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Das Planetarische Politisch(e) Denken

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Einleitung – Das Planetarische politisch denken

Christina Pauls, Martin Oppelt, Nicki K. Weber

Im Zuge der massiven Zunahme an Umwelt- und Naturkatastrophen breitete sich im Laufe der letzten Jahre ein Bewusstsein für die tiefgreifenden Einflussnahmen des Menschen auf die Erde und die damit einhergehende Zerstörung umfassender Lebensgrundlagen aus. In den Geowissenschaften wird dies seit ungefähr zwei Jahrzehnten unter dem Begriff des „Anthropozän“ diskutiert. Dieser bezeichnet die gegenwärtige erdgeschichtliche Epoche, in welcher die „Spezies Mensch“ mit dem Beginn des industriellen Kapitalismus im 19. Jahrhundert, spätestens jedoch seit Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts, als geologische Kraft der relevanteste Einflussfaktor auf den fundamentalen und anhaltenden Wandel biologischer, ökologischer, geologischer und atmosphärischer Erdprozesse geworden ist (Crutzen und Stoermer 2000; Crutzen 2002).

Der Rückgriff auf den naturwissenschaftlichen Gattungsbegriff „Mensch“ beim Versuch, die klimapolitischen Herausforderungen sozial- und humanwissenschaftlich zu bearbeiten, evoziert kritische Denkschulen, die sich seit jeher mit der diskursiven Setzung „Mensch“ auseinandersetzen. Die Fokussierung auf *eine* zentrale Kategorie der „Menschheit“ birgt die Gefahr, soziale, ökonomische und politische Ungleichheiten zu verkennen. Damit gerät auch aus dem Blick, wie Menschen(gruppen) historisch entlang sozialer und politischer Differenzkategorien (Race, Class, Gender, Body) und beispielsweise auch im globalen Nord-Süd-Verhältnis hierarchisiert und unterdrückt wurden.

So wird beispielsweise in Anbetracht einer drohenden Homogenisierung von Verantwortlichkeit für den anthropogenen Klimawandel dafür plädiert, den Begriff des Anthropozän durch den Begriff des „Kapitalozän“ zu ersetzen (Haraway 2015; Malm 2016; Moore 2016), welcher den Kapitalismus als verursachendes und zu überwindendes Prinzip in den Blick rückt und zudem berücksichtigt, dass eben nicht alle Menschen gleichermaßen für die gegenwärtigen Krisen und ihre Überwindung verantwortlich (zu machen) sind. Ein weiteres Beispiel für die Kritik an der diskursiven Setzung „Mensch“ ist die ontologische und epistemische Bedeutung eines in der Mo-

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derne etablierten Dualismus von Mensch und Natur, die von feministischen, post- und dekolonialen Ansätzen thematisiert wird (Todd 2015). Dieser Trennung liegt ein eurozentristisches, individualistisches Menschenbild zugrunde, das als ideologische Grundlage eine kolonial implementierte *weiße* oder *patriarchale Überlegenheit* legitimiert.

Im Anschluss diskutieren seither auch sozial- und humanwissenschaftliche Ansätze die Frage nach der Rolle des Menschen und seines Verhältnisses zur und in der Welt des Anthropozän (Horn und Bergthaller 2019). Mit Gayatri Chakravorty Spivaks Forderung, den „Globus“ mit dem „Planeten“ zu überschreiben ([1997] 2013) und so der „Globalisierung“ mit ihren kolonialen, imperialen und kapitalistischen Implikationen sowie der ihr korrespondierenden Aufteilungen der Erde eine „planetische“ Verantwortung entgegenzusetzen, kam der Begriff des „Planetarischen“ in die Diskussion. Anknüpfend konturiert der Historiker Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009; 2019; 2021) eine planetarische Perspektive, in der menschliche Geschichte und Erdgeschichte enger zusammengedacht werden, um den Herausforderungen des Anthropozäns begegnen zu können.

Planetarische Perspektiven werden dabei auch von indigenem Wissen inspiriert, welches den Eigenwert und die Eigenheiten des historisch in den europäischen Geisteswissenschaften als nicht-menschlich deklarierten Lebens hervorhebt. Für dieses Wissen war es im hegemonialen Diskurs der Moderne bisher schwer bis unmöglich, politisches Engagement zu mobilisieren (De la Cadena und Blaser 2018). Breny Mendoza adaptiert in diesem Zusammenhang Spivaks berühmte Leitfrage „Can the subaltern speak?“ (1988), um die im planetarischen Diskurs implizit mitschwingende Frage „Can the subaltern save us?“ (Mendoza 2018) ins Licht zu rücken. Mendoza stellt jedoch fest, dass dieses gegenwärtige Bedürfnis, in indigenem Wissen nach Antworten auf bestehende Krisen zu suchen, mit kolonialen Kontinuitäten, Widersprüchen und Ambiguitäten einhergeht (Mendoza 2018, S. 119). Mit dem Planetarischen lassen sich also ein „Planetary Turn“ (Elias und Moraru 2015) als radikaler Perspektivwechsel in hegemonialen Wissensformationen und die Errichtung eines neuen Paradigmas anstreben, welches die Auflösung des Dualismus von Mensch und Natur und das Denken neuer Beziehungen, Institutionen und Imaginationen befördert. Der sich im Anthropozän einstellende „Eindruck vom ‚Ende der Welt, wie wir sie kannten‘ – könnte der ‚planetary moment‘ sein, der die erd- und menschenfixierte Leitidee der Globalisierung hinter sich lässt“ (Hanusch et al. 2021, S. 7). Der Begriff des Planetarischen stellt also diagnostisch auf die den Planeten verändernden Effekte im Anthropozän scharf, zielt mit Blick auf Handlungsoptionen in gewisser Weise aber auch darauf ab, den „Menschen“ zu dezentrieren.

Die planetarische Perspektive erfordert dementsprechend ein „Herauszoomen“ aus einer menscheits- und erdgebundenen Perspektive und damit eine Distanzierung vom Anthropozentrismus und Soziozentrismus, die der Natur als auszubeutende Ressource keine Erklärungskraft für soziale Prozesse zusprechen und alle nicht-menschlichen Kräfte in ihrer Eigenständigkeit ignorieren (Connolly 2017, S. 15). Dies ermöglicht es, gegen den menschlichen Exzeptionalismus anzuarbeiten und den „Menschen“ nicht länger als einzig relevante*n Akteur*in für den Erhalt der langfristigen Bewohnbarkeit des Planeten zu verstehen. Damit stehen schließlich Fragen nach anderen Formen der Zugehörigkeit und einem alternativen Miteinander, Zuein-

ander- sowie Zur- und In-der-Welt-Sein im Raum, die auf das Feld des Politischen führen. In Ergänzung zu einer dem Anthropozän angemessenen Gesellschaftstheorie (Adloff und Neckel 2020; Laux und Henkel 2018) und einem planetarischen Denken des Sozialen (Clark und Szerszynski 2021) braucht es eine Diskussion über die Möglichkeiten und Vorteile sowie Schwierigkeiten und Gefahren einer planetarischen Perspektive auf das Politische und die Politik, wie von eingangs aufgeführten kritischen Denkschulen formuliert.

Mit dieser Debatte möchten wir daher politische und im engeren Sinne politikwissenschaftliche Diskurse, Theorien, Institutionen, Konzepte und Begrifflichkeiten in den Blick nehmen, die unter dem Begriff des Planetarischen subsumiert werden und prospektiv zu einer planetarischen politischen Theorie (und Praxis) beitragen können. Doch (wie) kann das als nicht-menschlich Verstandene politische Mitsprache erhalten (Chaplin 2017) oder Ansprüche formulieren? Wie kann eine politische Ontologie, die das Politische über den Menschen hinausdenkt, als planetarische Grundlage aussehen? Oder ist ein solcher Ansatz selbst nicht viel zu sehr verstrickt in seine eigene Herkunft aus dem europäischen politischen Denken, um hier einen Ausweg zu bieten? Wenn die planetarische Perspektive schließlich ein Herauszoomen aus dem Rahmen bestehender (hegemonialer) Ordnungsgefüge, Institutionen, Praktiken und Begrifflichkeiten bedeutet, was gerät dann stattdessen oder zusätzlich in den Blick? Was kann so überhaupt (noch) in den Fokus gelangen und was droht gleichzeitig aus diesem herauszufallen, ausgeblendet und unsichtbar zu werden?

