians, diplomats, and businesspeople from around the world – all committed to view the world’s problems in systematic and integrative terms. Their approach avoids the guild-like specialism of much of contemporary academic research, which throws its validity into peril, particularly when viewed from the perspective of a teetering global civilisation in which multiple crises are likely to emerge synchronously and without regard for the boundaries of the academic ‘fields’ they concern. Many of the organisation’s reports have focused on further projections for the future, such as Jorgen Randers’ *2052*, while other works, including Dror’s *The Capacity to Govern*, have concentrated on reformulating political institutions to increase the competence of their decision-making skills and general resilience in the face of emergent global crises, ranging from biogenetic hacking to nuclear weapons to climate change.²

What distinguishes the present book by Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker and Anders Wijkman – co-presidents of the Club of Rome – is the vast array of research and arguments it pulls from the various Club of Rome members and associated researchers in fields as diverse as the economics of global trade, earth-systems science, renewable energy technologies, artificial intelligence, and population biology. The three chapters that comprise the book are organised around this compendium of research topics and constitute both an update on the diagnosis of contemporary social ills now representing the consensus of the Club of Rome, as well as a series of concrete policy recommendations, institutional

reforms, and proposed species-wide philosophical shifts that are meant to temporise or even reverse them.

The first chapter seeks to diagnose the central problem of unsustainable resource depletion in global industrial civilisation. It argues that linear models of economic growth do not factor in the adverse effects of growth into their understanding of its social consequences, and measure social progress in terms of the speed and quantity of economic transactions. In the tradition of the Club of Rome, the authors argue that such models cannot guide our conceptual framework, since the economy can only be understood as a subsystem embedded in the broader set of the non-human planetary system, within whose parameters 'the economy' must achieve a stable balance if it is to survive.

Chapter two is concerned with what the authors have come to understand as the philosophical roots of the crisis. Drawing on the Green economist Herman Daly, they invoke the concept of an 'empty world', or what we might view as a fallacious envisioning of the planet as an infinitely increasing frontier for human growth and innovation. This is deeply tied to an unrepeatable experience of European colonial expansion across the planet between 1492 and 1919, with an added dose of the unique optimism of the American frontier culture. Against this, the authors propose that we develop new social thought on the basis of a 'full world' in which the limits to human expansion and activity are a daily feature of experience and are brought into measures of prosperity and social wellbeing. This chapter argues for appealing both to the tradition of the Enlightenment, with its focus on formulating political principles and institutions based on a verifiable factual reality, rather than ideological dogmas or stories. Moreover chapter two also appeals to the world's religious traditions, particularly inasmuch as age-old reprimands to human hubris and egoism serve to underline the smallness and fragility of the human experience relative to the point of view of God or eternity.

Chapter three, by far the longest chapter, is oriented toward more concrete solutions, ranging from reform of the banking system and corporate governance in order to include more stakeholders in crucial decisions affecting billions. The chapter also includes a survey of the organisation Development Alternatives, a group building resilience and community security in India, as well as new innovative concepts of urban planning that aim to create 'regenerative cities' through novel forms of infrastructure and waste management.

As is often the case with works of ambitious breadth, the extraordinary range of this book is both a strength and weakness. Delving much deeper than mere showy erudition, the volume

reaches across disciplines and allows us to perceive the synchronous interaction of a multitude of problems and innovations on a global stage in alignment with the Club of Rome's laudable mission. However, one often moves through its chapters with a longing for a more detailed treatment of each of the issues engaged. For instance, the opening briefly takes up the historian Yuval Harari's dystopic prediction that the future of humanity might hold a particular kind of cyborg marriage between man and machine, in which 'today's elite classes might upgrade themselves to a biologically improved version – super humans – which the general masses couldn't possibly afford'. The result, in Harari's view, would be a caste system with real biological hierarchies. This shocking but all too plausible possibility is never again engaged beyond perfunctory calls for more international regulation of artificial intelligence (AI). Contrary views of other thinkers in the AI field are not surveyed again, nor are the ways in which such trends in biotech and AI might interact with other social forces, such as climate change, theorised in systemic terms that we should expect from the Club of Rome.

