
Introduction: what is critical environmental politics?

Luigi Pellizzoni, Emanuele Leonardi and Viviana Asara

On 28 September 2021 – precisely while we started to collect thoughts and ideas for this introductory chapter – Greta Thunberg addressed the Youth4Climate¹ delegates gathered in Milan for the upcoming Pre-COP 26.² Her ‘Blah blah blah’ speech was to become as iconic – if not more iconic – than her notorious *j’accuse* – ‘How dare you?’ – uttered at the UN Climate Meeting roughly two years prior.

Since Thunberg’s words are very often commented upon but seldom reported, we find it important to quote her at some length:

There is no planet B’ there is no planet blah – blah blah blah, blah blah blah.

‘This is not about some expensive politically-correct green-assed bunny-hugging or’ blah blah blah.

‘Green economy’ blah blah blah.

‘Net zero by 2050’ blah blah blah.

‘Net zero’ blah blah blah. ...

Thunberg continues, we contend, with an accurate delimitation of the field of critical environmental politics:

This is all we hear from our so-called leaders: words – words that sound great, but so far have led to no action.

Our hopes and dreams drown in their empty words and promises.

Of course we need constructive dialogue, but they’ve now had 30 years of blah blah blah and where has that led us?

Over 50% of all our CO₂ emissions have occurred since 1990,³ and a third since 2005.⁴

All this while the media is reporting what the leaders say that they are going to do instead of what they are actually doing. ...

They say they want solutions, but you cannot solve a crisis that you do not fully understand and you cannot balance a budget if you do not count all the numbers.

And as long as we ignore equity and historic emissions, and as long as we don’t include consumption of imported goods, burning of biomass etc. etc., and as long as clever accounting is one of the most efficient ways of reducing emissions, we won’t get anywhere.

And the climate crisis is of course only a symptom of a much larger crisis – the sustainability crisis, the social crisis – a crisis of inequality that dates back to colonialism and beyond – a crisis based on the idea that some people are worth more than others and therefore have a right to exploit and steal other people’s land and resources – and it is very naive to believe that we can solve this crisis without confronting the roots of it.

Right now we are still very much speeding in the wrong direction⁵

In light of yet another underwhelming outcome at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 26 in Glasgow,⁶ it seems to us that Thunberg’s words call for a deep rethinking of what critical environmental politics has theoretically meant thus far (next section) and on what conjunctural

field it will most likely be deployed in the future (subsequent section). After reflecting on these issues, we briefly present the structure of this handbook (final section).

CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Critical, environmental, politics: three words that both individually and taken together hardly seem to require clarifications. That the environment has become a major political issue is uncontested even by most resolute denialists of climate change or its anthropic causes (Jacques et al. 2008; Oreskes and Conway 2010). Moreover, decades of debates and interventions have not produced much, at least if we consider the situation about climate change and other alterations to the processes that, since the inception of the Holocene about 10 000 years ago, have reportedly ensured a ‘safe operating space’ for humanity (Rockström et al. 2009). This alone suggests the need for a thorough critique of environmental politics carried out thus far.

As a proper field of political intervention, rather than a set of occasional measures, environmental politics began around 1970 in correspondence with government and public acknowledgment of an ‘ecological crisis’, that is, of structural problems with the relationship between fast-growing, ever more industrialized societies and their biophysical milieu. The notion of crisis, incidentally, shares its etymological basis with the notion of critique, as both derive from the Greek word *krinein* – ‘judge’, ‘decide’. A crisis, especially if it endures and worsens in spite of decades of efforts to tackle it, asks for an assessment of its origins and possible solutions. This amounts to being critical, right?

Well, not necessarily, or at least, the point needs specification. Is it the same, for example, to write a handbook of critical environmental politics and a critical handbook of environmental politics? A quick reflection suggests this is not the case. Critically addressing a subject matter requires sound research: setting valid questions, looking for relevant evidence, and probing a terrain of inquiry carefully and rigorously. So, a critical handbook of environmental politics should just be a good handbook of environmental politics. Referring to critical environmental politics, instead, gives the work performed a peculiar qualification – a posture. Being critical is not just about doing a good job but, first, addressing the job in a particular way.

What is this way? Most answers to what ‘being critical’ is focus on the theoretical level, though this by no means rules out empirical research, as long as on-field inquiry is always based on some explicit or implicit theory. In a frequently cited account, Cox distinguishes between ‘problem-solving’ and ‘critical’ theory. The former aims to ‘help solve the problems posed within the terms of a particular perspective which was the point of departure’. It therefore ‘takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action’. The latter

stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about. Critical theory, unlike problem-solving theory, does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing’. (Cox 1981, pp. 128–9)

A critical outlook is committed to questioning the backdrop against which, or the framework whereby, problems are identified and solutions devised, and in so doing being attentive to the origin and contestation of institutional arrangements, power differentials, agency distribution, knowledge and authority claims, reality definitions, interest and identity attributions, and the

transformative potential of alternative approaches and social struggles. It is therefore sensitive to historical change. For Fraser (1989, p. 113) critical theory is the ‘self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age’. Similarly for Horkheimer – exponent of a school including several generations of German philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition that, being named ‘critical theory’ (see Chapter 1 in this volume), should epitomize what a critical posture is about – holds that a critical theory ‘never aims simply at an increase of knowledge as such’ but at ‘emancipation from slavery’ (Horkheimer 2002, p. 246).