Dipesh Chakrabarty, Professor für Geschichte an der Universität von Chicago, appelliert im ersten Beitrag der Debatte an die Sozial- und Humanwissenschaften, die Erkenntnisse der Erdsystemwissenschaft stärker in ihre Überlegungen einzubeziehen. Dazu müssten sie zu einem Bewusstseinswandel bereit sein und den Menschen angesichts der planetarischen Einheit dezentrieren. Auch könne der Mensch niemals einem geeinten politischen Subjekt entsprechen, da die Vorstellungen vom planetarischen Einen (dem Planeten) und den globalen Vielen (Akteur*innen) in einem grundlegenden Konflikt zueinanderstehen, der sich immer nur bearbeiten, niemals jedoch auflösen lässt.

Miranda Schreurs, Professorin für Umwelt- und Klimapolitik an der Technischen Universität München, verteidigt die existierenden klima- und umweltpolitischen Institutionen gegen Chakrabartys Vorwurf, das für die Rettung des Planeten nötige epochale Bewusstsein nicht ausreichend befördert zu haben. Dafür zeichnet sie nach, inwiefern diese Institutionen seit ihren Anfängen in den 1970er-Jahren durchaus von einer Art planetarischem Bewusstsein für den Menschen als geologischer Kraft getragen waren und welche Erfolge sie damit hatten. Weite man jedoch das Institutionenverständnis auf zivilgesellschaftliche Assoziationen bis hin zur jüngsten Klimabewegung aus, bestehe Grund zur Hoffnung, dass eine effiziente und zugleich demokratische planetarische Politik im Rahmen des Bestehenden vielleicht sogar schon praktiziert wird.

Breny Mendoza, Professorin am Fachbereich Gender and Women's Studies an der California State University in Northridge, kritisiert das von Schreurs aufgeworfene Vertrauen in die bestehenden Institutionen und Chakrabartys Rekurs auf die Erkenntnisse des geowissenschaftlichen Anthropozän-Diskurses. Auch der naturwissenschaftliche Diskurs sei politisch und die daran beteiligten Naturwissenschaft-

ler*innen müssen als politische Akteur*innen verstanden und als solche kritisiert werden. Sodann könne die Verschleierung ungleich verteilter Verantwortung und ungleich verteilten Leids sichtbar gemacht werden, wo schon aufgrund der rassistischen und kolonialen Geschichte des „Anthropos“-Begriffs niemals alle Menschen in gleicher Weise „mitgemeint“ waren. Gegen Chakrabarty sieht Mendoza daher auch nicht alle Menschen als gleichermaßen verantwortlich für die gegenwärtige und zukünftige Lage des Planeten an, sondern rückt die koloniale Rolle Europas stärker in den Fokus. Ein planetarischer Blick „von oben“ und ein naives Vertrauen in die bestehenden wissenschaftlichen und politischen Institutionen reiche laut Mendoza nicht aus, um den Planeten dauerhaft bewohnbar zu halten. Es brauche vielmehr den indigenen, dekolonial-feministischen und radikaldemokratischen Blick „von unten“, um eine „andere Welt“ zu ermöglichen.

Frederic Hanusch, Claus Leggewie, Liza Bauer, Claudia Hartl und Clemens Finkelstein vom Panel on Planetary Thinking an der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen lehnen die harte Frontstellung zwischen existierenden politischen und wissenschaftlichen Institutionen und alternativen bzw. marginalisierten Epistemen ebenso ab, wie Chakrabartys Perspektive eines vermeintlich unlösbaren Konflikts zwischen der Einheit des Planeten und der Vielheit des Globalen. Stattdessen bemühen sie sich um eine Vermittlung und präsentieren hierfür Überlegungen, den Wald als Mitakteur zu begreifen und entsprechend eine Agency des Waldes nach indigenem Vorbild zu stärken. Sodann könne eine neue relationale Ontologie als Grundlage der internationalen Politik eine politische Agency der Erde hervorbringen, welche sowohl die bestehende internationale Forest Governance institutionell bereichern und effizienter gestalten als auch das gängige Verständnis des Politischen nachhaltig verändern würde. Gegen Mendozas Kritik beziehen sie sich bei dem Rückgriff auf indigene Wissensbestände also explizit auch affirmativ auf die europäisch geprägten Natur-, Agrar-, Ingenieurs- und Sozialwissenschaften.

Ninawa, Chief des indigenen Volkes der Huni Kui, Präsident der Huni-Kui-Föderation des brasilianischen Bundesstaats Acre sowie Wall International Indigenous Scholar an der Universität von British Columbia, sieht die existierenden politischen Institutionen und Theorien als Teil des Problems und ist skeptisch, inwiefern sie zur Lösung beitragen können. Er plädiert daher für eine radikal neue Episteme auf Basis konkreter und erlebter indigener Erfahrungen, die dann der Ausgangspunkt für die Entstehung alternativer politischer Identitäten sein müssen. Exemplarisch stellt er die Huni Kui vor, die sich als Beschützer des Amazonasregenwaldes begreifen, den sie wiederum als ein eigenes Lebewesen verstehen. Als Mitglied der Huni Kui beschreibt Ninawa deren Sichtweise und stellt darauf aufbauend – in Abgrenzung zu Hanusch et al. – fest, dass westliche Denk- und Affektstrukturen kolonial geprägt sind und die planetarischen Herausforderungen reproduzieren. Die Weltgemeinschaft müsse sich daher zuvorderst dem Schutz indigener Territorien und indigenen Wissens verpflichten, aber auch eurozentrische Epistemologien dezentrieren, wenn nicht sogar verlernen, wenn sie den Planeten wirklich vor dem Untergang bewahren wolle.

The Planetary and the Political

Dipesh Chakrabarty

While I have found my training in Subaltern Studies, Marxist analytics of capital, and postcolonial studies adequate for discussing globalization, it fell short when I tried to think about the predicament that global warming represents for humans (Chakrabarty 2009). The problem of anthropogenic and planetary climate change required us to engage with Earth system science (ESS), the inter-disciplinary branch of scientific knowledge that defines the planetary climate change problem. Without this engagement, one could still have other explanations of the erratic weather patterns we experience these days, but one would have no understanding of how the climate system of the planet works.

Did that mean ESS was simply added to our repertoire of existing analytical tools in the social and human sciences without those tools being affected in any way? Would not the encounter with deep history—geobiological deep time is intrinsic to ESS thinking—also challenge the shallow time of the “history” that humanist scholars work with? While I ask this question of history and the discipline as a historian, the geographer Nigel Clark and the sociologist Bronislaw Szerszynski have already raised this question with regard to “social thought” in general and argue that we should “socialize the Anthropocene” and “geologize” the social (2021, p. 49).

As I worked through the problems, I set myself toward comprehending global warming and the Anthropocene hypothesis—the idea that the planet had crossed the threshold of the geological epoch of the Holocene, thanks to human impact on Earth, and entered a new epoch for which the name Anthropocene was proposed—and posited an analytical distinction between the “globe” and the “planet” as categories with distinctly different imports for humanist thought. I argued that this distinction was issued from my encounter with the deep time of the Earth system—the way geology and biology interacted in the history of our planet to create a life-supporting system that is now under threat. This meant (partly in reference to Catherine Malabou) that the word “globe” in the expression “globalization” and the “globe” of “global warming” did not have the same meaning. The globe of globalization was at most a 500-year-old entity brought into being by humans and their technologies of transport and communication. It was a human-told story with humans at its center. The “globe” of global warming referred to what ESS calls “the Earth system.” This was a heuristic construct of ESS scholars and it referred to planetary processes whereby geological and biological factors combined on this planet to help it develop its own system for supporting complex, multicellular life. The story of the Earth system is also a human-told story, but it does not have humans at its center. Disciplines like geology and (evolutionary) biology cannot be anthropocentric, for humans come too late in the stories they tell to be at the center of their narratives. This “Earth system” of the ESS is what I eventually designated “the planet” (Chakrabarty 2021, p. 70, pp. 78–79).