Further, there are a few straightforward errors in the book, in particular in its treatment of history; this is always a danger with hyper-collaborative and interdisciplinary writing. In the most surprising comment in the entire book, the authors write, 'in earlier times, even the poor were embedded in a basically benign, robust and fertile planet'. This would have shocked innumerable agriculturalists in the ten thousand years since the agricultural revolution began in ancient Mesopotamia, almost all of whom experienced poor harvests, hunger, and malnutrition, and many of whom lost more than half of their children to disease, hunger, and war. No wonder such societies tended to imagine their god or gods as wrathful and jealous, and nature as a fickle entity tied to the inexplicable whims of fortune rather than as 'basically benign'.

Additional problems of historical accuracy occur when the authors try to extract philosophical lessons from the European Enlightenment. Ironically, the authors appear both overly optimistic and overly critical regarding the politics of the European Enlightenment. On the one hand, they claim that the Enlightenment 'successfully discredited the earlier doctrinaire, authoritarian and colonialist-missionary manifestations of the faith'. However, the first truly global phase of militant, and often ruthlessly puritanical Christian missionary work arose in the nineteenth century in concert with the machinations of the imperial states of that period, with a particular focus on China, India, the Middle East, and Africa in the immediate aftermath of the Enlightenment's zenith in the eighteenth century. Additionally,

the authors claim that the Enlightenment was ‘experienced by most people in Europe as an extremely welcome development’. This certainly would have surprised the millions of Europeans, including those in relatively tolerant cities such as London and Amsterdam, who viewed writers like Benedict Spinoza, Bernard Mandeville, and David Hume, as well as relative moderates like Voltaire, Smith, and Locke, as godless heretics.

Elsewhere, the writers, strangely after their statement on the Enlightenment ‘discrediting’ authoritarian missionary work, articulate a contrary claim:

European colonialism with all its arrogance and cruelty found almost no critique among the intellectuals of the Enlightenment. The misery of the working classes and impoverished peasants to say nothing of the colonized indigenous peoples all over the world was hardly noticed in bourgeois circles. No comprehension was visible of the equivalent value of women and men. And unrestrained growth was seen as completely legitimate.³

This again is a gross oversimplification of historical fact, now in the form of a counterargument to their previous statement. Coming from writers of such erudition and care, it strikes the reader as oddly disconcerting. Thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Burke, and Denis Diderot were all ambivalent about empire and saw its violence and socially corrosive effects as afflicting the conquerors as well as those bent to their power. Concurrently, Enlightenment thinkers from Jean Jacques Rousseau to Voltaire and Kant objected to the daily humiliations to which the poor were subject under the *ancien régime*. These thinkers sought to formulate a vision of society devoid of arbitrary caste hierarchies—a vision without which subsequent egalitarian moralities and political theories in the history of the West could not have taken shape.⁴

These historical lapses on the part of the authors are not merely contingent. At times, they feel symptomatic of the strange place that the concept of the Enlightenment occupies in this book. The authors wish to embrace the Enlightenment’s critique of arbitrary authority and inequality, but at the same time, they fear its startling optimism about the potential of humankind to shape its own fate through acts of will and self-conscious freedom. The question of to what extent one can unmask authority as an arbitrary and rootless force and avoid societal hubris, which convinces human beings of the utopian illusion that they can remake the world ad infinitum through acts of will and self-definition, unguided by and oblivious

of natural constraints, remains to be answered by the history of the coming century. Perhaps this is one philosophical question in the face of which computer models and systems analyses will fall silent.

That said, *Come On! Capitalism, Short-Termism, and the Destruction of the Planet* deserves immense credit as a contribution to integrative thought on the interaction between human and natural systems with a global reach and a perspective that cuts across disciplines and inquiries. The authors and their organisation should be lauded, in particular for engaging extensively with multiple possible policy reforms across governance scales and forms (including, notably, corporate governance) that could foster a transition to a truly sustainable global civilisation. They should, furthermore, be applauded for not shirking genuine but difficult problems, such as overpopulation, which have become almost unmentionable in many quarters of environmental thought both within and outside the academy. Regardless of its flaws, Weizsäcker and Wijkman's work sparks urgent, and most importantly, intellectually *sober* conversations among academic disciplines and political forums, from the seats of national legislatures to local community meetings and town halls, concerning the uncertainties of the human future in a rapidly evolving, globally integrated civilisation. Such dialogues are vital, and this book courageously contributes to many.

