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Martin Guinard, Bruno Latour, Ping Lin, and e-flux journal editors

Editorial: You and I Don’t Live on the Same Planet

On the occasion of the Taipei Biennial 2020 and together with the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), this special issue of *e-flux journal* will also be available to read in Chinese in 2021. Titled “You and I Don’t Live on the Same Planet,” the issue deals with an increasingly pressing situation: people “around” the world no longer agree on what it means to live “on” earth—to such a radical extent that the foundational material and existential categories of “earth” and “world” are profoundly destabilized. It was often said at the beginning of Trump’s time in office that he had no coherent strategy. But today we can see that, on the contrary, he had an extremely coherent strategy that unfolded over four years without fail: privatization, deregulation, and isolating the US from any international project. The message of this strategy was clear: “You and I don’t live on the same planet.” What becomes of politics when opposing parties are taken as aliens occupying separate earths altogether? It is as if the question no longer concerns *different* visions of the *same* planet, but the composition and shape of *several planets* in conflict with one another. Pluralism has taken a much more explicit ontological shape, as if we are literally living on different earths—and earths that are at war with each other, as the essay in this issue “Coping with Planetary Wars” explores.

Successive “world orders” have treated planet earth as a fairly homogeneous place where different kinds of resources, different kinds of interests, and different kinds of sovereignties are all unified by one homogenous and overarching concept of Nature. This issue explores the consequences of what Eduardo Viveiro de Castro calls a shift from multiculturalism to “multinaturalism.” As we approach a series of tipping points, we simultaneously witness a division between those who seem to have abandoned planet earth, those who try to make it more habitable, and those whose cosmology never fit within the ideals of the globalizing project in the first place.

This state of division flies in the face of many twentieth-century strategies of political ecology—especially the principle that the high stakes of political ecology justify bypassing the tedious process of negotiation and deliberation typical for political action. Unanimity was supposed to rally the masses in a strong revolutionary push to “save the planet.” However, for the last forty years, we have seen that ecology does not unify. Instead, ecology divides. It divides the generations who will deal with its failures from those who will escape its consequences; it divides the regions already affected by climate disasters from those that are protected; within each region, it divides the classes that suffer disproportionately from decisions made by other classes; furthermore, it divides each one of us at the personal level: for each decision we face, we know there are cascades of unintended consequences that make it hard to distinguish the right actions from the wrong ones. What Bruno Latour has elsewhere called the “New Climatic Regime” poses problems at every magnitude of scale and blurs the

classical political cartography.[1] As Chun-Mei Chuang writes in this issue: "Our place is neither conservative nor progressive. It is molecular and planetary."

To characterize this new spatial configuration, Dipesh Chakrabarty offers a brief history of ways of conceiving of the planets, while Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Déborah Danowski explore the consequences of the turn from a *philosophy of history* to a *philosophy of space*, epitomized by the dismantling of the Axial Age thesis.[2]

In which direction should we go once these divisions are established and assumed? The objective here is to try to imagine procedures that would allow these incommensurable worlds not so much to "dialogue"—which is not sufficient for the enormous differences in ways of inhabiting the world—but to enter into diplomatic negotiations.

The diplomacy that is evoked here does not lie within the existing framework of nation-states, which have, to say the least, many limitations with regard to the New Climate Regime. At the international level, the various UN Conferences of the Parties (COPs) have shown only moderate efficacy. The state may be relevant for choosing whether to shift away from coal or to impose regulations prohibiting the consumption of single-use plastics, but when it comes to managing "trans-boundary hazards" or reducing CO2 produced outside a state's borders, a framework other than that of the nation-state and intergovernmental negotiations needs to be imagined. In this issue, John Tresch, through his research on "cosmograms," searches for a representation of this space to be invented, while Erika Balsom looks at how documentary cinema can depict those encounters at the "third register."

As Adam Tooze argues in his essay, diplomacy must be understood here as a mode of negotiation in a world without arbiters, without a higher authority capable of regulating the actions of the various collectives concerned. Of course, being horizontal rather than vertical in its mode of operation does not mean that there is no balance of power.

Taiwan is perfectly positioned to explore this theme. Due to its particular exclusion from the international order, the Taiwanese government has constantly created innovative ways of asserting its existence. For example, in the 1990s it funded the University of the African Future, an elite pan-African university in Senegal whose history is traced in this issue by artists and curators Hamedine Kane, Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro, Olivia Anani, and Lou Mo. But Taiwan is also a place where geological power is felt: an island that trembles, where erosion is severe and typhoons common, and which does not escape the problems of dependence on coal and extractivism. In short, Taiwan is the ideal place to explore *geo* politics in both senses of the word: geological and political.

It is on the basis of the cleavages arising from this new geopolitics that a new form of diplomacy can be formulated. As Isabelle Stengers writes in this issue, the statement "'we are divided' should first be understood … in an active sense, pointing to what divides us, that is, to what has destroyed the feeling of interdependence as an operative political affect." In this sense, the figure of the diplomat is changing: it is no longer a representative of a state, but rather an investigator of collective dependencies who has the capacity to help these collectivities formulate their obligations towards what must be maintained. In other words, the diplomat is an "epistemic messenger," as Paul B. Preciado writes in this issue. What remains to be explored is how to set up such collectives and how to grant oneself the right to represent them.

When one world vampirically preys upon the resources of another, diasporas may play the mediating role of stitching together torn geographies, as Nadia Yala Kisukidi proposes. She emphasizes the modalities of living in several worlds at the same time rather than assigning a place-based identity to diasporas. By exploring this form of geopolitics, Kisukidi traces a path away from the "poor dialectic" that binds France and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For Yuk Hui, the figure of the diplomat mutates into that of the "knowledge producer," promoting a planetarization based on a diversity of ways to understand technology. A new appreciation of technodiversity might help us break out of the global hegemony within which planetarization has become stuck. And with a concern that this situation may result in new forms of "techno-molecular colonialism," Achille Mbembe draws the contours of an ethic that is not based on a "diaphanous universalism," but on "commonality and incalculability" among the living.

Relying on a more traditional definition of inter-state diplomacy, Pierre Charbonnier urges ecological discourse to change its moralist tone and develop a realpolitik approach. The author sees China's announcement that it will achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 as a way of asserting its power on the international stage. An undemocratic ecology is on the march. Such a context can be instructive for European environmental movements advocating ecological justice by consensus in ways that limit their ability to defend concrete interests.

Even with such a "realist" approach to the situation, can we truly envisage negotiating with everyone? As the well-known doctrine goes, "You can't negotiate with terrorists." But what of the state-subsidized terror of preventing legal abortion? Preciado identifies a set of countries, from the US to Afghanistan, that shares a set of repressive policies on abortion. The diplomacy to be invented in this case must be one that incorporates the logic of resistance, otherwise the opponents of this

techno-patriarchal bloc will lose all their leverage.

Adam Tooze, for his part, wants to clarify the modalities that make it possible to speak between opposing camps: one cannot negotiate with the hyper-privileged who abandon earth to fly towards "planet escape."[3] An irresponsible project that places so little value on the lives of the masses can only be a crime against humanity, whose adequate response is not diplomatic (horizontal) negotiation, but a hierarchically organized (vertical) trial. According to Tooze, the growing concern about a world that may become uninhabitable makes ecology less a question of superior metaphysical force than an increasingly credible cause. Tooze concludes: "Let us look for every chance for 'diplomatic encounters.' But let us reckon with the pervasive force of the emergency that our instruments so clearly register and let us not ignore complementary action" in the realm of traditional politics

In conjunction with this special issue, the Taipei Biennial 2020, which opened physically on November 21, 2020, asks: How can an exhibition, as a vehicle for conceptual speculation, reach beyond the realm of the physical museum to interrogate the disorientation created by the current situation? Topics such as the interdependence between human and nonhuman worlds (Taipei Biennial 2018) have been explored by transforming the museum into a base for the activation of ecological thinking and experimentation. During the Taipei Biennial 2020, we introduced a series of thought experiments that unhesitatingly make action the priority. Consequently, the Biennial's exhibition and its public programs not only feature fifty-seven participants, as well as collaborations with scholars and school departments spanning a variety of disciplines. This engaged action introduces "political and diplomatic tactics" to explore the collision between human and nonhuman worlds.

In this state of division, the "common" that remains is our shared responsibility to face the future. In this sense, accepting that different people live on different planets may provide a useful clarification: to understand whom to ally with, and whom to fight against. The possibility of such "diplomatic encounters" remains a project to build, but aiming for such a project is already a radical departure from the path of war and conflict.

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Martin Guinard is an independent curator based in Marseille. He has worked on several interdisciplinary projects dealing with the topic of ecological mutation. He is the current curator of the Taipei Biennial. He has collaborated with Bruno Latour on several international projects over the last few years, including "Reset Modernity!" at ZKM (2016) as well as a reiteration of the project through two workshop platforms in different geographical contexts: the first in China, "Reset Modernity! Shanghai Perspective," as part of the 2017 Shanghai Project; the second in Iran, "Reset Modernity! Tehran Perspective," curated with Reza Haeri at the Pejman Foundation and the Institute of History of Science of Tehran University. He is co-curator at ZKM for the ongoing exhibition "Critical Zones: Observatory for Earthly Politics."

Born in 1947 in Beaune, France, **Bruno Latour** is now professor emeritus associated with the médialab and the program in political arts (SPEAP) of Sciences Po in Paris. Since January 2018 he has been a fellow at the Zentrum für Kunst und Media (ZKM) and professor at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (HfG), both in Karlsruhe, Germany. A member of several academies and recipient of six honorary doctorates, he received the Holberg Prize in 2013. He has written and edited more than twenty books and published more than 150 articles. The major international exhibitions he has curated are: "Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art" with Peter Weibel (2002), "Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy" (2005), and "Reset Modernity!" (2016). The catalogs of all three exhibitions are published by MIT Press. He is now a member of the curatorial committee at ZKM for the ongoing exhibition "Critical Zones: Observatory for Earthly Politics." He is the current curator of the Taipei Biennial.

Ping Lin is the director of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM). She is also a former column contributor at *ARTITUDE* magazine; former committee member of the collection committee at TFAM, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts; former committee member of the public art committee at the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Transportation; former head of the Department of Fine Arts and director of art gallery at Tunghai University; former art director of Stock 20 Taichung, CCA Railway Arts Network; former member of nomination committee at "Taishin Arts Award" and other major international awards committee. She is currently also a professor at the Department of Fine Arts at Tunghai University, Board member of the Xi De-Jin Art Foundation, and a member of the CiMAM, International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art.

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TB2020 Visual Design: Lu Liang

1
Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* , trans. Catherine Porter (Polity, 2018).

2
The theory, advanced by Karl Jaspers, of a relatively stable and unique transition from an archaic time to a more "enlightened" one in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia starting in the first millennium BC.

3
For more on "planet escape," see "Coping with Planetary Wars" by Martin Guinard, Eva Lin, and Bruno Latour in this issue.

Dipesh Chakrabarty

World-Making, "Mass" Poverty, and the Problem of Scale

One key idea that I have been discussing and debating with Bruno Latour lately is how the philosophy of history emerged in the West. In Marxism as much as in the liberalism expressed by Francis Fukuyama in 1989, this philosophy asks: Where is human history going? Of course, when you examine this idea of history you see that it's essentially a secularization of a Judeo-Christian idea of human beings achieving some kind of salvation. And when it comes to this history, Latour's question has always been: How do people misread their own times? Throughout modernity, he argues, human beings were actually moving towards the Anthropocene without knowing it, lurching from one state to another state towards the Anthropocene. He is making the point that there are three or four moments when the planet or the world is, so to speak, brought into being by Europeans.

The first moment is when Europeans expand and discover the "new world" and take other people's land and create European empires and colonies, coupled with the so-called Scientific Revolution that was happening in Europe. We can consider this the first stage of the making of the world of the globe—Latour uses the word "mundus" for this. The second stage, he says, is the civilizing project that Europeans think they have been carrying out from the end of the eighteenth century. They think it is their job to civilize the whole world, and this is another project of world-making. And then there's the forging of connectivity from the time of the Industrial Revolution to the Second World War. New technologies emerge to connect the world—the telegraph, steam shipping, fossil fuels, and coal.

And then comes globalization and the deregulation of world economies under Thatcher and Reagan, particularly in the Anglosphere. China then joins in after Deng Xiaoping announces the Four Modernizations plan in the 1970s; Mao dies in 1976 and Deng announced it in 1977. We've been living in that world, the intense world of globalization, ever since. In conversation with Latour I have been trying to argue that this intensification of globalization makes—for all of us, for humanists, for nonscientists—the earth system visible. So now earth systems scientists like Tim Lenton and Erle Ellis, among others, explain to us what earth systems mean to citizens. Suddenly this planet becomes visible as a dynamic actor behaving like a system.

Latour makes an interesting point that the planet comes last in this series of world-making. Yet the planet is the most ancient of all the terms. In this European world-making process, which is five hundred years old, the most ancient thing, the earth, which is 4.5 billion years old, comes last. Latour's point since *We Have Never Been Modern*, and even in his earlier work, has been that this European project was flawed. It was based on the nature/culture distinction, or what he calls the "constitution of the modern." Therefore, it was always self-deceptive on the part of Europeans to think that this

world could be made, and that everybody could share in this world. You might call it a flawed philosophy of history. It gave rise to the idea of growth, continuous growth, infinite growth. Therefore, the problem Latour raises is: Why and how did Europeans manage to deceive themselves?

This is exactly where my mild and friendly disagreement comes in. My question, which comes from having grown up in a place like India, is: How did the non-European anti-colonial leaders buy into this vision? Why did Césaire from Martinique, the negritude poet, write in his book *Discourse on Colonialism* that the problem with colonial rule was that Europeans did not keep their promises? They said they would come and modernize us, but they didn't build enough hospitals, enough railways, enough industry, so we should build them ourselves. Nehru says the same thing, Nasser says the same thing. The same thing is said by Mao (before the Cultural Revolution), by Ho in Vietnam, by Nyerere in Tanzania. The same thing. So my question is: Why do all these anti-colonial and anti-imperial figures buy into this regime? Even when you think of somebody like Gandhi or Tagore—who did not necessarily buy into the idea of modernization, of this industrial infrastructure, since Gandhi was anti-industry and Tagore criticized industrial civilization—they, as world-individuals, nevertheless depended on fossil fuel. Gandhi would not have been Gandhi without steam shipping, nor without the railways, which all ran on coal. Tagore made seventy-five or eighty global trips by sea, one by air when he went to Iran, all fossil-fuel based.

Given their sense of cosmopolitanism, their sense of being global, why did they buy into this? Did they fall in love with the material allure of modernization? My answer, looking at Gandhi and Tagore, and even Césaire, is: No, they fell in love with the values of the Enlightenment. They fell in love with the idea of equality. They fell in love. In fact, in an essay, Tagore lists four things the Europeans brought with them.[1] One was peace in public life. Before the Europeans came, you were a nobody if you didn't know how to wield the sword, so becoming an important person in society meant that you had the skills to kill somebody. My ancestors, and those of Tagore, were all products of a pacification of Indian society that the Europeans carried out. The middle class fell in love with the fact that you did not have to know how to kill people in order to be a human being of note or to protect your well-being. Also on Tagore's list are access to modern science, and the rule of law, the idea that you are equal in the eyes of law. These ideas didn't exist before then. Criticism of untouchability in the caste system was made possible by these ideas, which is why Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the best-known leader of ex-untouchable people in India, the lowest of the low, said in one of his writings that he would like to have Indian history begin in France in 1789. He wanted the French Revolution to be the first event, the inaugural event of modern Indian History.

The problem is what else the Europeans introduced at the same time, alongside these values. Europeans introduced the question of scale. Just as they created this world, a large-scale entity, they also integrated large areas in particular. They created the politico-geographical thing called India and introduced more effective infrastructure for such unification: all-weather roads, the printing press, the railways, the telegraph, a mail system, a uniform legal system and currency, uniform education systems, and so on. They gave rise to the desire for nation-states that replaced the idea of empires. Thus, the Chinese communists would later want to own a big thing, a nation-state called China. The values I have mentioned before, which were inspiring, now had to be scaled for very large areas, and after the Second World War, for very large numbers of people. The idea of equality, the idea of caring for the poor, all these things would have to be executed in India and China, after the revolution or independence, for a growing number of people. The Indian population has grown more than fourfold in my lifetime, as did the Chinese population after their Revolution.

The only way you can *care* for such a large number of people is through a "science" Europeans developed, which is really an art of governance called economics that comes out of eighteenth-century moral philosophy. Adam Smith—and later economists—actually argue that economics is a way of caring for people, which is why somebody like Amartya Sen can write a book called *Development as Freedom*, or champion the kind of capabilities approach that he, Martha Nussbaum, and others employ. Economics was a way of developing a secular spirit of caring. Before that, in India for instance, caring was very religious, like Christian caring. You cared for somebody because they were God's creature. But in economics, having to care for millions of people whom you could never know personally gave rise to the idea of welfare. It was totally human-centric and forgetful of ecology, but it championed one principle that humans and even our ancestors the hominins needed, which got written into European political philosophy: the idea that humans have to be protected from predators and natural disasters.

The more humans created a human-dominated world order, an order of life, the more we got rid of most of the wildlife that could have threatened it. And we developed mechanisms for dealing with "natural" disasters, ranging from technology to insurance. The only predators we have left now are viruses, bacteria, and other microbes. In a way, this happened by combining caring with scaling up. When you read Hobbes, the basic principle is that the protection of human life is a fundamental public good. And Hobbes assumes that this includes protection not only from bad people, but also from wild animals. The history of urbanization is basically the elimination of wild animals.

Now we see how the question of protection becomes a question of public health. Looking at today's world, most of

the emerging diseases in the last twenty years have been zoonotic diseases, diseases that come from wild animals. The current pandemic is a very interesting instance of what has happened through this scaling up, of how the global reveals the planetary. On the one hand, the disease is global because we are global; we are large in number, concentrated in cities, and are intensely mobile, so we spread the disease around. That's a question of scale. But it's also an event in the history of life, because this microbe has probably lived in the guts of bats for millions of years. Bats have been around for fifty million years, and are a much older species than human beings. This microbe had a small local address, and now its address is global. Basically, it has colonized our bodies and found a new way to become global.

So we have actually scaled the microbe up into a global microbe, and therefore precipitated an event in the history of life and biological evolution. In some way, we have scaled ourselves up to such a degree that we have imperiled our own existence. If the whole principle that humans should be protected from predators came to mean, effectively, that we have no other predators than microbes, viruses, and bacteria, the expansion of our economic and extractive activities has meant that they can now jump species to become very effective predators. And that's because the interface between wildlife and human life is increasing due to deforestation, logging, road building, human habitation, illegal trade in wildlife, and so forth.

The predicament is deeper than the predicament of the high modernists that Latour criticizes. We will not understand this predicament unless we take the question of mass poverty very seriously. All those anti-colonial people I named spoke about poverty and development and modernization in good faith. Now people like Prime Minister Modi and others speak of the same things in bad faith. But the fact that China and India, while defending fossil fuel on grounds of removing poverty, sound like they're making a very powerful argument, shows that poverty itself is a scaled-up problem. It's a very important problem, and unless we take that into account very seriously, we will not know how to further the critique of planetarity that Latour inaugurated, to take it forward into our time.

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Rabindranath Tagore, “Kalantar” (Change of times), in *Rabindrarachanabali* (The collected works of Rabindranath Tagore), vol. 13 (Government of West Bengal, 1968), 209–15. See also the discussion in my essay “From Civilization to Globalization: The ‘West’ as a Shifting Signifier in Indian Modernity,” in Chakrabarty, *The C rises of Civilization: Explorations in Global and Planetary Histories* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 54–75.

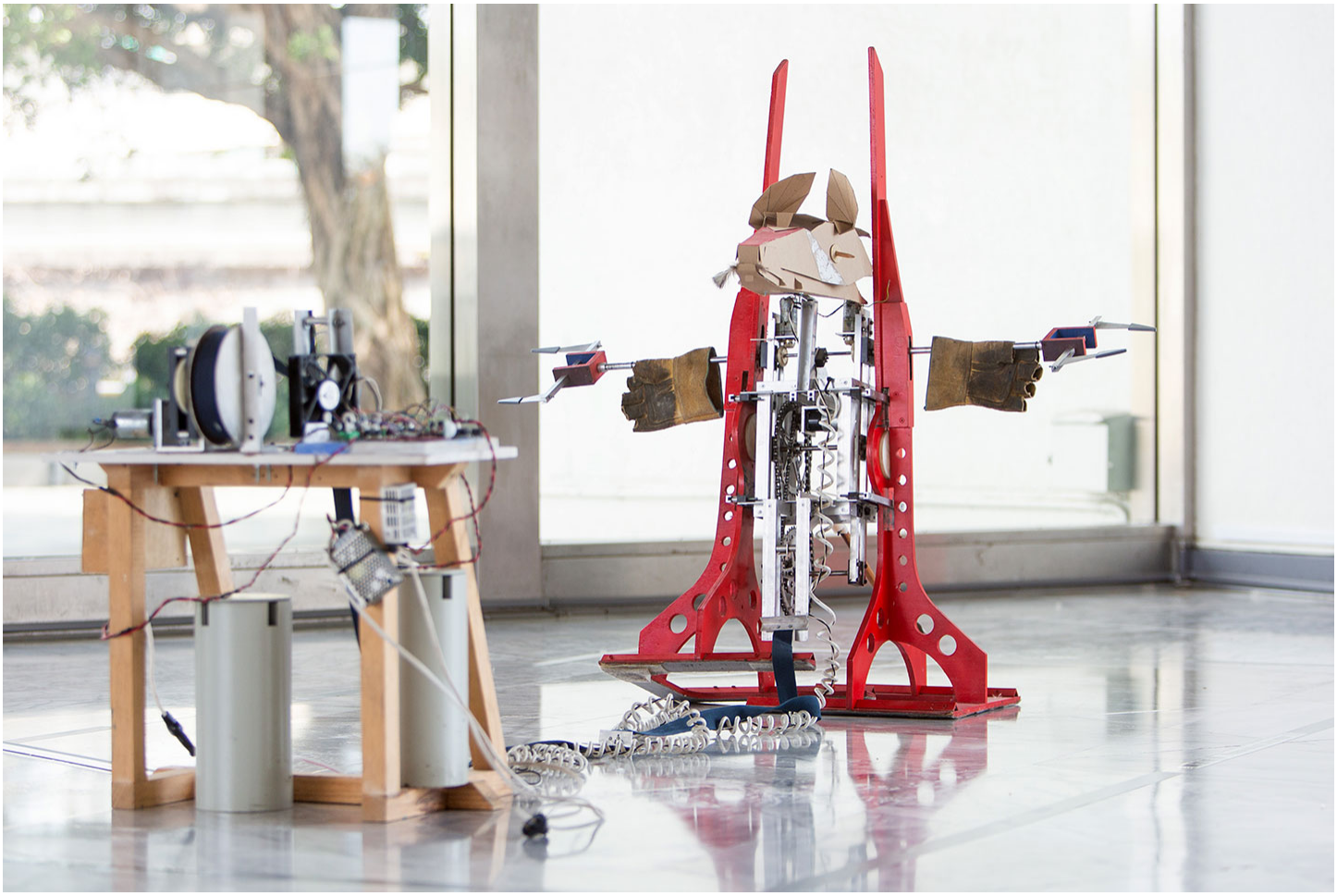
Martin Guinard, Eva Lin, and Bruno Latour

Coping with Planetary Wars

What makes the present political situation so dire and different from past moments of geopolitical tension throughout history is that today the meaning of the prefix "geo-" has changed altogether. Nations are no longer fighting one another on the same geographical stage. Everything unfolds as if there were no common world to fight over, but rather a generalized fight about the very definition of what the world is made of. "Nature" is no longer the background to geopolitical conflict, but rather the very thing that is at stake. It is clear, for instance, that "climate" does not mean or signify the same things for the United States, Europe, Brazil, or China. For some states, the priority when thinking about the climate is the great risk of its catastrophic mutation; for others, any reference to the climate is a mere passing inconvenience. Against all hope, what many eco-critics are calling the "ecological turn" has not resulted in more international unification but, on the contrary, in a new round of conflicts over land, water, air, resources, and oceans.

To register this shift in the definition of geopolitical conflict—a shift we have summarized with the phrase "You and I Don't Live on the Same Planet"—we propose the hypothesis that people now live on different *planets*. Yes, those conflicts are on a "global" or "planetary" scale, but they mobilize multiple incommensurable worlds and not simply, as in the past, different visions of the same natural world. Thus, we are witnessing a massive extension of conflicts and an extreme brutalization of politics. The "international order" is being systematically dismantled. And yet, in a strange and uncertain way, this dismantling creates a paradoxical form of unity. To be sure, it is not like former projects that imagined emancipation for all—like historical liberalism or socialism—but rather a set of new projects that aim to find ways of coping with the former natural world in novel ways.

When it comes to the vocabulary we chose for the 2020 Taipei Biennial exhibition, instead of talking about a conflict between planets we could have talked about a clash between different cosmologies, since the question comes down to different ways of articulating material reality and the social order.[1] However, the advantage of using the figure of the planet over the term "cosmology" is that thinking on the scale of planets makes it possible to stage the influence that celestial bodies exert over one another, like the Moon over the tides. Astrology attempts to describe how planetary alignments influence our moods, actions, and decisions. But in this situation, it is not the influence of Pluto or Venus on our actions that is relevant, but rather different versions of the earth. Indeed, the singular image of the blue marble is now divided into different worlds which form a constellation that has nothing to do with celestial harmony. We are caught within it, where for each decision we must make, the gravitational attractions of the different configurations of earth make one's head rotate as if on a merry-go-round. The model for describing this condition is not just some new form of



Fernando Palma Rodríguez, Soldado (red), 2001. Wooden structure, electronic circuits, sensors and software, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the Artist and Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

dialectic (implying only two poles), but rather a configuration with a multiplicity of polarities. This is what we are trying to depict with our fictional planetarium.

Sticking with the Modern Project at all Costs: Planet Globalization

The first planet worth exploring is one we call "planet globalization." This planet was shaped by the promises offered by modernity, when "making the world" became a central impulse. The influence of this planet is felt whenever people speak of development, progress, and increased "exchanges" between cultures.[2] Though Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the process of "world-making" began with European expansion and the Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth century, it is really during the rapid deregulation of the 1980s that this process intensified exponentially.[3] In fact, this planet, planet globalization, owes much of its contemporary conception to neoliberal cosmology, which, as is well known, follows the dictums of the market's "invisible hand" and considers the materiality of the earth as an inert object offering resources to be extracted and commodified. Of course, this phenomenon is not limited to the Anglosphere, nor to the West, as China's opening to foreign investment in the late 1970s also plays a huge role in the intensification of the impulse for "the making of the world of the globe."[4] Even though it has produced a massive rise in inequality and in forms of neocolonialism, this planet keeps drawing people who seek unlimited growth. In this configuration, the limits of planetary boundaries are set aside, to be dealt with later. Because of the historical and contemporary influence of planet globalization, all the other planets we will explore position themselves in reaction to it.

Withdrawing from the Common World and Building a Wall: Planet Security

For the many people who feel lost or betrayed by the ideals and violence of planet globalization, the general reaction is to ask for a piece of land, a border, or a haven

Jonas Staal, Steve Bannon: A Propaganda Retrospective, 2018-2019. Installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the Artist and Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

where they can live protected from others who have also been betrayed. This is the discourse proposed by the ultranationalist movements that have taken hold in many countries all over the globe. This attraction emerges from the second planet, which we call "planet security." One of the notable craftsmen of this movement is Steve Bannon, former chief strategist to Donald Trump. In addition to being a political consultant, Bannon directed numerous documentary films that have been influential in shaping today's alt-right propaganda. His work in branding and articulating new images for planet security is tracked adeptly by Jonas Staal, who has presented a propaganda retrospective of Bannon's work. Staal methodically dissects the mechanisms of ultra-right propaganda that depict a grim image of a decadence to come. According to Bannon's films, which he himself refers to as "kinetic cinema," the future is frighteningly beset by economic crises, Islamic fundamentalism, and the secular hedonism of cultural Marxism and the globalist elite. Only a strong leader can serve as a rampart in defense of family values, the Christian faith, military might, and of course, the US economy: all the things that Bannon defines collectively as, in Staal's terms, "white Christian economic nationalism."[5] We find Staal's installation *Steve Bannon: A Propaganda Retrospective, 2018–2019* especially relevant because he does not offer criticism that delivers blunt blows to populist leaders, but rather explains precisely what makes this propaganda so attractive, and thus dangerous. Most notably, he does this by showing how various visual tropes recur throughout the fourteen years when these documentaries were produced, such as the figure of the storm, which heralds the "natural" and therefore inevitable approach of a decline, or the figure of the predatory animal, which is taken as a metaphor for the globalized elite attacking lonely ultra-right politicians.

The retrospective of Bannon's work pays special attention to his "Gesamtkunstwerk": the Biosphere 2 Earth Systems Science Research Facility in Oracle, Arizona, of which he became CEO in 1993 (a model of this project is also shown in the biennial.) Inside this covered park of more than one hectare was the world's largest artificial ecosystem, designed with the aim of testing the survival capabilities of humans, flora, and fauna in an enclosed space that could be replicated, integral to Bannon's conception of a future of interplanetary colonization. The project was a failure; for one, oxygen levels dropped so low that breathable air had to be introduced from outside.[6] The project was also a financial disaster. Bannon's solution was to turn to Columbia University for extra funding, but with a significant twist: now Biosphere 2 would no longer seek to explore the possibilities of extraterrestrial colonization. The site would instead be used as a space to conduct climate change experiments, as Staal describes. Taking this fact into consideration, Bannon's role in the Trump administration's 2017 abandonment of the Paris Agreement is yet more surprising. It clearly demonstrates that those like Bannon who are attracted by the pull of planet security are not necessarily ignorant or in denial of these climate challenges. As they feel the ground slip away under their feet, and as they see that there is no hope of creating the conditions to inhabit Mars, the choice they make is to withdraw from the common world behind economic and ethnic barriers, engineering what Staal refers to as Bannon's "alt-right biosphere."[7]

If Earth Is Doomed, Let's Get Out of Here: Planet Escape

The third planet that we propose to explore is "planet escape ." It concerns a small number of privileged people who are way past denying climate catastrophe, and for whom it has become imperative to either exit from their body via a transhumanist project, or leave the earth by colonizing Mars. Alternatively, if it takes too long to develop either of these high-tech extravaganzas, they may opt for a more a familiar brick-and-mortar solution by building bunkers deep underground, in places that might be less affected by climate collapse. The pull of this planet escape is visible, for instance, in the work of the artist Femke Herregraven, whose installation *Corrupted Air—Act VI* invites spectators into one of these survivalist bunkers to explore the imaginary of a "panic room," a small living space used in the event of catastrophe. As the installation's doors open, the visitor enters a room with no windows, lit with blue neon light, filled with metallic structures that span the space, equipped with basic furniture such as two beds kept under plastic sheets to protect against moisture, water supplies, and books such as Paul Virilio's *Bunker Archeology* (1975). The space remains mostly uninhabited, except for the avatars of three strange creatures: an elephant bird, a trilobite, and a lizard, all extinct, are displayed on a screen. These animals have come back to "life" thanks to highly precise scanned digital models. As they engage in a discussion written by the artist, they continually mention a character who shines forth in his absence: the "Last Man," who is the owner of

Femke Herregraven, Corrupted Air–Act VI, 2019. Mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the Artist and Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

the space.[8] He is to be understood as a sort of prophetic figure, who nevertheless brings no salvation: "When he arrives, I'll be even more bored" says the digital trilobite who wonders what the point is of living on a "lonely planet."[9]

Looking for a Way to Land: The Terrestrial Planet

For those who have understood that the modernizing projects of planet globalization can go nowhere since it would take the resources of many earths for the entire planet to live the American way of life; that planet security is unrealistic since the planets are inextricably intertwined; and that planet escape is only a pipe dream, and a depressing one at that, where are they to turn? What planet can they go to? Many different names could serve to identify the inhabitable place we are searching for, but in the context of this essay we call it "the terrestrial planet."

The terrestrial planet is at a disadvantage compared to those mentioned above for many reasons: its contours, aesthetic, and modes of inspiration are a lot less clear when compared to the crisply packaged and marketed planets of globalization and escape, and it lacks the well-orchestrated propaganda mechanism of planet security. The terrestrial planet attempts to create a cosmology which, per John Tresch, still lacks a "cosmogram": a set of representations of what it could mean to achieve prosperity within the earth's own limited planetary scale and resources.[10]

To develop the contours of the terrestrial approach, the first step is to exchange the canonical image of the earth—the iconic blue marble, stable, seen from far away, symbolizing an ideal of global governance—for something more realistic and appropriate for the contemporary moment. Relying on global governance to solve the problems caused by ecological change—the ultimate ideal of planet globalization—is futile. Recent examples of division in the US, or Europe's inability to federate on its own modest scale, send a clear message to all those who still hold out hope for intercontinental unity.