Furthermore, I argued that it was the intensification of the capitalist and technology-driven process of globalization in the late twentieth century that brought within the ambit of humanist thought and everyday “news” the domain of the pla-

netary, hitherto of interest to specialist scientists. (ESS itself had many precursors in scientific thought, but that does not concern us here.) I wrote the following: “The intensification of globalization and the consequent crises of global warming, along with all the debates that have attended the studies of these phenomena, have ensured that the planet—or more properly, the Earth system—has swum into our ken even across the intellectual horizons of scholars in the humanities” (Chakrabarty 2021, pp. 3–4). And then, “Using Heidegger’s language, we can say that the harder we work the Earth in our increasing quest of profit and power, the more we encounter the planet. Planet emerged from the project of globalization [...]” (Chakrabarty 2021, p. 69).

To avoid a common misunderstanding of my work, notice that in my thinking, “the globe” and “the planet” have always been related entities, not a mutually exclusive binary (Chakrabarty 2021, p. 4, p. 18, p. 85).

As a humanist historian, I found the globe–planet distinction useful in that they provided two different but related vantage points from which to develop simultaneously—two different perspectives on human history. We need to work with both in writing humanist histories for our age. Humans remain and will remain divided on the question of how to relate to what I have called the planet. But in the age of anthropogenic climate change, the planet, however understood, has emerged as a matter of concern. I list below some of the major differences that distinguish the “Earth system” (or the planet, in my terms) of ESS from the “globe” of globalization. Once again, I repeat my caveat: the distinctions are of analytical value, with the globe and the planet being connected entities.

1. The global is human-made; it involves the work of empires, capitalism, and technology. Humans are at the center of its story, as the main protagonist of the story of the making of the globe. The planet—also a human construct—decenters the human. Humans come too late in the geological and biological histories of the planet to be at the center of these narratives.
2. The global belongs to a recorded history of 500 years. The planetary is about deep history, the geobiological history of the planet.
3. The global is uniquely and singularly human. The planet is comparative, emerging out of human attempts to answer questions such as the following: Can Mars be made habitable for complex life? Did Venus become hot because it experienced runaway planetary warming? Technology becomes a planetary question when we ask, for instance, can the Earth’s climate be engineered by humans? Or, much more far-fetched, is a high-tech civilization necessarily unsustainable?
4. Sustainability is a global and humanocentric term. It asks if humans could leave the Earth in a sustainable state for humans who come after them. The planetary is about habitability, an issue that is raised, for instance, when we ask, how does a planet become habitable for life? Here, “life” does not refer exclusively to life in the human form.
5. The global is about a human-dominant order of life on this planet. The geobiological history of the planet, on the other hand, makes us realize that we are a minority form of life and that the majority forms of life on the planet, both by weight and numbers, are microbial—for example, bacteria, viruses, protists, and fungi. In hu-

man terms, the situation calls on us to develop minoritarian forms of thinking with regards to other forms of life.

6. The globe, the Earth, and the world are all categories that assume a relationship of mutuality between humans and their worldly environment. We express this when we say, “the Earth is our home, it is made so that we can dwell on it.” The planet is indifferent in its relationship to us. We are not the end that the planetary processes that support life have in view. Humans are a product of contingencies in the history of life on this planet.
7. The globe, forged by human technology, lends itself to moral and therefore political questions. It is amenable to issues of fairness and norms. Planetary forces, on the other hand, can reduce us to our creaturely lives. When we are faced with planetary “fury”—such as a tsunami, an earthquake, or a firestorm—our politics are reduced to the politics of mere survival, something that Kant or Arendt would not call “politics” for it is bereft of any sense of morality.

The category planet poses a peculiar challenge to what humans regard as the domain of the political, a heterotopic area that includes a range of activities from the nation-state formation to other formations of power and inequality down to the individual human. The problem is the following: the planet, which is the Earth system, is both differentiated and unitary. It is a “dynamic ensemble of relationships” (Chakrabarty 2021, p. 70). It lurches from one state to another over geological time (Ellis 2018; Lenton 2015). Clark and Szerszynski observe that “the Earth [...] is more than a single system that supports life, [...] there are decouplings or disconnections in the planetary body, as well as couplings” (Clark und Szerszynski 2021, p. 29). They introduce the idea of “planetary multiplicities,” by which they refer to the undeniable fact that “the Earth has an inherent potential to shift from one state to another and to do this quickly.” But they also acknowledge the oneness of this planet and see it as “a dynamic and self-organized” entity (Clark und Szerszynski 2021, p. 11, p. 21).

In its differentiated representation, the planet or the Earth system speaks of the different entanglements—of the geological with the biological, of different forms of life with one another, connecting the work of bacteria and planktons, for instance, to the proportion of oxygen in the air. Such entanglements are subjects on which Donna Haraway, Anne Lowenhaupt Tsing, Bruno Latour, and others have written with insight and imagination. Entanglements represent the differentiated aspect of the planet. Yet the planet is also one. The “carbon budgets” for humanity that the IPCC publishes are based on the idea that there is one atmosphere and one planet, a planetary climate system that can be treated as a whole and a single “Earth system” supporting life. The definition from the former International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, which was run by Earth system scientists, says the following: “The Earth system now includes human society” (IGBP 2015).

There could be many other understandings and representations of the planet. Indian astrologers, for instance, could have an entirely different set of reasons explaining the planetary plight of humans. From the pre-historic humans who settled the Pacific Islands thousands of years ago by navigating the seas using the night sky, to ancient Greek and Indian astrology and peasant sayings about seasons, to the Copernican

revolution in the sciences and its consequences, there are many examples of planetary thinking. But the IPCC recommendations regarding “carbon budgets” for the atmosphere of the planet could only be made on the assumption that the planet is differentiated and yet one.

Humans, on the other hand, are only differentiated, that is, not one, politically speaking. There is no one humanity in politics. Politics stems from what differentiates humans. That which may be a universal truth about humans—that they are a biological species entangled with other forms of life, for instance—constitutes no ground from which a unitary political subject could arise and project itself onto the world. As Sartre, following a train of thought that went back to Hegel, once pointed out in his preface to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, the recognition of one human by another as a human being may very well be the ground for relations of hierarchy and difference, of colonization, torture, oppression, dispossession, and enslavement (Fanon [1961] 2005). The IPCC may posit one planet and issue calls for somewhat synchronized human action based on a unitary planetary calendar, but humans and their representative institutions would always want to route this oneness through their differences. Thus, when nations like India say to the industrialized nations that they, the former, should be allowed some carbon space for development as the warming of the planet is the historical responsibility of the latter, they not only raise an important question of climate justice, they also, in the same move, differentiate the planet. It is like saying to the developed nations, “the planet is mainly yours for the next two or three decades. Looking after it is also mainly your business. We need to focus predominantly on growth for the time being.” That is an act of splitting the planet.

This structural and unresolvable mismatch between the oneness of “the Earth system” as imagined by the science of climate change and the pluriversal quality of human politics defines, to my mind, a fundamental aspect of the human condition today.

Epochal Consciousness and Global Climate Policy

Miranda A. Schreurs

Dipesh Chakrabarty’s *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* is a much-welcomed call to the humanities to reflect more deeply and systematically on the planetary crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, which are of human making. Chakrabarty argues that the humanities must go beyond their penchant to focus on the moral failures associated with capitalism and colonialism over the past 500 years and to consider “how humans might use the resources of their moral capacity to regulate their life as a biosocial species among other species” (Chakrabarty 2021, p. 10). Chakrabarty is clearly worried that in our drive for progress, modern civilization has so altered the natural systems of the planet that we now talk of the geological era of the Anthropocene (Zalasiewicz et al. 2017). Humans are condemning countless other species to extinction while risking their own future survival (IPCC 2022). Looked at in geological time frames, humans have only inhabited the planet for a small

fraction of time, and the planet will continue to exist with or without us. Is this not all the more reason to develop a new respect and awe for the natural systems on which we are so dependent?

I grew up in a small town in New York State where the forces of geological time were everywhere to be seen. The Great Lakes, formed by retreating glaciers, are among the largest freshwater bodies in the world. The heavily weathered and eroded Appalachian Mountains are believed to have once stood as tall as the Himalayas. Marine fossils can be found on the top of these mountains, signs of the ocean that once covered this land of rolling hills and forests.