Notes

- 1 Donella Meadows, Jorgen Randers, et al., *The Limits to Growth Report: A Report for the Club of Rome on the Predicament of Mankind* (Universe Books, 1972).
- 2 See Yehezkel Dror, *Capacity to Govern: A Report to the Club of Rome* (Routledge, 2001) and Jorgen Randers, *2052: A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years* (Chelsea Green, 2012).
- 3 Ernst von Weizsäcker and Anders Wijkman, *Come On! Capitalism, Short-Termism, Population, and the Destruction of the Planet* (New York: Springer, 2018).
- 4 There are memorable works on the European Enlightenment that provide a picture of its historical context as well as its complexity, ambiguity, and philosophical richness. A few are Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and by the same author *Democratic Enlightenment: 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Also excellent are Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern vol. 2: New Modes and Orders of Modern Political Thought* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Stephen Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of*

Modernity 1210-1685 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: the Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1995).

MARK BEESON, *ENVIRONMENTAL
POPULISM: THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL
IN THE ANTHROPOCENE*, SINGAPORE:
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2019.

Simon Dalby

This slim volume tackles two of the big questions in contemporary politics: matters of climate change and the issues of populism. It is a hybrid volume, written in a mostly popular style to appeal beyond the academy, and yet with plenty of documentation in numerous endnotes for those within the research and activist communities who might wish to follow up the arguments.

The crucial formulation of the Anthropocene in the title points speaks not only to the current climate crisis, but to the larger ecological transformations of the present. If unaddressed, they will shortly lead to major crises of habitability in many places in the coming decades. However, it is noteworthy that the term ‘Anthropocene’, as the overarching designation of contemporary changes, is hardly discussed in these pages. ‘Anthropocene’ has rapidly become the key term highlighting contemporary dangers from the growing scale of fossil-fueled humanity in the Earth system. As such, it now simply frames our context.

Populism is usually understood to be a matter of reactionary politics; of right-wing demagogues criticising policy elites out of touch with popular sentiments. Mark Beeson expresses skepticism as to whether a left-wing or progressive populism is useful for those aiming to tackle the accelerating climate crisis. If climate disruptions are to be effectively tackled, then existing institutions will need to either be changed drastically or replaced entirely. If this is to happen, pressure ‘from below’—whether in a specifically populist form, or as a matter of social movements and electoral politics in democratic societies—is urgently needed.

Six chapters make up this volume, and the first offers a brief overview of the current state of the world, the crisis of climate change, and the apparent inability of existing political arrangements to tackle the urgent, but novel circumstances of the current phase of the Anthropocene. Stepping back from the immediate issue of the climate, the second chapter ponders the paradoxes of economic development and more specifically, the difficulties of challenging the contemporary fixation with

economic growth in the current global economy. If sustainability is to be taken seriously, it simply must be tackled and solutions that are not so obviously constrained by corporate agendas require investigation. So far, the third chapter tells us, international attempts to tackle the climate crisis have been substantial failures and international cooperation on the issue has been set back by the Trump administration's active disregard. While China might be expected to step up and shape a global economic agenda more favourable to renewable energy in particular, that too has yet to materialise.

With that scene set in the first three chapters, the fourth turns its attention to theoretical discussions of populism and to contrasting democratic politics. It turns out that 'populism' isn't so easy to define, and the use of the term to describe various nationalist leaders and their movements, as well as those who articulate widely held grievances about elites, lacks analytical precision. Though efforts to challenge the status quo from progressive political positions—such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the high profile Green New Deal in the United States—clearly have populist elements. This holds even if, (as Beeson ruefully notes), the left-wing social theorists who might explain such things are extremely hard to read.

The fifth chapter looks to the often-disastrous histories of populist leaders in the twentieth century, of which Hitler, Stalin, and Mao exemplify how badly wrong popular policies can go when in the hands of regimes that ride roughshod over opposition in their determination to remake their peoples and the rest of the world. Cautionary tales of this sort are necessary, but the larger point in this chapter addresses the potential for dramatic change and simultaneously the difficulty of rapid change, given the institutional inertia in existing societies. As yet there is limited support for radical change beyond the more vocal social movements demanding action on climate. The case of Australia, where the coal lobby is especially effective at stymieing climate initiatives, is mentioned briefly as an illustration of these difficulties.