Leaving aside for the moment who the subject of emancipation is, being critical thus entails both doing good research (increase of knowledge) and making that research instrumental to tackling domination. This goal reminds the Enlightenment principle of human progress, a famous description of which comes from Kant. For him (Kant 1784 [2009]), enlightenment is the task for humanity to emerge from immaturity, which depends on a lack of courage to use one’s reason, intellect, and wisdom without the guidance of someone else. His famous motto is *Sapere aude!* (Dare to be wise!) – a call for the use of reason to emancipate themselves addressed to each and every human being. However, there is a difference between, say, assuming that just by letting reason do its job (for example, undertaking effective research) domination will eventually be wiped out, and claiming that reason cannot do its job well unless domination itself falls under its gaze. This involves also, and perhaps primarily, being alert to the dominative assumptions and outcomes hidden within our own intellectual posture.

Postcolonial and decolonial scholarship has been particularly effective in denouncing the dominative implications of a pretended universalism of reason. According to Said (1993, pp. 278–9), the critical tradition stemming from, or aligned with, the Kantian framework, performs a false universalism that ‘assume[s] and incorporate[s] the inequality of races, the subordination of inferior cultures, the acquiescence of those who, in Marx’s words, cannot represent themselves and therefore must be represented by others’. This false universalism, which has effectively supported Western imperialism, is also endorsed for Said by critical theory. This claim finds some support in Horkheimer’s own words. He contrasts traditional theoretical thinking, with its outlook on ‘the genesis of particular objective facts, the practical application of the conceptual systems by which it grasps the facts and the role of such systems in action [as] external’ to itself, with the critical questioning of the dominative grounds and implications of such endeavour; yet he also holds that ‘the free development of individuals depends on the rational constitution of society’ (Horkheimer 2002, pp. 208, 246), suggesting the presence of an ordering principle that should be brought to light and let unfold or promoted against reactionary forces. That is, on one side, Horkheimer questions the dominative implications of the case for what Nagel (1986) has aptly termed the ‘view from nowhere’ – the distinctive objectivism of Western civilization that has as a cornerstone Descartes’s idea of a mind separated from the body yet capable of apprehending the world as it is, and that finds a functional equivalent in Kant’s a-priori elements of reason. On the other side, Horkheimer seems to believe in a critique of Western reason from within this very reason, according to the latter’s view of history, subscribing to the idea of a ‘progress’ over premodern or non-modern forms of life. This standpoint, postcolonial and decolonial scholars claim, makes it impossible to address coloniality as an imperialist endeavour repeated time and again through a systematic devaluation and subjection of peoples and places under the justification of helping these to catch up with the ‘advanced’ part of the world. The problem with the Enlightenment’s equation between reason and freedom, notes Allen (2016, p. 3), is that ‘the language of progress

and development is the language of oppression and domination for two-thirds of the world's people'.

After this is acknowledged, however, where do we go? To make its point, postcolonial and decolonial scholarship has built to a significant extent on French poststructuralism (Eagleton 1998; Go 2016), that is, its deconstruction of the modern argument for universal reason and progress as a narrative among others, with no superior access to a trans-historical or transcultural truth. This entails that social arrangements can and should be questioned only in their own terms and within their own boundaries, without a possibility of appealing to an external principle. Hence, for example, the controversy over the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This conclusion, however, has recently met with growing concerns that it may entail a weakening of the possibility to challenge the global reach of a ruling order that, through technological advancement, corporate expansion and neoliberal regulation, is entailing a growing exploitation of humans and nonhumans. The issue, more precisely, is that contestations of injustices grounded on difference instead of inequality (a concept that entails a standard for comparison) may be a blunt weapon against a hegemonic ideology that portrays market differentiation, individual competition and a 'flat' ontology of monetary equivalents as the only Reason of the world (Dardot and Laval 2017). Can this new type of universalism – not of principles or ends but of results, the unpredictable combination of myriad of independent decisions, whose necessity is testified by its very actualization – be tackled through an argument for radical diversity and incommensurability? Preoccupations that this may not be the case are expressed from various perspectives: for example, that late feminism's focus on difference to the detriment of redistribution and representation may have come up to effectively support neoliberal politics (Fraser 2009); or that mobilizations based on claims about identity and lifestyles are proving ineffective in engendering political change (Mouffe 2013); or else that the deconstruction of scientific assertions is benefitting ruling elites, corporate interests and reactionary forces rather than disadvantaged groups and unrepresented ecological concerns (Latour 2004; McIntyre 2018).

However, if both the case for a view from nowhere and for a view from anywhere – which replicates the former in reverse (poststructuralism may repudiate Western reason but is an offspring of the latter!), becoming in this way more resistant to contestation – can hardly serve the purpose of a critique aimed at emancipation from domination, does the idea of a critical posture keep any meaning and purpose? An initial reply is that it does not; that the traditional notion of critique as based on claims, counter-arguments and protests is doomed. This argument has been made by scholarship, especially feminist, partaking in 'new materialisms' (Coole and Frost 2010; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012), also known as the 'ontological turn' (Pellizzoni 2016; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017) that has involved philosophy, the social sciences and the humanities at the turn of the twenty-first century, gaining momentum in subsequent years. The shared tenet of an otherwise diversified intellectual tide is an argument against both naturalism and culturalism: the former for its several dualisms (mind/body, masculine/feminine, nature/culture, and so on), which imply the dominance of one polarity over the other, deemed passive, deaf and valueless; and the latter for its failure to question the language/matter duality ending up with the same result and an inability to acknowledge the agency and vitality of matter and the body. Critique, new materialist scholars remark, has traditionally dealt with concepts and discourses, focusing on 'errors and points of contention' (Grosz 2005, p. 27), regarding materiality as passive and limiting, and positioning the critic 'as the dispassionate outsider who stands above and outside the epistemological or philosophical fray' (McNeil 2010, p. 433).