Instead of the image of the globe, we propose diving into representations of what scientists refer to as the "critical

MILLIØNS (Zeina Koreitem & John May) with Kiel Moe and Peter Osborne, The Ghost Acres of Architecture, 2020. Installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the Artist and Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

zone": the upper near-surface layer of the earth. If the planet were an orange, the critical zone (CZ) would be its skin. It is a thin layer where water, soil, rocks, plants, and animals interact to create the necessary conditions for life. This space is extremely thin, a few kilometers above our heads and a few under our feet, which is small compared to the earth's 12,700-kilometer diameter. And yet it is within this envelope that life takes place.[11]

Studying the CZ is not at the scale of the full globe, like earth systems science models, for example. Rather, the CZ is studied through a set of delimited observatories where scientists from different disciplinary backgrounds try to better understand how various processes interact with one another, on that zoomed-in scale. Because the CZ is variable and heterogeneous, scientists try to compare phenomena seen from one observatory to the next, attempting to build a better understanding of this thin layer within which all life-forms we know reside.

As geochemist Jérôme Gaillardet would say, to understand how the CZ functions at the scale of the planet, it would be necessary to have as many observatories as we have hospitals.[12] Clearly, the earth is far from benefiting from a network of such sites, but there is an important observatory located in Taiwan, in the Taroko Gorge, that could serve as a perfect example of such an observatory. The artist Yuhsin Su was able to follow two groups of scientists to a site in Taroko that was selected because geological dynamics are particularly active there.[13] Her work *Frame of Reference I & II* investigates the position of the observer and of their instruments *inside* these open-air observatories, adopting what she calls a view from "within." The artist draws on two different methodologies—those of Leonhard Euler and Joseph-Louis Lagrange—to explore connections between the observer and their "object" of study. These two eighteenth-century mathematicians defined different "frames of reference" that are still used today by critical-zone scientists to conduct observations. In a Eulerian frame of reference, the position of the observer is fixed in space, which allows one to see what happens from a single perspective. In a Lagrangian framework, however, the observer moves with their object and is, therefore, relative.[14]

The structure of Su's video switches between Eulerian and Lagrangian frames of reference, alternating images taken from a fixed viewpoint (a GoPro camera placed underwater in a river, and a camera positioned on a hydrometric station near the riverbank) with images taken from a moving viewpoint (a drone and a handheld camera). The video installation, with its sensory style, bypasses a stable "subject/object relationship" thanks to its immersive setup. The tilted screens laid out around visitors do not put them "in front" of the work but "encapsulate" them within it. This echoes the position of the observer inside the CZ who is always "within" the skin of the earth, within the flesh of the world, and therefore cannot *escape*, nor *withdraw,* from this terrestrial position.

It is in the ability of this planet to register the diversity of ways of inhabiting the earth that it should be judged. This is why we are so interested in the alternative "observatories" set up by indigenous groups in critical zones that have been massively disturbed. The works of Aruwai Kaumakan, who is from the Paiwan tribe in southern Taiwan, offer a typical case. Her village was hit by a particularly violent typhoon in 2009, forcing its inhabitants to relocate to the current land of the Rinari tribe. She offers an interesting way of approaching questions of dwelling and inhabiting after resettlement. She creates sculptures with wool and fabric, weaving together organic or vegetal forms using "Lemikalik," a Paiwan technique that involves weaving in concentric circles. Through this technique she intertwines memories of tribal nobility to form a place for constant conversation and connection. She used to create jewelry, but she felt the need to "upscale" to larger pieces after the typhoon, allowing her to collaborate with others in the weaving process, literally recreating a social fabric. One should resist using the term "resilience" to characterize her practice, as it can indulge in forms of conservatism, accepting a situation rather than mobilizing against the problem.[15] Thinking about dwelling and inhabiting is especially important given that there will be more climate refugees in the comings years, driven to migrate by climate events like the typhoons that displaced the Paiwan.

The terrestrial planet is marked by a difficult problem: it seems that nothing is at the right scale any longer. The heart of the discoveries of James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis is that the earth's surface (the CZ) is a complex, self-regulating system in which every single element—rocks, gases, minerals, water, atmosphere, soil—has been modified by the actions of life-forms,

Su Yu-Hsin, still image from Frame of Reference, 2020. Video installation, dimensions variable. Frame of Reference I was produced in cooperation with the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe and GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences Geomorphology. Image source: GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences, Taroko Project Database, NCTU Disaster Prevention, and Water Environment Research Center.

notably bacteria. But the key concept from this model is that even large-scale changes are the result of entities and contexts that are small-scale. The challenge is to resist the temptation to remain within the opposition between "global" and local phenomena. We must also address the concept of locality without getting stuck within the confines of the local. There is a need to resituate the territories from which we draw necessary resources but which we don't see—a need to situate the "ghost acres" (to use Kenneth Pomeranz's expression) that are necessary for feeding our daily lives.[16] This is especially visible in a work proposed for the biennial by the architecture collective Milliøns with Kiel Mo and Peter Osborne.[17] In *The Ghost Acres of Architecture*, they take up the complex task of drawing what such resituated territories could look like. Since it would be impossible to do this at the scale of a full city, they start with Mies Van der Rohe's famous 1958 Seagram Building in New York City, visualizing data from the first moment of extracting the materials for its construction through its contemporary operation. Milliøns analyzes the immense territorial reach of these processes—the minerals, the energy, the interactions with the earth's crust. Architecture is an ideal site to measure up the conflicts between globalization and what could be called "terrestrialization."

Of course, the 2020 Taipei Biennial is also caught between these attractors. Typically globalized in terms of its theme and resource consumption, it has addressed different topics since 1984: the monsters of modernity (Franke, 2012), the question of the Anthropocene (Bourriaud, 2014), and the museum as an ecosystem (WU, Manacorda, 2018). If we speak in terms of the material production of an exhibition and not only in terms of its themes, it is easy to be "global" with artists from twenty-seven countries, and it remains a real challenge to get an exhibition like this one to land on a terrestrial planet. For example, in their work *Arts of Coming Down to Earth*, Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro, Ming-Jiun Tsai, and Margaret Shiu tried to find ways to see how institutions could "expand their maintenance practices beyond the object, to non-human collectives."[18] This involved an audit of the CO2 consumption of the biennial, as well as allowing a large area of degraded land in Taiwan to

regenerate, focusing on biodiverse reforestation and protection. The ethos of their project involved neither greenwashing nor the proposal of an easy solution to a complicated problem. At the very least we have to admit that the Covid-19 pandemic had the merit of removing one of the contradictions of attracting globalized crowds from the world of art and cultural tourism!

So, where do we direct ourselves once this position of division is fully assumed, once our colonial history has damaged the ideal of universalism, once we find ourselves in a fragile situation that is being exploited to serve populist agendas? The present imperative is not simply to foster a discussion among a multiplicity of perspectives, since this would inevitably fall back to older models of universalism—reconciling multiple visions of the same

Aruwai Kaumakan, Vines in the Mountains, 2020. Wool, ramie, cotton, copper, silk, glass beads, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the Artist and Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

Diplomacy: Onwards from the Fictional Planetarium

As has been suggested throughout this essay, the hypothesis on which we rely is the following: people tend to accept representations of the world that make it possible to live and act within it. When it was understood that the earth was round in the sixteenth century, a way of "shaping" the world was developed through circulation, trade, and imperialism. With the earth as a globe—that is to say, as an inert object—few possibilities are available to understand ecological problems, since this representation of the blue planet as a giant billiard ball simply invisibilizes the deregulation of the biosphere, as well as all the alternative cosmologies that never fit within the globalized ideal in the first place. Thus, it is important to identify some of these different ways of "world-making" and how they differ from one another, as well as to acknowledge that there are many other planets that can be added to this fictional planetarium.

natural world. The aim here is to explore alternative procedures that still aim at some sort of settlement, but only after having fully accepted that divisions go much deeper than those anticipated by old universalist visions. Or perhaps the aim is to show why this is impossible and draw political and ethical conclusions from this dilemma.

Since we lack a common world, it is crucial that we imagine different procedures that will at least explain why it is impossible to simply "sit at the same table." What are peace and war when dissension runs this deep? If you and I don't live on "the same planet," it is crucially important to explore alternative modes of encounter between these worlds, to avoid destruction. It is because people are caught between the wishful thinking of planetary governance, the brutalization of politics, and the dismantling of the international order that we appeal to the notion of *diplomacy*. Of course, one cannot ignore that in

the current situation, diplomacy may seem too weak. To give an example: an associate of Steve Bannon contacted a museum showing Jonas Staal's retrospective on the propagandist, and asked if Staal would "debate" Bannon. Staal declined, emphasizing that while he felt it was essential to develop propaganda literacy and build counterpower, he refused to give a platform to an alt-right propagandist who promotes planet security. This attitude might also be understandable when looking at the size of the communication networks that Bannon owns, which are, unfortunately, much larger than Staal's. But one should not confuse diplomacy with polite discussion. Diplomacy offers a compelling proposition: First because it brings together procedures and techniques used before or after wars and conflicts, which is a fitting description of the current situation. Second, since it takes place in the absence of an overarching authority, diplomacy can be particularly useful at a time when the "international order" has demonstrated its fragility after four years of Trumpism. Third, although it certainly is not immune to asymmetrical imbalances of power, diplomacy offers parties the possibility of negotiating to remain engaged so long as they remain alive. Although we must admit that it is a serious possibility, the pull of planets globalization, security, and escape have not yet sucked the terrestrial planet into a black hole, with gravity so strong that not even a ray of light can escape.

If the issues raised by the new climate regime are divisive, the goal is neither to remain so forever nor to unify too quickly, for fear of falling back into the trap we described earlier—namely, that moralizing arguments paralyze the effort to build a politics that knows how to identify the concrete interests that should be defended. Therefore, we argue that "new diplomatic encounters" are necessary. Imagining how to even engage in such encounters when different people do not even share the same ground and the same atmosphere remains a difficult question, which we try to address in our curation of the 2020 Taipei Biennial and in this issue of *e-flux journal*.

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Martin Guinard is an independent curator based in Marseille. He has worked on several interdisciplinary projects dealing with the topic of ecological mutation. He is the current curator of the Taipei Biennial. He has collaborated with Bruno Latour on several international projects over the last few years, including "Reset Modernity!" at ZKM (2016) as well as a reiteration of the project through two workshop platforms in different geographical contexts: the first in China, "Reset Modernity! Shanghai Perspective," as part of the 2017 Shanghai Project; the second in Iran, "Reset Modernity! Tehran Perspective," curated with Reza Haeri at the Pejman Foundation and the Institute of History of Science of Tehran University. He is cocurator at ZKM for the ongoing exhibition "Critical Zones: Observatory for Earthly Politics."

Eva Lin is an independent curator based in Taiwan. She is the current curator of the public programs of the Taipei Biennial. Her recent curatorial projects include "Parallax: Damage Control" (2017), "The Hidden South" (2018), "The Upcoming Past" (2019), "Ryoji Ikeda Solo Exhibition" (with Jo Hsiao; 2019), and the 7th Taiwan International Video Art Exhibition – "ANIMA" (with Wei Yu; 2020). She is now the art director of mt.project.

Born in 1947 in Beaune, France, **Bruno Latour** is now professor emeritus associated with the médialab and the program in political arts (SPEAP) of Sciences Po in Paris. Since January 2018 he has been a fellow at the Zentrum für Kunst und Media (ZKM) and professor at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (HfG), both in Karlsruhe, Germany. A member of several academies and recipient of six honorary doctorates, he received the Holberg Prize in 2013. He has written and edited more than twenty books and published more than 150 articles. The major international exhibitions he has curated are: "Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art" with Peter Weibel (2002), "Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy" (2005), and "Reset Modernity!" (2016). The catalogs of all three exhibitions are published by MIT Press. He is now a member of the curatorial committee at ZKM for the ongoing exhibition "Critical Zones: Observatory for Earthly Politics." He is the current curator of the Taipei Biennial.

1
See the exhibition pamphlet *You and I Don't Live on the Same Planet* , authored by Martin Guinard and Bruno Latour for the 2020 Taipei Biennial.

2
This is also the planet that has most directly influenced the conception of the biennial and its ideal of " *mondialité*" (worldness), given that the Taipei Biennial was established in 1984 with the stated mission of promoting international exhibitions.

3
See Dipesh Chakrabarty's contribution to this issue, "World-Making, 'Mass' Poverty, and the Problem of Scale."

4
Chakrabarty, "World-Making, 'Mass' Poverty, and the Problem of Scale."

5
Jonas Staal, "Propaganda (Art) Struggle," *e-flux journal*, no. 94 (October 2018) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/94/219986/propaganda-art-struggle/ .

6
Bettina Korintenberg, "Life in a Bubble: The Failure of Biosphere 2 as a Total System," in *Critical Zones* , ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (MIT Press, 2020), 185.

7
Jonas Staal, personal conversation with the authors.

8
See the recent essay by Simon Sheikh that explores another image of this last man: "It's After the End of the World: A Zombie Heaven?" *e-flux journal*, no. 113 (November 2020) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/113/359978/it-s-after-the-end-of-the-world-a-zombie-heaven/ .

9
See the website for the 2020 Taipei Biennial https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2020/en-US/Participants/Participants_Content/1?type=escpae .

10
See John Tresch's contribution to this issue, "Cosmic Terrains (of the Sun King, Son of Heaven, and Sovereign of the Seas)."

11
See Bruno Latour, "Seven Objections Against Landing on Earth," in *Critical Zones*.

12
Jérôme Gaillardet, personal conversation with the authors.

13
We thank the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences, especially Niels Hovius and Jens Turowski, and the NCTU Disaster Prevention and Water Environment Research Center in Wuhe and Wulu for their help in realizing this project.

14
Bastian E. Rapp, "Conservation of Mass: The Continuity Equation," chap. 10 in *Microfluidics: Modelling, Mechanics and Mathematics* (Elsvier, 2016), 265–77.

15
On the topic of "refusing" resilience, see the section "Nous ne voulons plus être appelés résilients" in Matthieu Duperrex, "Arcadies altérées, territoires de l'enquête et vocation de l'art en Anthropocène" (PhD diss., Toulouse University, 2018), 275–80.

16
Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

17
Milliøns is Zeina Koreitem and John May.

18
See the website for the 2020 Taipei Biennial https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2020/en-US/Participants/Participants_Content/21?type=terrestrial .

John Tresch

Cosmic Terrains (of the Sun King, Son of Heaven, and Sovereign of the Seas)

Between the Terrestrial and the Cosmic

In 1966 Stewart Brand printed buttons asking, "Why haven't we seen a photograph of the whole Earth yet?" He thought the photo would transform politics and everyday life by sparking recognition of the feedbacks of our social and ecological systems. Once NASA released photos of "Earthrise" and the iconic "Blue Marble," Brand put them on the cover of *The Whole Earth Catalog*.

Bruno Latour and Dipesh Chakrabarty's conversation about "Conflicts of Planetary Proportions" raises a demand not far from Brand's.[1] In 2020—as wildfires burn, demagogues fume, refugees clutch at rafts, and new viruses stalk the species—our vision of the earth needs revision. The planet is now shattered into an array of "planetarities": the globe of free trade, the calculable systems of earth science, the spiritual or indigenous nature beneath the pavement, a geopolitics redrawn by industrial powers outside the West, the elusive and unpredictable Gaia.[2]

Despite billionaires fleeing to New Zealand and Mars, we're far too connected by oceans, weather, communications, and diseases for any of us to go it alone. We again need to see the earth as a whole. This is all the more true since the planet photographed from space failed to birth an unequivocally better world. The "Blue Marble" photo implied that a swift and tidy unification was possible; it blurred and suppressed differences, making the work of agreement—of diplomacy—seem unnecessary. Even the *Whole Earth Catalog,* though based in a vision of autonomous, off-grid communes, later fed into Silicon Valley's globe-spanning techno-capitalism.[3]

Perhaps as a rebuke to the previous generation's narrowed vision, artist Aspen Mays created a new pin in 2009: "Why haven't we seen a photograph of the whole Universe yet?" She was asking something impossible: no camera could snap the whole universe. To make visible and explicit all the knowledge, assumptions, hopes, and fears about the cosmos in a single image requires active imagination and semiotic condensation. It invokes history, possibility, and the not-yet-seen. It may call for a synthetic, anamorphic view from multiple perspectives at once—harmoniously, discordantly, or unthinkably joined.

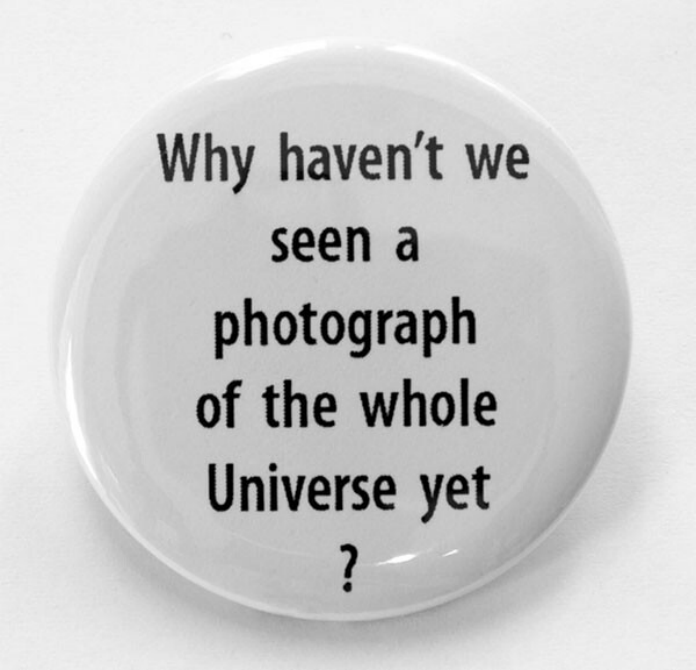
Brand hoped that a single image of the planet could change our cosmology. Mays suggests a complimentary reply: how we live on earth is closely tied to how we address the immensely difficult task of picturing the universe. If we want to come back "down to earth," we need to think these two scales together—the cosmic and the terrestrial—and consider how our depictions of the universe have intersected, or bypassed, our ways of inhabiting the planet.[4] This essay explores the intersection between the cosmic and the terrestrial by juxtaposing *cosmograms* and *territorialities*, taking examples from an

"Zodial Sphere and Celestial Globe, Observatory, Beijing," 1873, from Illustrations of China and Its People: A Series of Two-Hundred Photographs, with Letterpress Descriptive of the Places and People Represented, J. Thomson, F.R.G.S. Credit: Wellcome Collection/CC BY 4.0.

earlier moment in global encounter.

"Cosmograms," or representations of the universe as a whole, convey relations among human, natural, and divine realms. They can serve as propositions for how the world might be, with utopian, eschatological, or simply conciliatory aims; often, however, they serve didactic, dogmatic, propagandistic ends.[5] For example, a 1667 painting showed Louis XIV receiving members of the French Academy of Sciences in an overdetermined cosmic context.[6] Behind him was the map of the nation redrawn with new canals, the newly built Paris Observatory straddling the meridian; before him were terrestrial and celestial globes. These objects placed "the Sun King" in the heavens and on the earth amidst machines and mechanical philosophy. Meanwhile, in 1673, on the other side of Eurasia, the Qing emperor Xangxi commissioned a new celestial globe; on the roof of the Beijing observatory it joined an armillary sphere held up by imperial dragons, a symbolic cluster for the ritual renewal between microcosm and macrocosm maintained by the "Son of Heaven." Two distinct autocratic orders presented their "universal" rule within a few years of each other, using comparable imagery and tools (and expertise, as the Beijing globe was built from Chinese models with the assistance of French Jesuits)—but within radically divergent cosmologies. As we will see below, looking at other cosmograms from these monarchs, they also set the framework for diplomacy among parties seeking to make, keep, change, or enlarge a world.

My other key term, "territoriality," does not simply refer to



Aspen Mays, Why Haven't We Seen a Photograph of the Whole Universe Yet?, 2009. 1.5-inch plastic button, unlimited edition. See .

the drawing of borders around a region to define a political entity, as in a vision of the world made up of nation-states; this would be just one mode of territoriality.[7] While "territoriality" grounds political and cosmological formations in the use, affordances, and constraints provided by particular landscapes, my view stands apart from discussions of "the nomos of the Earth"; to examine how groups inhabit a space, we can do without an essential distinction between friends and (killable) enemies.[8] Nor am I adhering to the concept of "territorialization" that Deleuze and Guattari drew from ethology and state formations: *A Thousand Plateaus* associated "territorialization" with the blockage of a "line of flight," the major as opposed to the minor, the royal as opposed to the nomadic.

I mean something simpler. Living as a desert nomad—or in a flat in post-Brexit London—implies a particular mode of territoriality: a relation to a landscape, a pattern of movement attuned to weather and seasons, ways of defining the regions one traverses or occupies as well as the other people one encounters or avoids. Crucially, it also involves a relation to sources of subsistence: the materials one extracts, transforms, and uses, the plants, fruits, grains, and livestock one raises and gathers—or purchases at the endpoint of supply lines from other continents.[9] Modes of territoriality link specific collectives to specific regions of the earth. At the same time, they are tied to specific cosmologies—ways of encountering, delimiting, conceptualizing, and experiencing the relations among entities and domains. They thus leave traces in cosmograms, or shared representations of those cosmologies.

To describe territorialities, the field of geography offers helpful approaches—among them, the efflorescence of "Atlases" and their concepts and representations around 1900 (though one would hope to leave behind the racial and environmental determinism which haunted the discipline).[10] Inspiration also comes from environmental historians' examination of land use: territorialities often weave together disparate regions and activities through particular materials, as in the binding of Andean plots of coffee and coca with agitated cities in the North, Indonesian forest clearings with an Asian building boom, the city of Chicago with the West. The study of diverse "cropscapes"—rice, corn, oranges—along with agronomic sciences and variable theories of "environment" also help define territorialities.[11] Environmental anthropology presents diverse studies of gardening, hunting, and agriculture and their relations to cosmological narratives, rituals, crafts, and ancestral geohistoiries.[12] As David Graeber and David Wengrow have pointed out, anthropology and archaeology also offer examples of *alternating* territorialities and social patterns—such as the oscillation, in northwest Canada, between strongly hierarchical, concentrated formations in winter and egalitarian, distributed habitations in summer.[13]

As these sources suggest, territoriality is not limited to the fixed spaces carved out and recognized on a map of nations. Nor is it reducible to a calculated ledger or "economy" of production, consumption, trade, or even "energy units." This would mean translating a specific mode of territoriality into the valences of political science, economics, biology, or a naturalist ecological science—all of which belong to a peculiar "modern" territoriality, the basis of the current, rather shaky "liberal" global order.[14]

Returning to the early days of global trade, I want to consider three cosmograms in which distinct (though comparable) modes of territoriality were visible. These intersecting histories suggest how cosmic terrains may interlace companionably—or provoke a violent clash with lasting echoes.

The Habitation of the Sun King

The straight pathways, geometrical *parterres*, and symmetrical axes of the palace and gardens of Versailles announced the power, wealth, and splendor of Louis XIV. They projected him as a cosmocrat, a ruler legitimated by and controlling the universe and the natural order.[15] This palace complex—built ten miles from the traditional seat of royal power, disrupting previous conventions and alliances to secure the Bourbon reign—was a cosmological representation, proclaiming and reinforcing a new social order: the absolutist state. Here Louis welcomed visitors—diplomatic delegations from the Hapsburgs, England, Persia, Siam—as well as members of

Henri Testelin, Colbert présente à Louis XIV les membres de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, 1667. Oil on canvas, 348 x 590 cm. Musee d'Histoire de France, Versailles.

the French nobility, whose power he sought to limit and contain.[16]

The palace's enormous scale announced the labor at Louis's command; thirty thousand workers were said to have built it. Yet in Pierre Patel's 1668 painting *Vue du château et des Jardins de Versailles*, the main human action is the sinuous entry of the king's carriage and retinue at lower right; these works are for him and by him alone. Otherwise, the image emphasizes a crosscut central axis continuing to infinity. The palace's symmetrical sides, for the king and queen, meet in shared ceremonial rooms, most famously the "Hall of Mirrors," where courtiers saw themselves reflected to infinity, illuminated by the Sun King's rays, and where the court's intrigues forced nobles to dance to the sovereign's tune.

This new political order explicitly resonated with reigning cosmologies: the allées formed crucifixes while paintings and fountains depicted Apollo, fusing Louis with both Christian and classical deities. The plan also embodied Descartes's natural philosophy, based in the mechanical interactions of circulating matter within a universal, uniform grid.[17]

This cosmogram also embodied a particular mode of territoriality, inscribed in the earth and the subsistence drawn from it. Though Louis XIV's gardener André Le Nôtre drew heavily upon the "estate management" tradition developed by Dutch and French Protestant predecessors, experimenting with new techniques to increase the yield of the land, emphasis shifted from profitable improvement. As Chandra Mukerji demonstrated, Versailles proclaimed a new system of rule through territory, in which "land was celebrated for domination, not for productivity."[18] On an unprecedented scale Versailles employed agricultural innovations, such as orchard walls and glass jars to keep in heat; new methods for working with soils; and the cultivation of previously rare fruits such as melons, vegetables, and flowers.

Versailles drew on both the administrative rationality of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's Comptroller-General of Finances, and the engineering prowess of the Marquis de Vauban, who worked for the Sun King for over fifty years. The palace relied on knowledge of military fortification, hydraulics (the Marly Machine, a massive water-pumping system, brought in and elevated water from afar), and roadworks. It also imposed a new social order in which the nobility became anxiously dependent on royal favor, and in which the grain-producing peasantry were encouraged to feel themselves as subjects of the kingdom. Woven through this socio-technical fabric, and making it possible, were the air, sun, and earth. Louis XIV was redefining the state as a territorial entity—an administration of taxation and building within clearly drawn borders, bound by roads and canals, expanded and defended by a disciplined army. This dominating territoriality applied to the soils, stones, food, animals, and living ornaments he also controlled.

"Duojia ruyun" (Crops as beautiful as the clouds), from Yuan ming yuan si shi jing, 圓明園四十景 (Forty views of Yuanming Yuan), 1744. Text attributed to Qianlong emperor, calligraphy by Youdoun Wang, painting by Yuan Shen. Painting and calligraphy on silk, 82.7 × 148.8 cm. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Garden of Perfect Brightness

How similar and yet how different was Yuanming Yuan, the Garden of Perfect Brightness, eight miles from Beijing. The Qing emperor Yongzhen began construction in 1707; in 1736 his son the Qianlong emperor massively expanded the garden into the Summer Palace—making it his primary base for administrative and diplomatic functions. Like Versailles, it was a deliberately constructed and maintained cosmogram: the site for aligning emperor, empire, and the cosmos as a whole.

Views of the gardens are preserved in a book of paintings and poems attributed to the Qianlong emperor himself—who, even more than Louis with his academicians, styled himself as a scholar. Che Bing Chiu

has studied these *Forty Views* along with a Feng Shui report of the site, to detail its cosmological resonances. The views recede into the distance, a limitless horizon with the center wherever the emperor stands.[19] The landscape's materials embodied fundamental principles of the universe. From the mountains arise *qi,* the life force; the bodies of water guide and contain it. Scenes also reference Confucian values of filial piety, virtue, and diligence as the basis of good government, and the care given to both administration and agriculture. The view of "Nine Islands" references the nine regions of the world; two of its islands "confront each other in a yin-yang form, the *taiji* or supreme fact of the universe," from which the ten thousand things making up the cosmos arise.[20]

The empire's geophysical locations, mapped onto the body of the earth, were restated in the garden's orientations: the Tibetan mountain range appeared as the source of blood vessels, with the "You and Ji regions as right arm, Chuan and Shu as left arm … the Yellow river for intestine."[21] The different regions of the empire were also represented in building styles and plants, just as Taoist, ancestral, and Buddhist confessions were enshrined in monasteries, temples, and artworks. The monasteries housed actual monks; the rice fields were planted and worked by real farmers.[22]

The gardens were also laid out with references to the scholarly tradition, following the guidance of Ji Cheng's *Yuanye*, which insisted on gardens' adaptation to their settings as well as their historical echoes. In Tang poet Li Bai's poem "Mount Jingting," while contemplating a mountain it is as if, according to Che Bing Chiu, "time and space are abolished"; the mountain and the poet "form a single body."[23] Likewise in the garden, human artifice and nature become indistinguishable; for Ji Cheng, the well-designed garden "may be only the creation of man [but] may appear the work of Heaven." Yuk Hui has argued that Taoist and Confucian elements combine to form a "Chinese cosmotechnics"; the cosmogram assembled in Yuanming Yuan also implied a specific mode of territoriality.[24]

While the entire complex emphasized continuities with earlier dynasties, Qing emperors enacted distinct terrestrial policies which echoed the garden's manipulations of land and water. Yongzhen instituted "ever-normal granaries" where donations of grain from well-rewarded landholders were pooled and periodically released to keep prices low. Canals were built and improved to move rice and other crops from farming regions to those such as the Yangzi valley, which by the early eighteenth century was a center for crafts and small manufactures. Certain crops were encouraged by state provision of seed, tools, and livestock, including potatoes, peanuts, mulberry (for silk), and cotton, grown for both internal and external trade. New lands were claimed for farming; cultivation moved up mountainsides, and military conquest into the northwest in Xinjiang created an agricultural "New Dominion" expected to be self-sufficient.[25]

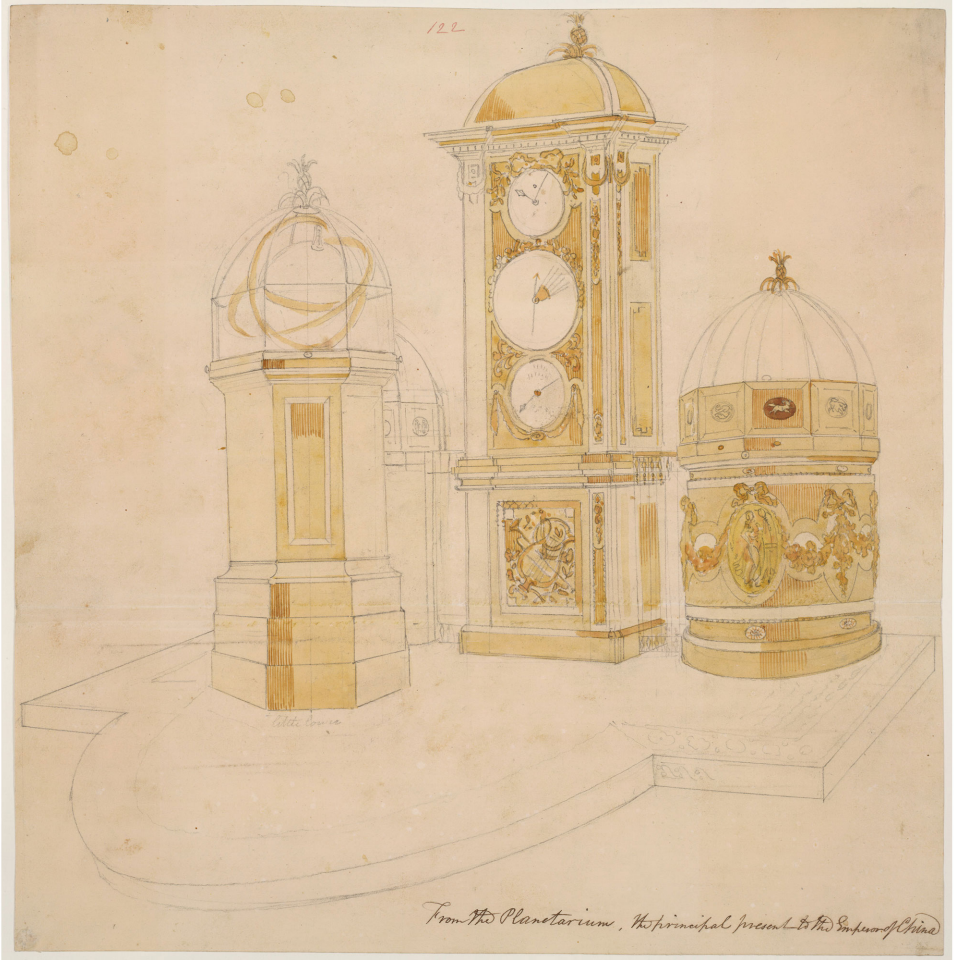
While this active fostering of the land to feed a growing population demanded military, administrative, and commercial innovations, it was presented as *renzheng,* the Confucian "benevolent government"—light interventions following virtuous intent. It was also presented as a Taoist yielding to the natural "way" of the landscape. Rather than forcing submission of either subjects or the land, the emperor was presented as fostering and cultivating natural inclinations.