The final chapter pulls together these various themes, suggesting that while the global perspective is crucial in dealing with the climate, much action must spring from the local level. At this stratum, campaigns on more regional issues can provoke demand for large-scale transformation. Politics is local, even if the consequences of particular actions have larger scale implications. The task of social movements for change in dealing with fossil capitalism is not about simply removing politicians who remain dedicated to fossil fuels. Tackling climate change is about building new social arrangements that do not require endless consumption.

However, if this is to happen, Beeson concludes, it will have to be driven by an upsurge of popular action 'from below', in particular places, to push political elites to tackle climate change, and to do so quickly.

The title of this volume might be read to suggest that it contains an analysis of existing environmental movements that are tackling the crisis of the Anthropocene, but most of the book is an analysis of populisms of the past. The suggestions all through the volume is that it is a serious political mistake to leave populist tactics and the political arguments in formulations of 'people against an evil elite' to xenophobes, tyrants and dictators of whatever political stripe, and specifically to those who currently invoke just such tropes in opposition to migration, environmental regulation and sensible climate policy.

The volume is dedicated to Greta Thunberg and her generation, which Beeson very clearly understands is the human cohort that will face the failure to act on the part of the current policy elites. In so far as fossil fuel companies continue to campaign for further exploitation of coal, oil, and natural gas, they are running contrary to the expressed preference of numerous peoples for effective policy action on climate. Moreover, these companies and their supporters are acting in ways that will make life all the more difficult for future generations.

Beeson is based in Australia and clearly recognises his good fortune in living in a part of the world that has the potential to deal with many of the local problems of climate change. However, he shares the frustration of many other Australian residents with the failure of the political class to deal with climate issues, and in particular, the apparent chokehold the coal industry has on policymaking. In the terms of populism, this elite has indeed failed to take the larger concerns of the Australian populace seriously, with the rising hazards of drought and increasingly severe wildfires that now plague the continent. Exporting coal to China frequently seems more important than protecting a habitable planet for future generations.

So, what is the potential for turning populist formulations loose on the climate crisis? Here, despite laying out the framework for thinking through this question, Beeson is reticent to outline anything in much detail. Nonetheless, it is surely a crucial question, given the obvious need to reclaim citizenship as the basis of democratic politics in the face of state capture by fossil fuel corporations in many parts of the rapidly changing world, not least in Australia.

JASON W. MOORE (ED.), *ANTHROPOCENE
OR CAPITALOCENE? NATURE, HISTORY
AND THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM*,
OAKLAND, CA: PM PRESS, 2016.

Charlie Gerstrom

‘Do we really believe a word is so powerful that it has the capacity to change people’s ideas about the causes of climate change?’. This is the criticism levelled at the Capitalocene concept by an advocate of the Anthropocene on page eighty-one of this collection. These seven essayists come together to give an emphatic response: yes. This is not ‘an argument about replacing one word with another’, but a wholesale effort to repair our ecological histories and ontologies. ‘It matters what thoughts think thoughts’, as Donna Haraway tells us, and whilst the Anthropocene as a thinking tool has been useful, it cannot fully answer the questions it raises.

The common definition of the Anthropocene – a new geological age in which human activity has been the dominant influence on the climate and environment – was (re)coined by scientists Eugene Stoermer and Paul Crutzen in 2000. It quickly took on a life of its own, or as Jason W. Moore puts it, ‘two lives’: one of openings, the other of enclosure. The first is likely the more familiar to readers coming to this volume: the Anthropocene as an alarm bell, spreading rapidly across academic departments and into the public imagination, bringing vital attention to the hard evidence of anthropogenic environmental disaster. The fact of a biosphere in crisis is taken as a given here, and the Anthropocene is rightly credited for helping disseminate this understanding. Readers looking for a primer on the scientific findings that cluster around the Anthropocene should look elsewhere.