This has been unable to yield social and political change. Critique as discourse deconstruction is therefore to be replaced with embodied practices, where alternative ways of living are experimented with and affirmed. This, we may argue, is what is happening with a host of ‘prefigurative’ mobilizations where corporeality and new socio-material entanglements become sites of resistance, creativity and hope (for example, Yates 2015; Schlosberg 2019; see Chapters 34 and 35 in this volume).

A critique embodied in materiality and everyday practices should ostensibly circumvent the politically disabling alternative between the view from nowhere and the view from anywhere. However, the argument for prefiguration has been targeted with the same criticism of ineffectiveness it addresses to traditional protest. If discourse deconstruction is a blunt weapon against a ruling order based on violence, exploitation, systematic devaluation and, increasingly, the adoption of deconstructive styles by ruling elites themselves, some scholars wonder how effective can be an embodied politics that struggles to transcend the level of small groups, that the commodity system intercepts as lifestyle, profitable market niches, and that governments ever-more leaning towards the market ideology welcome as a self-help reply to a shrinking welfare state (De Angelis 2013; Haiven 2016; Pellizzoni 2021a).

Does the alternative between the view from nowhere and the view from anywhere, or between a discursive and an embodied approach, exhaust the space for conceiving and enacting critique? Not necessarily. There is a line of argument, connecting otherwise distant scholars such as Foucault and Adorno, that opens up a possibility for critique to be both historically and culturally located and transformative (Allen 2016). Both Foucault and Adorno subscribe to the emancipative ethos of Enlightenment without endorsing its metaphysical assumptions about progress as the universal affirmation of Western modernity as it is and as a whole, making a case for an immanent critique, that is, a critique that turns against themselves the assumptions and conceptual tools available in the historical moment, questioning their foundation as bound up with specific power relations, hence raising the issue of ‘how not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them’ (Foucault 2007a, p. 44). For Foucault the task of a critique so conceived is to bring into question the ruling ‘problematization’ – why and how certain issues emerge as problems and the horizon of meaning that even opposed solutions share – from within itself. Think, for example, of how, in the debate over the ecological crisis, those who call for more technology and those who call for a return to ‘simpler’ ways of living generally share a same understanding of what technology is about. Problematizing that understanding, then, means regarding technology, as currently conceived and implemented, as neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ but – using Foucault’s term – ‘dangerous’, by which he means that, whatever the situation and its dominant accounts, ‘we have always something to do’ (Foucault 2000, p. 256). This amounts to saying that technologies are amenable to different developments according to different purposes, rather than just according to different possibilities of fulfilling same purposes, as if these were self-evident and constrained by the materiality of devices and by their conditions of production. Existing socio-material arrangements can and should, instead, be only the starting point for a rethinking and transformation of technologies that builds on contesting their very matter-of-factness, their apparent necessity. Similarly, Adorno proposes the ‘non-identical’ as an alternative to ‘identity-thinking’, the matter-of-fact appearance taken by historically located and culturally loaded apprehensions of the world. Against the argument for an actualization of socio-technical potentialities that can be fostered or hampered but not diverted, ‘negative dialectics’ means for him a ‘historically

situated response to a particular form of social organization and its accompanying worldview' (Allen 2016, p. 193), showing precisely its non-necessity: that 'it need not be' (Adorno 1973, p. 321). On this view, 'the positive meaning of freedom lies in the potential, in the possibility, of breaking the spell or escaping from it' (Adorno 2006, p. 174). The separation between nature and society, and the domination of the latter over the former in the name of progress, represents a key element of this spell, to which even critical theorists have proven sensitive. Habermas (1983, p. 108), for example, has claimed that 'for the sake of removing socially unnecessary repression we cannot do without the exploitation of external nature necessary for life'. A statement that Marx, in spite of his nuanced account of the relationship between humans and nature, would arguably underwrite (see Chapter 4 in this volume).

It is of the utmost relevance for a critical environmental politics, then, that for Adorno it is not possible to instrumentalize and exploit non-humans without doing the same to humans. Even for the late Foucault (despite his well-known disregard for nature), freedom builds on a particular relation with oneself and with the world (Iofrida and Melegari 2017). For both these scholars, moreover, it is not possible to predict where critique will lead to, precisely for its immanent character, alien to any claim of historical necessity. Its only normative benchmark is freedom from domination (of humans and non-humans alike, and together: an issue on which Adorno is most explicit), which means inclusion, justice and respect for the other. Its way of proceeding is contestatory, first and foremost of the aprioristic assumptions that naturalize power relations foreclosing imagination and acknowledgement of alternatives, in so doing giving relevance to embodied experiences, especially of injustice and suffering, which are neither ruled out nor hypostatized, but seen as affecting and effecting thinking, and vice versa (see, for example, Foucault 1988; Adorno 1998a). An immanent critique, moreover, acknowledges that experiences of injustice and domination never repeat themselves in the same way, yet they can be recognized across time and place. It is on this recognizability, which Walzer (1990) names as minimal or reiterative universalism, that emancipatory thrusts can build up and find support beyond the confines of specific communities or social groups.