Art historian Greg Thomas has beautifully examined the commonalities between the "palace cultures" of Yuanming Yuan and Versailles.[26] Despite clear differences in style, the two imperial gardens served similar functions of diplomatic staging, ritual, and symbolic amplification—an isomorphism which enabled the European fascination for "Chinoiserie" and the Chinese interest in "Européenerie." One section of the Chinese garden featured replicas of European-style palaces; filled with tapestries, artworks, clocks, and automata, they offered a playful, miniature, and feminized fantasy of a remote realm. Symmetrically, Versailles's gardens contained a Chinese pleasure palace, similarly reduced in size for the amusement of the King and visitors.

Beneath this symbolic entwinement, the two cosmocrats were far enough apart to remain undisturbed by each other's universal claims. French "naturalism" (and its territorial demands) did not have to clash directly with the "analogical" adjustment of microcosm and macrocosm radiating outward from the Chinese throne.[27] These were two nodes in the web of imperial formations which traversed eighteenth-century Eurasia, along with the Mughals, Ottomans, Romanovs, and English, each with their distinct forms of universality.[28]

A Cosmogram Refused

Over the eighteenth century, the French crown was weakened by financial upsets; Versailles hosted the Estates General and tennis court oath, followed by the Revolution. The Qianlong emperor's long reign saw internal uprisings as well as the growing imposition of European traders at the port of Canton (Guangzhou). Encouraged by their conquest of India, booming trade, and naval prowess, by 1792 the English believed themselves "at this moment the first people of the world."[29] They oversaw the production of cotton, sugar, tea, and opium in India and the Caribbean; though these goods were grown and significantly consumed offshore, the profits came back to merchants, landowners, and factory owners in Britain. British monarch George III fashioned himself "A Sovereign of the Seas."[30] Naval power allowed the empire to grow rich, in an unprecedentedly extensive mode of territoriality.



William Alexander, Planetarium, the Principal Present Given to the Emperor of China, 1793. Watercolour, British Library, WD 961 f.42. Public Domain.

Eager to reverse the flow of silver to the East, and frustrated by the Qianlong emperor's heavy control on trade, the English planned a diplomatic mission. Led by Lord Macartney, they sought the right to trade direct directly with Chinese merchants and an island as an operational base. Knowing the Emperor's enjoyment of mechanical devices, as tribute the British brought textiles and other demonstrations of English craft, along with clocks, telescopes, and astronomical instruments. The pièce de résistance was a planetarium which combined a solar orrery, an armillary sphere (both encased in glass), and a clock showing the hours, months, and progress from creation to apocalypse. Unlike Versailles and Yuanming Yuan, this was a portable cosmogram. As Simon Schaffer has shown, it represented a universe (and a universality) defined by mechanics, navigation, the free trade of Adam Smith, and Christianity.[31]

The offerings were displayed at Yuanming Yuan. In three ritual meetings, the Emperor received Macartney, who refused to perform the "kowtow" implying submission to the Emperor's supremacy; he greeted him instead on bended knee. The planetarium, the mission's "principal present," was a dud. Assembling it on site took nearly three weeks; a vitrine broke which only Chinese glassmakers could replace. The Copernican cosmology it represented seemed proof of European confusion, since earlier devices had advanced geocentric and Tychonian systems. It was dismissed as nothing new, indistinguishable from the other "sing-song" devices from the "red-headed Western ocean."[32] None of the mission's requests were granted. The Emperor thought other nations would soon demand similar privileges, and suspected a wish to "propagate your English Religion; which is a Thing I will by no means permit."[33] Rather than opening a dialogue, the planetarium was a rejected token of failed diplomacy.

The Europeans advanced by other routes. To reverse the balance of trade, the English planted poppies and produced opium en masse, selling it in great volume to Chinese smugglers. The devastating effect of widespread opiate addiction strained relations between the two nations. After Chinese officials seized these "goods," the English started the first Opium War in 1840. Advanced ships and guns allowed them to force vast concessions in the Treaty of Nanking. In the Second Opium War, in 1860, British and French troops stormed Yuanming Yuan. They

looted its treasures and set fire to its palaces. Plumes of smoke were visible from Beijing.[34]

The message was clear: submit to the "universalism" of "free trade"—on terms favorable to those with military might—or suffer the consequences. Today, the Garden of Perfect Brightness remains in ruins, a symbol of brutal defeat and a spur to new striving for global supremacy.[35] Like so many attempts "to teach a lesson" to natives insufficiently receptive to "civilizing missions," the sacking of Yuanming Yang shows how the "one world" of global commerce among nations was assembled through continuous war: military threat, occupation, and forced "settlements" advantageous to the invaders.

Parallax

Recognizing that the relation of imperial powers to the rest of the world has been one of *war* sets heavy but necessary conditions on any rethinking of the planet.[36] The examples above come from large, acquisitive empires. But those who resist, evade, ignore, or are subsumed by them also make cosmograms and insist on their own territorialities. They often do both at the same time, as in cosmological rituals and artworks concentrated on specific landscapes, from Australia to the Andes to Taiwan.[37] A great challenge of the present, with the upsurge of divergent planetarities, is to create cosmograms that can hold each of those universes and justly apportion the terrains upon which they depend. To return to Aspen Mays's prickly question, why haven't we seen a picture of the whole Universe, adequate to the demands of the present? Because we haven't figured out how to compose it in a way that includes all the *cosmoi* that make it up—or how they might all fit on the same planet.

A first step is to bring cosmograms into alignment with their modes of territoriality, highlighting any disparities between the spaces people live *in* and the spaces they live *off*.[38] In the West since the time of Macartney, a vertiginous distance has lain between battered cosmologies of technical progress and development, and the stretched if "ubiquitous" territorialities on which our accelerated ways of life depend. The parallax between our cosmograms and our territorialities reveals outsourced labor systems and environmental degradations we wouldn't tolerate at home, along with the "ghost acres" which supply otherwise unimaginable consumption.

Only with a clear cosmogram of such distorted arrangements can we begin to rebalance them. Occupations of land and the cosmic orders that justify them raise questions of life and death, but the central terms of conflict—who and where "we" are, and what "we" need—are not fixed. New cosmologies can be drawn, new territorialities defined; they change with the seasons and the years. Many need more than they have, while a few have much more than they need. As in Amazonian cosmologies which depict a primordial kinship among all beings, only later dividing into plants, animals, and human tribes, we might begin not with what divides us, but with what we share: a restless, generous earth, and an unquenchable need to picture it.[39]

X

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Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and
Déborah Danowski

The Past Is Yet to Come

For Bruno

1.

When did things start to go wrong? It is hard not to ask that question nowadays. By "things" we mean, of course, "*nous autres*," those civilizations that are now known to be mortal, as Valéry lamented in 1919, using a plural to speak of a singular, modern European civilization, whose future was the object of his deep concern. Today, this singular has become even more evidently and disturbingly a universal, the techno-spiritual monoculture of the species. For this singular form (in the double sense of the adjective) of civilization, which for many centuries saw itself as "the origin and goal of history," is faced with the possibility of being at the threshold of a not very original "goal": self-extinction, caused by the cancerous metastasis of its techno-economic matrix and the cosmological imaginary that sustains it, in other words, of its cosmotechnics and cosmopolitics, in Yuk Hui's sense.[1]

The Origin and Goal of History is the title of the famous book in which Karl Jaspers advances the concept of an "Axial Age," the period after which the species would begin to have not only a common history but also a single destiny.[2] With this term Jaspers referred to the period between 800 and 200 BCE, during which Eurasia saw the rise of Confucius, Lao-Tse, Buddha, and Zoroaster, the great Hebrew prophets, and the Greek poets, historians, and philosophers. In this period, "Man, as we know him today, came into being."[3] All pre- or extra-axial cultures were gradually absorbed by the axial cultures, on pain of disappearing; in the twentieth century, Jaspers believed, the last "primitive" peoples were finally heading towards extinction .

2.

We do not recognize ourselves in pre-axial humanity, ancient or contemporary; the great archaic empires are like another planet to us. "We are infinitely closer to the Chinese and the Indians than to the Egyptians and the Babylonians"—which did not prevent the author from underlining a certain "specific quality of the West."[4] According to him, the Axial Age created a universal "We" de jure, but only in the techno-scientific modernity inaugurated by the "Teuto-Romance peoples" did this "We" become a de facto universal, "the really universal, the planetary history of mankind."[5]

Robert Bellah, one of the historians of culture who took

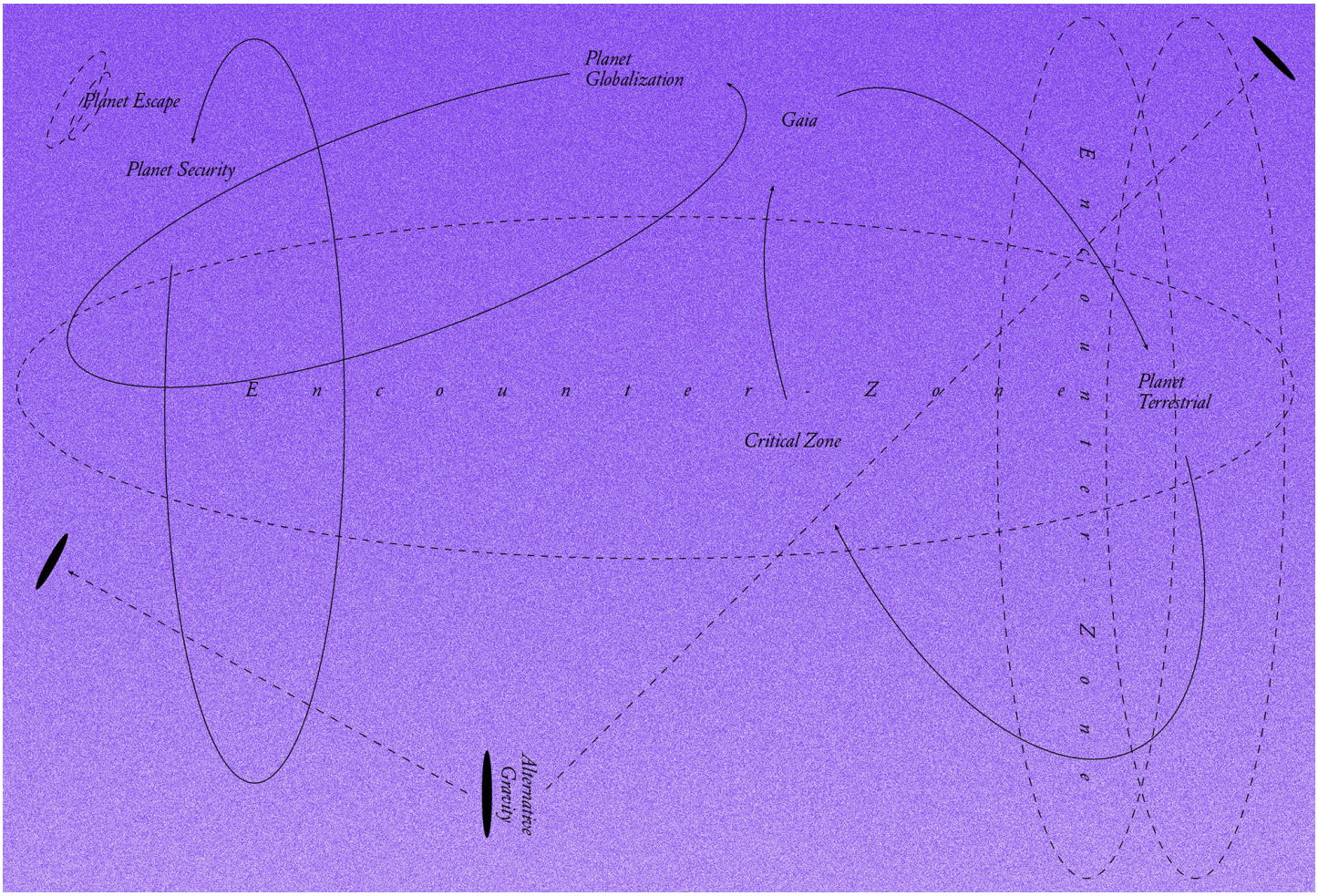

Image design by Lu Liang.

Jaspers's thesis on board, suggests that, to this day, "we" live off the heritage left by the Axial Age:

> Both Jaspers and Momigliano say that the figures of the axial age—Confucius, Buddha, the Hebrew prophets, the Greek philosophers—are alive to us, are contemporary with us, in a way that no earlier figures are. Our cultural world and the great traditions that still in so many ways define us, all originate in the axial age. Jaspers asks the question whether modernity is the beginning of a new axial age, but he leaves the answer open. In any case, though we have enormously elaborated the axial insights, we have not outgrown them, not yet, at least.[6]

The following pages express our suspicion that the final words of this reflection—"we have not outgrown them, not yet, at least"—may be fatally wrong, or rather, they can only be considered true if interpreted in a pessimistic light, as they seem to justify Latour's admonition that "there is no greater intellectual crime than to address with the equipment of an older period the challenges of the present one."[7]

3.

Let us accept, for the sake of the argument, the admittedly controversial thesis of the historical occurrence of an "Axial Age," or at least of its typological value.[8] The hypothesis we present to our readers is the following: the advent and popularization, from the first decade of the century, of the concept of the Anthropocene reveals the terminal obsolescence of the theological-philosophical equipment bequeathed by the Axial Age. And this for the same reasons that made it, as Bronislaw Szerszinsky wisely observed, a "harbinger" of the Anthropocene epoch—which, as is well known, began well before it received a name.[9] In other words, if the *epoch* of the Anthropocene had among its conditions of possibility the cultural mutations that occurred in Eurasia about three millennia ago, the *concept* of the Anthropocene, insofar as it names a "total cosmopolitical fact" (in Mauss's sense)—an ecological catastrophe, an economic tragedy, a political threat, religious turmoil—indicates the extreme

difficulty we, with our axial repertoire, have in thinking about the epoch these mutations prepared. For Jaspers's "truly universal" history (again, an exclusively human universal) has become the "negative universal history" of the Anthropocene,[10] a time whose name equivocally refers to that "Man, as we know him today." The *ánthrōpos* of the "Anthropocene" is the character that came into being in the Axial Age.

It might therefore be necessary to go much further back than usual in theorizing about the causes and conditions of the Anthropocene, as far as the frontier between the axial revolution and the worlds that preceded it, many of which, incidentally, insist on continuing to exist in various parts of the world, even if increasingly harassed by the self-appointed emissaries of *ánthrōpos*. While the immediate material causes of the Anthropocene have emerged much more recently—let us summarize them with the expression "fossil capitalism"—the anthropological configuration articulated in the Axial Age is at the center of the intellectual conditions of possibility (spiritual or subjective conditions, if you will) of those objective conditions, and in particular of the conviction of the "destinal" nature of the latter.[11]

4.

There is no room here for a review of all the characteristics of what many historians have called the "axial breakthrough"—among which is the very idea of a breakthrough, of a radical break with the past, in short, the germ of the modern idea of revolution (and, of course, of our own suggestion as to the obsolescence of the axial inheritance). Let us just highlight some of the expressions that would define the "common underlying impulse in all the 'axial' movements":[12] "the step into universality"; "the liberation and redemption of the specifically human in man" (Jaspers); "the age of transcendence"; "a critical, reflective questioning of the actual and a new vision of what lies beyond" (B. Schwartz); "the age of criticism" (A. Momigliano); "a leap in being"; "the disintegration of the compact experience of the cosmos" (E. Voegelin); the emergence of "second-order thinking" (Y. Elkana); "theoretic, analytic culture" (M. Donald, R. Bellah); "the negation of mythical authority" (S. Eisenstadt); the "power of negation and exclusion"; "the antagonistic energy" of the axial "counter-religions" (J. Assmann); "the passage from immanence to transcendence" (M. Gauchet). Last but not least, let us remember "the progress in intellectuality" that Freud, in the wake of Kant, saw in Jewish iconoclastic monotheism, and the "disenchantment of the world" of Weberian fame, extended back by M. Gauchet and C. Taylor to the Axial Age and the advent of counter-religions of transcendence, seen as necessary steps in the process of the secularization of human cultures.

5.

It is not difficult to notice that these definitions look a lot like the image modernity has made of itself. Although tinged with greater or lesser ambivalence (particularly marked in Assmann and his theory of "Mosaic distinction"), they are essentially positive, identifying in the Axial Age the initial step in the long march towards the *emancipation*—the master word of modernity—of humanity from a primitive condition of magical immanence, dominated by a fusional relationship with the cosmos, a narcissistic and anthropomorphic monism, a submission to the past, a mythical freezing of the social order. A condition of ignorance, in short, if not structural denial, of the species' infinite potential for self-determination, both in terms of its sociopolitical institutions and its technical capacity to deny natural "givens." The evolutionist parti pris of most authors is obvious, and the assumption of the inexorable irreversibility of the "breakthrough" is practically unanimous. Perhaps it is also no coincidence that several of the most important "axialists" show a political and theoretical orientation more to the right than to the left.[13]

6.

The Great Attractor of this ideological constellation is, of course, "transcendence," an idea that counter-invented its own antipode, "immanence." The concept of transcendence, as is well known, is at the center of Jaspers's existential philosophy; but it is mobilized in less specific directions in most references to the Axial Age. The invention of transcendence is generally defined as the establishment of a hierarchical disjunction between an extramundane and a mundane order, and the consequent emergence of an ontological dualism that will mark all post-axial thinking. It is the result of a conjunction, in the middle of the first millennium BCE, of political and cultural tensions and conflicts that led to an anxious relativization of the mundane order in all its aspects, which in turn stimulated the elaboration of a conceptual metalanguage (critical reflexiveness, second-order thinking) and fostered the compensatory search for an absolute foundation and a salvational horizon, both of them located on the extramundane plane. What marks human history from the Axial Age onwards would then be the emergence of transcendence as a supersensible and/or intelligible dimension that harbors a higher, non-apparent Truth, with a personal (the God of the Abrahamic religions) or impersonal (Parmenidean Being, modern Nature) essence. In some versions of the axial revolution, transcendence has come to assume the form and order of time—as in the case of Christianity and its many modern philosophical heirs—to the point that space is regarded as the pagan (hence untrue) dimension par excellence: "The truth of space is time" (Hegel).[14] It is no surprise that this metaphysical negligence of spatiality would have serious consequences for our present mixture of impotence and indifference in the face of the Anthropocene, that is, our

seeming inability to move from the "truth *of* space" to truth *in* space. But we anticipate.[15]

7.

A recently published historical study by Alan Strathern, *Unearthly Powers*, takes as its starting point the dichotomy, explicitly derived from the axialist literature, between two forms of religiosity, which he calls "immanentism" and "transcendentalism."[16] The specific problem of this well-documented monograph will not occupy us here, namely, the interaction between political and religious factors that led to the worldwide expansion of some major transcendentalist religions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism). But its treatment of the concepts of transcendence and immanence was one of the inspirations for the present text.

Strathern advances three main theses to support the historical analyses developed in *Unearthly Powers*. Firstly, in an uncompromisingly "naturalistic" position, the author defends the idea that immanentism is our default religious mode, resulting from certain "evolved features of human cognition."[17] It is part of the *natural culture* of the species, the "ontotheological" moment of *pensée sauvage*. It follows that immanentism itself is originally immanent: recursively immanent, therefore, at least until it is reflexively reappropriated by certain philosophical and political counter-axial traditions. Secondly, transcendentalism, due to its paradoxical, life-denying character (as Nietzsche would say), its contradiction with the basal metabolism of the human mind (as Strathern would say), has always manifested itself in an unstable synthesis with immanentism, constrained to establish compromises with it. The synthesis was achieved in various forms in the post-axial religions; it gave rise, for example, to different categories of mediators between the two orders, ontologically ambiguous or hybrid figures: prophets, priests, ascetics, philosophers, messiahs. The foundational dogma of Christianity is one of the responses to this need for a bridge brought about by axial disjunction: the earthly and suffering incarnation of God or Logos, the radical immanentization of supreme transcendence. The thesis of an unstable religious synthesis takes up Shmuel Eisenstadt's idea that the Axial Age establishes an "irresolvable tension" between affirmed (revealed, announced) transcendence and the dogged persistence of worldly immanence, the immovable substratum of humanity's trajectory as a living species. Finally, if we understand Strathern's argument correctly, the worldwide success of a form of religiosity as "unnatural" as transcendentalism is due to its capture by a historical phenomenon that originates independently, to wit the State, by facilitating the commensurability between religious truth and political power as a separate instance of the socius—a commensurability that is particularly evident in the elective affinity (the "intriguing associations"[18]) between monotheism and empire. The homology between structures of transcendence and political institutions, however, is not restricted to the premodern world: think of the "cosmopolis" of the seventeenth century analyzed by Stephen Toulmin, in which the Newtonian laws of Nature and the principles of the absolutist nation-state justify and legitimize each other.[19]

8.

For Jaspers and most axialists (certainly not for Strathern), the invention of transcendence and everything that followed is part of a necessary progress of humanity, the unfolding of the potentials that distinguish it within nature as whole. All converge, however, in the realization, reaffirmed in *Unearthly Powers*, that there is no continuous linear advance from original immanence to final (or terminal) transcendence, but that post-axial history shows a certain alternating rhythm, as the innovative impulses of transcendentalism are gradually neutralized by immanentist inertia, in a kind of fractal, entropic routinization of charisma—the well-known relapses into idolatry, ritualism, and superstition, the atavistic paganism of the popular classes—and require periodic efforts in reform, asceticism, and purification, the old idea of starting anew. (Would this mean that the transcendentalist scheme of time's arrow is historically subject to the immanentist idea of time's cycle?[20])

9.

The dialectics between transcendence and immanence unleashed by the axial paradigm took the canonical form, in modernity, of the distinction between Nature and Culture, whose notorious instability became increasingly unsustainable as the "total" cosmopolitical implications of the Anthropocene emerged. This instability appeared particularly in the contradictory alternation of the predicates of transcendence and immanence between the orders of Nature and Culture (or Society), as Latour showed masterfully in *We Have Never Been Modern*.[21] Now Culture was the new name for human transcendence (the soul of divine origin modernized and internalized as practical reason or as the order of the Symbolic) and Nature that of its immanence (the congenital animality of the species, from the instinctive to the cognitive plane). Now Culture was the domain of immanence (openness to the world, history as the history of freedom, the heroism of the denial of the Given) and Nature that of transcendence (the exteriority and intangibility of physical and biological legality, history as the mechanical evolution of the cosmos). The meanings of the notions of transcendence and immanence are, moreover, mutually interchangeable—in the above characterization, we could have flipped them—depending on whether what one emphasizes is a *primary* immanence of Culture to Nature, which then assumes the all-embracing mantle of transcendence (a

neo-transcendentalist position, like Strathern's on immanentist religiosity[22]), or a *secondary* immanence of Nature to Culture, which becomes a para-transcendent power to infuse meaning into reality (a neo-immanentist position). This is due to the frequent ambiguity in the way this pair of concepts is used, either associating transcendence with a spiritual or ideal order and immanence with the corporal and material order (ontological transcendence, the opposition between the celestial and the terrestrial), or, inversely and more modernly, associating transcendence with objective exteriority and immanence with subjective interiority (epistemological transcendence, the opposition between the world of things and what is given to experience).[23] We qualified as "primary" the subsumption of Culture by Nature and as "secondary" the inverse one because, in modernity, what linguists would call the "unmarked" pole of the opposition is Nature—Culture being the diminished secular successor of the extramundane order of Grace, which in the premodern world encompassed the mundane order (without, however, being able to abolish it). This inversion in relation to the premodern axial regimes is explained by the phenomenon of the "secularization" or "disenchantment" of the world.

10.

The syntheses of the pre-axial period lost their already quite relative balance with the *translatio imperii*[24] that established the sovereignty of the pole of Nature and gave it eminent dominion over the order of Culture; the late socio-constructivist reactions to this turnaround failed to really mobilize the hearts and minds of the moderns. The transcendent character of the extramundane ("religious") order was absorbed by the mundane ("scientific") order, creating modern Nature as an absolute ontological domain, "exterior, unified, deanimated, indisputable."[25] The old supernatural values were confiscated by this new and true "Super-Nature." The fundamental gesture of modernity, thus, is the spillover of Assmann's "Mosaic distinction" of transcendence into immanence—an immanence that has completely lost the characteristics it possessed in the pre-axial worlds, and that it still retained residually in the post-axial worlds, namely, its "compact experience of the cosmos" (Voegelin), its democratic universalism (Strathern), its contempt for monotheistic intolerance (which later became the mono-naturalist intolerance of the moderns), its pragmatic skepticism towards "Mosaic" certainties (Assmann) and the foundational dichotomies consecrated by the gospel of transcendence, such as those between body and spirit, human and extra-human, subject and object, people and things. This first immanentization of transcendence, which began in the seventeenth century, the era of the "Search for Certainty,"[26] in reaction to the successive crises of the unstable synthesis (the immanentism and skepticism of the Renaissance, Copernicus and Galileo, the wars of religion), will manifest itself differently in the following centuries, this time spilling over from the domain of Nature to that of Culture—to various trends in philosophy, political theory, and forms of religiosity.[27] On the other hand, and crucially, the immanentization of transcendence as Nature has metaphysically deterritorialized Culture (which lost its religious ballast and became a sort of free-floating domain), causing the liberation or "disinhibition"[28] of powerful sociocultural forces which, precisely because they are "natural" in the sense of ontologically continuous with the material environment over which they apply (the earth's energy cycle, the biosphere), have caused what has been called the Anthropocene.

11.

The definitive, and in more than one sense, "final" failure of the modern ideologeme of Nature and Culture signals the passing of the conceptual heritage of the Axial Age. Strictly speaking, this failure means the end of any hope in a real transcendence: no God will come to save us. Are we then reduced to accepting a definitive immanentization of transcendence, with the triumphant disenchantment of the world, the end of humanity's childhood (or its prehistory, Marx would say), that is, political mastery of society and technical sovereignty over the planetary (and interplanetary) environment? Or, in the face of the awakening to Gaia's "cosmological state of exception" (Gaia the improbable planet made by what it makes, to wit Life), should we embark on a reflexive transcendentalization of our "old anthropological matrix"[29] —a "compact" immanence—attempting an intensive reanimation of the local cosmos (the earth) by means of a counter-axial re-enchantment of the world, necessarily secondary and somewhat strained? This dilemma gets even more complicated when we realize that the appeal of certain proposals for the transcendentalization of immanence, such as the theology of "happy sobriety"—an especially authoritative formulation[30] of the human need to convert necessity into virtue—seems to be rather powerless in the face of the "anthropological" appeal of some religious reappropriations of the immanentization of transcendence, such as the neo-Pentecostal theologies of prosperity, or, more seriously, in the face of the irrefutable demand for material emancipation by the dispossessed masses?[31]

12.

Let us conclude with a return to Hegel's quote above: "The truth of space is time." It encapsulates the whole meaning of the philosophy of history that originated in the Axial Age, and whose most successful Western fruit was Christianity and its diffuse cultural heritage. It is no accident that it reappears almost literally in a programmatic document by Pope Francis, a pope nevertheless extremely sensitive to the ("spatial" by

definition) cause of the earth. In the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis establishes four principles that underlie every possibility of "peace, justice and fraternity." The first one is precisely: "Time is greater than space." The subsequent comment exhorts patience and warns that

> giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion; it is to crystallize processes and presume to hold them back. Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Time governs spaces.[32]

In the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, a document whose eco-political significance cannot be overestimated, we find another admonition, this one regarding the deviations that threaten all well-meaning condemnations of anthropocentrism: "Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than romantic individualism dressed up in ecological garb, *locking us into a stifling immanence*."[33]

The superiority of time is thus what allows ánthrōpos *to escape the immanence seen as a prison*.[34] The "integral ecology" of Francis respects, notwithstanding his admirable effort to bring the cause of the earth to the center of the concerns of the faithful, the absolute doctrinal principle of the salvational relationship between temporality and extramundanity, a relationship that extracts, partially but decisively, the human species from earthly immanence and distinguishes it within Creation.

It is then appropriate to repeat here Latour's concern about the contribution of this unilateral privilege of time, which we find in the philosophies of history, to the indifference or blindness of " *nous autres, civilisations*" regarding the cosmopolitical challenge of the Anthropocene: "Could this civilization's blindness actually be caused in part by the very idea of 'having' a philosophy of history?"[35] And he concludes, in a tone that we should say is more desiderative than constative:

> It seems that everything happened as if *the orientation in time was so powerful, that it broke down any chance of finding one's way in space.* It is this deep shift from a destiny based on history to an exploration of what, for want of the better term, could be called geography (actually Gaiagraphy), that explains the rather obsolete character of any philosophy of history. *Historicity has been absorbed by spatiality*; as if philosophy of history had been subsumed by a strange form of spatial philosophy—accompanied by an even stranger form of geopolitics (actually Gaiapolitics).[36]

The hierarchy between temporality and spatiality established by the Axial Age and hyper-transcendentalized by the Christian eschatology infused in Western philosophies of history (Karl Löwith has always been right) is being empirically challenged by the extensive (imperial) and intensive (extractivist) closure of the earth's frontier. So it is not surprising that the Anthropocene reenacts in scientifically up-to-date terms a "compact experience of the earth" (the local cosmos, the critical zone, the generalized symbiosis as the truth of Life), and that the latter requires a "spatial turn" of thought. With this, then, the primordial earth of the premodern and extra-axial peoples appears as an unexpected alternative within the planetary differendum proposed by Latour. The distinction between his planets Contemporaneity and Terrestrial[37] is certainly a temporal difference, but it is a strangely circular temporality, as if he were saying: "The past is yet to come." For the planet Contemporaneity is the autochthonous, ancestral, primordial earth that has always been there, that is, here; it is the "good enough planet" that political action must be able to reclaim from the "damaged planet" bequeathed to us by the previous planets.

We mentioned political action. The perspective suggested by Anders of the "apocalypse without kingdom" as the unthinkable of the Real—in contrast to the perverse unreality of capitalism's "kingdom without apocalypse," and the pious fiction of the "apocalypse with a kingdom" of Christianity and its utopian heirs—does not imply a quietist or fatalistic solution.[38] The time of the end is the time of the "end of the world," in the spatial, geographical sense that the Greek term *eschaton* also has[39]—it is the limit of the expansion of the capitalist cosmotechnical assemblage—and the end of time is, today, the growing degradation of ecological conditions, that is, of the conditions given in earthly space; an endless ending. The button of Anders's total nuclear war has already been pushed, in the sense that the catastrophe is not yet to come, but already began many decades ago.

There is no more waiting, there is only space. Wouldn't Paul Tillich's *kairós*, Walter Benjamin's *Jetztzeit*, designate the moment when "time becomes space"? When time is suspended, history exploded, and one enters space through action? The time when fighting for the earth means, first of all, joining the struggle of the landless peoples who were and still are invaded, decimated, and dispossessed by the earthless people, the "Humans" of *Facing Gaia*, the people of Transcendence—" *nous autres* ," we the Whites, as so many indigenous peoples of the Americas are wont to call, well, Us?

So let us finish with the words of the shaman, political leader, and spokesperson for the Yanomami Indians in

Brazil, Davi Kopenawa: “What the Whites call the future, to us is a sky protected from the smoke of the *xawara* epidemic and tied tightly above us!”

X

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Their book *The Ends of the World* (trans. Rodrigo Nunes) was published by Polity in 2016.

1
Yuk Hui, "Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics," *e-flux journal*, no. 86 (November 2017) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/161887/cosmotechnics-as-cosmopolitics/ .

2
Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (1949; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953).

3
Jaspers, *Origin and Goal of History* , 1.

4
Jaspers, *Origin and Goal of History* , 52, 61.

5
Jaspers, *Origin and Goal of History* , 61.

6
Robert Bellah, "What is Axial about the Axial Age?" *European Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 1 (2005): 73.

7
Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004): 231.

8
See the excellent critical review by John Boy and John Torpey, "Inventing the Axial Age: The Origins and Uses of a Historical Concept," *Theory and Society* 42, no. 3 (2013): 241–59.

9
Bronislaw Szerszinsky, "From the Anthropocene Epoch to a New Axial Age: Using Theory-Fictions to Explore Geo-Spiritual Futures," in *Religion and the Anthropocene*, ed. Celia Deane-Drummond, Sigurd Bergmann, and Markus Vogt (Cascade Books, 2017), 37.

10
Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (2009): 197–222.

11
The idea of going back three thousand years in order to recover the subjective conditions of the Anthropocene predicament has some illustrious antecedents. Think of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* , where the authors decide to go beyond the critique of social domination within capitalism to undertake a transhistorical critique of instrumental reason (Ulysses as the first bourgeois!). Not to mention Nietzsche and his archaeology of truth as value, the deconstruction of the Hellenic equivalent of the "Mosaic distinction" that Jan Assmann sees in Abrahamic monotheisms. See Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism* (Stanford University Press, 2013).

12
Benjamin Schwartz, "The Age of Transcendence," *Daedalus* 104, no. 2 (1975): 3.

13
It should be noted, however, that the celebration of freedom as a diacritical attribute of the species, the mark of its ontological state of exception, is widely distributed across the political spectrum, including, for example, among contemporary thinkers of the "communist hypothesis."