New York is also home to many native American tribes, including the Erie, Cayuga, Seneca, Onondaga, Mohawk, Delaware, Mohican, Abenaki, Laurentians, Poospatuck, Mohegan, and many others. These tribes lived for millennia in this region, leading sustainable if not always peaceful existences until their numbers were largely decimated by European settlers. Self-identified native Americans in the state now number less than two hundred thousand; about half of these live on reservations, a legacy of the unjust treaties forced upon them (Stacker 2022).

It is hard to ignore that in the course of just a few hundred years, “modern” American society nearly wiped out entire Indigenous populations and brought many animal species to the brink of extinction. Industrialization caused severe pollution of air, water, and soil and the use of toxic chemicals and pesticides contributed to “pollution diseases” and wide-scale ecological destruction. Realizing that nature’s self-healing ability was being pushed to the extreme, scientists became increasingly concerned that environmental problems were taking on international and even global dimensions. By the late 1960s, for example, Lake Erie, one of the five great lakes, had become so polluted and choked with algal blooms that it was pronounced “dead.” Acid rain linked to the burning of coal in Germany, Great Britain, and Poland was causing the death of forests and lakes in Scandinavia. Similarly, the burning of coal in the Appalachian region in the United States was threatening forests in New England and across the border in Canada. In 1974, Sherry Rowland and Mario Molina (1974) theorized that chlorofluorocarbons—chemicals introduced in the 1930s that enabled refrigeration and air conditioning—were destroyers of stratospheric ozone. These problems were to foreshadow the even larger problems of wide-scale biodiversity loss, climate change, oceans filled with plastic, and mounting volumes of high-level radioactive wastes—legacies of the Anthropocene.

In his call for the development of an “epochal consciousness,” Chakrabarty indirectly critiques our social and political decision-making structures, suggesting that they are poorly equipped for dealing with planetary crises (Chakrabarty 2021, pp. 196–198). While this is certainly true, it is nevertheless helpful to remember that normative and institutional changes are possible. The sense of environmental crisis that took hold in many parts of the world in the 1970s led not only to demands for pollution control and nature conservation but also for more participatory and democratic decision-making processes. The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment became a trigger for policy change and environmental institution building at the national and international levels. Foreshadowing the concept of the Anthropocene, the conference’s communique concluded as follows: “In the long and tortuous evolution of the human race on this planet a stage has been reached

when, through the rapid acceleration of science and technology, man has acquired the power to transform his environment in countless ways and on an unprecedented scale” (UNEP 1972).

It is easy to forget that there were no environmental agencies or ministries at the national level in most countries before the 1970s (Aklin and Urpelainen 2014). A new generation of environmental groups such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and the Natural Resources Defense Council formed. Older groups like the Sierra Club and WWF shifted their focus to address the many new and serious environmental issues. Their efforts helped spur the development of an extensive set of environmental laws, practices, and policy instruments in Europe, North America, and East Asia. Also, in many developing and transition countries, environmental movements emerged and demanded change. In 1973 in India, for example, the Chipko movement, a local group that fought against deforestation, helped launch India’s modern environmental movement. In 1993 in China, Friends of the Earth opened its doors, becoming the first of what are now thousands of registered environmental organizations in China. These new players pushed environmental issues onto political agendas, contributing to the control of many pollution problems and the establishment of new environmental norms, such as the polluter pays and the precautionary principles (Longhofer et al. 2014).

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was another turning point in environmental policy making. It was at this conference that the issues of climate change and biodiversity loss gained global political attention and an appreciation began to emerge for the need for global action. Although by no means a great success, the Kyoto Protocol, which was negotiated in 1997 and came into effect in 2005, helped spread awareness of climate change and concepts such as climate mitigation, climate adaptation, and climate justice. In the meantime, the 2015 Paris Agreement—though agreed upon woefully late in the game—led to the establishment of nationally determined contributions aimed at limiting the rise in greenhouse gas emissions and monitoring and evaluating systems. There have since been efforts to take lessons learned from the climate realm and transfer them to the biodiversity area, an example being the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which is modelled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Of course, with global average temperatures nearing 1.2 °C above pre-industrial levels and global greenhouse gases continuing their upward march, it is fair to argue that governments, industry, and society have yet to show a strong moral resolve to act. There are already many indications that we are causing irreversible damage to many ecological systems. Rising anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions are changing the climatic system in dangerous and potentially irreversible ways.

There are other worrying signs that are societal and institutional. The very actors that have played such an important role in raising awareness about environmental problems in the past are now under attack. In many countries environmental activists and NGOs are facing increasingly restrictive laws that limit their ability to speak and act freely. The clampdown against environmental movements appears to be linked to concerns in authoritarian regimes that strong civil society movements can threaten or even topple governments. It may also be tied to traditional fossil fuel interests

who feel threatened by demands for low carbon energy transitions. Also, in some established democracies, democratic institutions and norms are being chipped away at and challenged by far-right movements. Social media has become a powerful tool used by climate deniers and other right-wing activists to try to weaken the resolve to act or question climate change altogether.

But despite a reality that can be quite depressing, there are signs that the international community may be beginning to muster a deeper will to act. Fridays for Future, Sunshine Democrats, and Extinction Rebellion are just some of the movements launched by young people that have changed the narrative on climate change against the greatest of odds. Today a growing number of people are knowledgeable about the concept of sustainability, have heard of the idea of the Anthropocene, and are willing to devote time and energy to spreading a new climate ethic.

In part, in reaction to their demands, there are also now more and more countries that have established ministries of climate change or added climate change into the responsibilities of other ministries—from those responsible for energy to those for transport, agriculture, and industry. Climate neutrality targets are now widespread. Renewable energy is expanding rapidly and massive tree-planting initiatives are underway. Financial institutions are beginning to promote green investing and new technological developments tied to digitalization and artificial intelligence are contributing toward greater efficiency gains.

My intention is not to underplay the seriousness of the environmental threats facing the planet in this the age of the Anthropocene. Instead, building on Chakrabarty's argument, I suggest that if the majority of humanity can accept that all humans are part of a global community and act together, there is capacity to bring about change.

In his impassioned speech opening the Glasgow climate conference in 2021, the great naturalist David Attenborough warned, “our burning of fossil fuels, our destruction of nature, our approach to industry, construction and learning, are releasing carbon into the atmosphere at an unprecedented pace and scale. We are already in trouble ... This story is one of inequality, as well as instability. Today, those who've done the least to cause this problem, are being the hardest hit. Ultimately, all of us will feel the impact, some of which are now unavoidable”.

While noting that the time available for us to take action before we exceed the 1.5° target is short, he continued on the following more hopeful tone: “Perhaps the fact that the people most affected by climate change are no longer some imagined future generations but young people alive today, perhaps that will give us the impetus we need to rewrite our story, to turn this tragedy into a triumph. We are after all, the greatest problem solvers to have ever existed on Earth. [...] A new industrial revolution powered by millions of sustainable innovations, is essential, and is indeed already beginning ” (Attenborough 2021). If we can combine technological, social, and political innovation with a will to reduce global inequalities, perhaps we can steer humanity in the direction of a more sustainable future.

The Politics of the Anthropocene

Breny Mendoza

In North Atlantic academia today, the Anthropocene has become an authorized narrative about the state of the Earth, even though Earth science authorities such as the International Commission on Stratigraphy or the International Union of Geological Sciences have not officially recognized its existence. Political establishments around the world, and particularly in the United States, have also been actively resisting the discourse of the Anthropocene, which is defined as a geological era determined by “human” forces that can potentially end the life of the species. The notions that we are facing the apocalypse or its opposite, that life on Earth is perpetual, are in tension with one another. This tension refers not merely to two distinct evaluations of our times; it is an essential difference in the idea of time itself. The West views time as a linear progression of phases that devolve from each other in a constant battle of positive and negative outcomes that end in self-destruction. This idea, rooted in the Christian apocalypse, can be found again in astrophysical theories that predict the end of the universe, traversing from the Big Bang to the Big Crunch (Mack 2020).

In contrast, the idea of the perpetuity of life is more rooted in non-Western cosmovisions that view time as cyclical and dependent on the harmonious relation between the human and the non-human. If this harmony is recreated over and over, time is never-ending. Seen from these differing perceptions of Time writ large, the Anthropocene delves into ideas related to the origin and the end of Time, perhaps even verging on the terrain of the divine. In the West, however, the one thing that supersedes the divine is Western science. Science is about creating certainties or certitudes that decry myths and non-Western cosmologies. It is the only recognized exercise of the mind aided by its method that can allegedly unlock the laws of life and provide the undeniable truth of facts. As a political scientist concerned with matters of the Anthropocene, I must therefore take a leap of faith. I can neither confirm nor dispute the findings of the “anthropocenologists” (Bonneuil und Fressoz 2016) with the tools of political science, but I can try to unravel the politics of the science and the Anthropocene discourse.