The second life of the Anthropocene – as an analytic discourse of Man acting upon Nature – is the real point of critical departure. Daniel Hartley and Eileen Crist’s essays, together with Haraway’s more creative offering, offer dissections of the ‘spontaneous ideology’ that some advocates of the Anthropocene carry into the discussion of historical and political causation. Similar critiques have been made before,¹ and elements will be familiar to anyone who has encountered critiques of ecomodernism, green growth, transhumanism and so on; labels which should come attached to most of the dozen or so Anthropocene advocates quoted here. This should not be read as a blanket critique of the politics of all

those working on the science of the Anthropocene, particularly as increasing numbers of scientists are including critiques of the economic system and its inequalities in their work.²

The major features of this discourse are as follows. Firstly, the Anthropocene presents an abstract, undifferentiated humanity (*anthropos*) to bear equally the costs, benefits and responsibilities inherent in our environmental regime; a disappearing act for all the ways that differences and inequalities of race, class, gender, culture, and so on, define our environmental histories. Secondly, it naturalises the causes of our environmental impact as an expression of human nature and neutral technology, completely ignoring the role of specific forms of social relations and power (particularly capitalism) in creating a destructive environmental regime for the benefit of a few. Thirdly, it presents a Whiggish view of inevitable historical progress and technological determinism, which forecloses alternative solutions.

For these authors, the Anthropocene gets the symptoms right but the causal diagnosis wrong. The problem is not Humanity, but the specific system of capitalism. This alternative history – the Capitalocene – is laid out in overlapping formulations in the essays of Moore, Justin McBrien, Elmar Altvater, and Christian Parenti, who present an exciting, synthesised argument over six hundred years of environmental history. Here, the Anthropocene began not with the Industrial Revolution, but in Braudel's 'long 16th century'. New technics, knowledges and values arose that completely reshaped the environment in service to the market long before the steam engine; from the pre-industrial deforestation, exhaustion, and enclosure of much of Europe to the transfers and organisations of the Atlantic empires, through the Columbian exchange, slavery, and the plantation. McBrien overlays this history with a stylish argument for the Necrocene: capitalism-as-extinction, accumulating negative value. Parenti's concluding essay resituates the state at the heart of this history, as the enabler and protector of this appropriation through the geopower of infrastructure, property rights, and force.

Beneath these critiques of discourse and history is something more fundamental: the dualism of modernity. In one way or another, all of these essays are interested in the radical, illusory Cartesian split between Man and Nature, and Self and Other. This is expressed in Moore's 'world-ecology' formulation, the 'double internality' that recognises capitalism-in-nature, but also nature-in-capitalism. This extends beyond standard eco-socialist analysis, as the two systems not only act upon, but become-with each other.

This dualism is presented as existential to capitalist accumulation. Moore argues that 'capital organised work as a multi-species

project' from the beginning; it employed a split-off Nature (which in a neat piece of theoretical accounting, includes both alienated environments and alienated humans, such as women and slaves) as a source of 'Cheap' work, appropriated to power ever-rising productivity in the formal market. As these finite sources of 'abstract social value' are exhausted, so the frontier of capitalism expands to find new Natures to exploit through colonialism, enclosure, and enslavement. Altvater explains this dynamic in economic terms, with the 'externality' as a feature, not a bug, of capitalist accounting: a rationale only of parts and never the whole. Hartley develops the necessity of dualistic culture as a historic driver, as well as legitimiser, of the Capitalocene. The scientific revolutions, the development of abstract rationalism and their manifestations in technologies of mapping and measuring space and time are key in creating abstract Nature, alongside cultures of racism, misogyny, and such otherings.

This volume is a reflection of the profound pivot in the social sciences and humanities towards the environment and its crises, as well as the blossoming of relational thinking with the more-than-human. Whilst some of these elements may now feel familiar, these essays do important work in bringing together concepts which need each other to move forward. It offers a compelling explanatory model that is worthy of engagement for environmentalists, historians, and social scientists alike: anyone who wants to think more deeply about the roots of the Anthropocene. It assumes a working knowledge of core concepts in Marxist analysis, so you will know already if that is not your flavour. It can also be repetitive in places, with overlapping treatments of core arguments across essays that will be familiar to readers of *Capitalism in the Web of Life*.³ That said, the thinking and writing is clear, crisp, and enjoyable, and every essay makes a strong contribution. Taken together, it is an excellent introduction to Moore's world-ecology framework and environmental Marxism generally, whilst Haraway's fertile, imaginative, and vital essay is worth the cover price alone. It also suggests many interesting questions for further study; for instance, testing these concepts beyond the Atlantic, through the histories of the early-modern environmental regimes of Asia.