14
Quoted in Vítor Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space: The Lost Dimension of Theology Past and Present* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), xiii. The time of "axial" cultures, it should be noted, is conceived according to a linear and future-oriented scheme (terrestrial or supra-terrestrial), while "pagan" spatiality would be associated with a primitive cyclical (therefore temporally lapsed) temporality. See the classical essay by Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (University of Chicago Press, 1949); and the highly original study by Westhelle.

15
On the concept of negligence, see Latour's commentary on a passage by Michel Serres in Latour, *Facing Gaia* (Harvard University Press, 2017), 152.

16
Alan Strathern, *Unearthly Powers: Religious and Political Change in World History* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

17
Strathern, *Unearthly Powers*, 4.

18
Strathern, *Unearthly Powers*, 132.

19
Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).

20
Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time* (Harvard University Press, 1987).

21
Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Harvard University Press, 1993).

22
In *Unearthly Powers*, Strathern observes that certain core values of immanentist religiosity—wealth, fertility, consumption, victory, worldly success, etc.—are also dominant in modern secularized society (37). Nevertheless, the scientific culture he assumes in his analysis is, under important epistemological aspects, precisely "non-secular" in that it refers to an idea of Nature that is the direct heir of Christian transcendentalist monotheism.

23
Levy Bryant, "A Logic of Multiplicities: Deleuze, Immanence, and Onticology," Analecta Hermeneutica, no. 3 (2011): 1–2.

24
Latour, Facing Gaia, 177.

25
Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 178.

26
Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*.

27
As Gunther Anders observed in *Le temps de la fin* (1972; L'Herne, 2007), the disappointment that accompanied the inaugural gesture of modernity, namely the collapse of the geocentric image, "must have been unpleasant, but it was not fatal," because it was compensated by a new anthropological dignity: the absolutization of history itself.

28
Jean-Baptiste Fressoz quoted in Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 20, 191.

29
Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* , 30.

30
Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, May 24, 2015, §224 http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html .

31
The theologies of prosperity, very popular and politically powerful today in Latin America (and elsewhere), are originally associated with US so-called televangelism. "The distinguishing characteristic of contemporary prosperity theology is the miraculous quality of the blessing; material welfare is not merely a ... byproduct of virtuous living, but it is, ipso facto, God's supernatural gift to the faithful, not unlike other gifts of the Spirit such as glossolalia or faith healing." Virginia Garrard-Burnett, "Neopentecostalism and Prosperity Theology in Latin American: A Religion for Late Capitalist Society," *Iberoamericana: Nordic Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 42, no. 1–2 (2012): 23–24. As to the demand for material emancipation, Chakrabarty has said: "'The principal reason,' writes Hannes Bergthaller ... 'why all the curves of the "Great Acceleration" are still pointing relentlessly upwards ... is the spread of middle-class consumption patterns around the world.'" This is "the historically inherited obligation to the masses." Bruno Latour and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Conflicts of Planetary Proportions—a Conversation," in "Historical Thinking and the Human," ed. Marek Tamm and Zoltán Boldizsár Simon, special issue, *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 14, no. 3 (2020): 31, 36.

32
Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, §223 http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html .

33
Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, §119. Emphasis ours.

34
The expression "stifling immanence," in the Portuguese translation of *Laudato Si'*, is rendered as "a suffocating confinement within immanence." Confinement—what a concept!

35
Latour in Latour and Chakrabarty, "Conflicts of Planetary Proportions," 4.

36
Latour and Chakrabarty, "Conflicts of Planetary Proportions," 14. Our emphasis.

37
Latour and Chakrabarty, "Conflicts of Planetary Proportions," 17.

38
Günther Anders, "Apocalypse without Kingdom," trans. Hunter

Bolin, *e-flux journal*, no. 97 (February 2019) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/97/251199/apocalypse-without-kingdom/ .

39
Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space* , 2012.

Chun-Mei Chuang

Politics of Orbits: Will We Meet Halfway?

1. The Barycenter of Life on a Planet

Can we live like a planet? Or, can planets live like us?

What kind of life a human being should lead is a critical issue in social theory, involving ontological, epistemological, political, and ethical dimensions. What kind of life a planet should live, a query that seems guilty of literary anthropomorphism, touches the fundamental question about what a planet is. The Greek etymological root of the word "planet" means "wanderer." It refers to those celestial objects that once seemed to revolve around us, from a human embodied perspective, such as the Sun, the Moon, and Venus. We used to think that our abode was stable, and we regarded the earth's intermittent shaking as divine condemnation. We believed the earth was the center of the universe, just as our individual bodies are the center of our various sensory functions in the lifeworld. Even after science proved that the earth revolved around the Sun, we could only make contact with the world from our physical bodies that inhabit the earth. However, to be precise, the earth does not revolve around the Sun. All celestial bodies in the solar system, including the Sun, revolve around the center of total mass, i.e., the barycenter, which is not fixed but changes position continually depending on where the planets are in their orbits. Even the largest celestial body in the system, the Sun, has to be drawn in by every planet and countless other objects, especially the most massive planet, Jupiter. Likewise, the Moon does not revolve around the earth; the two bodies revolve around the center of this system's mass.[1]

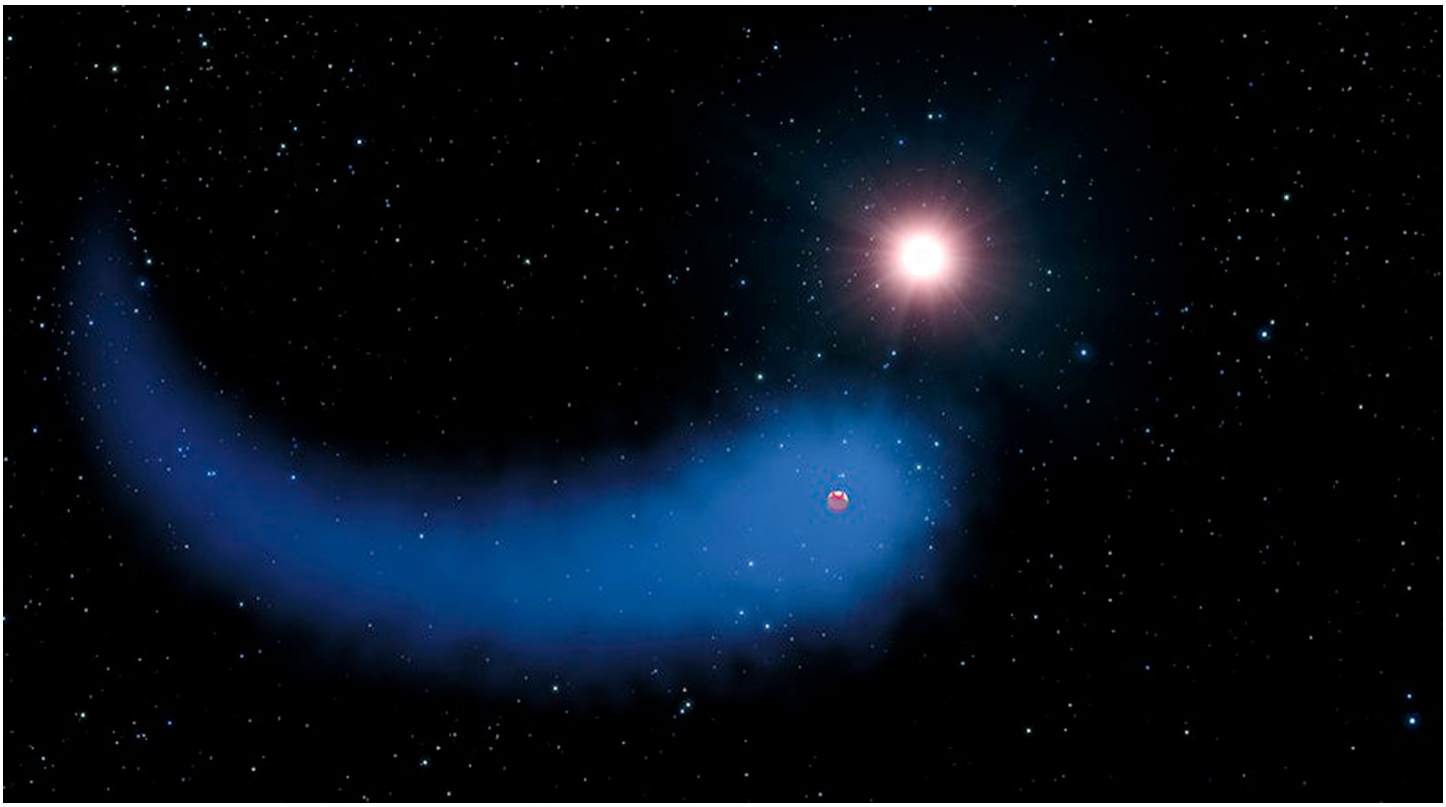
What is the barycenter of our life on earth? We do not revolve around an invisible center of mass like celestial bodies do. However, maybe we revolve around each other in another way. As James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis's Gaia hypothesis implies, our revolving around each other is not just a metaphor, but represents the complex biochemical evolution of life on earth.[2]

Not only do we revolve around each other, but we also wrap around each other, establishing a new form of life. In this sense, it's clear that we are not merely humans, but always already trans-species hybrids, in terms of the boundaries within and without human species or individuals. In a controversial 1967 paper, Margulis argued that three organelles—mitochondria, chlorophyll, and flagellum—were once "free-living prokaryotic cells."[3] Incorporating different cells that were once living biological individuals may not be as smooth a process as we might imagine. It could work through processes as varied as predation, parasitism, invasion, or capture. Different narrative tropes tell different stories of value, but there is rarely a fully confirmed narrative. The complex life forms we see now have undergone a series of dynamic redistributions. The narrative metaphors can be as rosy as symbiosis; they can also highlight the power struggle

inherent to these processes. Paleontologist Martin Brasier used the term "enslavement" to describe the formation of multicellular algae. From their multiple cell walls, it can be inferred that cyanobacteria were "engulfed" by early eukaryotic cells, resulting in chloroplasts with double membranes in the algae. Red algae and green algae also resulted from such "enslavement," and they were "engulfed" by different eukaryotic cells, producing brown algae with a three-layer membrane. In the process, the internal symbionts gradually lost essential genes and can no longer "escape."[4] The narrative of "enslavement" certainly reflects the capitalist ideology of military colonialism, but it also resonates with postcolonial and anti-colonial politics of boundary negotiation.

Enfolding, folding, unfolding, and entangling—in the solar system, where everything is revolving around everything else, the Baroque formation of life on earth is always already a work of art. Meanwhile, it is a definite politics of boundaries that we cannot ignore.

cognitive devices as physical beings. This evolution spans the intuition and concepts inherent to naked-eye science and the increasingly complex assemblages of extended cognition. While the concept of the system allows us to see the bigger picture, we are also urged to see the processes on a smaller scale. Since the late seventeenth century, the rapid proliferation of imaging technology has led to the molecular turn in science and philosophy. As Donna Haraway says, we live and participate in the implosion of subject and object, of culture and nature, of biologics and informatics, of organism and machine, in fact, of multitudinous categorical oppositions.[5] The generative dynamics in multifarious implosion can be understood as the "intra-active becoming of the world," in Karen Barad's terms. In this process, the agential participants (potential agents) include humans and nonhuman assemblages and their acts of measurement.[6] In recent years, Bruno Latour has drawn on the geological concepts of critical zones and metamorphic zones to highlight the redistribution of different kinds of agency. The configuration of a specific place is not given or



An artist's rendition of "The Behemoth," an enormous comet-like cloud of hydrogen bleeding off of a warm, Neptune-sized planet. Also depicted is the parent star, which is a faint red dwarf named GJ 436. Image credit: NASA, ESA, and G. Bacon (STScI).

2. The Molecular Scribbling of Historical Consciousness

Our world's center is wobbling because of the complex and varied dynamic actors in the entire system. The epistemic transition from the visible earth and Sun to the invisible center of mass reveals the evolution of our

engineered. It is produced by the endless encounters and collaborations between heterogeneous forces.[7] Human actors need to actively participate in "composing the common world," precisely because commonality is not to be taken for granted. The dichotomy of human and

nonhuman is obsolete. We need to observe and act on a smaller scale, and we have already done this, especially in science, but we need to continue to do so with a heightened sense of historical precaution. The crossing and reconstitution of boundaries on any scale is consequential and not without risks for the agents involved.

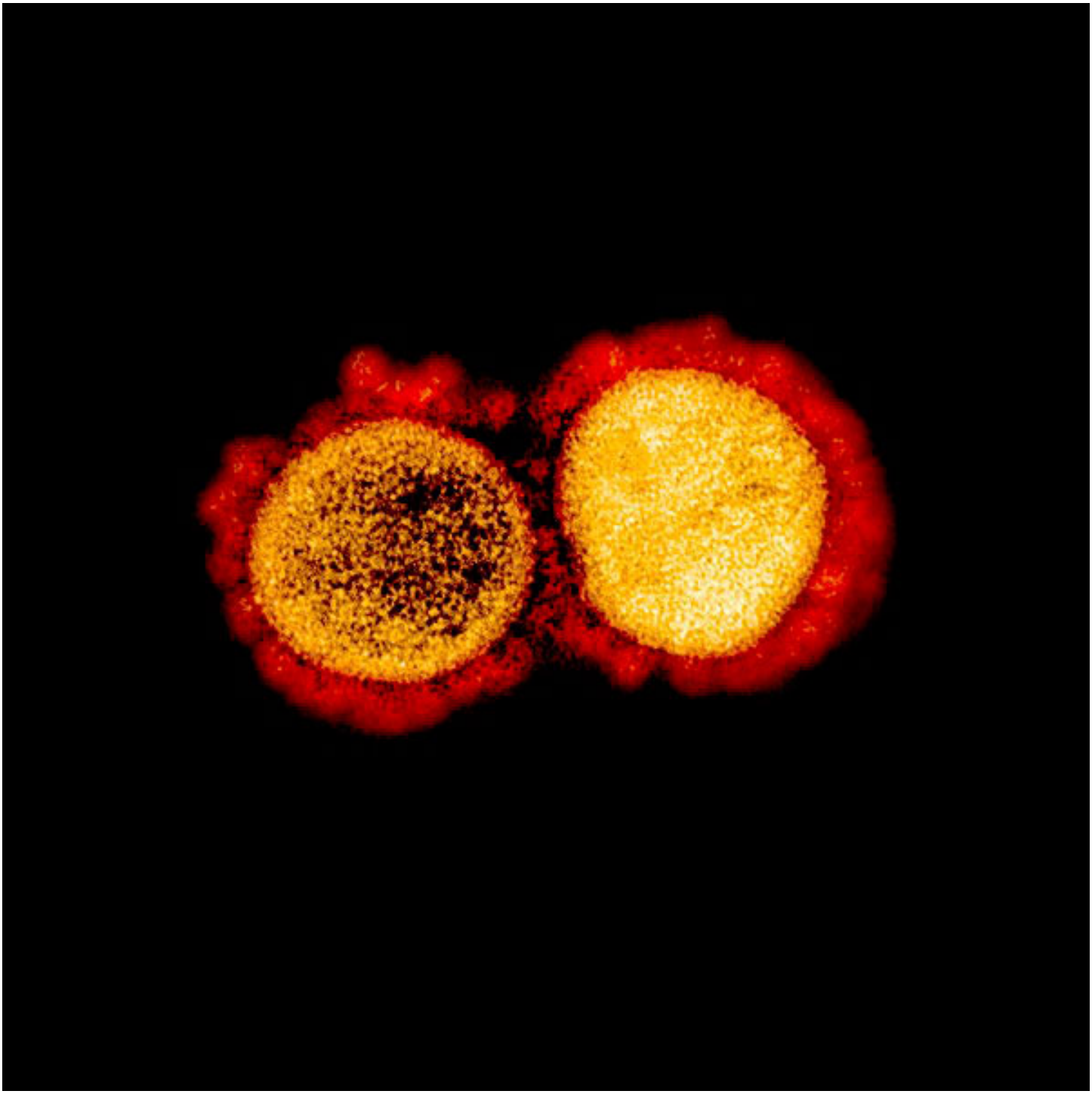
Certainly, "we" are not entirely humans in terms of the cross-boundary linkage involved in our extended cognitive practice, and the trans-species coevolutionary composition of the human genome. Eight percent of the human genome is made of viral gene sequences, called "endogenous retroviral sequences." They came from the deep common history of humans, other primates, and mammals, embodying the trans-species memory of infection, inheritance, and continuous symbiotic evolution ever since ancient, prehuman times.[8] In a sense, the significance of assemblage or hybridity transverses the nonlinear temporality between the posthuman and the prehuman. We have never been merely humans; we are no longer just humans. We are witnessing the intersection of two modes of the deconstruction of anthropocentrism. In the conjuncture of the Anthropocene, the hybrid consciousness of postcoloniality acquired a new value, which goes beyond what Dipesh Chakrabarty puts forward when he rethinks history through the challenge of climate change: "The cross-hatching of species history and the history of capital is a process of probing the limits of historical understanding."[9] As a matter of genomic fact, postcolonial hybridity goes way back to the nonlinear evolution of trans-species deep history, where historical understanding constantly rewrites its boundaries when intertwined with the process of evolution.

Cross-hatching is a drawing technique commonly used in shading. By hatching and cross-hatching, one can create different values, tones, and shadows with a single pencil using simple parallel lines. Even though it is handy, cross-hatching might not be the most appropriate metaphor for considering the deep history of trans-species or multispecies beings ranging from the prehuman to the posthuman. The scribbling technique widely used in art therapy is probably a more becoming metaphor. Scribbling uses flowing lines to visualize the object's outlines, the unfolding of the event, the entanglement of forms, the direction of momentum, and plural, nonlinear temporalities. Our historical understanding is not without limits. It is not only expanding its scale from the local to the planetary. One will undoubtedly encounter unscalability at some point, as Anna Tsing points out.[10] More than that, our historical understanding continuously reconstructs the semantic boundaries of history via the molecular turn of contemporary science. Under the regime of molecular visualization and measurement, all limitations or boundaries have undergone quantitative and qualitative changes. Quantum mechanics, born nearly a century ago, began with an epistemic gap between the large and the small: scientists discovered that classical mechanics, which was perfect for explaining daily life, was at a loss when it came to the subatomic or electronic scale. This epistemic and existential crisis has never been fully resolved.[11] In our time, molecular scribbling has become an indispensable technique of historical consciousness. In the scribbling of nonlinear molecular evolution, the trans-species brushstrokes of life are mixing, crossing, merging, and collaborating; simultaneously, they are conflicting, pushing, tearing, and continuously unsettling the borders between life and death, not unlike the ecology of postcolonial politics. As an illustration, take an indigenous artist's work. When the work appears too "hybrid" or "modern," its cultural authenticity may be questioned. The same interrogation happens with the works of other minority groups. Contemporary, non-Western artists and thinkers tend to face a similar dilemma as well. In the high-tech, capitalist era, all kinds of material and semiotic elements continually flow and hybridize. However, some subjects remain marked and have to work harder to mark their subjectivity in the thick of hybridity.

The postcolonial molecular scribbling must not erase boundaries; instead, it has to draw out the boundaries amongst the entanglement, no matter how transient those boundaries are. In the intricate connection of trans-species, multispecies, and interspecies, the most crucial task of posthuman ecological politics is to mark the destructive consequences of speciesism. In the era of industrialized farming, the Covid-19 pandemic invokes an Althusserian ideological interpellation. We can no longer bypass the trans-species zoopolitics that the virus materializes. The postcolonial ethnic and cultural wars have already expanded to the nonhuman through what Vandana Shiva has called the "Second Coming of Columbus."[12] The molecular scribbling extends its brushstrokes into deep history and the far future in the cross-hatched dividing lines of class, gender, ethnicity, and species. Thanks to molecular imaging technology, humans can no longer turn away from the evolutionary entanglement between themselves and other life forms on the planet. As such, they are also crossing the line between art and science. In the twenty-first century, contemporary art, like contemporary science, must engage in the transvaluation of all boundaries.

3. The Scale of Division and the Meaning of Travel

Every era is divided, and our division is both molecular and planetary. Utilizing extended cognitive devices, we can send florescent molecular DNA sensors to help visualize a cell's forces; and we can transform the earth into a planet-sized astronomical telescope to take pictures of a black hole fifty-five million light-years away, a massive cluster of entropy or disorder.[13] However, we fail to properly understand earth's biodiversity, resolve conflicts



Transmission electron micrograph of SARS-CoV-2 virus particles, isolated from a patient. Image captured and color-enhanced at the NIAID Integrated Research Facility (IRF) in Fort Detrick, Maryland. Credit: NIAID / CC BY 2.0.

due to cultural differences between human groups, and trace the source of disorder in human society and politics. We cannot see our faces; we cannot feel our hearts. The Anthropocene's epistemic and ethical ambiguity lies in the fact that the expansion of human cognitive devices and the technosphere has threatened biodiversity, and has also frequently forced humans to face their hybridity, dependence, and vulnerability. The related political paradox is that we, who can only live on the same planet, are divided, having lost or never acquired the ability to compose a shared world.

In the time of Covid-19, the agential image of the virus has become an unexpected mode of communication in our

divided world. However, it also highlights the existing inequalities and barriers in our global society. Perhaps this planet does not belong to humans. It is a planet of viruses. In the nonlinear loop connecting the prehuman and the posthuman, viruses have been practicing cross-hatching and molecular scribbling across different species, mapping the complex boundaries in between. Viruses are the most outstanding parasite on earth, the most accurate metaphor of our times. Our shared trans-species ontology is full of consequences. Parasitism and symbiosis are intertwined in complex connections on all scales of life, from the smallest to the largest. These relationships go beyond the traditional picture of the food chain, which usually portrays the predatory relations between independent individuals. They are intelligence operations and complex linkages that are ambiguous, concealed, dark, secret, and challenging to see, continually rewriting internal and external boundaries, and forming ever more intricate molecular information evolution networks. The moral evaluation of symbiosis and parasitism in everyday human languages has been put into question. The boundary between the two is never straightforward. By employing contemporary visualizing and measuring devices, we can observe dynamic negotiations of certain micro-boundaries, all of which continue to reshape our understanding of biological individuality, the boundary between oneself and the other. Diverse life forms, including those that were not regarded as life, or those that lacked independence, compose extended systems of symbiotic, parasitic, and holobiotic feedback loops and shared information through various evolutionary events on all scales.

When we appear to be divided on the scale of nationality, society, politics, and culture, we are already evolutionarily entangled on the molecular scale, and we continuously rotate together on the planetary scale. Our life dynamics of being divided, entangled, and in a constant state of rotation are dangerous, but full of future seeds. What viruses and planets have in common is the historicity and trajectories of evolution. This characteristic also applies to the most fundamental reality that we, who are not merely human beings, must face as life forms on this planet. Our reality is agential, but it also carries historical weight with multiple temporalities.

It all starts with searching for ourselves, but one can only find oneself by looking for others. This also applies to our planet. The Gaia theory began with humans inquiring about how this planet can support the formation of life, and then realized that once life emerged, it began its entangled scribbling at the molecular level, and facilitated the further evolution of life on earth. Nevertheless, sometimes and somehow, the misty image of some "other" in a distant spacetime overshadows life here and now. Since the mid-twentieth century, the endless stream of interstellar exploration and cyborg imagery in sci-fi films and television has betrayed this unconscious displacement. Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline coined the term "cyborg" in 1960 while discussing how to free humans to explore outer space. Their essay began with a felicitous analogy. What if a fish wants to live on land? It cannot. However, what if this is a highly intelligent fish that happens to be proficient in biology, engineering, and cybernetics? It will realize that it must extend its organism as a control system and assemble it with a cybernetic system that simulates its habitat conditions. In other words, the fish must take its aquatic habitat with it as an extension. It must become a cybernetic organism, a "cyborg."[14] This necessity results from our physical-mental constitution's evolutionary history, be us human, fish, or another life form. Historicity makes migration and travels a source of stress because even the body's internal and external pressures have a history.

A human being who travels to outer space must carry her planet as an extension of her organism if she wants to survive. To be more precise, she needs to be a moving mini-planet. The model for this mini-planet cannot be any other than that particular planet with a specific biosphere in which she has evolved and strived, as well as the biochemical conditions and complex feedback loops that sustain life, i.e., Gaia. As Haraway stated, "Space-bound cyborgs were like miniaturized, self-contained Gaias."[15] The question is, how long can such a miniaturized Gaia be self-contained? Just like earth, as a planet with life, if somehow it left orbit and moved beyond our solar system, how long could its biosphere sustain itself, having lost the primary source of external energy?

The search for another habitable planet, earth's alter ego, abounds in science, art, and literature. Since the mid-1990s, scientists have discovered thousands of planets outside our solar system orbiting other Sun-like stars, also known as exoplanets. Now we know these planets are almost everywhere. We know because we have "seen" some of them. Through our extended sensory assemblages, we are able to visualize, measure, record, and analyze, as well as immerse our memories, concepts, and consciousness in the vast amount of information on and available images of these planets. These practices enrich our imagination, but they may also feed our symptoms of escapism. Perhaps our unconscious mind is ready to abandon earth, our ego, and flee to another "superhabitable" earth, the imaginary alter ego, that is waiting to be discovered.[16]

More recently, scientists have discovered that there may be billions of wandering planets in the universe. These planets do not orbit a star and are unlikely to be habitable. They were either off-orbit or abandoned by their parent star, or perhaps began as orphan planets, born in gas and dust but without a star. Scientists call them "rogue planets." These wandering worlds may be the loneliest unilluminated travelers in the universe. They are their own homes, and they are challenging to detect because they usually travel in the dark. Through the sensory assemblages that humans extend into space—in this

case, the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, which will be ready for its mission in 2025—scientists can observe the wandering planets when they align with a distant star.[17] When that alignment happens, lasting a few earth hours or days, the spacetime around it will be bent by the planet's mass, causing changes in photons' motion, which can be used to infer the passing planet's size. We, as human observers, have never been so occupied. We are closely recording the interaction between coronavirus spikes and human cell receptors. We are filming distant black holes with planet-sized telescopes. And we are prepared to use the physical relationship between distant celestial bodies to measure wandering planets. All living beings are observers, measuring and transforming their habitats. Human observers' regime of measurement is continually expanding, seeing ever smaller, deeper, farther, and larger. We are lost in the middle scales between the most extensive and the smallest. For humans, the middle is too mediocre, the daily routine is too tiresome, and the here and now is the barycenter of all confusion.

As Latour reminds us, "You cannot ask where you can settle if you do not say where you yourself *wish* to settle."[18] The even more urgent question is where you have to take what you carry with you. We do not belong to a place, and the place does not belong to us, but when we move, we always carry our place with us without knowing it. We carry our history, our memory, our island, and our planet—as well as the extended sensory and cultural assemblages that we have evolved together and separately—with us wherever we travel.

It is a bittersweet situation; we can only live with each other on an intermediate scale between the human and more-than-human scales. We are a multi-scaled existence, a mixture of the molecular and the planetary. Such a complicated existence can only survive in a lifeworld of intermediate scales. In the wildest extension of the human body-mind, we imagine that we can continue observing, measuring, feeling, loving, and memorizing, even if we lose our bodies. Humans yearn for wandering because there is a home planet to go back to; this home is called earth. Likewise, your soul occasionally imagines leaving your body, precisely because you think there will be a home body to return to. In the era of planetary-scale observation, the profound paradox is that we can see other planets wandering, but we cannot see the disastrous displacement occurring on our own planet. We can calculate the orbital inclination of a planet in relation to earth, but we have no idea how deviated our social, political, and cultural orbits are. A planet can only live in the solar system where it was born and has evolved, just as we can only live in the specific habitat on this planet. We are terrestrial beings.

Our place is neither conservative nor progressive. It is molecular and planetary, and in between. It is about life and technology, as well as art and politics. Our nonlinear evolution as more-than-human beings is teeming with molecular scribblings flowing from countless embodied perspectives: the art of making space, time, and matter, and the orbital politics of carpooling, parting, clashing, and secret rendezvous. We are dwelling in a lifeworld amidst endless struggles on all scales. Will we meet halfway?

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Hamedine Kane, Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro, Olivia Anani, and Lou Mo

We Are the Ambassadors of the Blurred Mirages of Lands that Never Fully Materialized (About the School of Mutants)

Around three years ago, Senegal announced the creation of a new oil and gas institute, in the unfinished buildings of the University of the African Future. Such a statement produces too many dissonant chords to be ignored. It asks to be explored with regards to what it relays to us about future politics.

Activists and civil society organizations in Senegal have continued to warn against recent large-scale offshore gas discoveries and the current government's exploration policy. Massive corruption scandals have already broken out at the highest levels of the state, signaling ominous prospects in the country's shift towards a predatory petrocracy. In addition to that sinister horizon in the future, this story brings back past complexities of now-forgotten grand visions proclaimed by the previous government at the turn of the century: a pan-African university with international outreach, that would be linked to leading global institutions via the new network technologies of the World Wide Web.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, as African countries declared their independence and became members of the United Nations, two different Chinas—the nationalist government of Taiwan and the communist government of mainland China—began a race for allies on the African continent. The University of the African Future (UAF), initiated as one of president Abdoulaye Wade's electoral promises, was co-funded by many African states and the Republic of Taiwan as part of these diplomatic efforts. Since the early 2000s, the brutalist campus has been left unfinished in the middle of the Sébikotane Baobab forest, in the rural outskirts of Dakar, with its inverted pyramid and enigmatic neo-Sudanese structures designed by Senegalese architect Pierre Goudiaby Atepa. The futuristic concrete pyramid, which would have housed the university's library, still acts like a spell charming many Senegalese people.

Like history, geography stutters, repeating itself.

The spectral constructions of UAF sit next to another ruin of past pan-African idealist futures: the William Ponty Normal School, which was transferred from Gorée Island to Sébikotane in the 1930s. William Merlaud-Ponty was a French colonial governor: the colonizer's academic instrument to train local administrators. Some of the brilliant students, recruited across all of West Africa, would become independence leaders, heads of state, and radical pan-Africanists—colonial mutants, in a sense. It has been said that their revolutionary mindset caused the school's exile out of Dakar. However, Gorée, the slave island—a place of geographical efficiency, natural beauty, and indelible suffering—remained a harbor for African unity and the political elaboration of futurity. In the late 1970s, towards the end of Léopold Sédar Senghor's presidency, which lasted twenty-one years, the University of Mutants was founded on the island. Today, in the derelict colonial palace that housed this short-lived

The uncompleted campus library of the University of African Future. Copyright: Hamedine Kane & Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro.

pedagogic experiment, dusty reports on various cultural and political matters written by researchers from all over the continent and Europe bear witness to Senghor's promise of a "dialogue between cultures." The building is now occupied by people of Gorée, which echoes the repurposing of the Ponty School ruins by a local beekeeper who installed his beehives in the theater hall: gestures of pragmatic appropriation more eloquent than any commentary on the politics of palimpsest.

Like history, geography stutters, repeating itself.

To build its legitimacy, each government ridicules the programs of prior administrations. Through such a practice, they erase and rewrite the urban landscape. They multiply the "ruins of utopia."[1] A few kilometers away from the UAF carcass, the current government has started building another university, as part of a new "smart city" powered by speculative private-public investments. This gigantic neoliberal construction project is causing the mass eviction of community farmers and the ecocidal destruction of the Sébikotane forest. Construction has been halted for months, breaking the promises made to the Senegalese youth who demand better access to higher education. That youth seems fated to yet another obsolete future.

Filming in a Dominated Land

The School of Mutants is a multidisciplinary, collaborative platform that set out in 2018 to revisit and amplify these interwoven histories. Through archive research, fieldwork, and public assemblies, our investigation into intertwined structures of knowledge, power, and architecture in post-independence Senegal attempts to grasp the inaccessible and indefinite time and space of postcolonial futures. It does so in alliance with the territory and the inhabitants of Sébikotane and Diamniadio, by gathering under the "palaver tree" to share past memories and present-day concerns about the privatization of land and the struggles against it. From this starting point, ruins become vehicles to collect counter-narratives of resistance and anti-imperialism, and connect with other post–Cold War peripheries.

Who mutates, and where? Beyond Senghor's vision, the pattern of mutation—the sudden, discontinuous

Ecole Normale William Ponty. Film still. Copyright: Hamedine Kane & Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro.

appearance of a new genetic feature, a novel character within a group—irrigates postindependence literature. Nigel Gibson traces the appearance of "radical mutation" in Frantz Fanon's late writings as part of a broader, emerging reflection on the postcolonial.[2] Joseph Ki-Zerbo, coauthor of the *General History of Africa*,[3] called on Africans to "mutate or perish" by means of a nonaligned crusade against "the golden calf of quantitative productivism,"[4] linking mutation to ecological concerns. Almost contemporaneously, Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik traveled across Brazil to meet activists and autonomous groups, encountering what they called "collective modes of enunciation" that actualized "mutant virtualities."[5] At the sci-fi end of this literary spectrum, mutants recurrently appear in Octavia Butler's novels, as ambiguous agents of incomplete liberation. Mutating theories for mutating worlds.