As many have noted, the lines dividing science and the social and the political sciences have never been so blurred as in discussions about the Anthropocene (Bonneuil und Fressoz 2016; Chakrabarty 2021). Anthropocenologists possess the discursive power to define what the Anthropocene entails as they are backed with the authority of science; they also dictate how we must deal with it. They have dabbled not only into the arena of politics but also political science, giving political scientists entrance into a heretofore area of knowledge that was privy to geologists and the like. Yet, the activities of scientists and politicians have never been truly separated. At least since the Manhattan Project, if not earlier or perhaps always, science and its makers have been serving political interests. The Manhattan Project catapulted science not only to the discovery of the secrets of the atom but also to the project of destroying life in the context of a brutal European war. With the development of the atomic bomb, Western science was able, under the sponsorship of the US, the UK, and Canadian governments, to exercise the until then “divine right” of

deciding over life and death on the planet in the service of winning a war. Science under the guardianship of government and with its planetary capacities to destroy life has lorded over all human and non-human life since then, its knowledge central to the political strategies of imperial powers. Inverting and rephrasing Clausewitz's famous maxim that says war is the continuation of politics by other means, we can say that politics is the continuation of war and science its means. The year 1942, when the Manhattan Project began, can be seen as the start of the Anthropocene or the moment the West gains lordship over life on the planet, cementing the fusion of empire politics and science.

With a simple inversion of numbers, others date the start of the Anthropocene in 1492 with the European "discovery" of America. The year 1492 is not only the time when most continents of the planet became known and entangled and when a new conception of the world emerged, but it is also the start of the capitalocene, another way of understanding the Anthropocene (Moore 2016). The capitalocene emphasizes two very important aspects of Western lordship over human life: the first is the creation of capitalism via colonialism when human energy was consumed at its maximum capacity in the service of endless accumulation of capital through slavery and "perpetual servitude" of the colonized. The second is when the colonized were first expelled not only from humankind at the service of empire but also from the realm of politics. Defined as non-human or non-beings, non-Western peoples, those outside of Human aka Western civilization, became subjected to Judeo-Christian views that not only defined nature as inert without an inner life of its own but as non-beings endlessly exploitable and expendable by the God species that the Judeo-Christian chosen peoples saw themselves representing. As such, under Western eyes, non-Western peoples became people without human and political rights, never possessing sovereignty over their lands, treated perennially as enemies of war within a logic of elimination, making them always killable and exterminable wherever they are. Not only did they become devoid of civility and sovereignty, but the non-human colonized were deemed as people without science, without knowledge, and therefore without epistemic rights.

Because humanity became split between the West and the rest, many consider it wrongheaded to talk about the Anthropos or the human in the abstract when referring to the Anthropocene. This not only because non-Western peoples have cumulatively and historically a smaller ecological footprint and therefore are less responsible for the catastrophes of the Anthropocene (Chancel 2021), but also because they suffer the brunt of ecological destruction. Ecological destruction and massive loss of life has always been at the center of empire building. In the year 1492, the Columbus exchange and the Great Dying in the Americas deeply transformed the Indigenous world. In a few decades, the extreme exploitation of labor, measles, smallpox, influenza, yellow fever, and the bubonic plague reduced the population by 90% according to the latest estimates, exceeding the loss of life in Europe during the centuries of the Black Death, which was perceived at the time as the "end of the world" (McCoy 2021, p. 35). In the Americas, deadly colonization left the lands, fields, and forests unattended, growing back to their natural state and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere to the point of cooling the planet, a truly anthropocenic and planetary event that can be traced back to the harshness of empire politics or

perhaps best described as the founding moment of the capitalocene (Moore 2016). The capitalocene was founded on the excessive use of massed muscle power that maximized the output of the human body of slaves and indentured Indigenous labor and on an extractive economy based on mining. According to Stanley J. Stein, Spain, using the free labor of three million Amerindians, extracted 400,000 tons of silver in a third of the time that Europe had in the previous six hundred years (Stein and Stein 2000). Thus, perhaps neither the plantation nor the steam engine should be viewed as the precursor of the so-called Anthropocene or the alter-concept of the capitalocene but the silver mines of the Bolivian city of Potosí or Huancavelica, Peru. Not only was capitalism and modernity born here, but a sense of Western lordship over the Earth and the understanding of non-Western peoples as less than human also had their beginnings. A sense of self that Dussel calls the *ego conquiro* (Dussel 1991) or the imperial attitude (Maldonado-Torres 2007) is one that asserts the political right to reign over the world-Earth. Modern Man was created bringing social death to the rest.

Dipesh Chakrabarty would object to such an interpretation of history as the post-colonial elites today act on their own accord as desiring agents of capitalism and can therefore be seen as equally responsible for the Anthropocene as the historical colonial masters of the West. As he says, “technological domination of nature was experienced as masculinity far beyond the boundaries of the so-called West” (Chakrabarty 2021, p. 101). Of course, Chakrabarty does not have in mind the peoples of the Americas who would tell another story. He is drawing on the histories of India and China as examples of civilizations that were equally based on predatory masculinity and projecting capitalist desires onto them in much the same vein as Britain behaved in the 17th century. However, neither India and not even China today or at any point in history until now incarnate planetary histories comparable to the West whether that is under the guise of colonialism, capitalism, or the Anthropocene. This does not mean that postcolonial elites are not as deadly domestically and ecologically destructive in their areas of influence and increasingly beyond their territories. Both India and China possess nuclear arsenals and are rapidly developing similar *ego conquiros* and imperial attitudes of the West if for no other reason than capitalism is a world-system. In a manner of advanced discipleship, China and to a certain extent India are slowly occupying the spaces the West has ruled for the last 500 years in both the development of science and capitalist expansionism, turning them into Anthropocenic agents. Whether the planet can survive another capitalist empire is the question that the capitalocene/Anthropocene poses for us. If we take our cues from the West, mass death of the colonized is the price to pay for the lordship over the world-Earth. We witnessed this again during the current pandemic when the Western pharma industry and governments prevented the distribution of vaccines in favor of astronomical profits at home. The mass death that has taken place in the US–Middle Eastern wars, Ukraine under Russian invasion, and the slow death of Latin America under US neoliberal tutelage (Watson Institute 2021; NYT 2021; BBC 2022) are other examples of the disposability of non-Western life as is the idea that the third world should act as a buffer zone for the West as a way of reducing the effects of the Anthropocene on the chosen peoples.

But we must not view the world always from above. Looking at the world from below allows us to see that other worlds are possible outside of the logic of capitalism and the logic of the “extermination of the brutes” that Western colonialism set in motion. Lest we are always looking at the barrel of the gun, we will not be able to see the different ontologies, life forms, and life worlds that the planet has to offer for its perpetuation. Heteropatriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, modernity, racism, and Western civilization need not be the last word or the wherewithal of life and death of the human and non-human. Thrown into a myriad of crises by what Andean intellectuals call the civilization of death from whence all other crises derive like the crises of climate, energy, poverty, inequality, and meaning (Escobar 2020, xi), as Spengler and Haraway (2016) say, we must think in such a mode as if life were perpetual. Reinhabiting the planet peacefully—without capitalism and colonialism—is still a possibility. Another world will require a few preconditions: (1) the reconstitution of vinctuality or the affective ties that can bring us together; (2) de-patriarchalization or the pacification of men; (3) de-racialization or the end of race; (4) the re-sacralization of labor or the labor of love that an economy of equals requires or the end of capitalism; (5) the decolonization of politics or the reintegration of the colonized into the political world as full citizens of the planet; and finally (6) the reconstitution of science in the service of the planet for the love of the human and non-human, in their totality.