Equally important is to take notice that a critical posture so conceived entails a peculiar relationship with uncertainty or non-knowledge. The case for progress as a pathway towards the full realization of universal Reason crucially builds on science, and specifically on the incomplete, ever-revisable character of scientific knowledge. Outside the laboratory or the university lecture hall, the assumption of knowledge perfectibility has effectively authorized a sort of retroactive application of its future accomplishment in terms of sufficiency of the knowledge available at any given time for handling the world in full accord to purposes. This has led to a neglect of early warnings of 'unpredictable' adverse effects of technology, a preference for amount of yield against resilience and reversibility, an assumption of resolute technical progress, and so on. The tendency to conflate knowledge exhaustiveness as a normative ideal – the vanishing point of the scientific enterprise – with the capacity of handling biophysical processes has gained momentum in recent years, the purpose of basic research having been increasingly diverted from cognition to usability (Stokes 1997). Acknowledgement of incompleteness, in the Adornian account of non-identity, means instead that the anticipated matter-of-factness to which action should conform is incompleteness itself (Pellizzoni 2021b). In the lexicon of Adorno, it is impossible to do full justice to the Other – and all the better if this leads to an attitude of humbleness and respect, a care in avoiding smugness and assimilation, a demand of friendship rather than an attempt at lordship, and a search for 'agreement between human beings and things' (Adorno 1998b, p. 247). This position draws inspiration

from Benjamin's (2019, p. 203) claim that a type of labour is possible which 'far from exploiting nature, is capable of delivering her of the creations which lie dormant in her womb as potentials'. Benjamin's envisaged horizon appears now increasingly crucial, yet foreclosed by a critique of technology harnessed in a conflict between technophiles and technophobes that is largely fictitious and instrumental to dominative designs.

If the above provides an account of the type of job 'being critical' entails, be it a matter of academic work, action research or civic mobilization, the account cannot but invest the notions of environment and politics themselves. Environment is not the same as nature. The latter is a complex concept which, according to Williams (1983), can be drawn to three main meanings: the whole material reality; the opposite of culture, that is, the sphere of what is not altered by humans; and the essence or distinctive features of a being. This applies to the Western tradition, as all these meanings presume the external similarity and internal difference between humans and non-humans that Descola (2014), Viveiros de Castro (2014) and other anthropologists have shown to be specific to Western ontology. Environment, however, is a relational concept. When applied to the biophysical world it draws attention to interaction instead of identity. It is not by chance that it has become synonymous with ecology, the study of the relationships between organisms and their biotic and abiotic surroundings, whose official birthday is 1866, when the German biologist Ernst Haeckel reportedly coined it. The rise of this relational perspective is thus concomitant, and hardly unconnected, with what Foucault (2007b) terms the liberal problem of government, as a political focus on the handling of the dynamics involving populations and their biophysical milieu, with the crucial help of specialized knowledges. Environment, therefore, is a concept where knowledge and power are deeply intertwined from the outset. Political and cognitive aspects are constitutive of the notion. The environmental crisis is a crisis in the relationship between humans and nature, and surely not a crisis of nature, if by this we mean the planet. Life has proven capable of surviving the most adverse conditions, as the vestiges of past geological eras indicate.

Therefore, a critical outlook cannot but scrutinize the notion of environment, a task that should also involve a critique of what counts as 'environmental' and what constitutes 'environmentalism'. This has traditionally been set by Western standards, the bounds of which have coincided with the legitimization of 'white' and colonial visions, and the de-legitimization of other, indigenous, non-white and non-modern visions, ontologies and knowledges not orientated towards extractive relationships. While the environment has been framed as 'an exotic elsewhere' (Di Chiro 2008, p. 286) environmentalism has traditionally been constructed as a 'cult of wilderness' legitimating the dispossession of peoples from their land, and as an approach that should not be concerned with livelihoods, human labour, and materiality, but rather with presumed 'post-material' values and issues (see Chapters 35, 37 and 42 in this volume). Decolonizing the notion of the environment hence means to make visible the alternative genealogies of environmental thought that have been silenced by an assumed universal meaning of green concerns.

Furthermore, scrutinizing the notion of environment also entails an investigation of how it is used in political action and struggles, which brings into question a great deal: for example, the type of value humans assign to the biophysical world, and how this value comes about. Without pre-empting an issue touched upon in various chapters of this volume, a critical posture should ostensibly question the idea that value is a thing or an intrinsic quality of things, conceiving of it as a consequence of acts of valuation and evaluation (Muniesa 2011; Lamont 2012), as this allows inquiry into the underlying assumptions about worthiness and

how to protect or increase it, and related power relations, bringing to light conflicting moral economies and challenging the claim that any judgement of worth can ultimately be traced back to a single metric (see Chapter 23 in this volume). Indeed, many emergent mobilizations in the Global South and Global North contest precisely this, enacting what Centemeri (2018) terms ‘alternative value practices’.

Undoubtedly, a critical outlook should also extend its gaze to the notion of politics. This entails taking a post-foundationalist posture, that is ‘a constant interrogation of the meta-physical figures of foundation’ (Marchart 2007, p. 2), whereby politics is not simply the ontic manifestations of conventional politics (including, for instance, the political system and institutions, or politics meant as the ‘art of government’), but also encompasses ‘the political’, the ontological dimension of the institution of society which is characterized by the absence of a final ground or ‘closure’ of the social. Political difference explains the ‘unbridgeable gap’ (Marchart 2007, p. 6) between, on the one hand, concepts such as polity, policy, politics and police, and on the other ‘the political’ or radical antagonism, that is the instituting moment of the social.

A critical approach should also involve a critique of those instituted forms of conventional politics that contribute to mark the current socio-ecological crisis. It is in this sense that, as political ecology has forcefully voiced since at least the 1970s, dealing with the environmental question is an inescapably political endeavour and, vice versa, politics cannot prescind from its environmental groundedness and implications. That is, a critical approach to politics is intimately tied to a critical approach to the environment. This involves critiquing the continuous ‘displacement (or denial) of the real socio-ecological processes’ (Chapter 32 in this volume) that drive the socio-ecological crisis, such as the capitalist mode of production and consumption and its generalization through an ‘imperial mode of living’ (Brand and Wissen 2012) that is deeply rooted in everyday practices. Such a suppression occurs by means of a politics of unsustainability (Chapter 9 in this volume) that has turned the ‘ecological transition’ into a new orthodoxy (Brand 2016) where, as in the famous novel *The Leopard* by Tomasi di Lampedusa, ‘for things to remain the same, everything must change’. A paradigmatic case is the European Union (EU), an actor traditionally considered to be environmentally progressive. Here, while the environment has moved centre stage, with the ecological transition raised to the rank of newly established ministries in several European countries, and the Next Generation EU mobilizing unprecedented funds with the goal of climate protection, eco-politics is reduced to a techno-managerial issue, revolving around issues such as green finance, commodification of nature, circular economy and, most likely, even reliance on nuclear energy and fossil gas as tools for win-win solutions that can harness momentum for further economic growth.⁷ Such politics of unsustainability involves, as we argue in the next section, on the one hand a new approach to the environmental challenge, whereby ecological limits are turned into an opportunity for market-led valorization, and on the other an intimate relationship with the slippage into post-democratic governance through consensual governing and a mainstreamed environmental discourse that attempts to erase social antagonism (see Chapter 32 in this volume).