Lighthouse built by inhabitants and activists of the Notre-Dame-Des-Landes, ZAD. Film still. Copyright: Hamedine Kane & Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro.

If mutation is a nighttime journey of traveling theories,[6] we also try to shed light on what appear as dead ends and to see through wandering dreams by filming. In his novel *Écrire en pays dominé* (Writing in a dominated land), Patrick Chamoiseau asks: "How to write when your imagination is fed, from morning until dreaming, with images, thoughts, values that are not yours?"[7] But what can images do? What can a camera do?

In the ruins of UAF, Ponty, and the University of Mutants, our cameras wobble, they flicker. Such sensors are not equipped to surprise the magnetic trace or the elemental force—though it is a natural thing to be caught, seized by an external presence. We humans interact, construct, and speak of worlds according to our dispositions and the effect of others on ourselves. This trait of ours, which is sometimes called charm, is not restricted to living beings, whether human, plant, or animal. The vestiges of a past that does not entirely pass away are full of darkness; ruins confront us with the unfathomable.

The desire for new narratives, as well as for reconnection with sources from precolonial Africa, is perceptible among young people in Senegal and in Sébikotane in particular. They are opting and organizing to stay in Senegal, to keep inhabiting the territory, despite being confronted by all sorts of dangers that threaten, crush, and deny life every day. It is this permanent revolutionary future that we try to capture on film.

Assembly of African Futures. Copyright: Elise Fitte-Duval.

Was Bandung All a Dream?

During the Jin Dynasty (fourth century CE), poet Tao Yuanming (陶淵明) imagined Peach Blossom Land: a utopian community sheltered from the world. In 1902, historian and philosopher Liang Qichao (梁啟超) wrote "The Future of New China" (新中國未來記), a half-fictional, half-political story that predicted a prosperous, democratic New China would emerge in 1962. To try and change the social conditions of the present, the poetic mind invents and inhabits future worlds. But when parts of the present world become uninhabited by the mind, are they

discarded to the oblivion of the past? As Taiwan's diplomatic history with African countries fades out in the blur of post–Cold War history, Africa recedes into an invisible geography in the Taiwanese popular imagination. With the percussion of Black Lives Matter protests resonating widely, it seems more important than ever to discuss race, Afro-Asian unity, and international relations instead of simplifying them to trivial cultural differences or claiming noninterference.

As the School of Mutants travels to the Taipei Biennial, our archeology of utopia continues. Comprised of archival materials, film, wood engravings of the Mutant Manifesto, and fabric pieces created by Nathalie Muchamad using traditional Indonesian batik techniques which became the famous African "wax" during the Dutch colonial period, our installation reactivates the UAF connection, and revisits the legacies of Afro-Asianism more broadly: Afro-Asian solidarity, the Tricontinental and Bandung conferences, and nonaligned trajectories.

Relations between Africa and Asia have been ongoing for a significant amount of time, with records of commercial interactions and intercontinental travels dating to as early as the eighth century.[8] The Chinese text *Youyang Zazu* (酉陽雜俎), an 853 CE compilation of short stories by the Tang Dynasty official, writer, and poet Duan Chengshi (段成式), contains what some believe to be a description of East Africa. Like many texts of the period, *Youyang Zazu* is an interesting amalgam of facts and hearsay, the result of research expanded with imagination. It is a collection of anecdotes from daily life and customs, fantasy (an early version of *Cinderella* is present in the text), and notes on nature and pharmacopeia. The observation that the earliest accounts of diplomatic encounters between the two continents can be found alongside fairy tales makes one think about the fictional nature of history, past, and present, on a global scale. Still today, nations, countries, and communities create fictional accounts of a mythical time ("make America great again"), or justify chasing after an idealized future (the end of class). The average "good" citizen lives in the fictional world of the "family" or "national values" of the past (Why can't we all get along?), while the activist marches for justice for Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and a future in which *All Black Lives Matter*. Was Bandung all a dream?

Endless Mutation

When we began unravelling the rubble of the University of Mutants and other experiences, we could have never imagined that another mutant community, of the coronavirus family, would lay bare once more the anxious drive of the West and its fantasy of separation from the living world. Again, we face Western universalism's claims to frame possible futures, using the pandemic as a global shock doctrine to accelerate towards the dematerialized

The forest near abandoned buildings of the National Taiwan Ocean University Campus in Keelung. Film still. Copyright: Hamedine Kane & Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro.

commodification of social and economic relations. Learning and practicing a "mutant becoming" is not only about self-organizing a collective response and a diplomatic cohabitation with the virus, but also about exposing ourselves to the beautiful trouble of plural ways of inhabiting the world arising from plural pasts, presents, and futures.

Bruno Latour argues that we do not live on the same planet, that ideological differences have grown so wide as to imply the " *démultiplication*" of the world. At the School of Mutants, we've been discussing how to draw maps of imaginary and real worlds, to include them all in relation to one another, so that we can navigate from one utopia to the next. Maybe the only routes between one dream and the next are the people carrying them. Just like diplomatic encounters today, a new diplomacy implies an encounter between people, with the key difference that this time, the nations and worlds they represent could be appreciated for their "true" nature: that of places which do not exist.

In the opacity of our inner universe, as Edouard Glissant pointed out, in the shadows that writer Jun'ichirō Tanizaki (谷崎 潤一郎) described in his essays, we mutants are the ambassadors of the blurred mirages of lands that never fully materialized, or rather, that exist in a constant state of flux between fairy tale and naturalist study: a *creolité perpétuelle*, an endless mutation.

X

Hamedine Kane, Senegalese and Mauritanian artist and director, lives and works between Brussels and Dakar. Through his practice, Kane frequents borders, not as signs and factors of impossibility, but as places of passage and transformation, as a central element in the conception of itinerant identity. After ten years of exile in Europe, his

practice now focuses on the themes of memory and heritage. This aspect of his work is taking shape with the research project *É cole des Mutants / The School of Mutants* in collaboration with Stéphane Verlet-Bottero. In Kane's works, these themes intermingle with the past and the future, transgressing and irrigating the limits of space and time. In 2020, Kane will participate in the Taipei Biennial, the Casablanca Biennale, and various exhibitions as part of the Africa2020 season in France. His film *The Bleue House*, which had its world premiere at IDFA in Amsterdam in November 2020, received a special mention from the jury.

Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro is an artist, environmental engineer, and curator. His work develops land-based strategies that explore communizing and ecologies of care. In 2018 he initiated, in collaboration with Hamedine Kane, *The School of Mutants*, an artistic investigation into land struggles and political utopia in Dakar, with exhibitions and programs in Dakar, Oslo, Taipei, Nantes. He is lecturer at Ecole Centrale Paris, curator at NA Project, associate researcher for the European program "From Conflict to Conviviality" at Ensad Paris, and researcher at Unbewitch Finance Lab. He has had curatorial collaborations with Inland (Madrid), Institut Kunst (Basel), Technê Institute (Buffalo), Science Museum (London), and Documenta (13) (Kassel).

Olivia Anani is a writer, curator, and art-market specialist based in Paris. She has a background in Asian studies and contemporary art spanning three continents. As a writer and curator, she is interested in art from a global perspective, working with the Dakar and Kampala Biennales, Zajia Lab in Beijing, France's Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Centre Pompidou, Fondation Gulbenkian, and the Columbia University Center – Reid Hall in Paris. In 2014, she curated "Fast Forward: Video Art from Africa and Beyond" at Zajia Lab in Beijing. The exhibition was revisited in 2020 at Centre Pompidou in Paris. Her ongoing research project *A Compatibility between Value Systems* seeks to explore precolonial aesthetics in the arts, as a link between Africa and Asia, touching on concepts such as *wabi sabi*; *kintsugi* and repair *;* the philosophy of *qi*; and the concept of *force vitale* in the work of philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne. The project also investigates the politics and modes of conservation and display of works of art and how these concepts find their way into contemporary art practice today. *A Compatibility between Value Systems* has already touched on Benin, Congo, Japan, Mainland China, and Korea.

After studying art history and biology, **Lou Mo** has worked for museums, an auction house, and an international gallery in Canada and in France. She is interested in investigating current issues related to themes such as diaspora, identity, and perception through contemporary art, especially in regions previously considered as non-centers. She is invited curator of the 14th Dakar Biennale. Originally from Montreal, she now lives and works in Taipei as an independent curator.

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Isabelle Stengers

We Are Divided

We are divided, writes Bruno Latour, and in such a way that it seems impossible for us to "sit down at the same table" and reach any kind of agreement. An agreement, in any case, that effectively obligates all involved parties, and not only rhetorically as in the Conferences of the Parties (COP) at the UN Climate Change Conferences that have taken place for the past twenty-five years now. Must we blame the diplomats—that is, denounce the illusions of diplomacy? We would first have to agree on what we mean when we say "diplomacy." I propose we extend the notion of the diplomatic art to all situations in which the parties consider themselves as logically "obligated" to war—either that, or we will betray what makes us what we are.[1] " *Obrigada*" means "thank you" in Portuguese, "obliged" indicates gratitude in English. To be obligated is to know one is indebted to something other than oneself for what one is. The diplomatic art is the ability to express these obligations in a slightly different way that allows—not generally, but in this particular circumstance—for the possibility of peace without betrayal. In my book *Cosmopolitics* I have proposed to call "obligation" that which one must respect in order to belong to a collective of participants, and "requirement" that which this collective demands of its environment in order to be maintained.[2] Obligations are not norms because what they imply can make each member, as well as the collective as a whole, hesitate. The art of the diplomat requires hesitation.

This proposition is restrictive. When a belligerent party engages in predatory war, for example, which is to say defines the opposing party as its prey, there is no room for diplomacy. It would be easy to reduce diplomacy to an art of appearances, and repeat the critique that identifies all relationships as predatory and refuses to recognize affiliations founded in obligation, but only in the interest of conquest and domination. This critique may well suggest that diplomacy is a non-modern art. I would indeed claim that the human who presents herself as free of all obligation is a child of modernity.[3] It goes without saying that if this critique is on point, we can bid farewell not only to diplomacy but also, I am convinced, to the possibility that humans can, on this earth, safeguard any future worthy of the name.

This is why, confronted by the powerlessness of the diplomats active at every COP, I would like to look into the felicitous/infelicitous conditions of the diplomatic exercise. In this case, it must be stressed that this exercise cannot be reduced to the achievement of an agreement between diplomats. Each one gathered around the table fully understands that she will have to return to the powers that appointed her, and that it is up to those powers to ratify the agreement or reject it. Let's not talk about the Trumpist rejection of COP21, nor about the parliamentary ratifications that occur in other countries. Let's talk about the mode of hesitation that the "return of the diplomat" should bring about. Under felicitous conditions, the commitment implied by the acceptance of a treaty must

be the object of collective consultation, as those to whom the diplomat returns understand they must hesitate and wonder about what obligates them, which also means: to consult in the presence of what they risk betraying. It's important to stress that obligations and the risk of their betrayal are not intended as a nostalgic reference to so-called traditional peoples. The idea that diplomats today could help us articulate what divides us should not be abandoned. But it needs to be resituated in a new environment.

Right now, the environment in which diplomacy is no longer operative leaves us exposed, beyond the state, to capitalism. Of the latter, in effect, one can say it is completely unconcerned by the meaning of obligation and the experience of hesitation. Capitalism demands all sorts of freedom from its legal and political environment, but it isn't obligated by anything—it makes others responsible for its consequences. Of course, a boss may hesitate, but for general reasons, out of human decency. And as Marx clearly saw, too much hesitation will get him swept aside by his competitors—which is to say, by an operational logic under which to hesitate means to become prey to other predators.

We must be careful, however, to avoid the trap of converting this logic into a totalizing, or systemic, explanation. Because such an explanation paints as ridiculous the very possibility of even imagining being able to thwart it.[4] I will propose to characterize capitalism in a way abstract enough to accept the cry of contemporary activists: "We don't defend nature. We are nature defending itself." The activists' cry affirms the will to resist a ruination that concerns people and nature inseparably. It is certain that the innumerable species doomed to extinction today will not be revived. But what must be defended is what the capitalist redefinition of the world has continued not only to claim and exploit, but also to unravel and destroy. Capitalism, as I will attempt to characterize it, redefines human and nonhuman worlds in a way that unravels relationships of interdependence and institutes the most inextricable network possible of chains of dependence.

"We are divided" should first be understood, then, in an active sense, pointing to what divides us, that is, to what has destroyed the feeling of interdependence as an operative political affect. This doesn't mean that without this division we would necessarily stand undivided in solidarity, or concern ourselves with the common interest. The difference between dependence and interdependence isn't a moral one. Dependence is, first and foremost, a fact. We depend on the inhabitability of the earth, and the idea of liberating ourselves from this dependence belongs to the realm of imagination. To dream of going to Mars is to dream of living in a way dependent on an entanglement of highly sophisticated technologies. Likewise, industrially produced seeds can produce plants without a need for soil; but their life becomes dependent on fertilizers and pesticides produced by the agrochemical industry. Since Lynn Margulis, however, biologists have become increasingly aware that if the earth is not only inhabitable but teeming with life, if arid rocks have become fertile lands, this is owed to the creation of relationships of interdependence. Relationships that do not arouse the imagination of liberation because the beings who participate in them become—thanks to, alongside, and at the risk of others—capable of what they are not capable of by themselves. Such are the relationships that, across the globe, human communities have celebrated, translated, and cultivated in terms of obligations to what has made them who they are.

The way in which, instead of relationships of interdependence, ever longer chains of dependence have been created over the course of our modernity does not reflect a dream of self-liberation, even if this dream has seduced those who have invented a thousand and one means of emancipating themselves from the "whims of nature." Rather, it reflects an operation of mobilization, in the military sense. The ideal of mobilization is the possibility of defining soldiers as beings whose behavior should depend solely upon the orders they receive, communicated down a chain of command: a mobilized army must not let itself be slowed down by anything. That's why mobilization is a correlate of anesthesia in relation to everything capable of disrupting discipline, everything that should not count. The substitution of relationships of interdependence with chains of dependence thus entails an entrenchment of the imagination, the dream of function without friction.

As Anna Tsing has shown, the invention of sugarcane plantations starting in the sixteenth century was the terrible success of a mobilization that produced beings rendered incapable of constructing histories or entering into "capricious" attachments.[5] Here is the recipe for these plantations: plant sugarcane (which reproduces identically, through cloning) in a distant land, where it encounters neither related plants nor familiar insects; beforehand, exterminate the inhabitants and eliminate the native vegetation from this land, and, to work on it, bring slaves whose cruelly short life spans necessitate constant replacement: a triple circulation chain of sugar, money, and humans.

What the Portuguese created, stresses Tsing, is a practically uprooted mode of agricultural production, inventing the ideal of "scalability"—the ability to function and extend into the most diverse locales without this production losing its identity. In doing so, she sheds a brutal light on the meaning of the activist's cry: "We are nature defending itself." Because the demands of scalability today determine equally industrial production standards and what will be deemed knowable, rational, or objective, as well as state population management. And in each case—though each case follows its own particular

pattern—the cost is the same: the relationships of interdependence are eroded, ignored, even deliberately destroyed. Because these relationships stand in the way of general definitions, which are independent of circumstances and local, social memories.

Scalability allows the cry "we are nature defending itself" to be understood without confusing it with a "return to nature" or with an assimilation that would drown out thought and feeling in the fury of academic controversy—to dare make an analogy between the horror of slave life on the plantation and the sterile life of sugarcane! It's not a matter of comparison but of pointing out that which renders indissociable the human and nonhuman costs of the demand for scalability. Consequently, this demand for scalability allows us to characterize the institutions that, each in its own way, make it prevail. The demand is borne out and propagated by the distinct rationalities that arm the state and the economy, but also the kind of science that Deleuze and Guattari deemed "royal."[6] Facing the specter of climate disorder, we have heard the scalable injunction par excellence: everyone must reduce "their own" carbon footprint.

In themselves, however, chains of dependency are fragile and often rife with conflict. They are imperatives, certainly, and demand that we neglect what they define as insignificant, yet they do not have the power to make us forget. Each chain constructs an uprooted notion of dependence, but at the door of the laboratory, the tribunal, the hospital, and every other place where it gets to determine what counts and what doesn't, what it excludes persists and resists. Each chain is located, can be evaluated, critiqued, or even openly contested. Such was the role John Dewey associated with the emergence of the public: this was the emergence of a protest against a power to do harm to certain protagonists neglected in the definition of the state's concerns.

But as soon as the chains get bound to each other, they take on a power that none of them has individually, the power of creating *dependences* that take on the appearance of inescapable necessities, which cancel out the possibility of scruples and hesitation, and which silence all protest. How to care about sugar plantations when sugar, which was once a luxury good, has been turned into something we can't imagine living without? Who can fathom the price paid by others for this abundance, and the knot of military, legal, and commercial apparatuses required to maintain this mode of production? Contrary to the interlaced interdependences that human peoples have honored, and toward which they have felt and even cultivated obligations, the binding interconnection between chains creates an uprooted network that masses together the effects of anesthesia provoked by each, constructs labyrinths where protesters get lost, and, as we have discovered today, boasts its own impunity: "You all think you can regulate oil extraction to save the planet? You'll set off a financial cataclysm …"

This is where my characterization of capitalism assumes its full meaning as a force that substitutes intricate networks of chains of dependence for relationships of interdependence. Capitalism is not the puppeteer pulling the strings of the state, science, or the economy. It is what never stops taking advantage of their respective modes of abstraction in order to connect the chains and render dependence irreversible. And in doing so it creates the "infernal alternatives" that, today, faced with the disasters that have already begun, leave us divided and powerless.

It should be recalled, however, that scalability requires permanent upkeep. It does not ensure stable conquest. The eradicated interdependencies never stop resurging. Such resurgences are not "inherently good"—nothing is "inherently good." And so we will speak neither of "nature reclaiming its rights" nor of humans uniting against servitude, because these are images charged with an imaginary haunted by scalability—the dream of a great force of truth come to sweep away whatever powers would constraint it. Neither the great scenographies of heroic war, nor repentance and redemption are up for discussion, but neither is the time proper to diplomacy. In effect, what diplomacy requires—the ability of a group to ponder the way it formulates its obligations, its ability to make common sense of what maintains it and what it has to maintain—is precisely what has been undone by the chains of dependence, reduced to a hollow and plaintive imaginary, to an inconsistent desire, to an uprooted will. Today the diplomats are not equipped to cultivate the art of consultation they depend on.

To reactivate the sense of interdependence, we can look not to diplomats but to John Dewey's figure of the inquirer. Dewey's inquirers don't produce a neutral knowledge, a knowledge that would explain division and powerlessness. They are experimenters, actively intervening like all who perform experiments, but not in a laboratory, not in order to learn how to obtain reliable knowledge from what they deal with. The aim of today's inquirers should be to learn how to transform the relationship between those who experience and *what they experience*, in such a way that it reactivates the feeling of interdependence.

Feeling interdependence does not derive from knowledge. It is above all an act of "letting oneself be touched" and involves a form of gratitude that is neither subjective nor objective, since its truth lies in its generativity. If this feeling needs to be cultivated, it is because it is vulnerable. As humans, we know only too well that we may get dragged into ingratitude, entrenching ourselves against the feeling that we are who we are thanks to others. However derisory, interstitial, and fragile interdependence may seem, the task of the inquirer is to make it exist as part of a practical and political imagination, to be reactivated bit by bit and step by step. Many activists have dubbed this reactivation "reclaiming," and they know that

it is not only a question of regenerating but of fighting as well. Because such regeneration takes place in hostile or dangerous environments, likely to capture and enchain any initiative of simple goodwill.

The reactivation of practices that both reclaim and presuppose interdependence calls for a culture whose seeds can be sown by inquirers, but which must be nourished by the soil in order to grow. Which means that such practices will have to resist the demands of scalability and create their own soil, a mode of making sense in common we could call vernacular, because its words and phrasings set down their roots in this soil. Which means also that a reclaiming struggle should resist a scalable definition of what it stands for, allowing itself to be obligated by the entanglement of modes of sensitivity that they weave and are woven by.

And where the feeling of obligation takes on meaning again, the figure of the diplomat can reassert its relevance. Because the resurgence of cultures of interdependence is clearly not the solution to, but the beginning of growing together, learning to face problems of vicinity, of overlaps, of relationships yet to be established, of trusts to be risked, of griefs to be transformed into generative memories. The "we" called on to participate in "we are nature defending itself" will indeed include minorities[7] obligated in various ways—peasants, but also others who will also learn to reclaim the meanings of their obligations, against the imperatives of scalability, and to dismantle their entrenchment against what they had rejected as illusory, anecdotal, or irrational: researchers, scientists, doctors, technicians, legal practitioners, nurses, people of faith, and of course descendants of colonized people.

Diplomats find here their felicitous conditions because they will intervene between parties with divergent obligations—who have nonetheless rendered themselves capable of interrogating how they formulate their obligations, and of hesitating together, which is to say of resisting the majoritarian dream that turns difference into opposition. Diplomatic agreements would then have the character of partial connections, like all communication between vernacular languages. They would not guarantee the persistence of an original purity, but if successful they would generate tales and accounts of what has been learned, of what has made the involved parties grow, each in their own, now correlated, ways. And this would be what diplomats would convey—not models or arguments but activators of the imagination, incentives to expand the scope of the possible reinvention of new ways to formulate problems, freed from the scalable, state-imposed imperative.

Can we imagine a state capable of accepting that its position and responsibilities are legitimate only by default, and thus provisionally, given that novel approaches to reinventing a problem have not been experimented with? A state aware that it alone cannot undo the network of chains of dependence that paralyzes it, but which could give a chance to those who, link by link, learn to disassemble it? A state that knows how to give space while our worlds and our imaginations regenerate? And what if we were to venture the hypothesis of a state tired of pretending, panicked in the face of its own powerlessness, its only conviction being that if it lets go, chaos will ensue? Maybe, then, we should invent healers who address those who believe themselves the ramparts of public order and teach them to appreciate new inventions and to understand that what is done without their help isn't necessarily done against them, if they prove themselves worthy of our trust.

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Translated from the French by Kit Schluter.

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1
This is introduced in my *Cosmopolitics II* , published in 2011.

2
Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I* , trans. Robert Bononno (University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

3
For an example of the crucial role played by treaties and obligations in the lives of non-modern peoples, I recommend Michael Asch's beautiful book *On Being Here to Stay: Treaties and Aboriginal Rights in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2014).

4
See Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell* , trans. Andrew Goffey (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

5
Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

6
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* , trans. Brian Massumi (Athlone Press, 1988), 372–74.

7
Minorities here must be understood in the sense developed by Deleuze and Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 291), as a process of becoming that makes them diverge from the anonymous norm of the majority.

Nadia Yala Kisukidi

Geopolitics of the Diaspora

Sometimes a given economic, political, or social conjuncture will lay bare in no uncertain terms the insurmountable contradictions inherent in certain ideas. For instance, it is nearly impossible to disregard the context of the Covid-19 pandemic when thinking about the contours of the idea of "diaspora," or more precisely the (geo)politics that it delineates. The borders of nation-states were closed, putting a stop to the ongoing cycle of trips back and forth that shape diasporic lives. The pandemic slowed down, when it did not actually block, the transfer of funds to their countries of origin from diasporas—especially African—in Northern countries facing an economic crisis.[1] A whole economy of exchanges and movement came brutally undone.

At this point it seems wise, before proceeding any further, to not keep my place of enunciation in the dark. Because this place explains in part the thoughts that follow. I live in a Northern country, in France, crossed by a border—that of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This border may not be physical insofar as it does not materialize a barrier between two neighboring geographic regions, but it is nonetheless real. According to Gloria Anzaldua, borders are truly present whenever people of different cultures occupy the same land: "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants."[2] The border that Anzaldua evokes in her writings is a real physical territory located at the point of contact between Texas and Mexico. The border I'm speaking of presupposes a process of affective, symbolic, and cultural externalization that accompanies itinerancy, the exile of a family. The "Congo" sign runs through and recomposes, in a minor key, the French space I inhabit. The "Souths" live in the "Norths"; multiple spatial expanses shape the private lives of families. Landscapes are superimposed and conjoined in the inner life of the individual. This is how life in the diaspora is territorialized.

The health security policies that have halted the constant trips that characterize diasporic existence have partitioned the planet into a series of hermetic physical spaces that reestablish boundaries. Planet earth is not one: it is a multiplicity of small worlds, which coincide, unsurprisingly, with the borders of nation-states. The preventive measures[3] intended to protect oneself and others from the pandemic force people to stay put, to be rooted to a spot, to relocate their activities. The very idea of the "diaspora," insofar as it designates the ability of certain populations to form a unity, a people "despite the spatial dispersion of their members, by way of the unifying reference to a land or a territory,"[4] supposes at the very least a tension between two places, return trips, uninterrupted circulation around the globe. Diasporic existence describes a way of being in the world, forced or desired, which requires mobility—that tenacious paradigm of the globalized twentieth century. The sense of community withstands long distances and is confirmed in

Kiripi Katembo, Subir, from the series Un Regard, 2011. Copyright: Kiripi Katembo. Courtesy Fondation Kiripi Katembo Siku et galerie MAGNIN-A.

the joy of reunions.

The spatial concatenations of which diasporic lives are composed describe a concrete form of ubiquity. To think about the idea of the diaspora does not necessarily entail problematizing the "self" in reference to a native land that would give it its ontological substance and identity; it involves thinking about the idea of inhabiting. And more radically still, the idea of inhabiting two places, two lands at the same time. Diasporic life relies on an economy of movement, indifferent to finitude, requiring combustion and spending: flying, traveling across oceans, hitting the road, sending money. All this movement has been undermined by the pandemic and what it reveals about the ecological catastrophe.

Families scattered to the four corners of the world may no longer be getting together because of the virus, yet it is hard to give up on the political potentials of conceiving of the diaspora as a "double presence,"[5] in other words as a matter of "inhabiting two places at the same time." We must give thought to the political fecundity of ubiquity, and even more, give it a precise meaning, when the ecological situation no longer presents a unified planet, but instead worlds in conflict. What does it mean to inhabit two places at the same time, when these places are in an antagonistic relationship? The idea of "place" and "world" function here interdependently: "place" refers to a real physical location and "world" refers to a whole that materializes through interrelating a multiplicity of human productions and geo-situated forms of life.

By taking a position on a boundary at once real and imaginary—the boundary separating France and the Democratic Republic of Congo—criticism grounds itself in a *concrete terrestrial situation.* Diasporic life traces the contours of a "geopolitics," whose meaning is almost literal: a politics of the land, or yet again a politics of spatial localization. In spite of the pandemic and the immobility it imposes, it is important for us to think through the real political fecundities of the constant passage from one land to another.

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Geopolitics. To reflect on worlds in conflict means to focus not only on war and tensions between sovereign states but also on an economy of death and life. Colonization,

understood as the appropriation of lands and people, stands as the paradigm of this sort of vital economy. I would like to illustrate this through a look at some moments in the history of Central Africa.

Central Africa's encounter with the West, which started in the fifteenth century—the era when the Eurocentric order and a certain consciousness of global space was instituted—opened a cycle of "extraordinary violence," in repeated patterns of collapse.[6] Because worlds can indeed collapse several times. The slave trade developed after the arrival of the Portuguese in the Congo in 1482.[7] The kidnapping and enslavement, along with the drain on the labor force, destabilized local institutions and demographics. African lands were turned into a huge reservoir of manual labor, feeding trade channels that were becoming increasingly international.

In the nineteenth century, explorers and colonial societies competed on African soil in the name of European states.[8] The Conference of Berlin in 1885[9] established the legal terms of the European occupation of Africa, guaranteeing the sovereignty of each European nation and granting them all "complete freedom of trade."[10] This conference, which consolidated the rules of "commercial imperialism" that developed in Africa throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is to be understood as the point in time when "the European states imposed capitalism on the coasts of Africa."[11] In the Congo Basin—by then the property of the King of Belgium—rubber exploitation led to violent forms of extractivism[12] that included the destruction of villages, the appropriation of land, the massacre and mutilation of local populations, the destabilization of collective life, forced labor, and the exploitation of natural resources to profit foreign companies. Congolese lands fueled the development of the second industrial revolution in Europe.

These cycles of depredation and pillage are being reconfigured in contemporary postcolonial Congo. We must be able to reinterpret them from a vital standpoint: the life of some requires the death of others. Societies of superabundance imply the extinction of societies that function exclusively as reservoirs of energy and material. This is one of the formulations of the conflictuality of worlds in the Capitalocene era. The two Congo wars, which gripped the region with violence in the late twentieth century and have continued into the first quarter of the twenty-first, have accompanied the revolution of digital electronics, with Congolese mineral resources being introduced into the global market.[13] The systemic violence raging in the Democratic Republic of Congo supports an "international supply systems coupled with a form of national and regional redistribution of resources."[14] Mass massacres, the forced displacement of populations, rape, the increased vulnerability of human life, etc. The North/South divide is too broad to account for the conflictuality of worlds. The economy of pillage and extraction that has taken hold of the region is supported by international industrial and financial predations, but also by intra-African alliances[15] and a revenue system maintained by national elites.

Faced with this economy of violence, huge dumping grounds have been established where unneeded populations, deemed useless, are condemned to live. Whole expanses have become zones of infra-life. The globe is riddled with holes, haunted by shadows, dispossessed of the minimum required to satisfy vital needs.

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The conflictuality of worlds that is on display in Central Africa testifies to a becoming-vampire, for the vampire is that mythical creature that feeds on the blood of the living to increase its vital forces. It is not the general collapse of the planet that is being manifested but rather the way in which some worlds require the collapse of others to maintain their standard of living, in a context where limited resources imply their rationing, and hence their appropriation by some. The death of some, which preserves the life of others, can never be considered a scandal; at best, it deserves to be forgotten. In this context, many words—"Humanity," "Universalism," "Cosmopolitanism"—are emptied of their utopian overvaluation. Because it is a matter above all of grasping what they do not allow us to think through, notably how the life of some presupposes the death of others,[16] and how life in superabundance presupposes the continual reiteration of acts of massacre, the consent to the murder of those who, by their very existence, take up too much room.

In this framework it may be interesting to resignify, politically, the idea of "diaspora." Beyond the synthesis of opposites[17] that it operates, the idea does not refer exclusively to a spatial conception of identity that puts nationality, territory, and citizenship under strain. Diasporic existence unhinges exclusive affiliations with the body of the nation. To live in the diaspora is to be a member of two spaces at once.

This double presence[18] sheds light on the utopian powers that run through diasporic existence. Such an *existing* (*exister*) presupposes heterological self-construction, which incorporates the other—any other possible place—into the definition of what individuals, peoples, and communities are. It entails the possibility of a disaffiliation from the national, a breaking down of borders that complicates relationships to places of origin and arrival. It contests rhetorics of authenticity and loyalty that demand total allegiance to a nation defined as a block, a substantialized body. Diasporas can develop a sui generis way of life by forming "transnational and transcultural minorities," indifferent to the logic of existing nationalities.[19]

To think about the diaspora as a double presence is not to

privilege one world over the other. The lack of loyalty of which those whose lives unfold across several places are accused needs to be recoded positively as multiplied presences. Diasporic existence is a refusal, the refusal to choose between two worlds. This refusal assumes a singular form when the two worlds are in conflict. It summons a whole vital economy that contests a geopolitics founded on the logic of predator and victim.

"Double presence" has a material, terrestrial significance. To think about the diaspora is to ask a question that is not so much "Who am I?" as much as "Where do I live?" The answer is unambiguous: the diasporic being living at the intersection of antagonistic worlds inhabits a political conflictuality. On the France/DRC border, this conflictuality is brutally apparent: modes of consumption in wealthy societies rely on exploiting "blood minerals" from the Congo.[20] In diasporic lives, geopolitics and international relations become family affairs. They run through the affective lives of communities. We must not shy away from the violence of the conclusion: the inequality of worlds sometimes means that one inhabits a society that feeds on the blood of one's own family. The dialectic is poor: to live well requires the negation of the other.

So we must develop a practical approach to the idea of diaspora, as the refusal to see one world disappear so that the other can live. As the refusal to see one's kin die. Under what conditions are worlds in conflict equally habitable? How can they provide the same conditions of habitability to their populations, to families separated by a border? The point is not to reactivate, in these finite times, a co-development logic that is overly invested in the development paradigm, and that appears as the humanitarian facet of policies controlling migration flows in wealthy countries.

Diasporic practices are micropolitics; they take the form of an internationalism that is situated rather than abstract. Such internationalism is not some sort of idealized assumption of responsibility for the planet's future, theoretically positing a shared humanity. It is concerned, on the contrary, with concrete modalities of action implemented by the people who are interpellated by two places at the same time—two places in conflict that shape the body of their biographies and their attachments.