Der Wald als Mitakteur? Das Fallbeispiel einer planetaren Politik

Claus Leggewie, Frederic Hanusch, Liza Bauer, Claudia Hartl, Clemens Finkelstein

1. Die „differentia specifica“ des Planetaren

Das Planetare ist als Kategorie des Politischen neben das Globale getreten, das die Konzepte von Globalisierung und Global Governance dominiert (Hanusch et al. 2021). Die Eigenheiten des Planetaren beginnen bei seiner Etymologie: Der Globus ist „die Kugel“ (von lateinisch „globus“), der Planet „der Wanderer“ (von griechisch „planētēs“). Das Globale ist auf die von Menschen belebte Erdoberfläche beschränkt, dagegen beschreibt das Planetare sowohl einen Himmelskörper unter vielen als auch den speziellen Planeten Erde.

Die grundlegenden Dimensionen von Zeit, Raum und Materie können den Unterschied weiter verdeutlichen. Das Globale der Globalisierung ist höchstens so alt wie die Menschheit, je nach Definition erst ein paar Jahrhunderte oder gar Jahrzehnte. Der Raum des Globalen beschränkt sich zuvorderst auf die vom Menschen belebte Troposphäre, die Materie auf jene vom Menschen bewegte. Planetar zu denken heißt dagegen, die Erde epistemologisch, ontologisch und ethisch als Planeten anzuerkennen. Damit ist menschliches (Zusammen-)Leben also durch einen sich stets wandelnden Planeten zu verstehen, der sich räumlich vom Erdkern bis in den interplanetaren Raum erstreckt, zeitlich von der Nanosekunde bis zur geologischen

Tiefenzeit dehnt und materiell vom Elementarteilchen bis zur dunklen Materie im Weltraum reicht. Zurückgewendet auf den Menschen bedeutet dies: Wir leben nicht auf einem Planeten (= globale Perspektive), sondern sind ein Teil von ihm (= planetare Perspektive). Damit einhergeht die Relationierung menschlicher Existenz im Universum und die Relativierung der vorherrschenden anthropozentrischen Sichtweise.

Im planetaren Denken treten Planet-Mensch-Beziehungen in den Vordergrund, denen folgende Eigenschaften zugesprochen werden: Sie sind metabolisch, indem sie Stoffströme zwischen Planeten und Menschen betreffen, ohne beide Sphären gleichzusetzen und in einen materiellen Relativismus zu verfallen. Zweitens sind sie rezentrierend, da sie den Menschen seiner Sonderstellung entheben, ohne ihn damit aus seiner Verantwortung zu entlassen. Drittens sind sie transversal, da Dinge und Konzepte wie Natur und Kultur stärker verbunden werden, ohne sie ineinander aufzulösen.

Damit kommen die vielfältigen Weisen, in denen ein Planet zu unterschiedlichen Zeiten auf miteinander wechselwirkenden Ebenen existiert, zum Vorschein, ebenso wie die vielfältigen Beziehungen, die Menschen hierzu besitzen. Nigel Clark und Bronislaw Szerszynski charakterisieren dies als „planetary multiplicity“ und „earthly multitudes“ (2021).

Eine exemplarische „earthly multitude“, die die gewohnte menschliche Handlungsfähigkeit, für die sich in der englischsprachigen Literatur der kaum einschlägig zu übersetzende Begriff der „agency“ etabliert hat, in den Hintergrund stellt, ist die Handlungsfähigkeit des Waldes. Diese Handlungsvariante unterscheidet sich von der maßgeblichen Weber'schen Typologie, wonach Individuen und Gruppen aus Gewohnheit oder nutzenorientiert, aus Affekten oder Überzeugungen heraus tätig werden.

2. Der Wald als planetarer Akteur

Einen Zugang zur Handlungsfähigkeit des Waldes eröffnet die Anthropologie. Eduardo Kohn nähert sich ihr anhand von Flussläufen, Kautschukbäumen und -händlern, Flussdelfinen, Fischen und indigenen Jägerinnen im Amazonasgebiet Ávila über die vernetzte Struktur des Waldes: Die unterschiedlichen Akteure verteilen sich einerseits entlang der Baumpopulation, ihrer Früchte und der Strömung des Wassers, doch gleichzeitig konstituieren sie diese Strukturen mit: „[E]mergent patterns are always connected to lower-level energetics and materialities. And the materialities – say, fish, meat, fruits, or rubber – are what living selves, be they dolphins, hunters, fruit-eating fish, or rubber bosses, are trying to access when they harness form“ (Kohn 2013, S. 167). Die Fische, die sich von der Kautschukbaumfrucht ernähren, tragen deren Samen den Fluss entlang, womit sie (genau wie Fisch-fressende Delfine) an der Verteilung der Baumpopulation beteiligt sind; und Letztere orientiert sich wiederum am Flusslauf als Wasserquelle (Kohn 2013, S. 162). Solche Kausalzusammenhänge folgen nicht der „push-and-pull logic we usually associate with the physical effort needed to *do* something“ (Kohn 2013, S. 163, unsere Hervorhebung). In planetarer Sicht sind Menschen nicht die einzigen Akteure, auch Tiere, Pflanzen und nicht-belebte Objekte, darunter technische Artefakte und gar „künstliche In-

telligenzen“, bilden handlungsfähige Netzwerke. Den einzelnen Handlungsträgern dieses kollektiven Wald-Akteurs wird eine zu willentlichen Handlungen analoge – und diese möglicherweise verstärkende, durchkreuzende oder zunichtemachende – Wirkmächtigkeit zugeschrieben.

Dass das Ökosystem Wald durch Abholzung, Klimaextreme und andere destruktive Störungen von Schädigungen betroffen ist, hat den Freizeit- und Symbolwert von Bäumen und Wäldern gemindert, die gewissermaßen zur kulturellen Grundausstattung menschlicher Gesellschaften gehören, und immense wirtschaftliche Schäden angerichtet; damit können Waldgebiete nicht länger ihre sozioökonomischen und ökologischen Funktionen und damit „nature’s contributions to people“ erbringen (Díaz et al. 2018).

Zur Katastrophe geführt hat – individuell wie institutionell und strukturell – das Handeln menschlicher Akteure, das Bäume, Wälder sowie deren nicht-menschliche Bewohner als bloße Objekte betrachtet und die bereits vor über 300 Jahren gerade in der Forstwirtschaft von Hans Carl von Carlowitz eingeführten Nachhaltigkeitsprinzipien missachtet hat (Sächsische Hans-Carl-von-Carlowitz-Gesellschaft 2013). Diese klassische Subjekt-Objekt-Beziehung hat das Erdsystem an Kippunkte geführt, deren dramatische Vorzeichen längst in Gestalt von Wasserdefiziten, Überhitzung und Feuersbrünsten ausbuchstabieren, wie planetare Phänomene auf die menschliche Zivilisation zurückschlagen. Gehandelt haben zunächst soziale Akteure, reagiert oder rückgewirkt natürliche – und am Ende leiden sowohl die sozialen als auch die natürlichen Akteure unter diesem Kurzschluss.

Damit erweitert sich das Spektrum handelnder Akteure. Kommen wir zurück in das Amazonasgebiet, so sind konventionelle Akteure Forstbesitzer, die aufgrund der Marktnachfrage schnell wachsende Monokulturen angepflanzt und ausgebeutet haben, des Weiteren brasilianische Behörden und Regierungsinstanzen, die den Amazonas-Regenwald zur Abholzung freigegeben haben. Hinzu tritt die anonyme Instanz eines „Menschheitszeitalters“ getauften Anthropozäns, in der der (industrielle) Mensch als geologische Kraft auftritt. Dagegen angetreten sind zivilgesellschaftliche Akteure, die diesen Prozess aufhalten wollen und eine Art globales Weltgewissen geschaffen haben, das sich in Protestaktionen, Gerichtsverfahren und Mobilisierung von Wähler*innen artikuliert. So lassen beispielsweise Gerichte mittlerweile Sammelklagen zu und sprechen Urteile zu den „Rechten der Natur“ bzw. im Blick auf künftige Generationen.