Related to the point above, a noteworthy direction of inquiry over politics and its ongoing transformations considers the change occurred to the notion of crisis. According to the modern conception of reality, time and the human agent, crisis meant a decisive moment of confirmation or upheaval of the political order (Koselleck and Richter 2006), yet it now increasingly expresses a permanent situation from which there is no exit. This is exemplified well by the growth of debt as a structural condition at individual and collective level (Graeber 2011;

Lazzarato 2012), or by the shift from one ecological emergency to the next (heath waves, hurricanes, pandemics, industrial accidents, and so on) with hardly any break. That is, some scholars contend, crisis has become a way of governing (Lazzarato 2015; Gentili 2018). More precisely, we would be witnessing an intensification of the ‘administrative’ concept of government that Foucault (2007b, 2008) had detected first in liberalism and then in neoliberalism; an intensification possibly engendering a new political condition, with novel forms of domination. The project for this volume started before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The book was developed at the same time as this was unfolding, and completed before its end. Various chapters touch upon it though without giving it central stage, which in our opinion is correct as the scope of a handbook must go beyond the headlines, dramatic that these may be. However, voices have been raised claiming that the COVID-19 pandemic is a crucial step towards the normalization of the state of emergency, main restrictions of fundamental rights in the name of a bio-political necessity being bound to endure in some form or another after the end of the pandemic (Agamben 2021). Beyond the specific case, an administrative declension of crises has an impact on critique, as it increasingly crushes the latter on a problem-solving plane, foreclosing, among the other things, the possibility to question the growing account of adaptation as the sole sensible approach to climate change, pandemics, job precarity and a host of biophysical and social issues. A claim that not only assumes that the status quo is unchangeable (not ‘in time’, at least), but opens avenues for an expanding sector of economy that works on emergencies, the endless modulation of which corresponds to endless opportunities of profit. Also on this view, a critical approach to environmental politics is more necessary than ever.

Finally, another emergent line of inquiry in recent environmental politics scholarship comes from new materialist literature, especially at the crossroads between science and technology studies (STS) and feminist and postcolonial theory. What has come under the spotlight is the way ‘knowing, the words of knowing, and texts do not describe a pre-existing world [but] are part of a practice of handling, intervening in, the world and thereby of enacting one of its versions – up to bringing it into being’ (Mol and Law 2006, p. 19). The world, it is claimed, takes shape and meaning, emerging from an indistinctiveness that constitutes the (moveable) border of thinkability, only together with a cognitive act which is inseparable from history and flesh. Moreover, ‘if reality is done, if it is historically, culturally and materially located, then it is also multiple’ (Mol 1999, p. 75). It is ‘open to an alternative ordering or recomposition of the relational field’ (Clark 2013, p. 2828). Hence, a focus on emergent ‘ontological struggles’, on their crucial building on a denaturalization of Western dualisms in favour of perspectives by which ‘all beings exist always in relation and never as “objects” or individuals’ (Escobar 2010, p. 39). The notion of pluriverse is often evoked in this regard (Kothari et al. 2019), as not a kaleidoscope of declensions of a same world but a world comprising many worlds (Blaser and de la Cadena 2018).

CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS: CONJUNCTURAL ELEMENTS AND FUTURE SCENARIOS

The task of a handbook, we believe, is to offer an updated compass of a problem field, without succumbing to the lure of fashionability, using interpretive lenses provided with a focus deep enough to help the reader discern what is most relevant in ongoing events and emergent trends.

On one side we have to acknowledge the growing significance of the ontological politics practised by socio-ecological mobilizations and initiatives in the Global South and also increasingly in the Global North, as underpinning a new type of emancipatory politics – for humans and non-humans alike, and together – grounded in materiality that can itself nurture critical environmental politics. On the other side it is important to take note of how environmental movements' approach towards global environmental governance has evolved in recent years, such that it becomes hard to talk of 'traditional' mobilizations, in relation to usual politics of discourse (voicing and lobbying). Both issues are addressed from different perspectives in a number of chapters. It may however be useful to delve here into the latter as a way to contextualize the book in its entirety vis-à-vis the challenge of climate change, which now ostensibly encompasses and synthesizes the whole case for an environmental politics.

The current historical conjuncture is marked by a key relationship: that between ecological issues and transnational governance. Our crux is that Greta Thunberg's words – and, more importantly, the massive movements they inspired – constitute a remarkable shift in the history of that relationship. In brief, they put an end to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁸ as the centripetal force for climate-related imagination, as the main attractor of ecology-related policy efforts. This does not mean that, post-Greta, critical environmental politics is entirely unprecedented: many features of Fridays for Future or Extinction Rebellion existed in previous mobilizations, especially those of the alter-globalization cycle. Yet, what we believe is important to emphasize is the progressive disintegration – endogenous as well as exogenous – of the UN-led governance process, which represents a moment of discontinuity from both an institutional and a social movements' perspective.