To think from two places in conflict is not a matter of feeling nostalgia for the world's lost oneness but rather of questioning the way in which both spaces can be equally habitable. All of which implies a certain political practice of postponement.[21] To postpone the extinction, the death of a world, on the one hand. And to postpone the economic and political logics that increase superabundance, on the other. Poverty of words, poverty of solutions, at a time when certain processes of destruction appear irreversible. But what we need to think about is the way in which geopolitics are embodied in personal lives. And traversing the modes of existence that they demand, we need to try to awaken their revolutionary potentials, knowing that revolution here is firstly a refusal—the refusal to see the death of one world support the life of the other. This is the utopia of diasporic existence: to be present in two worlds at once in spite of the poor dialectics that link them, and to make it possible in each of them to inhabit and to develop the possibilities of a life *in spite of all*.

X

Translated from the French by Gila Walker.

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Vincent Hiribarren, “Berlin, 1885: Questions sur une conférence,” *L’Histoire* , no. 477 (November 2020).

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Yuk Hui

For a Planetary Thinking

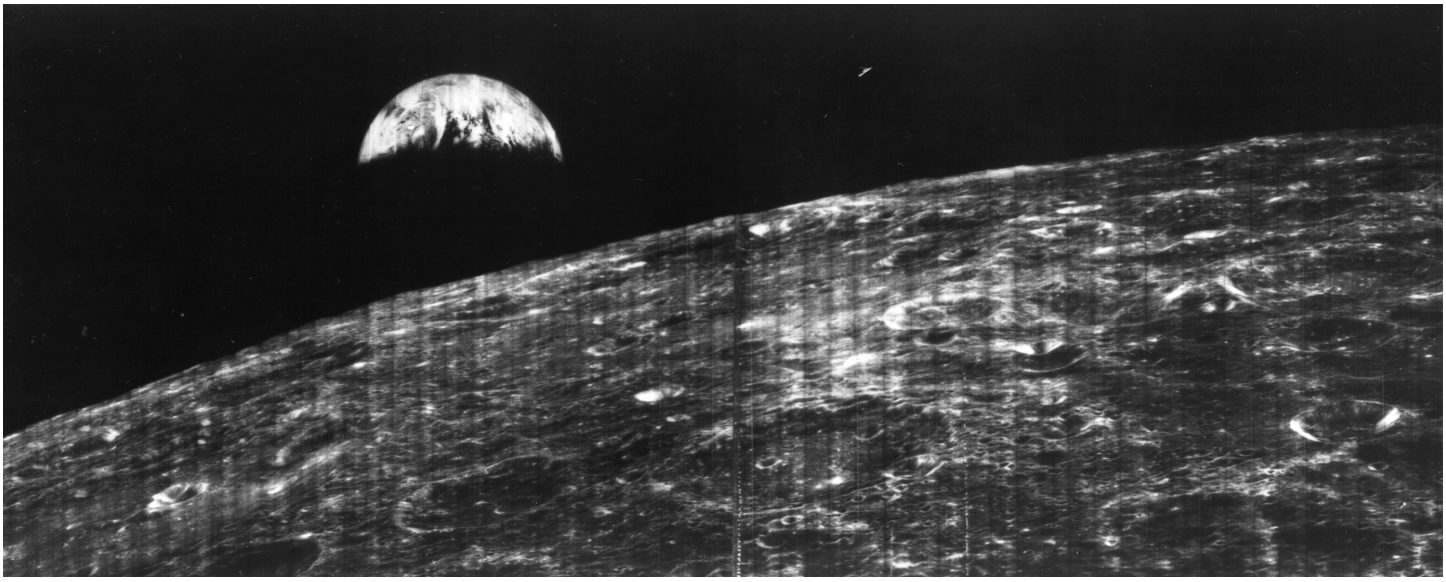
For Nicolas

§1. The Planetary Condition

If philosophy was brought to an end by technological planetarization (as Heidegger proclaimed in his time), or more recently by a historical turn driven by planetary computerization (as many enthusiastic authors have proclaimed in our time), then it remains our task to reflect on its nature and its future, or in Heidegger's own words, the "other beginning" (*anderer Anfang)*.[1] In this other beginning that Heidegger was looking for, human Dasein acquires a new relationship with Being and a free relationship with technology. Heidegger repositions thinking by returning to the Greeks, which may seem, at first glance, reactionary: Is this step back sufficient to confront the planetary situation that he himself describes? Doubtful. For Heidegger, writing in the 1930s, this planetarization implies a planetary lack of sense-making (*Besinnungslosigkeit)*, which is not limited to Europe but is also, for example, applicable to the US and Japan.[2] This lack of sense-making is even more obvious today. Even if European philosophy completely reinvents itself, disruptive technologies will continue apace throughout the globe. Any proposal to return to Being may appear embarrassing, if not ridiculous.[3] This is not because Europe is too late, but because it arrived too early, and no longer has control of the planetary situation that it started. This situation recalls what Heidegger said about the other meaning of the end of philosophy: "the beginning of the world-civilization based upon Western European thinking."[4]

Sense-making (*Besinnung)* cannot be restored through the negation of planetarization. Rather, thinking has to overcome this condition. This is a matter of life and death. We may want to call this kind of thinking, which is already taking form but has yet to be formulated, "planetary thinking." In order to elaborate on what planetary thinking might look like, as well as its relation to technological planetarization, we must further understand the essence of planetarization.

Planetarization is first of all the total mobilization of matter and energy. It creates different channels for all forms of energy (petrolic, hydraulic, electrical, psychic, sexual, etc.) above and beneath the earth. It is largely interchangeable with the term "globalization," or what Bruno Latour calls "globalization-minus," which is not an opening but a closing down of various perspectives.[5] Globalization has appeared under the guise of a blurring of borders, an opening to others that facilitates flows of capital and materials. However, it is largely driven by economic considerations. The conquest of markets arrived together with the conquest of land: history shows that trade and



On Aug. 23, 1966, the world received its first view of Earth taken by a spacecraft from the vicinity of the Moon. The photo was transmitted to Earth by the Lunar Orbiter I and received at the NASA tracking station at Robledo De Chavela near Madrid, Spain. The image was taken during the spacecraft's 16th orbit. Photo: NASA

colonization have always been deeply intertwined. When land, sea, and air are appropriated and circumscribed with borders—an indicator that modern nation-states are the sole postcolonial reality—the only form that colonization can continue to take is the conquest of markets. Modern diplomacy fuels this process by means other than direct military invasion, namely "soft power" or "culture."

The conquest of markets means a faster, smoother mobilization of material goods and capital, which necessarily creates trade deficits and surpluses. After the Cold War, globalization greatly accelerated this mobilization. Today, civilization can no longer bear it. Imagine a country whose population saw an almost 50 percent increase, from less than one billion to 1.4 billion people, in just forty years' time. How much exploitation of land, sea, and human beings was necessary to accommodate this increase in population and consumption? On the other side of the globe, deforestation of the Amazon has increased by 16 percent during the same forty year period, and has now sped up to three football fields per second under Bolsonaro. How many species have permanently disappeared as a result? Globalization means the exhaustion of resources as the human species reaches towards maximum acceleration. To maintain this geopolitical order, some stakeholders continue to deny that an ecological crisis is even taking place. Whether we like it or not, "planetarization" is probably the most significant condition of philosophizing today. This reflection doesn't come out of a demonization of modern technology or a celebration of technological domination, but rather a *wish* to radically open the possibility of technology, which today is increasingly dictated by science fiction.

§2 The Dialectics of Misrecognition

Total mobilization is made possible by rapid technological acceleration; it also demands that humans and nonhumans adapt to an ever intensifying technological evolution. The food delivery industry and its online platforms provide a clear example of how human flesh is used to compensate for the imperfections of algorithms. The human-bicycle nomad is propelled by orders made with human-apps. All of this is driven by a psychogeography dictated by hunger and desire. The nomad risks death by traffic accident in order to avoid punishment by data. The delivery person endures more misery when his bike is damaged than when his organic body suffers. The pain comes from an inability to meet efficiency quotas for orders and deliveries. What Marx described in the factory, which still occurs at Foxconn and other companies, is generalized across all industries. In other words, workers in all fields are automatically monitored and punished by data. This practice promises more efficient governance on all levels, from objects to living beings, from individuals to the state, based on universal calculability. It also exhibits what Heidegger calls *Gestell*, or "enframing": the essence of modern technology according to which every being is regarded as a standing reserve or a resource submitted to calculability.

Gestell expresses itself as kinetic politics, which Peter Sloterdijk describes as the key characteristic of modernity. Sloterdijk associates this kineticism with "total mobilization," a term Ernst Jünger notoriously used to describe wartime kinetics.[6] Total mobilization expresses itself in terms of "availability" and "accessibility" of material, information, and financial goods. In the food

delivery example, total mobilization ostensibly allows for the most "authentic" food to appear on a person's kitchen table, with all its promises of warmth and taste. The total mobilization of commodities is also the circulation of human labor and its double, namely the negation of "nature." This total mobilization also establishes a global episteme and aesthetics, driven by the necessity of acceleration. The realization of the world as a globe has been a continuous metaphysical project since antiquity. This project's completion through modern technology doesn't entail a smooth shift into a post-metaphysical world free of metaphysics. On the contrary, this metaphysical force maintains its grip on the fate of the human being.

A constant question remains: Where *is* this metaphysical force going? Or, where does it *desire* to go?

I have argued elsewhere that globalization, which has been celebrated as a unilateral process of colonization, is now confronting a lord-bondsman dialectic.[7] The lord-bondsman relationship is ultimately subverted by overdependence on a particular country as both factory and market. The "bondsman's" desire (*Begierde)* for recognition (which is nationalist in this case), realized through labor and technology, overturns the lord-bondsman relation. The "lord," awakened from this contradictory moment, has to reestablish its own boundaries and reduce its dependence, so that the bondsman can no longer threaten it and will become its subordinate once again. This moment could easily be interpreted as the end of globalization: the West has to reposition itself and reorganize its strategies by localizing and isolating threats to its dominance. Globalization might have come to an end, not because of the robustness of an anti-globalization movement (which silently died away), but rather because as a historical stage, it exposes more defects than the benefits it promises. This contradictory and confrontational moment has not yet been resolved, or better, *reconciled*, in the Hegelian sense. The German word for reconciliation, *Versöhnung*, which Hegel himself uses, fully expresses this process: one part of the equation will have to recognize the other as the father and identify itself as the son.

No matter who plays the part of the son in this drama, the nature of kinetic politics may not change. As long as the previous form of globalization continues, the bondsman countries will appeal for globalization and accuse the lord countries of acting against globalization. When they cut themselves off from the bondsman countries, the (former) lord countries also suffer: they lose the benefits they have been enjoying for the past century. An unhappy consciousness emerges and remains unresolved. We can observe this dialectic from afar, but we still have to question its nature and its future. We have no reason to blame Hegel—on the contrary, we should continue to admire his method of pushing rationality towards the Absolute—but we must analyze the mistakes his followers made. First of all, the dialectical movement of the world spirit is only a historical reconstruction. Like the owl of Minerva spreading its wings only when dusk falls, it is always already too late. And when it is projected into the future, this dialectical movement could easily fall prey to *Schwärmerei* (excessive sentiment or enthusiasm), like what happened to Francis Fukuyama with his *End of History and the Last Man*. Secondly, the lord-bondsman dialectical movement doesn't change the nature of power, only the configuration of power (otherwise, the bourgeois society that succeeded feudal society wouldn't have to be abolished). As in the classic Hegelian-Marxian dialectics, we see that the victory of the proletariat doesn't go beyond its own domination of power. This dialectic presupposes an overcoming of the lord, without realizing that the same power is reincarnated in a new monster. This is a common blind spot among Marxians. The desire to overcome the "lord" can result in nothing more than the "triumph" of the market, because then the lord countries will be accused of being anti-market and anti-globalization. This shift in power is only a promise to open the market, leading to more intensive planetarization and proletarization. We are confronting an impasse that demands fundamental transformations of concepts and practices.

§3. The Imperative of Diversification

The thinking of globalization, which is both the beginning and the end of the impasse, is not a planetary thinking. Global thinking is a dialectical thinking based on the dichotomy between the global and the local. It tends to produce twin monsters: imperialism on the one hand, fascism and nationalism on the other. The former universalizes its epistemology and ethics; the latter exaggerates external threats and traditional values. The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the recent geopolitical shift. In announcing the end of globalization, the pandemic does not promise a true vision, except for the sentiment that it marks the beginning of an epoch of catastrophe. On the contrary, all appeals to save the " *ancien régime*" resonating among the elites amount to nothing but the struggle for a regressive politics.

A planetary thinking is primarily an imperative for diversities. The concept of diversities, the façade of globalization, is based on the separation between techno-science and culture. In this sense, culture is reduced to "technology-free" rituals, social relations, customs, cuisines, and other forms of symbolic exchange. Multiculturalism is based on the modern assumption of the separation of technology and nature. Here technology is only understood as modern technology that has emerged since the industrial revolution. Nature, in this case, is conceived merely as an external environment or as an assemblage of non-man-made entities. We immediately enter into a dialectics of nature, through which nature will have "to consume itself like a Phoenix in order to emerge from this externality rejuvenated as

spirit."[8] This is a nature of logic that is fully compatible with modern science and technology. The diversity that globalization promised, found in the nature of multiculturalism, is far from true diversity since it is based on this disjointed concept of nature and technology. This is why Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, through his research on Amerindian perspectivism, proposes multinaturalism in contrast to multiculturalism. According to Viveiros de Castro, the former affirms a multiplicity of natures, while the latter is built upon the modern concept of homogenous nature. Without reopening the question of nature and technology, we are trapped in a system maintained by positive feedback loops, like alcoholics who cannot stop drinking again once they have had another taste of alcohol.

We moderns are alcoholics. And it is probably true that acceleration is considered a way out, via a quasi-tragic gesture that embraces what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri once reproached Samir Amin for: "Perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough … one has to accelerate the process."[9] A planetary thinking is not about mere acceleration, but rather diversification. It is called forth by planetarization, and simultaneously summons all efforts to go beyond it and transform it. The three notions of diversity that constitute what we call planetary thinking are *biodiversity*, *noodiversity*, and *technodiversity*.

Biodiversity is fundamentally a question of locality. It is defined by a specific geographical milieu and maintained by the particular relations between humans and nonhumans. These relations are inscribed and mediated through technical inventions, which is the constitutive part of a people, in terms of rituals, customs, and tools. Modernization and its productionist metaphysics have recognized these differences but have rendered them contingent. This doesn't mean that the Western premodern or the non-Western non-modern is better than the Western modern, but rather that one shouldn't relinquish the value of any of them too quickly. The human species is part of the larger system, therefore an antihuman gesture won't take us far. A renewed human and nonhuman relation is much more urgent and critical today, as many scholars have already said. Notable among them are the anthropologists of the "ontological turn" such as Philippe Descola and the "multispecies" school represented by Donna Haraway, forming two camps divided by a "preference" for culturalism or naturalism.

About a hundred years ago, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin proposed the notion of the noosphere. In short, the idea is that the technological envelopment of the globe since the beginning of hominization will converge and culminate in an emergent "super brain."[10] Here, this technological evolution means Westernization. According to Teilhard, the East is "anti-time and anti-evolution," while the Western way is "a way of convergence including love, of progress, synthesis, taking time as real and evolution as real, and recognizing the world as an organic whole."[11]

From a religious point of view, Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere is meant to be a *christogenesis*, a universalization of love; from a technological point of view, it is the universalization of a set of particular worldviews and epistemologies. The "super brain" or the "brain of all brains" is witness to the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth, but also the triumph of evolutionary and progressive Western thought. The culmination of the noosphere is certainly not a diversification, but rather a convergence mistaken for Christian universal love or "the One." The noosphere must be *fragmented* and diversified, and such fragmentation or diversification will only be possible when we take the diversity of thinking and the thinking of technodiversity further. We can reconfigure human and nonhuman relations as well as political economy through the development of technodiversity.

Both biodiversity and noodiversity are conditioned by technodiversity. Without technodiversity, we only have homogenous ways of dealing with nonhuman agencies and the world itself—as if homogeneous equals universal. If we take technology to be neutral and universal, then we might repeat what Arnold Toynbee said last century regarding Asian countries' naive importation of Western technology in the nineteenth century. Namely, he claimed that Far Easterners in the sixteenth century refused the Europeans because the latter wanted to export both religion and technology, while in the nineteenth century, when the Europeans only exported technology, the Far Eastern countries considered technology a neutral force that could be mastered by their own thought.[12] Carl Schmitt quoted the same passage from Toynbee to describe how the industrial revolution and technological advancement led to the domination of maritime Dasein: "The East must allow itself to be developed by us."[13]

§4. Epistemological Diplomacy

Schmitt's *Nomos of the Earth* started and ended with a reflection on the history of technology; after centuries of land and sea forces competing, in the twentieth century we see the rise of air force, ranging from combat aircraft to long-distance missiles. Power in the twenty-first century lies not in the parliament but in infrastructure. Some sharp-eyed writers have noticed that European bank notes issued in 2003 and 2013 no longer feature portraits of political or historical figures, but infrastructure. More than ever, technological competition is a battlefield on all levels, from enterprise to military defense and state administration. Infrastructure is not only a materialist concept; in addition to its economic, operational, and political purposes, it also embeds complex sets of axiological, epistemological, and ontological assumptions which may not be immediately visible. This is why the concept of diversity, which is central to planetary thinking, has yet to be thought. To further depict what planetary thinking might look like, a task that we cannot fully perform here, we can start with what it is *not*. In this way, we can give planetary thinking a contour.

Planetary thinking is not about the *preservation* of diversity, which posits itself against external destruction, but rather the *creation* of diversity. This diversification is grounded in the recognition of locality—not simply to preserve its traditions (though they remain essential), but also to innovate in the service of locality. We, as terrestrial beings, have always already landed, but it doesn't mean we know where we are; we are disoriented by planetarization. Like looking at the earth from the moon, we no longer notice the land under our feet.[14] Since Copernicus, the infinity of space has stood as a great void. The insecurity and nihilistic tendency inherent to this void were countered by Cartesian subjectivity, which returns all doubts and fears to man himself. Today the Cartesian meditation is succeeded by a celebration of the Anthropocene, the return of the human after a long period of "rolling from the center toward X."[15] The infiniteness of space today means infinite possibilities for the exploitation of resources. Humanity has already begun fleeing earth and hurtling towards dark matter, of which we know virtually nothing. Diversification is the imperative for a planetary thinking to come, and this in turn demands a return to the earth.

Planetary thinking is not nationalist thinking. Instead, it must go beyond the limit already set by the concept of the nation-state and its diplomacy. What is the finality of the existence of a people or a nation? Is it only the revival of a proper name? This is how diplomacy has expressed itself in the past century, ever since the nation-state became the elementary unit of geopolitics. Diplomacy has been based on a strong national interest and nationalist sentiment, all of which has led to a denial of ecological crises and the global spread of pandemics. Therefore, paradoxically, the sudden affirmation of the current crisis may also come out of diplomatic necessity. The nationalist sentiment is nurtured by economic growth and military expansion, which are seen as the only means by which to defend against threats from outside. A new diplomacy must arrive: an epistemological diplomacy grounded in the project of technodiversity. This new diplomacy is more likely to be initiated by knowledge producers and intellectuals than by diplomats, who are increasingly becoming consumers and victims of social media.

Planetary thinking is not Zen enlightenment or Christian revelation. It is the recognition that we are in and will remain in a state of catastrophe. According to Schmitt, God has already passed his power to man and man passed it to machines.[16] The new *nomos* of the earth has to be thought according to the history of technology and its future—and it is precisely this future of technology that Schmitt never sufficiently addressed. It remains to be discussed how to develop new design practices and bodies of knowledge, ranging from agriculture to industrial production, that do not act in the service of industry, but are rather capable of transforming industry. This equally prompts us to question the role of universities and their knowledge production today beyond acting as talent factories for technological disruption and acceleration. This restructuring of knowledge and practice is the main challenge for rethinking the university in the twenty-first century.

Biodiversity, noodiversity, and technodiversity are not separate domains, but are closely intertwined and mutually dependent. The moderns conquered land, sea, and air with a technological unconsciousness. They rarely questioned the tools they invented and used, until a first treatise on the philosophy of technology officially came out of Hegelianism. The philosophy of technology, which officially started with Ernst Kapp and Karl Marx, has begun to gain significant traction in academic philosophy. But is this "technological consciousness" sufficient to take us in a different direction after modernity?[17] Or does it simply make the modern project more central, as in how technology was considered the principle productive force in developing countries? Planetarization will probably continue for a relatively long time. We are not likely to be awoken by its irreversible miseries, since these can always be subsumed under humans' vain desire to reaffirm the role of the tragic hero. Instead, we will have to initiate other *ways* to accommodate new forms of life in a post-metaphysical world. This remains the task for planetary thinking.

To be continued ...

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1
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2
Martin Heidegger, *GA66 Besinnung (1938/39)* (Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 74.

3
I will deal in detail with this question in *Art and Cosmotechnics* (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming 2021).

4
Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *On Time and Being*, trans. Johan Stambaugh (Harper & Row, 1972), 59.

5
Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* , trans. Catherine Porter (Polity, 2019), 15.

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Peter Sloterdijk, *Infinite Mobilization: Towards a Critique of Political Kinetics* , trans. Sandra Berjan (Polity, 2020).

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Yuk Hui, "On the Unhappy Consciousness of Neoreactionaries," *e-flux journal*, no. 81 (April 2017) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/81/125815/on-the-unhappy-consciousness-of-neoreactionaries/ .

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Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, vol. 3, trans. M. J. Petry (George Allen and Unwin, 1970), §376.

9
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* , trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 239–40.

10
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man* , trans. Norman Denny (Image Books, 2004), 151: "When *Homo faber* came into being the first rudimentary tool was born as an appendage of the human body. Today the tool has been transformed into a mechanized envelope (coherent within itself and immensely varied) appertaining to all mankind. From being somatic it has become 'noospheric.'"

11
Joseph Needham, "Preface," in Ursula King, *Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern Religions* (Seabury, 1980), xiii.

12
Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West* (Oxford University Press, 1953), 67.

13
Carl Schmitt, *Dialogues on Power and Space* (Polity, 2015), 67.

14
This also differentiates our approach from Bruno Latour's terrestrial thinking. The terrestrial is the common denominator of all: left and right, modern and nonmodern. He contrasts terrestrial to both local and global. See Latour, *Down to Earth*, 54.

15
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* , trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (Vintage Books, 1968), 8.

16
Schmitt, *Dialogues*, 46.

17
In *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Urbanomic, 2016), I used "technological consciousness" to characterize Jean-François Lyotard's postmodern project.

Achille Mbembe

Meditation on the Second Creation

What does human nature consist in and, beyond it, what is life? What makes us moral beings? What is our destiny on earth? For a very long time, only theologians, metaphysicians, and philosophers of existence seemed to concern themselves with such questions.

Odd as it may seem, today they are back, including and especially among scientists. The meditation on how life ends has only increased in intensity in the context of the coronavirus lockdowns and the ever-rising death toll.

But whereas in the past it was a matter of determining whether the human was above all body or mind, today the debate is about whether it is matter and matter alone, or if, in the end, it is merely a sum of physical and chemical processes.

The discussion is also about what the futures of life can be in the age of extremes, and the conditions under which life ends.

Body, matter, and life are three very distinct concepts. One need not embrace Christianity to understand that, in every human body, in its organic unity, there is something that is not solely matter. To this something, several names have been given by different cultures and in different eras. But whatever the cultural differences, the truth of the human body will have been to resist any reductionism.

The same is true of what could be called the body of the earth, and even its flesh. The body of the earth is recognizable in its profusion. Typical of this is the viral eruption that we are currently experiencing on a planetary scale.

In the eyes of many, this virus is a demonstration of nature's virtually infinite power. They see in it an event of cosmic portent, a harbinger of disasters to come. For others, it is the logical outcome of the project of a Godless world, which they accuse modernity of having initiated. For them, this world, supposedly free but in actuality left to its own devices and with no recourse, has done nothing but subjugate humans under the constraint of a nature that is now converted into an arbitrary power.

In fact, God's absence is hardly what characterizes today's world. Neither is God's virulent and vengeful presence, in the form of the violence of a virus or other natural calamities, the distinctive features of our times. The hallmark of the beginning of the twenty-first century is the swing into animism.

Coupled with technological escalation, the transformations of capitalism have led to a twofold excess: an excess of *pneuma* (breath) and an excess of artifacts, the transformation of artifacts into *pneuma* (in the theological sense of the term). Nothing translates this excess better than the techno-digital universe that has become the double of our world, the objectal embodiment

of the *pneuma*.

The distinctive characteristic of contemporary humanity is to constantly traverse screens and be immersed in image machines that are at the same time dream machines. Most of these images are animated. They produce all kinds of illusions and fantasies, starting with the fantasy of self-generation. But above all they enable new forms of presence and circulation, incarnation, reincarnation, and even resurrection. Not only has technology become theology, it has become eschatology.

In this universe, it is not only possible to split oneself into two or to exist in more than one place at a time, and in more than one body or in more than one flesh. In fact, it is also possible to have doubles, i.e., other selves, a cross between the person's own body and the image of the person's body on the screen. Moreover, traversing screens has become the primary activity of contemporary humanity. It authorizes us to exit bodily boundaries and inaugurates the plunge into all sorts of parallel worlds, including the beyond, without a safety net. In being transported to the other side of the screen, humanity can be present to itself while simultaneously keeping a distance from itself.

Contemporary animism is, moreover, the result of a vast reconfiguration of the human and its relationship with the living. The era of the *second creation* has thus begun. It is now a matter of technologically capturing the energy of the living and downloading it into the human, in a process that calls to mind the first creation. This time, however, the project is to transfer all the attributes of the living into organo-artificial components endowed essentially with the characteristics of the human person.

These components are called upon to operate as human doubles. While in the past animism was considered a relic of the obscurantism of so-called primitive societies, now it is now compatible with artificial intelligence, supercomputers, nanorobots, artificial neurons, RFID chips, and telepathic brains.

This second creation, however, is basically profane. It proceeds via a threefold process of decorporation, recorporation, and transcorporation that instrumentalizes the human body in an attempt to turn it into a vehicle of hybridization and symbiosis. This threefold process is sacramental. It is the cornerstone of the new technological religions. It appropriates the fundamental categories of the Christian mystery, the better to destabilize them, beginning with creation itself, the incarnation, the transfiguration, the resurrection, the ascension, and even the Eucharist (this is my body).

With the cybernetization of the world, both the human and the divine are downloaded into a multitude of tech objects, interactive screens, and physical machines. These objects have become genuine crucibles in which visions and beliefs, the contemporary metamorphoses of faith, are forged. From this standpoint, contemporary technological religions are expressions of animism. But they also differ from it inasmuch as they are governed by the principle of artifice, whereas ancestral animism was governed by that of vital force.

Indeed, in ancestral animism, neither body nor life existed without air, without water, and without a common ground. In African precolonial systems of thought, for instance, life and body, and consequently the human, were fundamentally open to air and to breath, to water and to fire, to dust and to wind, to trees and to their vegetation, to animals and to the nocturnal world. Everything was alive, at the intersection of languages. This essential porosity was what made for its essential fragility. It was thought that the human adventure on earth was played out in the reality of air and breath. This could only last if a place was made for the regeneration of vital cycles. Life consisted in assembling together absolutely everything. It was a matter of *composition* and not excessiveness.

As the birthplace of humanity, Africa has perhaps experienced more catastrophic forces than other parts of the globe. It has learned from this that catastrophe is not an event that happens once and for all, and then goes away after having accomplished its gruesome work, leaving a world of ruins in its wake. For many peoples, it has been a never-ending process, which accumulates and sediments.

Under these conditions, opening channels for a more breathable world could be the foundation of a new ethic in the viral age. For the viral age is the corollary of the Anthropocene, the irreversible transformation of environments and the expansion of a new form of colonialism: techno-molecular colonialism.

The age of brutalism—that is, of forced entry—it is an age in which dream machines and catastrophic forces will become increasingly visible actors of history. The air we breathe will be more and more laden with dust, toxic gases, substances and waste, particles and granulations—in short, with all kinds of emanations. Instead of exiting the body thanks to immersive visualization technologies, the point will then be to return to it, especially through the organs that are most exposed to asphyxiation and suffocation.

To return to the body is also to come back to earth, understood not as a land, but as an event that, in the end, fundamentally defies the boundaries of states. Understood in this way, the earth belongs to all its inhabitants, without distinction of race, origin, ethnicity, religion, or even species. It pays no attention to the blind individual or to the naked singularity. It reminds us how much each body, human or otherwise, however singular it may be, bears on and in itself, in its essential porosity, the marks not of the diaphanous universal, but of commonality and

incalculability.

X

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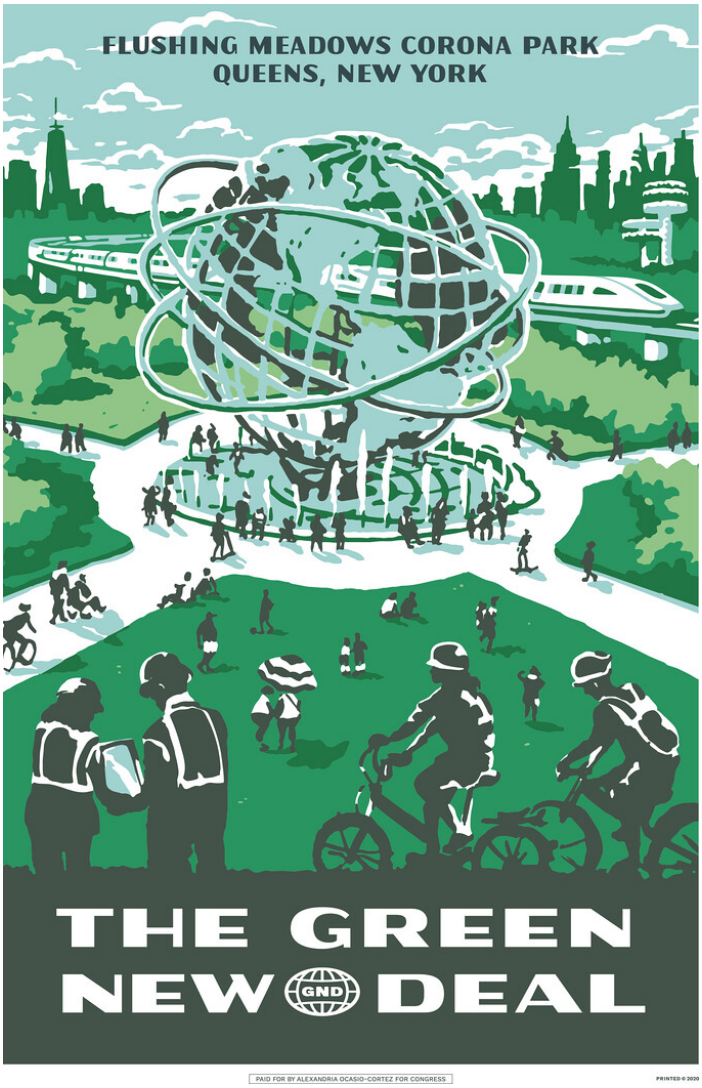
Pierre Charbonnier

For an Ecological Realpolitik



Green New Deal poster developed for Alexandria Ocasio Cortez's campaign, 2020. Artist: Gavin Snider; Creative Director: Scott Starrett; Detailer Dayi Tofu, Maria Arenas; Type: Jamie Wilson. Copyright: Tandem, NYC

On September 22, 2020, Xi Jinping, the chairman of the People's Republic of China, announced a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the aim of achieving carbon neutrality before 2060. Here, then, is China, the world's largest CO2 producer and leading industrial power, sometimes dubbed the "chimney of the world," seemingly embarking on an unprecedented path of development.

In a text published a few days later, historian Adam Tooze unpacked the geopolitical implications of the announcement, which he sees as a major turning point in the international order.[1] Given China's strategic, environmental, and economic weight, Xi's announcement—regardless of its subsequent implementation—could act like Archimedes's lever and effect a profound realignment of commercial and industrial policies currently in place. But this

announcement also means that an authoritarian ecology is on the march, which makes it urgent to reposition Europe's environmentalist strategies to give democratic alternatives a chance.

In Europe, and especially in France, this news was greeted with extreme caution, when it was not met with silence. I would like to try to explain the reasons behind Europe's inability to grasp the implications of the Chinese commitment, and what this inability says about the prevailing conception of the environment in our European provinces.

The first point that is absolutely crucial to stress, and which Tooze only implicitly indicates, is the monumental historical paradox that consists in making a show of political power by launching a program of fossil disarmament.

Ever since the emergence of industrial societies, particularly after World War II, the capacity to mobilize resources, especially energy resources, has coincided almost perfectly with influence on the global political scene. Coal and oil are not only the primary engines of a production capacity that generates high levels of consumption and a relative pacification of class conflict; they are also the stakes in cross-border projections of power designed to secure low-cost, steady supplies. The political order that emerged from World War II was obsessed, after the episode of fascism, with a search for stability (in the absence of genuine peace). It found an instrument of unparalleled power in the development of productive forces, serving both to ease internal tensions in industrial societies and to maintain the status quo between these nations and the new players that emerged from decolonization.