Finally, there is the question of what comes next. All these authors imply that a healing of the Cartesian split in our thinking is necessary. All agree that neither capitalism (as green growth) nor technology (geoengineering is a theme in McBrien and Altvater's essays) will come to the rescue, and transformational system change is required. All are united in understanding that our path forward must be democratic, ecologically sustainable,

and just; that we should reject catastrophism and embrace a more-than-human imagination.

Where there is disagreement, perhaps unsurprisingly, is on the future role of the state. The final essay by Parenti, and, to an extent, the introduction, bookend this collection with appeals to consider the State as ‘central to any *realistic* effort at climate mitigation and adaptation,’ [emphasis added]. Parenti also explicitly attacks strategies of circumvention or ‘escapist hyperlocalism’. Yet the rest of his essay is a dissection of the state as impossibly complicit with capitalism, whilst ‘realistic’ is exactly the kind of language that Crist and others have primed us against. Can the state really be transformed, or would it rather transform those who seek to act through it, reimposing its essential dualism? There is a dilemma here.

On the other side are Altvater and particularly Haraway, who insist that ‘the chief actors are not restricted to the too-big players in the too-big stories of Capitalism’, which must include the state. Instead, she calls into being the Chthulucene, ‘human beings with and of the earth’: earth as sympoietic composites of multispecies relations and storytellings, rather than rationalised territories. Yet in an endnote, she also expresses a common frustration, even amongst those opposed to managerialism: ‘I cannot help but think more rational environmental and socialnatural [sic] policies of all sorts would help!’ These dilemmas are a reminder that the way forward must be messy, frustrating, and constantly partial. It also brings us back to the original question: what name to claim? The Anthropocene has been useful, but may be too flawed. The Capitalocene now feels essential to any full understanding. But it is the Chthulucene that offers the most fertile future.

Notes

1 Malm, A. and A. Hornberg, ‘The Geology of Mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative,’ *The Anthropocene Review* 1 no. 1 (2014), 62-69.

2 For example: Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now - Science for Achieving Sustainable Development* (New York: United Nations, 2019).

3 Moore, J., *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2015).

SATGAR VISHWAS, *THE CLIMATE
CRISIS: SOUTH AFRICAN AND GLOBAL
DEMOCRATIC ECO-SOCIALIST
ALTERNATIVES*, JOHANNESBURG: WITS
UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018.

Tariro Kamuti

The increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events around the world are a manifestation of a worsening climate crisis. The consternation around the climate crisis relates to acknowledging its existence and understanding what it entails in order to find ways of how to deal with it from the local context to the global arena. These fundamental issues can be said to be the core drive behind Vishwas Satgar's *The Climate Crisis: South African and Global Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives*,¹ an edited collection of contributions by 'activist scholars, grassroots activists, and movement leaders,' (p. 2) drawn from diverse disciplines, and inspired by the grassroots to offer 'democratic eco-socialist alternatives' to the climate crisis. The volume is a sequel to Satgar's (2015) *Capitalism's Crisis: Class Struggles in South Africa and the World*² and the third in a series of Democratic Marxism of which he is editor. Through this series, Satgar, a fierce critic of neoliberalism, has carved a niche by redefining and reorienting Marxism by building a case for and contextualising the ideology in the form of democratic Marxism. This volume proposes democratic eco-socialism as an alternative approach to confront the climate crisis. This approach earned Satgar, a longstanding activist himself, the Distinguished Contribution Award from the World Association for Political Economy.

This collection is organised into three sections (besides the introductory and concluding chapters) that further develop the thesis concerning problematising the 'climate crisis as [a] capitalist crisis' (two chapters), give a global view of the 'democratic eco-socialist alternatives' (six chapters), and focus on the 'democratic eco-socialist alternatives in South Africa' (another six chapters). Satgar sets the scene of the climate crisis as the 'most serious challenge' (p.1) facing humanity and presents it as a 'systemic crisis of capitalist accumulation' (p.2). Satgar, in chapters one and three, together with Dorothy Grace Guerrero in chapter two, use scientific evidence to give a fact-based impression and build a compelling

argument around the climate crisis. They locate the climate crisis in the Anthropocene era, that involves how overwhelming human activity impacts the shift in climatic conditions. The volume also draws, from among others, on Klein's (2014) seminal work, *This Changes Everything*,³ and Newell and Paterson's (2010) *Climate Capitalism*,⁴ to bolster the argument against the 'limits of capitalist solutions to the climate crisis' (p.30). The 'false solutions' (p.34) that are characterised by elite corporate capture from the global to the local level, are driven by neoliberal capitalism that has created a disequilibrium due to a growth-centric obsession. This view lacks adequate consideration of the health of the natural environment and is therefore no longer sustainable.