In diesem Zusammenhang tauchte als zentrale Akteursgruppe die indigene Waldbevölkerung auf, die mit der Naturzerstörung ihre Lebensgrundlagen verloren hat, deren moralische Anklagen und politischen Proteste aber größtenteils noch immer ignoriert werden. Doch nicht nur materielle Grundlagen sind bedroht. Indigene bringen in den Diskurs über Bäume und Wald eine symbolisch-kulturelle Beziehung ein, die aus anthropozentrischer Sicht als „animistisch“ oder „schamanistisch“ etikettiert und als unaufgeklärtes Wissen diskreditiert wurde. Darüber ist schließlich die große Gruppe entscheidender Akteure im Konflikt um das Baumsterben zum Vorschein gekommen: die Flora und Fauna selbst, deren Materialität ein von Menschen weithin ignoriertes Eigenleben aufweist, das für die Zukunft der Bäume und Wälder vermutlich von entscheidender Bedeutung ist. In diesem Sinn greift die kanadische Forstwissenschaftlerin Suzanne Simard ein Verständnis von Ökologie und Nachhal-

tigkeit an, das die vielfältigen belebten, intelligenten und sozialen Eigenschaften und Kapazitäten nicht-menschlicher Lebensformen ignoriert:

„It’s our disconnectedness – and lost understanding about the amazing capacities of nature – that’s driving a lot of our despair, and plants in particular are objects of our abuse. By understanding their sentient qualities, our empathy and love for trees, plants, and forests will naturally deepen and find innovative solutions. Turning to the intelligence of nature itself is key“ (Simard 2021, S. 305).

Einem „Denken wie ein Baum“ nähern wir uns ihr zufolge über die Vergegenwärtigung des Zusammenwirkens der Bäume, Tiere, Pilze, anderen Mikroorganismen: „[a]n intelligent system, perceptive and responsive. Breathe. Think. Absorb. Process“ (Simard 2021, S. 161). Auf Menschenart wird im Wald nicht kommuniziert, so dass jeder Versuch, Bäumen zuzuhören, fehlerbehaftet bleibt. Dementsprechend wünscht sich Simard, sie hätte im Wald jemanden „to debate [her] growing sense that the fungus might be a trustworthy helper to the seedlings. Did the yellow fungus contain some secret ingredient that I – and everyone – had somehow missed?“ (Simard 2021, S. 19). So lassen sich wirksame Handlungslinien ableiten, die den komplexen und vielfältigen Belastungen entgegenwirken.

Animistische Kosmologien folgen häufig relationalen Ontologien und könnten zum Verständnis über die komplexen Wechselbeziehungen unter den unterschiedlichen Lebensformen der Wälder beitragen (Ingold 2006, S. 9–20; Abram 1996, 2010). Während die etablierte Dichotomie zwischen Natur und Kultur zur Entfremdung zwischen Menschen mit westlich geprägtem Naturverständnis und der nicht-menschlichen Welt geführt hat, haben sich viele indigene Gemeinschaften vor einer derartigen Naturentfremdung, auch aufgrund einer nicht durchlaufenen Industrialisierung und Modernisierung bewahrt. Laut Latour leben diese nicht „in harmony with nature; they are unacquainted with it“ (2004, S. 232). Verstanden als ein lebendiges System, welches nicht kategorisch von aus menschlichen Kulturen hervorgehenden abzugrenzen ist, kann der Wald als einer spirituellen, wegweisenden Kraft folgend verstanden werden. Die indigenen Jägerinnen aus Avila gehen davon aus, diesen Handlungsweisen des Waldes im Traum oder unter Einfluss bewusstseinsverändernder Substanzen auf den Grund gehen zu können (Kohn 2013, S. 178).

Radikaler ist die indigene Umweltaktivistin Sônia Guajajara, die sich und ihre Mitstreiterinnen als direkte Sprachrohre für nicht-menschliche Akteure versteht: „For us the wind speaks, the animals speak, the water speaks, the earth screams and we understand and interpret these signs. The Indigenous struggle and the environmental struggle are one and the same“ (James 2021). Sie verstehen ihre Körper und ihr Bewusstsein als sich ständig neu konstituierende Ergebnisse, Teile und Komponenten von „mother earth“, so dass sie die Verteidigung ihrer eigenen Grundrechte als kongruent mit jenen der Natur verstehen:

„Territory is the sacred place for life, existence, culture and biodiversity. It is the place that sustains the body. The body that fights and goes to demonstrations to defend mother earth. It’s also the body that anchors our spirit, this Indigenous

spirit that is guided by ancestors who give us the courage to continue in the face of all the challenges imposed by the government and the system“ (James 2021).

Doch auch diese indigenen Übersetzer*innen der Stimme von „mother earth“ können kaum davon ausgehen, dass sie die Zeichen des Windes und die unterschiedlichen Stimmen der Tiere absolut verstehen – zumindest aus einer westlich geprägten Perspektive heraus scheint jede Sprachvermittlung von Interpretation geprägt. Da sie jedoch ihrem Selbstverständnis nach Teile der Erde sind und somit jede Einwirkung auf diese mittragen („we see ourselves as being the land itself“), leiten sie daraus ab, ihre Stimme entspreche unmittelbar der von „Mutter Erde“. Analog dazu versteht Sônia Guajajara ihre politische Handlungsfähigkeit nicht als „im Einklang“ mit, sondern als die politische Handlungsmacht der Erde selbst. Wenn sie davon spricht, nicht-menschliche Zeichen zu „verstehen und zu interpretieren“, dann besteht ihrem Verständnis folgend gar keine Unterscheidung zwischen Verständnis und Interpretation. „For us the wind speaks“, liegt jenseits der Trennung von Natur und Kultur.

3. Konsequenzen für eine planetare Waldpolitik

Vor diesem Hintergrund zeichnen sich ein erweiterter (und aufgeklärterer!) Begriff der Forest Governance ab: Der hermeneutische Ansatz, der in Formeln wie „living like a tree“ oder „Denken wie ein Baum“ angedeutet wird und auf ein tieferes Wissen über das Leben der Pflanzen und der unbelebten Materie abhebt, also ihre Agency berücksichtigt, ist zu verbinden mit einem forstwissenschaftlichen Ansatz des „rewilding“, der auf die eigenständige Regenerationsfähigkeit durch eben diese Agency von Waldgebieten abzielt.

Bezugnahmen auf die planetare Handlungsfähigkeit des Waldes sind im gegenwärtig fragmentierten Regimekomplex der internationalen Forest Governance kaum zu identifizieren (Arts 2021; Fernández-Blanco et al. 2019). Für diesen Bereich existiert noch nicht einmal ein legal nur bedingt bindendes zentrales Abkommen analog zur United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) oder zur Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Im Gegensatz etwa zur Atmosphäre ist der Wald jeweils einem bestimmten nationalen Territorium zuzuordnen. Dementsprechend existiert eine Vielzahl an Einzelinitiativen, die sich lose um das United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) gruppieren und von dem aus der Klimarahmenkonvention abgeleiteten Konzept des Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) bis zur Forest Certification (FC) reichen. Einen gemeinsamen Orientierungspunkt bieten die sechs von den Vereinten Nationen 2017 in New York verabschiedeten Global Forest Goals: (1) Umkehrung des weltweiten Waldverlustes durch nachhaltige Waldbewirtschaftung; (2) Steigerung des sozioökonomischen und ökologischen Nutzens; (3) Vergrößerung der geschützten Waldflächen; (4) Aufstockung der Finanzmittel für nachhaltige Waldbewirtschaftung und Forschung; (5) Förderung von Rahmenbedingungen für die Waldbewirtschaftung als Beitrag zur Erreichung der Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); (6) Verbesserung der Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Regierungen und den Interessengruppen. In den Zielen der Global Forest Goals dominieren instrumentelle Werte gegenüber Na-

tur, intrinsische oder relationale, wie sie insbesondere für eine planetare Perspektive zentral sind, treten noch kaum hervor (Himes und Muraca 2018).

Wenn die Politikwissenschaft sich dem Planetaren öffnen und die planetare Handlungsfähigkeit berücksichtigen will, dürfte sie Inspiration eher in bereits stattfindenden Realexperimenten finden, wie beispielweise in Neuseeland, wo auf Vorschlag der indigenen Maori neben dem Fluss Whanganui und dem Berg Taranaki auch die Te-Urewera-Wälder eigene Rechtspersonen sind. So wird das Waldgebiet nicht nur als Ressource betrachtet und von einem Te Urewera Board vertreten, das sich aus Mitgliedern der indigenen Tūhoe und der neuseeländischen Regierung zusammensetzt. Als Gedankenexperiment existieren derartige Vorschläge schon länger (Stone 1974).