These historical dynamics explain the reluctance to pursue the path of an ecological revolution. Although earth system science has provided us with detailed evidence of the climate imperative, the inertia of the development paradigm and its percolating effect on both international relations and class relations have paralyzed the green turn. Without this engine of growth, how, one wonders, can "the social model" of industrial societies be preserved, and how, one wonders on the other side of the world, can the demands of development be satisfied?

The announcement by the chairman of China disrupts this logic—hence its historical importance. With the United States mired in a democratic crisis and Europe stuck in its wait-and-see attitude, China has taken the lead and opened a breach by signaling that it is now possible, indeed necessary, to pursue power politics without relying on fossil fuels. It goes without saying that China's plan for financing a decarbonized production infrastructure in no way means that the country is abandoning its dream of geostrategic influence and development, but simply that from now on it intends to ground its power—both its economic engine and its strategic base—in other material possibilities.

In doing this, China is killing two birds with one stone. It is responding to science by preparing for a future in which global warming is limited, and it is consolidating its internal and external legitimacy by appearing as a responsible actor aligned with the objectives announced in the Paris Agreement. Tooze, as an historian of the economics of war, makes perfectly clear the simultaneously realistic and moral character of Xi's announcement. We cannot continue to content ourselves with a debate that pits self-serving intentions geared toward power gains against purer intentions aimed at the global common good. Both dimensions are present in the Chinese announcement, and we must be prepared for them to be constantly mixed together in the years to come.

But this also takes on significance in terms of political philosophy, and this is no doubt what we missed in Europe. If it is true, as I have suggested in *Abondance et liberté* (Abundance and freedom), that human interests in the political sphere always depend on material possibilities (more or less perceived as such), then we must admit that we are living through a fundamental shift in these geo-ecological assemblages. While we have long been asking ourselves the question of the perpetuation of a legitimate political power—that is, of a democratization of capitalism—in the context of an ecological and energy shift, we must now accept the idea that such shifts will instead feed processes of relegitimization and power consolidation. This utterly crucial reversal in the materiality of modern politics is being played out before our very eyes. The shaping of post-carbon politics is not a peaceful landing in the world of shared interests, but rather a theater of rivalries organized around new infrastructures, new assemblages between political power and the mobilization of the earth.

The second point to stress is more directly related to the movement for the climate and the environment (the red-green universe) as it exists in the West. In recent years there has been a rapprochement in Europe and in the United States between the political imaginary of the traditional social-issues left, heir to the workers' movement, and that of political ecology. Admittedly, the compromise between these two worlds remains quite fragile, to the extent that the alignment between the exploitation of humans and of nature is debatable. But a strategic pact is nonetheless taking shape around reactivating economic interventionism, in a play on references to the postwar period. The Green New Deal, in its significantly varied American and European versions, does not yet structure investment plans that are both capable of meeting the challenge and truly rooted in social justice objectives, but it has imposed itself as the common ground of the Western left.

Yet the strength of the Green New Deal is also its weakness. This plan for economic and social reconstruction aims to break through the barrier of the employment problem by subordinating energy transition to wealth redistribution, control of investment channels, and even job guarantees. Thus defined, this project runs the risk of preserving the structural inequities between Global North and Global South. Whereas the so-called "developing" countries will lack the means to finance such plans, their partners to the North will have the wherewithal to reinvest their techno-scientific capital in a renovation that will only enhance their "lead" and their security. This paradox, which Tooze recently analyzed, is all the more embarrassing for the social-ecological left inasmuch as it compromises its rallying cry, namely the discourse of inclusion and global justice. Seen from the Global South, the Green New Deal often looks like a consolidation of the advantages gained during the colonial period of extractivism, and also like a lifeboat for advanced economies at a time of global disturbances.

Since at least the 1990s, Western environmentalism has been the subject of scathing criticism, notably from India. Ramachandra Guha, for instance, exposed the colonial and racist imaginary of the "wilderness" that enabled Americans to cleanse their urban and industrial guilty conscience by way of natural parks, which were established by evicting indigenous populations. This colonial disorder, which accompanies the environmental policies of the wealthy, continues to a certain extent with the paradox of the Green New Deal. There has long been a gap between ecology's universalist, moral discourse, including when it is linked to social issues, and the darker reality of the structural, material inequities that it struggles to offset. We know therefore that ecology's moral superiority does not amount to much, that it is something to be forged rather than posited. Peaceful ideas are often intimately bound up with a violent world.

And in this respect, too, the Chinese decision has upended the game. Indeed, the plan Xi announced to phase out fossil fuel dependence is based neither on a moral argument with regard to the environmental ravages caused by extractive industrialism, nor on the desire to curb or abolish the system of capitalist exploitation. It simply seeks to modify its material foundation, in what could be called an eco-modernist perspective, which is not incompatible with power ambitions. It so happens that, because of the Chinese economy's weight on a global scale, this plan—decided in a vertical, top-down fashion—is likely to have beneficial consequences for the global climate, and hence for all of humanity (which is what distinguishes it from a similar plan adopted in France, for example). At the same time, the plan is but a lateral consequence of global power-game decisions made in Beijing—a game the chairman of China knows how to play well.

We Europeans tend to think (and I am no exception) that the ecological question has taken over from a liberating movement that has run out of steam. We think, in other words, that environmentalism enshrines the social demands of equality and freedom in a new regime of production and consumption that could loosen the hold of economic exploitation and individualist anomie. In short, the point is to promote the emergence of a new social type, breaking with the one that accompanied the period of rapid growth, and rely on this to reactivate the process of democratization and social inclusion that has come to a standstill. This project can be used to disqualify the Chinese announcement, to assert that it does not rise to the challenge or that it resolves the problem through authoritarian means. That may well be. But by adopting this strategy (and I believe that this is the prevailing attitude in these spheres), we run the risk of not fully grasping the geopolitical and ideological waters in which we are navigating willy-nilly, and hence of not grasping the historical sense of our own project.

Indeed, it is simplistic to imagine that the conflict in which we are caught pits exploiting, alienating, and extractive capitalism against a political ecology of reconciliation between human beings, and between humans and nonhumans. This would be the consequence of conflating the countercultural lexicon of environmentalism with the lexicon of social critique in the red-green universe: ecology or barbarism. But now we find ourselves in a situation where aging fossil capitalism, mired in its material and social contradictions, coexists with a state capitalism engaged in accelerated decarbonization, and with the more demanding and radical path of reinventing the meaning of progress and the social value of production. If we accept this description of the situation, as clearly rudimentary as it is, Europe's red-green left takes on a different significance. It is then no longer locked in a binary confrontation with capitalism (reputed to be unfailingly fossil) in which it embodies the frontline of progress, invested as it is with a universal mission. The Chinese model that is being developed provides a third term, a third model of development, which is both compatible with the global climate aims defined in the 2016 Paris Agreement and possibly in tension with the green ideal of democracy that the social-ecological movement advocates.

Otherwise put, political ecology loses its status as the unique countermodel; it loses its ability to impose itself in debates as an anti-hegemonic political form. Two questions follow from this. First, what kind of alliance will it establish with the Chinese model to safeguard at least what is essential on a strictly climatic level, at the risk of no longer having "clean hands"? And, symmetrically, how will it make its specificity heard with regard to this new paradigm?

The European social-ecological left must figure out whether the Chinese announcement has "stolen the spotlight," so to speak, by embodying the central path

Green New Deal poster developed for Alexandria Ocasio Cortez's campaign, 2020. Artist: Gavin Snider; Creative Director: Scott Starrett; Detailer Dayi Tofu, Maria Arenas; Type: Jamie Wilson. Copyright: Tandem, NYC.

towards breaking the climate impasse, or whether, by a more complex game of three players, which also involves relations with the United States, it opens a breach that must be entered without delay. This breach is quite simply the definitive weakening of fossil capitalism, that is, of the American way of life (indeed, the US appears to be the weakest player on the global political and economic scene right now), consequently opening the possibility of a more direct debate between China and Europe. To put the question even more simply: What political forms should undergird the ecological turn? European ecology must take a turn towards realism. This does not mean it has to embark on an aggressive, pugnacious debate with other geopolitical players, but it must abandon its harmful habit of expressing itself in consensual, pacifying, and even moralizing terms, and agree to play on a complex political terrain.

After all, this dimension has always been present in the history of social welfare, even though we don't always like to be reminded of these things. The development of systems of protection began in Prussia; and, in a way, Xi Jinping is a little like the Bismarck of ecology: he does not so much listen to the demands of environmental justice as he anticipates them in order to silence them. The postwar advances in social rights in Europe are incomprehensible outside the geopolitical game that combines the specter of fascism, the war to be stamped out, the Bolshevik possibility, and American influence. As a British political representative put it, "The National Health Service is a by-product of the blitz."[2] The fact is that emancipation is not always, and not even primarily, won through expressions of moral generosity; it is also a matter of power. The figure of Lenin seems to be making a return to favor in critical thought, perhaps precisely because ecology has not yet found its Lenin.

The ecology movement should therefore agree to talk about strategy, conflict, and security; it should present itself as a dynamics of building a political form that assumes the idea of power without scaling back on social and democratic demands. In fact, these demands can only be achieved if they are invested into specifically political reflections and practices. But for this to be possible, we have to leave behind our tendency toward moral depoliticization, because we no longer have a monopoly on the critique of the fossil development paradigm. A new arena is emerging, and we have no choice but to launch ourselves into it.

X

Translated from the French by Gila Walker.

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1
Adam Tooze, "Did Xi Just Save the World?" *Foreign Policy*, September 25, 2020 https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/25/xi-china-climate-change-saved-the-world%E2%80%A8/ .

2
Quoted in Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Yale University Press, 2013), 131.

Paul B. Preciado

The Hot War

Mapping the modalities of a revolutionary present involves factoring in not only the processes of political subjectivation, the invention of new practices and new languages, but also the counterrevolutionary strategies being implemented by techno-patriarchal and postcolonial institutions to prevent profound social and political transformations. Mapping the revolution that is underway also, and necessarily, entails counting the enemy's bullets in our bodies.

This past October 22, thirty-two states, including the United States, Brazil, Egypt, Poland, and Hungary, affirmed their political desire to restrict current laws regarding the right to abortion with the signature of the Geneva Consensus Declaration. A new techno-patriarchal bloc is thus being forged on a planetary scale. Developing strategies of resistance to counter this authoritarian neoliberalism is a matter of urgency.

That same day, Poland's Constitutional Tribunal ruled that abortions for "fetal abnormality" (the reason for 90 percent of abortions currently performed in the country) were illegal, thereby making it virtually impossible to have a legal abortion on Polish soil. This ruling tightens what already stood as one of the most restrictive laws in Europe: until then, Poland allowed abortions only in cases of rape, incest, danger to the mother, or irreversible fetal abnormality. Dunja Mijatovi, the human rights commissioner of the Council of Europe, urged Poland's parliament to reject the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling, endorsed by deputies from the PiS (Law and Justice Party, an ultraconservative party), Kukiz (an anti-party movement), and the PSL (Polish Peasants' Party), joined by Korwin-Mikke's far right formation.

It was only a few hours later that day that, in the midst of the media fog occasioned by the management of the pandemic and twelve days before the elections in the United States, the governments of Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, Uganda, and the US, cosponsors of the declaration, were joined by twenty-seven other countries in a virtual signing ceremony of the Geneva Consensus Declaration (so called because it was intended to be held in Geneva before the World Health Assembly was postponed due to the global health crisis), broadcast from Washington, DC.

Presented as a restrictive amendment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration "further strengthens the coalition to achieve four pillars: (1) better health for women, (2) the preservation of human life, (3) strengthening of family as the foundational unit of society, and (4) protecting every nation's national sovereignty in global politics. For example, it is the sovereign right of every nation to make their own laws in regard to abortion, absent external pressure."[1]

During the virtual signing ceremony, Alex Azar, White House secretary of Health and Human Services,

Image by Ola Jasionowska for Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet (Polish Women on Strike).

emphasized "that every country has its own sovereign right to determine its own laws with respect to abortion. We say clearly, 'There is no international obligation on the part of states to finance or facilitate abortion.'" Katalin Novák, the Hungarian minister for families, asserted the importance of "protecting the right of a woman to be a mother."

But who protects the right of a body to which the female gender was assigned at birth to be a sex worker, to be a lesbian, and even to be a mother who's a sex worker or a lesbian? And what about the right to be trans, including the right to be a trans mother or father? Or the right to define oneself as nonbinary? The right to disidentify? And if the reproduction of human life is so important to the signatory countries, why is there no similar legislation governing erections, male ejaculation, and sperm flow?

It would be naive to see the Geneva Consensus Declaration as nothing but a bluff, an act of media propaganda, or a ritual of political intimidation. It is all these, of course, but it is more. This declaration is supported by a cascade of legal reforms already underway in several countries, including Poland and Hungary, but also Brazil and Uganda. In fact, a few days after the signing ceremony, the appointment of the openly pro-life justice Amy Coney Barrett to the US Supreme Court came to buttress the declaration.

In the so-called Western democracies, the Geneva Consensus Declaration is one more sign of the shift from neoliberalism to a form of neo-"authoritarian liberalism," to borrow the expression that philosopher and legal scholar Hermann Heller used to describe the late Weimar regime before its collapse in 1933.[2] Oddly enough, the words that most closely resemble the Geneva Declaration were spoken by Hitler on November 5, 1937, revealing his plans for the acquisition of " *Lebensraum*," or "living space," through the annexation of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

Living Spaces

In legal terms, the Geneva Consensus Declaration is the affirmation of the expansion of state sovereignty against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In political terms, the declaration is an act of annexation of wombs as territories over which nation-states claim full sovereignty, "living spaces" over which they deploy a strategy of occupation. It is a mistake derived from the naturalization of bodies and sexualities to imagine that the political notion of national territory, and the protection and extension of borders, concerns land alone. The sovereignty of the patriarchal and capitalist state is defined by its will to push the boundaries of the skin, infiltrate the interiority of the body, and designate certain organs as its "vital space."

The declaration, signed by thirty-two countries, is a diplomatic attack on the bodies of what the signatory states call, in discriminatory terms, "women." These "women" are not regarded as political subjects in their own right within their respective nation-states, but as

"living spaces" over which national sovereignty can be extended.

With the Geneva Declaration, we are now in a position to formulate an updated definition of patriarchy. We are dealing here with a political regime that declares female gendered bodies, children, homosexual, trans, and nonbinary bodies to be territories where national sovereignty holds sway. On the other hand, male and heterosexual bodies, and their organs and reproductive fluids, are declared fully sovereign. The state has no power to legislate their private or public use. The building of gender differences is coercive but highly asymmetrical: in the patriarchal regime, the male body is meant to function as a military instrument of the state dedicated to the occupation and expansion of living spaces, while the female body is represented as a territory to annex, a colony to occupy.

The same could be expressed with the sexo-political equation: open hole / squirt of sperm = national sovereignty.

Just as Germany's defense of "living space" in 1937 led two years later to the start of World War II, so the declaration of the thirty-two signatory countries to promote women's health and protect the right to life is a declaration of war by the united techno-patriarchal states against the free wombs of the planet. The terms of the declaration are evidence that the most important battle in today's global economy is focused on appropriating not only the means of production, but also and especially the means of the reproduction of life. The living human body is to the twentieth-first century what the factory was to the nineteenth: the seat of political struggle. It is not simply a matter of knowing whether the body has replaced the factory, but of understanding once and for all that the living body *is* the factory. The living human body is not a mere anatomical object, a natural organism, but what I call a " *somatheque*," that is to say, a historically and collectively constructed political space that can in no way be treated as an object, much less as private property belonging to the subject. The *somatheque* can be brutally objectified, as was the case in concentration camps; it can be expropriated, as was the case in the regimes of slavery. But it can never be entirely reduced to an object or property.

The proletarian and racialized body along with the body with a potentially reproductive uterus have been colonial capitalism's most important living machines since the end of the sixteenth century. Hundreds of thousands of African bodies were used as living machines on cotton plantations, tobacco fields, and in mines; indigenous fungible bodies which were not enslaved were treated as hands, legs, and muscles to carry loads until death, but also as sexualized bodies and penetrable orifices; and proletarian bodies were inserted into the production process as human engines forced to move to the rhythm of the great machine.

But of all living machines, none has been as thoroughly exploited, and in such a festive and disgusting, such a condescending and sacralized way, as the body with the reproductive uterus. Modern colonial and patriarchal medicine defines the uterus as an organ belonging to the female reproductive system. This definition is tautological: the concept of woman is bound up with that of the uterus and vice versa, in a never-ending loop.[3] To counter the discourse of the epistemology of sexual difference, I propose to regard the uterus not as "woman's" natural organ but as a political territory to be conquered, as a "vital space" over which various political entities fight for control. The uterus is a highly vascular, muscular, hollow organ, suspended in the abdomen of certain bodies, which has an uncommon capability of transformation and production: it can enlarge from three to thirty centimeters in diameter to reach a weight of almost ten kilos when it becomes the space of a reproduction process.

A chamber of intensity, the uterus is not, however, a closed space: if it were, it would not be reproductive. Access to this "living space" usually includes the vulva, an area located in the perineum, the pubis, the outer and inner lips, the clitoris, the vestibule, the vestibular glands, and a fibromuscular tube that connects the outside of the vulva with the uterus. The transformation of the uterus into a reproductive space is not spontaneous, given that a process of intentional insemination with sperm is necessary. Therefore, an equivalence cannot be established between woman and uterus. For this reason, in philosophical terms, I prefer the descriptor "body with a potentially reproductive uterus" to "woman." The category "woman" is the result of reducing bodies to their reproductive potential. It conceals the process of sexual and gestational exploitation produced by the division between masculinity and femininity as complementary poles of heterosexual reproduction.

Not all women have uteruses, and not all uteruses are reproductive. Defining women by their reproductive relations is as reductive as defining the existence of the racialized body in terms of the economy of the plantation, or defining the existence of the worker's body in relation to the profits that this body produces.

The Techno-Patriarchy Atlas

To map the new techno-patriarchal bloc that is being forged on a planetary scale, let us look, one by one, at the thirty-two countries that have signed the Geneva Consensus Declaration so far. In alphabetical order, they are: Kingdom of Bahrain, Republic of Belarus, Republic of Benin, Federative Republic of Brazil (cosponsor), Burkina Faso, Republic of Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Republic of Djibouti, Arab Republic of Egypt (cosponsor), Kingdom of Eswatini,

This French propaganda poster from 1917 commissioned a map which portrayed Prussia as an octopus stretching out its tentacles vying for control and it is captioned with an 18th-century quote: "Even in 1788, Mirabeau was saying that War is the National Industry of Prussia." Photo: Maurice Neumont, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Republic of The Gambia, Georgia, Republic of Haiti, Hungary (cosponsor), Republic of Indonesia (cosponsor), Republic of Iraq, Republic of Kenya, State of Kuwait, State of Libya, Republic of Nauru, Republic of Niger, Sultanate of Oman, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Paraguay, Republic of Poland, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Senegal, Republic of South Sudan, Republic of Sudan, Republic of Uganda (cosponsor), United Arab Emirates, United States of America (cosponsor), and Republic of Zambia. You will no doubt want to put these names down on your list of priority tourist destinations.

The world is divided, as Bruno Latour puts it, not only in relation to environmental politics but also, and even more sharply, in relation to sexual and reproductive politics. A new hot war divides the world into two blocs: on one side, the techno-patriarchal empire and, on the other, the territory where it is still possible to negotiate gestational sovereignty. But what is the common denominator that allows for consensus within the techno-patriarchal bloc? What is Trump's representative doing seated at the same table alongside his counterparts from Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Libya? What is Catholic Poland doing signing a sexual policy treaty with the Muslim Republic of Indonesia? How can we explain the fact that countries advocating white supremacy are signing a declaration with fifteen African states? Clearly it is not the opposition between Islam and Christianity that accounts for the lines drawn between the blocs in this new hot war.

Quite the opposite, theological-political countries, both Catholic and Muslim, fighting amongst themselves in

other respects, are finding a common ground in the expropriation of women's reproductive work, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia. Faced with liberated wombs, lesbians, sexually sovereign women, sex workers, transgenders, queers, and nonbinary bodies, the political relevance of the distinction between the Christian West and Islam, between North and South, is blurred. Faced with the sexual and reproductive power of pleasure and reproductive organs, oppositions and alliances are being reconfigured: on one side stand the patriarchs; on the other, the sexual cavities of this world, the nonbinary bodies, the potentially sucking mouths, the potentially penetrable anuses, and the potentially reproductive uteruses.

Let us examine the political-sexual demographics hidden behind the Geneva Consensus Declaration. The signatory countries have an average of fifteen million people with a potentially reproductive uterus, with the exception of the more populated countries of Brazil, the United States, and Nigeria, which together count approximately 375 million bodies with uteruses. That makes a total of about 825 million bodies that are affected by the Geneva Declaration. According to the World Health Organization, which defines abortion as a "woman's right worldwide,"[4] roughly forty-seven thousand to fifty-five thousand women around the world die every year due to unsafe abortions. Another five million suffer serious injuries resulting in sterility or chronic illness. These figures could rise significantly with the new restrictions promoted in the Geneva Declaration and implemented by laws in Poland and Hungary. Moreover, as Polish feminist Ewa Majewska points out, the impact of abortion laws are class related, inasmuch as the women who die are the ones who cannot afford to travel abroad for an abortion. Thus the hot war against the uterus is also a war against the poor working class.[5] Death would also increase along political lines of race and migration. In this sense, the Geneva Consensus Declaration against the sovereignty of the uterus may very well be one of the broadest, most far-reaching, brutal, and deadly necropolitical measures to be implemented, with the power to generate more inequalities not only of gender and sex, but also of class, race, and migration.

In response to the techno-patriarchal bloc's violent declaration, we consider it a matter of urgency to implement a number of strategies of resistance, following proposals by Polish feminist, queer, and trans groups:

1) As soon as possible and using all possible means, both physical and virtual, we must join the revolutionary demonstrations and actions taking place in Poland today, which constitute the most active front of resistance.

2) All bodies with a uterus in the thirty-two signatory countries are advised to cease as soon as possible the practice of heterosexual sex with penetration and ejaculation without a condom in that territory; any accident would lead to a conflict of sovereignty, and hence to a situation of war between the state and the body of the person with a uterus, which would be settled by repression and even by the death of the body with the uterus.

3) Homosexual practices, masturbation, ecosexuality, fetishism with ejaculation outside the vagina, the use of sex toys, and nonheterosexual orgies are highly recommended practices of political resistance.

4) We urge all NGOs and people living in the bloc where abortion is still legal to send morning-after pills and abortion pills to various groups in the techno-patriarchal bloc as soon as possible. Such shipments can be sent through private postal services or using drones to cross borders.

5) If the measures proposed in the Geneva Consensus Declaration were to be legally and politically applied, all persons with potentially reproductive uteruses would be advised to seek political asylum in countries that are not signatories to the declaration. The acceptance by the non-signatory countries of these refugees would mean the displacement of 825 million bodies, which would amount to the vastest human migration in history.

This population displacement would be known by the name of "the great migration of wombs."

The question now is whether the political antagonism produced by this reproductive division of the world can be addressed in terms of diplomacy, as Bruno Latour suggests, or whether the dispossession and violence to which certain bodies are subjected prevents a diplomatic approach to the struggle. Analyzing denialist theses and post-Holocaust trials, Jean-François Lyotard elaborated the notion of "différend" to account for the difficulty or even the impossibility of affirming the existence of the tribunal as a neutral space—a space outside history, so to speak, in which justice can be done.[6] Similarly, in the current confrontation of the patriarchal regime against sexualized bodies, diplomacy cannot be taken for granted, but requires the creation of a space, the invention of a set of language games capable of restricting the use of violence. If diplomacy is, as Isabelle Stengers argues, necessary precisely where the parties involved are at war, then sexual and reproductive policies should be enclaves of diplomacy.[7] Paradoxically, although the agents of patriarchy and the reproductive and sexualized bodies live under the same roof and even sleep in the same bed, they cannot easily sit at the same negotiating table, because that table is already, like the domestic space and the bed, a site of violence in which the sexualized body is objectified as prey.

From a philosophical point of view, I think it is important not to establish an opposition between the logics of political resistance and diplomacy. In order to make diplomacy a form of potential political action in the face of

the reproductive division of the world, one would have to understand diplomacy as an epistemological strategy: diplomats would not be those who sit at the table with representatives of the patriarchy, but those who through their practices of memory, struggle, survival, and resistance invent another epistemology of the living body that displaces the very table of the binary and heteropatriarchal epistemology. Stengers quotes a slogan of environmental activists, "We are nature defending itself," as proof of a new epistemology of interdependence in which "nature" has ceased to be a mere externality.[8] In the realm of sexual politics, the slogan would be: "Our living bodies are proof of the existence of another epistemic regime, not binary and not patriarchal." Diplomats are epistemic messengers. Only within a shifting epistemic table will bodies stop being what they used to be, their positions as predator and prey reshuffled, and their use of techniques of violence reorganized.

X

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8
Stengers, "We Are Divided."

Adam Tooze

After Escape: The New Climate Power Politics

I.

The vista painted for us by Bruno Latour, Eva Lin, and Martin Guinard in their concept for the Taipei Biennial 2020 is alarming: "We are witnessing a massive extension of conflicts and an extreme brutalization of politics. The 'international order' is being systematically dismantled … We lack a common world." The divisions are so deep that we can no longer even define peace and war. "It is crucially important to explore alternative modes of encounter … to avoid destruction," yet we cannot do so on the assumption of an overarching authority, which is precisely what no longer exists. "The present imperative is not simply to foster a discussion among a multiplicity of perspectives, since this would inevitably fall back to older models of universalism" in a vain attempt to reconcile "multiple visions of the same natural world. The aim … is to explore alternative procedures that still aim at some sort of settlement, but only after having fully accepted that divisions go much deeper than those anticipated by old universalist visions." This is what Latour, Lin, and Guinard mean by "new diplomatic encounters."[1]

Latour first began developing his diagnosis of the contemporary crisis thirty years ago with *We Have Never Been Modern*.[2] It is a complex and continuously evolving project reflecting, on the one hand, on the displacement of a stable nature as common ground, by what he calls Gaia. On the other hand, he is responding to the political impasse of modernity, which is at its most extreme in the Anglosphere. His 2017 *Down to Earth* was a direct response to the double crisis of 2016: Brexit and Trump.[3]

But there is another strand in Latour's contemporary diagnosis that informs the insistence on "diplomatic encounters"—the work of Carl Schmitt. And this is also the point at which the diagnosis misleads us. Reanimating Schmitt's critique of liberal modernity born out of the violence of Europe's early twentieth century serves as much to compound as to illuminate our current impasse. It is time to provincialize Schmitt's critique. It is time also to put the know-nothing, climate-denial tactics of a small fraction of the US elite in their historic place. Elon Musk's rockets may capture headlines, but the strategy that Latour has dubbed "escape," or "exit," is a dead end. And that fact is evident not only to the EU, but also to China and the most powerful voices of global capital as well. There is every reason to think that profound shifts are breaking the impasse that has defined our reality for the last thirty years. This is not to say that we do not face a divided and unequal world set on a disastrous course, but rather that the key players and the terms of the negotiation are shifting.

II.

To respond to our current crisis with diplomacy is a choice with deep implications. Elsewhere, Latour has described it as the

> toughest question of all, the really divisive one: do you consider that those who are on the opposite sides of the ecological issues … are irrational beings that should be … disciplined, maybe punished, or at least enlightened and reeducated? That is, do you believe that your commitment is to carry out a police- or a peace-making operation … in the name of a higher authority? Or do you consider that they are your enemies that have to be won over through a trial the outcome of which is unknown as long as you have not succeeded? That is, that neither you nor them can delegate to some superior and prior instance the task of refereeing the dispute?[4]

This framing comes directly from Schmitt. As does the warning that it is precisely policing actions, "wars waged in the name of reason, morality, and calculations—the 'just' wars … that lead to limitless extermination."[5] Their disinhibited violence is akin to that which "nature" has been subjected. What threatens us now are "Global wars waged in the name of the survival of the Globe," which

> would be much worse than the ones called "world wars." The extent, the duration, and the intensity of such wars can be limited only if we agree that the composition of the common world has not yet been achieved, that there is no Globe. How can we decide on these limits? By accepting finitude: that of politics and of the sciences, but also of religions.[6]

Those are the stakes of our "diplomatic encounters." This is why we must avoid any straining for ultimate agreement.

> If we miss this fork in the path … we will find ourselves in endless wars over the utopian foundations of existence … the return of the wars of religion from which the State was supposed to protect us. … wars of religion waged in the name of protecting Nature![7]

Hence the apocalyptic question that Latour puts before us is in the Gifford Lectures: "What new Thirty Years' War" are we preparing for?[8]

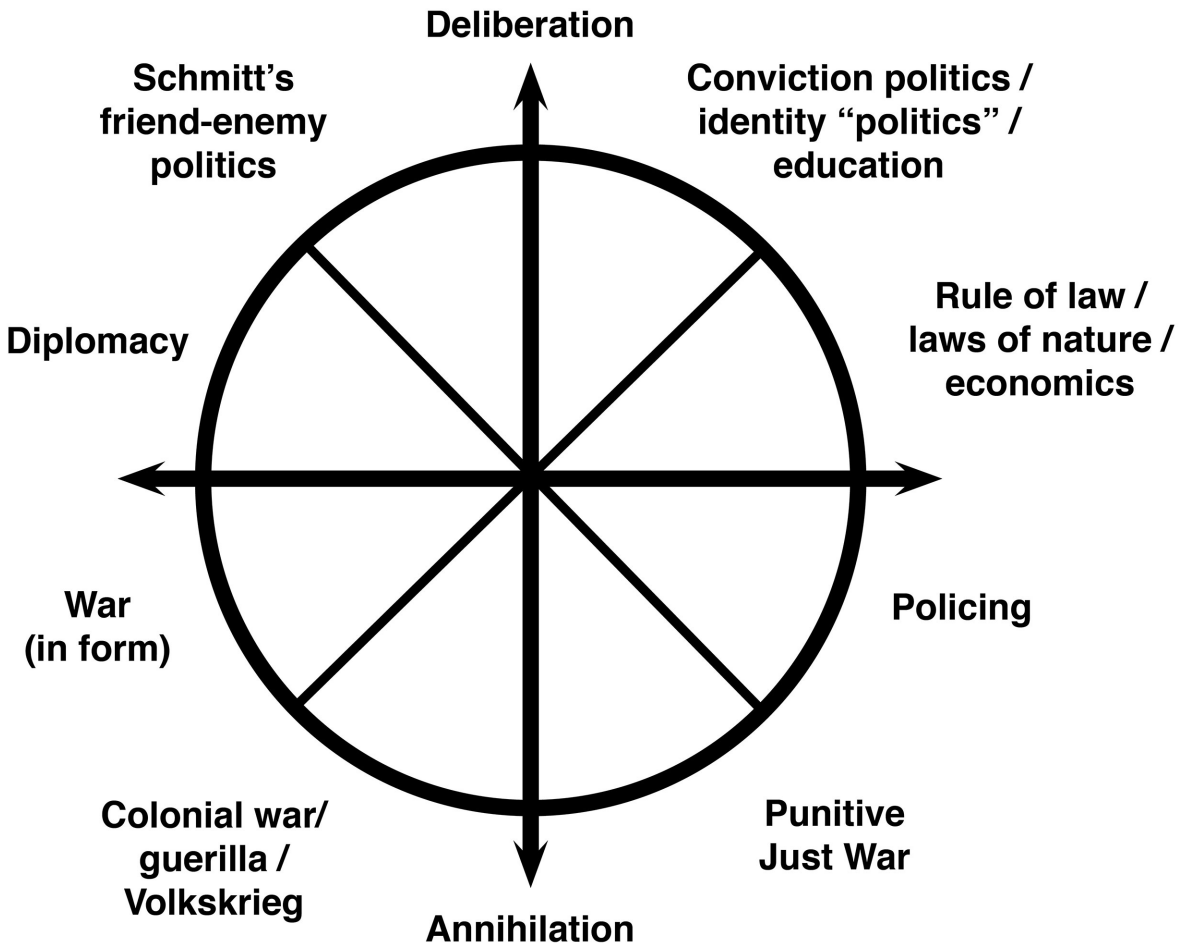
The answer? Again Schmitt. Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth century found an answer to the unfettered wars of religion in diplomacy, framed by the "*jus publicum Europaeum*"—a stable order of states that accepted each other's existence and the irreducibility of their differences and thus found a way not to eliminate war but to limit it. This, for Latour and his colleagues, is our challenge in the present: "Will the Earthbound be capable of inventing a successor to this *jus publicum*, in view of limiting the wars to come … what Schmitt, in his terribly precise language, called the *Raumordnungskriege*, the 'wars over spatial order.'"[9]

It is tempting to engage in a historical critique of Schmitt, to delve into his disastrous biography as a Nazi political theorist to expose the resentments that drive his peculiar narration of modern history. But what we need to focus on here is the sequence of plausible but unforced moves that lead to the conclusion that our current impasse should be answered principally by diplomatic, rather than (for instance) democratic deliberation, law, regulation, or police.