The climate crisis is becoming more dire on the back of the failure of multilateral negotiations for the last two decades that culminated in the iconic 'Conference of the Parties in Paris during December 2015 (COP21),' (p.3) (Paris Agreement) which aimed to chart a decisive path towards confronting the crisis. Despite the 'call for urgent action to prevent a 2°C increase in planetary temperature, with an emphasis on efforts to keep temperature increases below 1.5°C, at pre-industrial levels' (p. 3) in the Paris Agreement, there is sharp criticism based on its 'limits and contradictions' (p. 5). These include the undoing of the Kyoto Protocol, which placed a heavy responsibility, a 'climate debt' on developed countries, geopolitics that put national interests ahead of the collective, coupled with the lack of a legally binding mechanism in the agreement which made international cooperation difficult, 'green capitalism' which is obsessed with 'techno-fixes' rather than 'system change', and the failure to stem the tide on the extraction of hydro-carbon fuels which are a key 'driver of climate change' (p.7). These limits and contradictions all point to the 'business as usual' approach which continues to drive the world along a destructive path, thereby dubbed 'eco-fascism and imperial ecocide' (p.7). The inequality between the developed and developing countries in global climate negotiations and the United States of America's climate change denialism, (shown by its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement), are weakening the global effort to confront the climate crisis. It is upon this basis that *The Climate Crisis* is calling for 'climate justice, system change and the just transition' (p. 8) where there is equitable responsibility.

Theoretically, the volume draws inspiration from Marxism in conjunction with what is referred to as 'contemporary anti-capitalism' (p.2). For example, Satgar cites Marxist cultural theorist Raymond Williams' (1983) *Keywords*⁵ in the construct of democratic eco-socialism. However, the authors tread carefully from a Marxism-Leninism where growth, authoritarianism and

industrialisation were detrimental to the environment, to a Marxism that re-centres nature and challenges the hegemony of capitalism that is inherently linked to patriarchy, racism, and imperialism. This constitutes a movement from socialism to what they refer to as 'democratic eco-socialism'. In this respect, it is quite fascinating that the volume offers a rigorous critique of Marxism by pointing at its 'self-reflexivity' (p. 2). In chapter three for example, Marxism is used to critique the Anthropocene by pointing out its ecological contradictions, brought in by imperialistic primitive accumulation. Here, Satgar also taps into the Marxist scholar David Harvey's (2003) concept of 'accumulation by dispossession' (p. 56). Devan Pillay in chapter seven further explores the philosophical underpinnings of Marx in conjunction with Buddha to propose the need to imagine a utopia. Jacklyn Cock's (chapter ten) 'eco-feminist-socialist perspective' in search of solutions, is based on the Marxist-feminist and intersectional analysis of the climate crisis. Such theorising enhances deep analysis and explanations of the climate crisis, and Satgar's work foregrounds narratives and alternatives that challenge the entrenched episteme and practice of capitalism. Marxist scholars and critics alike will find relevant theoretical and practical references from this volume.

As a shared global crisis, the climate crisis needs global solutions. Hein Marais (chapter four) discusses the attractiveness of the Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG). This draws from the realisation that since the nineteenth century, employment has been the primary source of income that has a bearing on living standards. However, since the 1970s, capitalism has diminished the power of organised labour and the proletarianisation of peasants have, overall, led to marginalisation of waged labour and the masses. The historical underpinnings of the UBIG, including cases where it has been implemented, indicate improvement in living standards to cushion people against climate effects as countries strive to transition to sustainability. The hegemony of the Anthropocene which subscribes to the 'logic of capital' by putting humans at the centre, is challenged in chapter five by an alternative view of the 'Rights of Mother Earth' which instead installs nature at the centre (p. 107). Pablo Sólón uses the cases of Bolivia and Ecuador to argue how indigenous, scientific, ethical, and juridical streams connect to justify the honouring of nature, for example by inscribing the rights of nature in a country's constitution. Capitalism has seen the marginalisation of indigenous systems of life in the Global South. Alberto Acosta and Mateo Martínez Abarca (chapter six) take further the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia to argue that the inclusion of the rights of nature in these countries' constitutions mark the re-emergence of indigenous systems such as *buen vivir*