From the 1960s onwards, owing to convergent pressures by engaged scientific communities and vocal social movements, ecological issues have gradually become pivotal both in national and supranational political agendas. Up until the late 1980s, however, this unprecedented importance constituted a barrier to capital accumulation. As O'Connor (1973) and Gorz (1978 [1980]) remarkably showed, environmental protection was seen as a necessary evil, an additional cost to be either internalized within firms or externalized onto governmental budget, but eventually driving to an identical outcome: an increase in market prices for 'dirty' commodities. Although historical evidence suggests that ruling elites were most often willing to privilege profits over a liveable planet, it is worth noting that legal controversies over ecological issues – most often following socio-ecological mobilizations – were usually regulated within a command-and-control legal framework (Klein 2015), or else public regulation. The best example of this procedure is the Montreal Protocol which, in 1987, phased out a number of substances that were industrially useful but also detrimental to the stratospheric ozone layer (Epstein et al. 2014).

This situation significantly changed with the rhetoric of 'sustainable development' (SD) (in 1987) and was eventually reversed by the discursive formation of the 'green economy' (GE), arising within innovative business circles in the early 1990s. Whereas the main tenet of SD is the conviction that economic growth, biospheric health and future generations' best interests may go hand in hand (if properly balanced), the disruptive kernel of GE is the idea that what was once conceived as crisis *of* capitalism (that is, the ecological crisis) is from now on to be regarded as a crisis *for* capital. That is, GE postulates that the internalization of environmental limits does not constitute a burden but, rather, opens up a new strategy for market-led valorization (Leonardi 2019). This also led to significant shifts in environmental policy discourse after the 1970s. On the one hand, there was a change in discourse from 'growth versus the

environment’, which characterized international environmental governance of the 1970s (more particularly, global forums, such as the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and the 1974 Cocoyoc Symposium), to ‘growth for the environment’, which has emerged since the Brundtland report and further strengthened in later UN conference (the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development and the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development), most especially with the 2012 Rio + 20 summit under the aegis of the new GE concept (Gómez-Baggethun and Naredo 2015). On the other hand, there was a shift from a political discourse, characterizing the early days of global environmental governance, to an increasingly technocratic discourse where the ecological crisis is set as an apolitical problem requiring techno-managerial fixes.

A brief glance at the historical development of global climate governance shows the connection between the emergence of SD and GE and the governmental design of market-based schemes. The Kyoto Protocol is the first legally binding agreement on climate change whose main tenet is undoubtedly the beginning of carbon trading, for which it unmistakably represents an ‘official’ date of birth. The basic economic rationale which frames the flexibility mechanisms is that trading emissions permits and credits on dedicated markets would simultaneously reduce the aggregate cost of meeting the targets, foster sustainable development in non-industrialized countries and create profitable opportunities for green business. This formula indicates that global reliance on specifically dedicated markets as an exclusive policy option is connected to an extremely entrenched political belief according to which climate change, although a historical market failure (since negative externalities were not accounted for), could be viably solved only by further marketization.

This assumption has represented the red thread of climate governance as a whole and remained intact in the much celebrated Paris Agreement (signed at COP 21, in 2015). In passing, this uncontested centrality is consistent with the hypothesis according to which the environmental limit is turned by GE into an element of the process of valorization. That the COP-system is entirely reliant on this wager is shown once more by the inability of delegates at COP 26 to move beyond exclusive market mechanisms and to design a non-market mechanism – as prescribed by article 6 of the Paris Agreement. As far as carbon trading is concerned, it must be noted that negotiators in Glasgow reached an agreement over transparency by detailing the rulebook, the impact of which on fraudulent practices, such as double counting, is expected to be significant. Yet, the main flaw of the Clean Development Mechanism still undermines all efforts: carbon offsets – awkwardly renamed Article 6, paragraph 4, emission reductions (A6.4ERs) – do not achieve actual mitigation as they simply shift emissions from one side of the world to the other without any benefit for the atmosphere (Leonardi 2017).

For our purposes, it is key to assess also the disruptive nature of SD/GE on social movements’ side. Our main argument is that, since the 1990s, the policy framework aimed at posing ecological issues as drivers of capital accumulation has attracted even radical imaginaries as it ostracized denialists of various forms. Again, global warming is an example: the UNFCCC process being a centripetal force for social advocacy, most climate justice (CJ) actors ended up playing as legitimacy providers for climate governance (at the very least from Kyoto 1997 to Paris 2015).

As is well established, CJ as a political tool for social mobilizations has emerged in close connection with the anti-globalization cycle of struggles, also referred to as no-global, new-global or ‘movement of movements’ (Chapter 13 in this volume). It was at that juncture that ecology ceased to be perceived as an area among other areas, as a specific sector to be

linked to others, to instead be turned into a systemic viewpoint, a general connective tissue, and a broad perspective through which the traditional dualism between nature and society could be redefined. It is no coincidence that the expression ‘climate justice’ was coined in a 1999 text circulated on the eve of the Seattle uprising.

In that context, what the movement of movements wanted to emphasize was ‘the ethical and political dimension of global warming’, conceived of as a ‘not purely environmental or climatic issue’ (Corporate Watch 1999). Quite correctly, climate naysayers – or, merchants of doubt (Oreskes and Conway 2010) – were indicated as reactionaries unable to face an enormous and unprecedented challenge: making atmospheric stability a political stake. Perhaps less correctly, in hindsight, the UN-led climate governance was seen as a meaningful response; if not immediately effective, at least politically adequate to this challenge. Every preliminary definition of ‘alterglobal’ CJ cannot but be based on the recognition that those who have been least responsible for the historical volume of emissions are those who are most vulnerable to pay the price it entails. In this perspective, CJ was originally, for the most part, a geopolitical critique dealing especially with historical responsibility (for cumulative emissions) (Carbon Brief 2021) and (repayment of) climate debt. Against this background, it is possible to distinguish among three different strands of self-portrayed CJ:

1. Pro-corporate elites (for example, World Resource Institute) – progressive neoliberals, in Fraser’s (2019) terms, according to which eco-competition plus the Green Climate Fund⁹ would be effective in tackling carbon inequality.
2. Large environmentalist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (for example, Greenpeace), often part of the Climate Action Network, according to which divestment strategies plus the Green Climate Fund could be better candidates.
3. Radical unions, global networks and locally unwanted land use (LULU)/environmental justice movements from below (for example, Climate Justice Now!), according to which market-based solutions plus money transfers per se could not work without a deep restructuring of exploitative social relations.