It is no doubt essential to recognize, with Schmitt, the way in which the triplet of politics–diplomacy–war have functioned as modes of regulating conflict in a world without a supreme arbiter. Such orders are distinct from those based on the presupposition of a superordinate sovereign, or the knowledge of natural or economic laws. It may be useful to first approximate one as an order based on a balance of power, the other on hegemony, but the next moves become problematic—first, in Schmitt's claim that the two modes of order are radically distinct, and second, in his counterintuitive but seductive idea that the restraint of violence offered by a pluralist *jus publicum Europaeum* is preferable to that of founding a just order, if necessary by force. Both modes of order ultimately include war. Of course, some wars waged in the name of justice are annihilating, but not all are. And clearly not all annihilating wars are just wars. Indeed, Schmitt's *jus publicum Europaeum* authorizes war as such and was secured beyond its perimeters by unfettered violence.

Schmitt is illuminating in that he forces us to confront the reality of a world without a designated arbiter. He is a resentful ideologue when he absolutizes that condition and imputes a particular bias towards unfettered violence in hegemonic projects of order. To escape Schmitt's false alternatives, let us replace his binary oppositions by situating diplomacy in a circle of modalities of order—or perhaps a compass—that can be traveled in either direction, and which also allows cords to be drawn across, a circle that, in fact, seems far truer to the spirit of Latour and his collaborators than Schmitt's apocalyptic polarities:

On one side you have *jus publicum Europaeum*, and on the other you have liberal hegemony. They are both ways of securing order, and both have their perils. But once we have gotten over the polemical rush that enables us to see



the difference, we can also allow that they are not in fact radically distinct. They share a common possibility of catastrophe: a slide from either diplomacy or justice into annihilation. And we can also acknowledge that the circle closes not only at the "bottom," but also at the "top." There is a passage between diplomacy, politics, and lawmaking by way of deliberation and collective decision. This takes us back to the possibility rather hastily dismissed by Latour, Lin, and Guinard's curatorial statement: "Discussion among a multiplicity of perspectives … would inevitably fall back to older models of universalism." Let us pause for a moment on "inevitably fall back to older models." Is that not precisely the kind of modernist gesture we are trying to get past?[10] Why prejudge what will and won't work in the future by such a simple standard of obsolescence?

The challenge is not to pick one side or the other, but to negotiate how we distribute issues around this circle of options. Schmitt had his reasons for denouncing hegemony. But why should we allow the dark historical vision of a German National Socialist traumatized by his diagnosis of a "half-century of humiliation" (to adapt the parlance used in China) to foreclose possibilities for us? Why abandon the possibility that we might travel around this circle from war by way of diplomacy, and the frank recognition of friend and foe, to deliberate on the creation, however provisional, of common rule-bound institutions? Is that not precisely the history of Europe since 1945, the place where Latour himself wishes to land? Would it not be a bitter irony to cite Carl Schmitt as we discard the idea of international justice precisely at a moment when the climate crisis truly constitutes "affected humanity" as a universal—a "bad universal," but a universal nonetheless?[11] Which brings us to *escape*, or *exit*.

III.

Recall Latour's searing analysis of the origin of our contemporary crisis in *Down to Earth*:

> It is as though a significant segment of the ruling classes had concluded that the earth no longer had room enough for them and for everyone else. Consequently, they decided that it was pointless to act as though history were going to continue to move

> toward a … world in which all humans could prosper equally. From the 1980s on, the ruling classes stopped purporting to lead and began instead to shelter themselves from the world … to get rid of all the burdens of solidarity … hence deregulation; they have decided that a sort of gilded fortress would have to be built—hence the explosion of inequalities; and they have decided that, to conceal the crass selfishness of such a flight out of the shared world, they would have to reject absolutely the threat at the origin of this headlong flight—hence the denial of climate change.[12]

This is not diplomatic talk. This is an indictment worthy of a climate Nuremberg. On Latour's merciless reading, the exit-eers are the enemy of all. Those who build rocket ships signal all too clearly their intentions. Reading Latour's chilling lines, how can one not recall Hannah Arendt's anguished conclusion to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*? The ultimate charge against Eichmann was that "you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations."[13] What was Arendt's conclusion? Should we engage in diplomacy with people like Eichmann? Of course not. We should drag them out of their hiding places and hold them to account, even if in the dock they are capable of no more than babbling incoherent clichés.[14]

We cannot share the planet with the escape-ists. We will have to ban private jet travel and childish ideas about colonizing Mars, because they are not lifestyle choices but crimes against humanity. And if those who indulge in such practices have any sense, they will accept the protection of the law. The already too visible alternative is the mob justice of the likes of QAnon. Think of the lurid fantasies circulating around Jeffrey Epstein's "Lolita Express" private plane. After all, who even needs their own private plane? What are they up to up there, all the disgraced princes and ex-presidents?

The mistake is not to treat the exponents of escape as "irrational beings that should be … disciplined, maybe punished, or at least enlightened and reeducated." We cannot negotiate everything with everyone. Some problems can and should be delegated to the realm of law, others to economics. The mistake is to think that having done so, we have solved the whole problem. The mistake is to think that the whole crisis can be reduced to a matter of good governance rather than politics. The mistake is to conflate the parts and the whole. Having defined exit-eers as the enemies of all, we can begin negotiating the truly important questions amongst those who remain. And this means interpreting what has actually gone wrong in the last thirty years.

IV.

For obvious reasons, critiques of US climate politics focus on the scandal of climate denial. But does the preoccupation of climate campaigners with climate denial not reflect an unhealthy fixation on "climate truth"? It is too easy to conclude that if only the truth had not been so scandalously destabilized, we would have made progress. But that is not necessarily true, because it is when the doors to the exit are blocked *because* climate truth has been established that the seriousness of the problem actually becomes clear. Rather than being a challenge for the future, post–Paris Agreement, it has been the essential problem from the start.

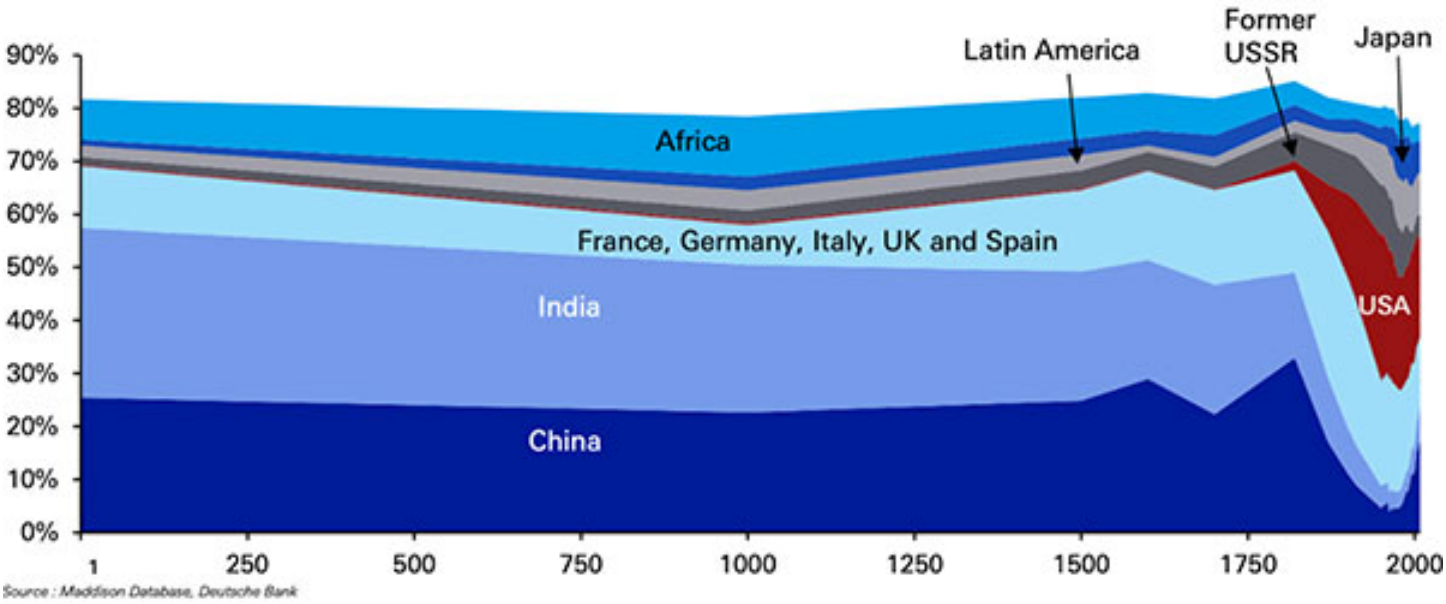
The misreading is in seeing the impasse of the 1990s as defined by climate denial. Of course, Exxon and the deniers in the GOP were obstructive. But the US refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol for other reasons. The main consideration was the insistence on the part of the US Congress that any deal signed by America must be binding on everyone, notably China.

The American elite is now going through a painful reevaluation of its decisions with regard to China in the 1990s. Did they make a historic mistake in believing in "the end of history" and a political and economic convergence?[15] On climate, at least, they can pat themselves on the back. They were never naive. While Angela Merkel was promoting "common but differentiated responsibilities" at COP1 in Berlin in 1995, the American negotiators, on behalf of the Clinton administration, read the situation as true diplomats and refused emotive talk about climate justice. History was not up for debate. As far as the carbon budget was concerned, the Western *Landnahme* was a fait accompli. They wanted to talk about the future, and you couldn't do that without talking about China. It was China and India's insistence that they were exempt, as non-Annex I countries, that erected an insuperable roadblock to US ratification. In climate policy America's strategy was geo-economic from the start.

If the hockey stick of the great acceleration is the one graph that defines our current moment, the other is the Angus Maddison's graph of global GDP:

You can neutralize the drama of this graph by arguing that it displays the natural effect of globalization and convergence. But what marks our moment is precisely that a naive story of convergence has tipped into a historic crisis of multipolarity. The moment of Western hegemony was a parenthesis. You cannot do justice to the "paradoxical unity" of our current moment, and to the terms of diplomatic negotiation, without incorporating this historic shift in the global balance of power.

If the truly decisive destabilization of the moment is that nature no longer serves as an outside to politics, the secondary destabilization arises from the fact that second nature, i.e., the economy, has begun to destabilize the



Powershift: the historical anomaly of Western dominance in the world economy is rapidly reversing. Shares of global GDP on purchasing-power parity basis.

order of states. It is not just that economic crises like that of 2008 and 2020 require interventions by the state. Even when the world economy functions well—or particularly when it functions well—combined and uneven growth challenges the existing structure of state power. This is the "jealousy of trade" problem that goes back to the eighteenth century, for which liberalism was supposed to be the antidote. But liberalism always operated on an unspoken assumption. The reason that global economic growth could be regarded as a universal blessing was that it did not disturb the delicate global order, anchored first by British and then by American global hegemony. In the last ten years that confidence has collapsed. It is not just blue-collar populism, but the Pentagon as well, that is skeptical about globalization.

This is where diplomacy, in the most classical sense, becomes absolutely the order of the day. But the next question is how to characterize the players.

V.

In a recent dialogue with Latour, Dipesh Chakrabarty has insisted that, along with Eurocentric projects of modernization, we must recognize India and China as exponents of "a regime of planetarity of the anti-colonial, modernizing imagination, an imagination that acknowledged its debt to Europe in a full-throated manner and yet asserted its sovereign, anticolonial values. Humanocentric, yes, but resolutely anti-imperial."[16]

Chakrabarty's point is well taken. But his category of emancipatory planetarity obscures the radical differences between India and China that the project of subaltern studies was once so attentive to. China's regime today was forged by total war and social and economic revolution. It was stabilized by a strategic alliance with the US and by the violent repression of Tiananmen. It was the site not just of the Cultural Revolution, but, as recently as the 1980s, of the most massive biopolitical experiment in human history, the one-child policy. It then became the theater for the most radical burst of economic growth and material transformation in the history of our species. Those uncooperative Americans at Kyoto in 1997 were right about one thing: the world was on the cusp of another great acceleration and it was all about China.

But here is the real surprise. If it was tempting for parts of America's ruling class to square deregulation, inequality, and climate denial in a strategy of escape, why was that not the obvious choice for the Chinese elite too? At first, the climate justice argument was crucial in allowing them to "own" the issue as a means of critiquing the West. But Copenhagen in 2009 marked the end of that road. Chinese emissions were surging ahead of those of the US. The US insisted on a deal. The meeting ended in chaos. This was the moment in which Beijing could have denounced climate politics as a Western conspiracy.[17] There was a brief spluttering of nationalist indignation. But then China's climate skeptics fell silent, perhaps through censorship or through lack of conviction. First Beijing signed up to Paris, and then on September 22, 2020, came Xi Jinping's announcement to the UN General Assembly: climate neutrality by 2060.

We may never know precisely what happened, but let us conjecture a mirror image to Latour's speculation about

1980s America. One can imagine a conversation in Beijing that went something like this: " *The CCP is about to enter its second century. In the face of the coronavirus, we have demonstrated the superiority of our mode of rule. We are stamping our will on Xinjiang. We are ending 'one country, two systems.' The great threat to our rule is actually the floods, desertification, and the ominous water shortages. We hold in our hands control over much of the climate equation. Through the Belt and Road Initiative we are building energy infrastructure across 126 other countries. The decision is obvious. To paraphrase comrade Lenin, the future is Xi Jinping Thought plus electrification.*"

Xi's declaration to the UN General Assembly has revealed that the entire process has, in fact, been waiting on China. For the first time since the advent of global climate talks, the major emitter is aligning with the agenda of decarbonization. Now, finally, the real talks can begin.

But how will others respond?

VI.

As Latour remarked, Europe didn't deserve its second chance as the principal laboratory for the discovery of terrestrial limits.[18] It didn't deserve it and it hasn't lasted long—provincialized Europe has been provincialized once more. Let us hope that the Europeans take it well.

More important is the American response. At the time of writing, Biden's victory may involve a return to the modest green agenda of the Obama era. But we may need to look to other points on the circle to understand the most important shift for the US, since electoral politics could matter less than markets.

Back in 2015, Latour was struck by the remarkable moment when Mark Carney, the then-governor of the Bank of England, warned key financial institutions: "Please, please check what will happen to all these big investments if the Paris meeting gets to 2 degrees, because those investments will be worth nothing." The problem was not a shortage of oil, but finding yourself lumbered with trillions in stranded assets. This, Latour declared, "is where the nomos arrives, because it's a matter of legal terms and concepts, arriving on to a physical resource which is plenty, and limited not by its objective limits … but by something which represents this future … *jus communis*."[19]

In the five years since, the argument has moved on. In the week before Xi Jinping's speech to the UN, Climate Action 100 Plus, a lobby group whose members represent global investors with a collective $47 trillion in assets, announced that it would be judging 161 of the largest companies, collectively responsible for up to 80 percent of global industrial greenhouse gases, by their progress towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.[20] Of course, there is an element of corporate greenwashing in any such statement. But it can also be read as a vote by giant asset managers like BlackRock and Pimco against escape. Like Beijing, they agree that the status quo and the future accumulation of capital depends on maintaining a stable environmental envelope. As for Beijing, the risks are political as well as physical. In the event of future climate crises, firms that might be seen as recklessly endangering climate stability may be at risk of suddenly losing their license to operate. Politics might intervene. Laws and regulations would follow.

None of this adds up to a consolidated, consensual image of a single world on which we all agree. In many realms, there is no designated arbiter. But Latour's Gaia is making its force felt. Agreements like Paris are beginning to exercise a subtle but significant sway, not because they stand metaphysically above the world, but because they have authority—the daily climate news confirms that we made them for a good reason and powerful actors are committed. Let us look for every chance for "diplomatic encounters." But let us reckon with the pervasive force of the emergency that our instruments so clearly register, and let us not ignore complementary action on all points of the compass of ordering mechanisms.

X

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Erika Balsom

Shoreline Movements

> Wind tugging at my sleeve
> feet sinking into sand
> I stand at the edge where earth touches ocean
> where the two overlap
> a gentle coming together
> at other times and places a violent clash.
> —Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 1987[1]

Achille Mbembe has proposed that we live in "a time of exit from democracy." It is a time marked by a violent drive towards the creation of a " *world outside relation*," a world that separates through walls and enclosures, denying planetary entanglements.[2] These cuts happen at scales that are both immense and intimate. They can occur even between those ostensibly on the same side. If there is an urgent need now to invent ways of opposing this thrust, how might certain forms of nonfiction cinema—an inherently relational form of image-making—provide a means of doing so? "Shoreline Movements," a film program Grégory Castéra and I curated together for the 2020 Taipei Biennial, is one very small answer to this very large question.

Hu Tai-li, Voices of Orchid Island, 1993. Image courtesy of the artist.

For Mbembe, borders are "dead spaces of non-connection which deny the very idea of a shared humanity, of a planet, the only one we have, that we share together, and to which we are linked by the ephemerality of our common condition."[3] They are at once literal demarcations between nation-states and conceptual emblems of much more expansive and ubiquitous instances of enmity. The shoreline, too, is a border—but it is an unusual kind of

border. Even if shorelines do in some instances function as those "dead spaces of non-connection" Mbembe shows to be a pernicious part of the necropolitical logic governing contemporary life, their fluidity and instability are suggestive of a different notion, one closer to the zone of contact that Gloria Anzaldúa elaborates in her pathbreaking work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. For Anzaldúa, the border is a place where dualistic thinking falls into crisis, where contradictions and ambiguity reign, where a plurality of voices clash and merge, where a single territory plays host to multiple, mutually implicated worlds. It is somewhere to learn from.

Whereas most borders enforce separation, the shoreline is a threshold marked by ceaseless negotiation. It is a site of arrivals and departures, of safe harbors and hostile intrusions. At once embedded in local traditions and subject to industrial development, it hosts encounters between different populations and environments, the terrestrial and the aquatic. In the case of marine shorelines, the intertidal zone—exposed to the air at low tide and immersed in water at high tide—is an in-between realm of intermittent transformation, containing a high diversity of species that have found ways to survive together within the challenging flux of the ecosystem. As the planet heats up and water levels rise, the shoreline is among the places where our vulnerability to climate emergency is made most manifest.

Hu Tai-li, Voices of Orchid Island, 1993. Image courtesy of the artist.

"Shoreline Movements" approaches the threshold between land and water as a material environment and as a provocative metaphor for the uncertainties and conflicts of worldly existence. The shoreline—a figure of proximity, division, and never-ending motion—becomes a means of thinking through the difficulties of surviving together in an age when it seems as if, to borrow Martin Guinard and Bruno Latour's provocative title for the 2020 Taipei Biennial, "You and I Don't Live on the Same Planet"—when in fact we do and we must. By attending to the shifting frontier of the shoreline and the organisms that inhabit it, we can learn to think ecologically, which means understanding the fluid relations that exist between a vast array of agents, to the point that presumed separations between them are put into question. Sometimes these relations are harmonious, but they can equally be characterized by discord and violence; the shoreline is where seemingly irreconcilable worlds confront one another in negotiations without end.

Sky Hopinka, małni: towards the ocean, towards the shore, 2020. Images courtesy of the artist.

Across eighteen films and videos made between 1944 and 2020, with the vast majority produced within the last five years, "Shoreline Movements" explores how artists and filmmakers have addressed the manifold encounters that take place in the littoral zone, broaching issues of environmental crisis, indigeneity, coloniality, and community.[4] Presented within a space designed by Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, across six cycles that come and go like the tides, these works search for ways to render sensible the world's particularity and complexity, embracing filmic and verbal language as nontransparent mediators that aid in this task. Through a wide range of strategies—from observation and the interview, to speculative docu-fiction and the essay form—they confront the difficulty and the desirability of building a shared world when deep divisions and power asymmetries everywhere prevail. In the aftermath of harm and loss, they imagine possibilities of repair and resurgence.

Fundamental to "Shoreline Movements" is the conviction that the moving image possesses the capacity to gather people, in real and imagined ways, around an object of shared concern: reality itself. To care for reality is not to assert the goodness or adequacy of the world that exists; on the contrary, it is to see that the building of a new world is imperative. The common world is a future horizon, an ongoing project; as Hannah Arendt affirms, it must be continually constructed through the meeting of different perspectives.[5] To care for reality is not to shore up consensus, to buy into the fiction of immediacy, nor to

Edith Dekyndt, Dead Sea Drawings (Part 1), 2010. Images courtesy of the artist, Kadist Collection, and Galerie Greta Meert.

Peggy Ahwesh, The Blackest Sea, 2016. Images courtesy of the artist.

trust in any one utterance as an absolute and authentic truth. It is, rather, to submit to a constant questioning of one's own viewpoint, to refuse the pervasive impulse to reduce and simplify, to remain attuned to the protean rather than comfortable in the pre-given. Borrowing another phrase from Guinard and Latour's conceptualization of the 2020 Taipei Biennial, it is to venture that the moving image harbors the possibility to stage "new diplomatic encounters" by presenting visions of a world that exists beyond any one individual, but of which we are all a part.

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When the notion of the encounter is discussed in relation to nonfiction cinema, it most often refers to the relationship between a filmmaker and their subjects. It is in this context, for instance, that Fatimah Tobing Rony explains that traditional ethnography foregoes producing a "historical account of an encounter" to instead espouse the ideal of the anthropologist as "all-knowing insider and as scrupulously objective observer."[6] Similarly, Trinh T. Minh-ha defines the encounter as "showing how I can see you, how you can see me and how we are both being perceived," noting that this rarely occurs in what she calls, tongue fully in cheek, "good, serious film[s] about the Other."[7] The history of nonfiction filmmaking is replete with encounters denied, full of extractive approaches devoid of diplomacy. Nor are such things fully consigned to the past: the reflexive gestures dear to many filmmakers today are hardly enough to make the problems Rony and Trinh underline suddenly disappear. The intricate and mobile circuits of power, exploitation, and self-fashioning that exist between maker and subject remain an enduring concern, even as many filmmakers foreground the ongoing search for ethical ways forward.

The films of "Shoreline Movements" formulate strategies that oppose and, in some cases, explicitly interrogate the denial of the encounter proper to certain strains of the ethnographic tradition. Sitting on the beach with a small group of people who live on Orchid Island, just forty-five nautical miles from Taiwan, Hu Tai-li opens her film, *Voices of Orchid Island* (1993), with a question that immediately establishes her central concern with what it means to make an image of the other. She asks, "How do you feel about co-operating in this film?" To her query, one man responds that the more anthropologists engage with the island's indigenous Yami (Tao) community, the more harm they do. Ever aware of this danger, Hu's film is marked by its subtle confrontation with the violence that lurks within the ethnographic enterprise, reflecting on the relationship between photography and power, the colonial desire for authenticity, and the border between insider and outsider. In *Lagos Island* (2012), Karimah Ashadu registers a similar concern by very different means, using what she calls a "camera wheel mechanism" to craft a visually disorienting rendering of migrant settlements on the shore. As the rolling apparatus passes temporary dwellings that are soon to be torn down by the municipal authorities, it screeches and cracks, never ceasing to draw attention to its situated gaze, its embeddedness in a terrain subject to constant change.

The notion of the encounter in cinema can also be thought in terms of the conflicts and congresses a film represents. It will come as no surprise that images of littoral landscapes abound across "Shoreline Movements." Yet beyond being located at the meeting of land and water, many of these works chart thresholds where worlds collide on shared territory, capturing unwieldy realities marked by division and struggle. The moving image can make visible the complex tangle of relations that exist within a given situation, limning the meetings—be they violent, caring, transformative, or otherwise—that occur between diverse agents who live alongside one another. If Guinard and Latour use the phrase "you and I don't live on the same planet" to encapsulate a contemporary situation in which different parties have profoundly divergent conceptions of their relationships to the material conditions of existence—so much so as to constitute a state of radical separation—then "Shoreline Movements" reminds us that such problems of cohabitation are of no recent vintage. Works by Patricio Guzmán, Sky Hopinka,

and Carlos Motta manifest a concern with the history of settler colonialism and the persistence of indigenous cultures, recalling that declarations of universalism have always been disguised provincialisms and insisting on the enduring need to reckon with the violence that inheres in the totalizing project of modernity. Hopinka's *małni: towards the ocean, towards the shore* (2020) is spoken predominantly in Chinuk Wawa, a nearly extinct pidgin trade language that the artist, who belongs to the Ho-Chunk Nation, learned when he was in his twenties. Interweaving intimate conversations with a lyrical rendering of the land and water of the Columbia River Basin, Hopinka explores the world-making capacities of verbal and cinematic language, affirming cinema as a vehicle for the invention of indigenous futures.

Sky Hopinka, małni: towards the ocean, towards the shore, 2020. Images courtesy of the artist.

A second cluster of colliding worlds pertains to land use and environmental damage, as communities respond to corporate and state initiatives that risk, or have already resulted in, the despoilment of their health and home. Hu Tai-li and Johan van der Keuken capture antinuclear protests as they happen, while Beatriz Santiago Muñoz and Tsuchimoto Noriaki film in the wake of slow violence, working in areas—Vieques, Puerto Rico, and Minamata, Japan, respectively—where significant portions of the population suffer from illnesses caused by pollution. In 1965, Tsuchimoto initiated what would become a decades-long practice of chronicling the sociopolitical, environmental, legal, and medical dimensions of mercury poisoning in and around Minamata Bay. Across some seventeen films, he documented how methylmercury in the wastewater of a chemical factory owned by the Chisso Corporation decimated marine life and caused severe neurological problems and fatalities in those who ate the contaminated seafood. Already, Chisso and the local inhabitants did not live on the same planet. Made after Chisso was found guilty of corporate negligence in 1973, *The Shiranui Sea* explores how daily life went on in the area. Tsuchimoto shows human and nonhuman life to be mutually interdependent, both vulnerable to harm and resilient in its aftermath.

Ben Rivers, Slow Action, 2011. Images courtesy of the artist and LUX, London.

There is the encounter between filmmaker and world, and there are the worldly encounters a film can capture. The notion of the diplomatic encounter as Guinard and Latour formulate it seems, however, most embodied by a third register: the confrontation between audience and world that occurs through the mediating interface of a film. This would be an encounter with encounters, a relationship to reality shepherded by the actions and attitudes of the filmmaker and film machine. Near the end of *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime,* Latour proclaims the need today to " *generate alternative descriptions*": "For there to be a world order," he insists, "there first needs to be a world made more or less shareable by this attempt to take stock."[8] The films of "Shoreline Movements" suggest diverse ways the moving image can take up this task, engaging in acts of taking stock that are partial, in the double sense of being both incomplete and situated, but which nonetheless offer a provisional basis for negotiation by making the world sharable. A film like *The Shiranui Sea* functions in a manner akin to the metaphorical table Arendt uses to describe the mediating things that relate and separate those who share a world, clearing time to convene over an object of common concern, serving as a forum for the assembly and articulation of multiple perspectives, both within the film and in front of the screen.[9]

Tsuchimoto famously said, "Film is a work of living beings," suggesting an ecological and relational understanding of his medium, encompassing the activities of the director, all of those who appear within the film, and the audiences it will confront. It is a conception of cinema distant from the notion of a film as an enclosed fiction or as the product of an auteur; at the same time, Tsuchimoto never disavows his responsibility for the film's construction, engaging with the community over a prolonged period and taking care to inscribe his position in relation to them within it. As scholar Aaron Gerow has explained, Tsuchimoto's statement means

> not only that the subject of cinema is living things and their environment, but also that film is defined by the work of living beings—a work that is fundamentally ethical and involves constant self-reflection on how cinema, the filmmaker, and viewers define and

Tsuchimoto Noriaki, The Shiranui Sea, 1975. Images courtesy of Seirinsha.

position themselves in the environment and how they can relate to other living beings.[10]

The Shiranui Sea is a convocation, one that did not end when the film was completed, but which extends through its life in the world, as viewers come to position themselves in relation to the complex ecology the film unfolds and consider that the world it depicts is the world they too inhabit. Encountering the film, the viewer enters into a relationship with multiple agents—the filmmaker, the film apparatus, all those who are represented within it, human and otherwise—and ventures the possibility of transformation through this contact, as their sense of reality is pried open and perhaps reframed. As the work of living beings, documentaries are not just constative utterances, attesting to the past, but performative utterances with the capacity to change the reality they describe, as audiences come to understand themselves in relation to a commons and thereby potentially inhabit the world in altered ways. It is in this sense that the encounter between world and viewer that takes place through the medium of the moving image is a true encounter—an exchange, a negotiation—and not simply a monodirectional address.

Films pry open our understandings of reality through their deployment of form. Different as they are from one another, the films of "Shoreline Movements" are united in a commitment to challenging the dominant frameworks through which reality tends to be presented to view. Their experiments with form constitute a question of aesthetics, not in the sense of "aestheticizing" reality—sometimes wrongly conceived as a cosmetic addition or beautifying corruption—but rather as *aisthesis*: an investment in probing the modalities of perception and sensation by which we come into contact with the mess of the world. In

Zhou Tao, The Worldly Cave, 2017. Images courtesy of the Artist and Vitamin Creative Space.

her *Dead Sea Drawings (Part 1)* (2010), Edith Dekyndt holds a small sheet of blank paper under the surface of the saltwater, registering the ephemeral refractions of light caused by the mineral content present within it. This apparently simple gesture reveals that what might have been presumed to be a clear emptiness in fact contains a fullness capable of creating elaborate yet delicate undulations. It is an aquatic allegory of the generative possibilities of mediation, one that captures the desire found throughout the program to navigate around the Scylla of transparency and the Charybdis of instrumental explanation, both of which have historically formed an important part—but certainly not the entirety—of the documentary tradition. Rather than strive towards comprehensiveness and clarity, these films amplify the gaps, uncertainties, stray details, and bewilderments of reality, recruiting cinematic form to render them sensible and available for collective consideration.

In this coming together—between film and viewer, and between viewers—there are possibilities of concordance but also friction and disorientation; not for nothing does the etymology of the word "encounter" contain within it the adversarial *contra*. In making sharable descriptions of reality, these diplomatic encounters can reconnect their viewers to a sense of a world held in common, to a feeling of membership in an expansive political community—one that refuses all myths of origin and instead forever returns to, in Mbembe's words, its "permanent opening onto the sea."[11]

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1
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* , 4th ed. (Aunt Lute Books, 2007), 23.

2
Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Duke University Press, 2019), 9 and 40. Emphasis in original.

3
Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 99.

4
The cycles of "Shoreline Movements" are as follows: Movement 1 (November 16–December 6, 2020): Beatriz Santiago Muñoz, *Black Beach / Forces / The Dead / Camp* , 2016; Tsuchimoto Noriaki, *The Shiranui Sea (Shiranuikai)* , 1975; Karimah Ashadu, *Lagos Island*, 2012. Movement 2 (December 7–27, 2020): Thao Nguyen Phan, *Becoming Alluvium* , 2019; Sky Hopinka, *małni: towards the ocean, towards the shore* , 2020; Maya Deren, *At Land*, 1944. Movement 3 (December 28, 2020–January 17, 2021): Edith Dekyndt, *Dead Sea Drawings* (Part 1), 2010; Joshua Bonnetta, *The Two Sights* , 2019; Rebecca Meyers, *blue mantle*, 2010. Movement 4 (January 18–February 7, 2021): Carlos Motta, *Nefandus*, 2013; Hu Tai-li, *Voices of Orchid Island* , 1993; Patricio Guzmán, *The Pearl Button (El botón de nácar)* , 2015. Movement 5 (February 8–21, 2021): Jessica Sarah Rinland, *Y Berá – Bright Waters* , 2016; Ben Rivers, *Slow Action*, 2011; Johan van der Keuken, *Flat Jungle (De platte jungle)* , 1978. Movement 6 (February 22–March 14, 2021): Peggy Ahwesh, *The Blackest Sea*, 2016; Francisco Rodriguez, *A Moon Made of Iron (Una luna de hierro)* , 2017; Zhou Tao, *The Worldly Cave* , 2017. For more info, including program notes, see http://www.council.art/inquiries/1522/shoreline-movements .

5
Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* , 2nd ed. (1958; University of Chicago Press, 1998), 52–58.

6
Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Duke University Press, 1996), 118.

7
Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Routledge, 1991), 66.

8
Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* , trans. Catherine Porter (Polity, 2018), 94 and 98. Emphasis in original.

9
Arendt, *Human Condition*, 52.

10
Aaron Gerow, "Tsuchimoto and Environment in Documentary Film," in *Of Sea and Soil: The Cinema of Tsuchimoto Noriako and Ogawa Shinsuke* , ed. Stoffel Debuysere and Elias Grootaers (Sabzian, Courtisane, and CINEMATEK, 2019), 95.

11
Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 15.