(living well). In the same vein, Christelle Terreblanche (chapter eight) puts forward the concept of *Ubuntu* as the construct of an 'African eco-socialist alternative' (p. 168) and decolonisation. Devan Pillay (chapter seven) ups the ante by questioning growth economics through invoking Marx and Buddha to provide guidance in support of social movements. Indigenous systems also serve as the basis for food sovereignty, as Nnimmo Bassey (chapter nine) argues, by promoting naturally based foods that do away with genetically modified foods. For example. Andrew Bennie and Athish Satgoor add more information to the significance of food sovereignty (chapter fourteen), by commending a solidarity economy premised on the grassroots that challenge existing power relations as effort towards a just transition. This is the only chapter that uses empirical findings as support for its arguments through the review of the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign.

The climate crisis and its connection to labour, democracy, and energy through the mineral-energy mix are critical in South Africa. Michelle Williams (chapter eleven) emphasises the need to deepen democracy by being inclusive of labour as the country contemplates embracing the transition to cleaner energy. Nuclear procurement in South Africa has been a contentious issue and David Fig (chapter twelve) cautions against nuclear power as one of those false solutions to climate change, since the country needs to embrace alternatives that foster a just transition. The search for quick returns through haphazard top-down planning to exploit South Africa's blue economy for instance, in search of oil as Desné Masie and Patrick Bond (chapter fifteen) reason, will prove to be unsustainable and unfit for a just transition. Vishwas Satgar concludes by consolidating the arguments for 'democratic eco-socialism and transformative politics' (p. 341) through, for example, grassroots-based Leftist 'climate justice politics' (p. 342). The author's take on the climate change denialism of the Trump administration, which imperils humanity through the 'business as usual' approach, is palpable. The thought-provoking suggestions in this volume are not seen as final solutions in themselves, but a window through which to seek viable alternatives to tackle the climate crisis. Satgar and his fellow contributors, who are experts in their own right, provide rich theoretical and practical contexts underpinning the climate crisis, by employing a Marxist critique.

The Climate Crisis offers a refreshing, yet robust critique that challenges current dominant views about the climate crisis by suggesting an alternative course of action besides the 'business as usual' approach. The call for action is urgent and needs a radical transformation of production systems and consumption through democratic eco-socialism from the local to the global level. The

selected cases from the Global South demonstrate an anti-capitalist ideology against the hegemony of the Global North in order to bridge the gap between them and call for fair sharing of responsibility in confronting the climate crisis. Satgar's offering is quite comprehensive, compelling, and therefore convincing. It contextualises the climate crisis, not only by criticising current approaches, but seeking alternative ways to tackle the climate crisis. He manages to locate the climate crisis as a huge challenge confronting humanity and traces its roots from preceding industrial revolutions to the continual exploitative and extractive practices of the present era. The pockets of resistance through grassroots activism offer a glimmer of hope for an alternative course of action, as their voices become louder than before, and as they forge new alliances to galvanise universal support for climate action. The youth, who are the future, are making use of their agency and taking this struggle seriously, as shown by their recent activism within the climate justice movement. *The Climate Crisis* is a great intellectual contribution to debates on climate change by its urgent call for universal implementation of climate action alternatives through democratic eco-socialism.

Notes

- 1 Satgar, Vishwas, *The Climate Crisis: South African and Global Democratic Eco-Socialist Alternatives* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2018).
- 2 Satgar, Vishwas, *Capitalism's Crisis: Class Struggles in South Africa and the World* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2015).
- 3 Klein, Naomi, *This Changes Everything* (London/New York: Penguin Books, 2014).
- 4 Newell, Peter, and Matthew Paterson, *Climate Capitalism: Global Warming and the Transformation of the Global Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 5 Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983).
- 6 Harvey, David, "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession," in *The New Imperial Challenge*, eds. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (London: Merlin Press, 2003), 63-87.