Schematically, and in the absence of a mass movement, the following can be stated: group 1 has consistently supported the COP system; group 3 has mostly opposed the COP system; group 2 – by far the largest civil society advocate of CJ – has oscillated between tepid endorsement and mild criticism, but has nonetheless consistently provided climate governance with political legitimacy. A significant confirmation can be found in the following 2010 interview with Kumi Naidoo, Executive Director of Greenpeace. Asked about the NGO strategy in the dramatic aftermath of COP 15, Naidoo explains that campaigning within the UNFCCC was still to be a key component of it:

At Greenpeace we are intensifying our efforts and we have an effort to put more pressure on the US, China, the BASIC countries [Brazil, South Africa, India and China] in general as well as trying to see if the European Union which were fairly marginal in the politics played out in Copenhagen, can get their act together and add some momentum to the talks. The UNFCCC is also going through a transition because with de Boer¹⁰ leaving there is anticipation that perhaps someone from a developing country might be appointed who would bring urgency to the negotiations.¹¹

These words echo the typical group 2 comment at the end of every COP: ‘it’s not enough, but it’s a first step in the right direction’. In our interpretation, however, this course of actions progressively lost support to eventually end in Katowice at COP 24 (in 2018). As the climate

movement's confidence in COP's ability to produce substantive progress and handle the climate crisis in an efficacious and socially just manner progressively weakened, strand 2 moved closer to strand 3's positions, as a reformist approach aimed at influencing the COPs was gradually discarded in favour of a more radical approach, thus facilitating a relative unification of the climate movement (see also De Moor 2018). The core of climate governance (global warming exists and can only be solved by markets) was undermined by two unexpected events:

1. the rise of a 'denialist front' within the COP system itself (USA, Russia, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia). These four countries stated that the latest IPCC report was not to be 'welcome' but, rather, 'taken note of';
2. the delegitimization of climate negotiations on the part of group 2 of the CJ camp.

If Donald Trump was the political personification of the first process, Greta Thunberg played the same function as regards the second. Her message, in Katowice, was threefold:

1. Delegitimation of the UNFCCC elites: 'our political leaders have failed us' so 'I will not ask them anything. Instead, I will ask the media to start treating the crisis as a crisis' (Katowice, 3 December 2018);
2. Inversion of the relationship between economy and ecology: 'some companies and some decision makers' are to blame for the climate crisis. They 'have known exactly what priceless values they are sacrificing to continue making unimaginable amounts of money' (Davos, 22 January 2019);
3. Call for action rather than negotiation: 'We've had 30 years of pep talking and selling positive ideas and I'm sorry but it doesn't work. Because if it would have, the emissions would have gone down by now The one thing we need more than hope is action' (Stockholm, 24 November 2018).

All these speeches by Thunberg heavily impacted on group 2 of CJ, as shown by the reaction of Greenpeace at the end of COP 24: 'People expected action and that is what governments did not deliver. This is morally unacceptable and they must now carry with them the outrage of people and come to the UN Secretary General's summit in 2019 with higher climate action targets' (Greenpeace International Executive Director, Jennifer Morgan). More importantly, these speeches fuelled a political process which eventually erupted in the first global climate strike on 15 March 2019. Instead of NGOs providing legitimacy, 2019 brought to the UNFCCC a mass movement undermining its very *raison d'être*.

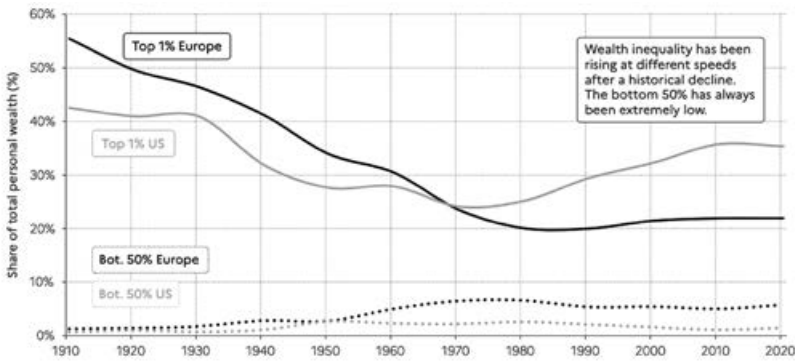
This mass movement for CJ is marked by some key features. First, it thoroughly changed the social perception of climate change: from apocalyptic scenario to driver of youth worldwide mobilization. Second, it incorporated the centrality of transversal feminism not only in respect of critical repertoires, but also, more directly, within its structure of leadership: Greta Thunberg is accompanied by young women such as Vanessa Nakate, Luisa Neubauer, and Angela Valenzuela. Third, within and against the institutional process of climatization of the world (Aykut 2020), it turned CJ from an oppositional stance to a general political framework for the convergence of different struggles.