Zur Erkundung des Planetaren in der Politikwissenschaft ist also erstens nach Fällen zu suchen, in denen die planetare Handlungsfähigkeit bereits in politische Praxis übersetzt wurde, und nach deren Konsequenzen für das Verständnis des Politischen zu fragen. Zweitens sollte sich die Politikwissenschaft einbringen in interdisziplinäre Debatten, wie sie in der Forstwissenschaft oder etwa von der indigenen Umweltaktivistin Sônia Guajajara angestoßen wurden. Sie kann sich damit an einem breiteren Forschungs- und Bildungsprogramm beteiligen, das sich der Planetarisierung des Politischen genau wie der Sozialisierung des Planetaren widmet.

“The Fantasy of Separation and Superiority is Destroying Our Planet”

Chief Ninawa Inu Huni Kui

The Huni Kui Indigenous people in the Huni Kui federation of the State of Acre in the Amazon region live in 118 communities and have a population of approximately 16,500 people. They were contacted 100 years ago and were also enslaved for 60 years, but they continue to resist in order to exist. The Huni Kui have a subsistence economy based on respect for the forest. They maintain the strength of their language, culture, and spirituality within their communities. The Huni Kui have ancestral knowledge about the use of traditional medicines and autonomy in governance and education.

The Huni Kui and other Indigenous peoples are guardians of the Amazon rainforest. For them, the Amazon is not a natural resource, but a living being of which they are also part. The Amazon forest covers an area of 5.5 million square kilometers. With this size, it is considered the most important carbon sink on the planet and has an extremely important role in hydrological ocean cycles regulation as well as in climate control (Gatti et al. 2021). The forest has 10% of the world's biodiversity, 390 million trees, 2.5 million insect species, and thousands of animal species, but only 1% of plant species have been studied so far. Indigenous native communities are holders of this knowledge of plants that can help all of humanity. However, today they number only 10% of the original population that existed before colonization, because the rest of their people were exterminated by colonialism.

The forest is screaming for help. The Indigenous people as well as humanity as a whole are facing rampant deforestation because of Western demands for meat,

soy, corn, rice, all types of grains, and timber as well as land speculation. Seeking profits from international markets, the Amazon region holds the world record for criminal forest fires that are lit to open pasture space to raise cattle, for agri-business, and for oil and gas, copper, and iron exploration. This brings an irreparable loss of biodiversity.

Indigenous peoples in the Brazilian Amazon region also face the threat of a far-right government who wants to cancel Indigenous rights and to take away land tenure in order to open up the Amazon to predatory industries. The government is encouraging illegal invasions in the Indigenous territories. Their leaders are being murdered. Environmental crimes are not punished. The crisis has never been more serious.

The destruction that is happening is driven by people with a high degree of formal knowledge and education. The most educated people are the ones who become most invested in the fantasy of separation and superiority that is destroying our planet. Western education has been and is still promoted worldwide as what can save the planet, what can alleviate poverty, and the path to sustainability. However, the sustainability that this education promotes is the continuation of a lethal system for the planet and for humanity. This education promotes narcissistic individualism, encourages rampant consumerism, and promotes the assimilation of Indigenous and rural populations in a metropolitan culture where the relationship with the Earth is replaced by accumulation, greed, and consumption, where the most vulnerable people are exploited and even exterminated. This happens because of the fantasy that modernity is the best choice for us to live well.

This form of education is sold as progress, development, and even as a superior form of civilization. These illusions are the roots of our collective disease. Before one can imagine a better future, one needs to confront the damage that this illusion has done to the planet. The Earth itself and the global challenges can and should be seen as teachers. People can start learning now, willingly making different choices, or they can expect things to get worse and start learning when there is no longer an option. The alleged “progress” in modern societies has happened at the expense of Indigenous peoples around the world and of the living planet. The social and environmental collapse caused by colonialism through dispossession, destitution, and genocide is now coming for those who have previously benefitted from it. The alleged progress is setting humanity on a path that accelerates its own premature extinction. There is little use in describing political theories based on the same destructive habits of being. The crises humanity is facing are primarily existential, not political.

The limits of the planet spell the end of the colonial capitalist world, but the end of this world does not need to be the end of humanity. If we learn quickly from our mistakes, repair our relationships, and do not run away from the problems or settle for simplistic solutions, we have a chance to redefine our (co)existence. First, we will need to heal how we have been conditioned to think, feel, relate, and trade and to see ourselves in relation to the planet. We need to remember we are part of nature, not separate from it. This will be difficult and painful as we will need to face how we have created the mess we are in. Once we start to heal the disease of separability, the disease that separates us from the land and from each other,

new political practices will emerge. For those expecting another universal theory of progress that can replace the destructive one that has been imposed so far, these ideas may sound impractical. From the perspective of the Huni Kui, theories of progress and change that do not account for how our relationships to the planet and to each other have been damaged by individualism, consumerism, and indifference, will only continue to reproduce the existing harmful patterns.

There is no way to move forward without dealing with what happened in the past. We need to wake up to the reality that the planet is unwell and that we humans are part of the disease. It is our responsibility to seek healing in order to help ourselves and our own planet. This learning will be difficult and painful, but without it one will not understand why the house that has been built by colonialism and human arrogance is about to collapse. There are the examples of the pandemic, the climate emergency, the rise of anger and populist movements, increased polarization and social violence, economic instability and precarity, and a global mental health crisis.

For several generations, the Indigenous Elders have warned that there would come a time when the Earth would collect the debt that we have with her. The Earth is a living organism that is bio-intelligent, and not an object of ownership or a natural resource to be managed. This is not a “concept;” this is a lived reality that is denied in modern societies. For most people in modern societies, the physical sense of belonging to the land is something unimaginable; therefore, most of what has been said here is unintelligible.

The 118 Huni Kui communities are trying to do their part in stopping the Amazon Forest from turning into a savannah. The Amazon is close to a tipping point where more deforestation will cause the forest to disintegrate on its own. If this happens climate change will accelerate exponentially with devastating global consequences. The Huni Kui are putting their lives on the line to defend the forest, not only for their own survival but for the survival of all people.

The fight is becoming more difficult by the day. The violence is escalating and the communities have also been disproportionately affected by climate change. They have been experiencing extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, high temperatures, and other extreme conditions that did not happen in the past. Their lives were adapted to complex and dynamic climate cycles, which used to be predictable, but all that has changed.

The Huni Kui communities are also threatened by people who take advantage of prolonged droughts and who commit arson to destroy large areas of the forest. After the fires, these areas are invaded and occupied for agribusiness, grain cultivation, raising cattle, mining, or other predatory large-scale economic operations aimed at producing goods for export. All of this happens at the expense of the life of the forest and of the Indigenous peoples that are part of it.

Meanwhile, climate change mitigation has also become a profitable industry that reflects the desire of modern societies to address problems of capitalism with more capitalism. Measures to counter the climate crisis, such as carbon trading and net zero, both adopted and promoted by large corporations and even the UN, are false solutions. The latest UN Climate Change conferences were disheartening. Not only are the conferences funded by multinational corporations, but the negotiations for environmental solutions are guided by their interests. The key interest of these com-

panies is to continue with business as usual, and for this they offer compensation to governments to manage projects to mitigate the environmental and social destruction caused by their activities. Carbon offsets allow companies to continue unhindered and absolve them of the environmental and human crimes that are necessary for their profits. Despite the sustainability rhetoric, carbon trading is not a viable solution to climate change because it disguises predatory economic expansion that is the expansion of colonialism itself.

As part of this industry, many organizations are approaching Indigenous communities for carbon capture and trade agreements as a way to endorse the continuation of the predatory economic growth that destroys the planet. Many of the communities accept such agreements without considering the origin and systemic implications of these contracts for the sustainability of our way of life, our sovereignty, and our autonomy within our territories. When Indigenous communities agree that their forests can be “protected” as carbon sinks, the forests are commodified and the communities gradually lose what has enabled them to live and use the land in ways that are culturally and existentially sustainable. The compound effects of climate change, invasions of Indigenous territories by land-grabbers, and loss of governance and cultural sovereignty under carbon-trading agreements are creating a state of emergency.

We are issuing a warning. If there will be no way to cooperate globally to protect Indigenous territories and place Indigenous rights at the center of the climate agenda, the Huni Kui people may not survive. Indeed, this could be literally our last warning.

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