From this perspective, it is important to highlight that the four climate strikes of 2019 progressively enlarged CJ's focus on geopolitics so that it now includes social inequality within national communities as a key target of its critical endeavour. What is now explicitly posed

is an unprecedented proximity between social equality and conflicts for atmospheric stabilization (linked primarily to emissions reduction). In order to properly grasp this fundamental extension of the scope of CJ, it may be useful to link it to the crisis of the UNFCCC as the centripetal force for climate-related imagination. We contend that this crisis is an instance of what Sachs has described as the crisis of development as West-centric *Weltanschauung* (worldview) of the post-World War II world:

A suspicion spreads among the global middle class that the expectations kindled by development are not going to be fulfilled. Alienated from their traditions, aware of Western living styles through their smart phones, yet excluded from the modern world, this is the fate of too many people, and not only in poor countries. Thus, cultural confusion and ecological crises fuel fear of the future. (Sachs 2019, p. xv)

Elaborating on Sachs’s crucial insight, we may say that the UNFCCC’s promise of social inclusion through green growth (or, climate mitigation as achieved through carbon trading) has not materialized. On the contrary, inequality worldwide has been increasing since the 1980s. With specific regard to the US and EU, the *World Inequality Report* contains a remarkable graph (Figure I.1).



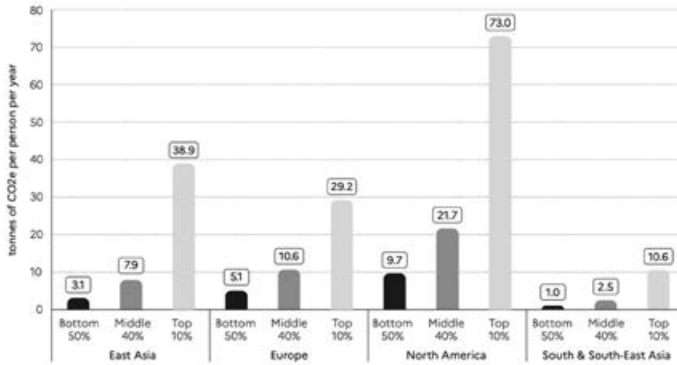
Source: Chancel et al. (2021).

Figure I.1 *Top 1 per cent versus bottom 50 per cent wealth shares in Western Europe and the US, 1910–2020*

However, what is even more remarkable is that this data is openly connected with greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions not at the country level – where inequality often is obfuscated by the failure to account for imported emissions owing to offshoring heavy industries – but, instead, at the per capita level, as Figures I.2 and I.3 show.¹²

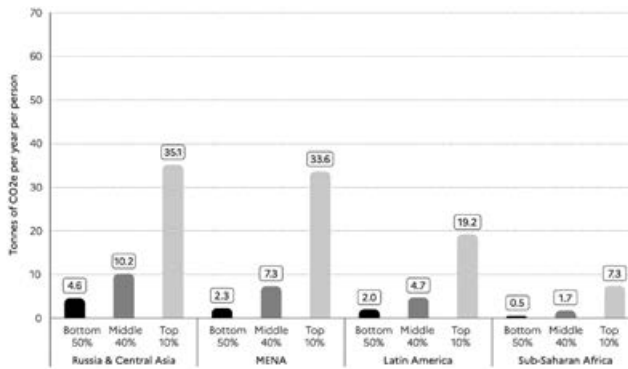
This interest on carbon inequality is a direct consequence of CJ’s ‘new clothes’ and can be appreciated in the insightful figure from an Oxfam Media briefing in September 2020 (Figure I.4).

What is key here is a new understanding of what has to change in order for the 1.5°C target (set by the Paris Agreement) to be achieved: not the lifestyle of developed countries in general but, primarily, the lifestyle of the richest 10 per cent, worldwide. This does not mean that indi-



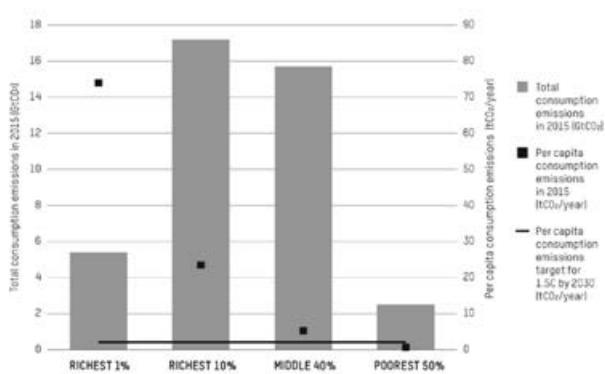
Source: Chancel et al. (2021).

Figure I.2 Per capita emissions across the world, 2019 (1)



Source: Chancel et al. (2021).

Figure I.3 Per capita emissions across the world, 2019 (2)



Source: Gore (2020).

Figure I.4 Total and per capita consumption emissions of individuals in different global income groups, 2015

vidual contributions are to be considered unimportant; the opposite is true, when it comes to climate activists (Wahlström et al. 2019). Simply, contemporary CJ postulates that individual efforts can be effective only against the background of more systemic transformations.

While it is not possible to anticipate how the climate movement will fare in the face of the mounting challenges of the politics of unsustainability, what we have tried to show in this section is that a critical take on environmental politics cannot leave aside not only the ‘ontological’ struggles developing in the Global South and Global North at different scales, from the everyday to the national, but also the current historical conjuncture concerning global environmental governance and movements’ positioning in and contribution to it. That is, a critical outlook should consider praxis as a fundamental dimension for nourishing the sociological imagination, so that observing, investigating and, even, partaking in social processes and practices can generate grounded theoretical reflection eventually feeding into emancipatory and transformative processes.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In the sections above we have depicted our understanding of a critical approach to environmental politics – its rationale and distinctive outlook. We neither expected nor pushed the contributors to endorse this account; all the more so considering the number of issues worthy of entering a handbook, and the variety of perspectives from which they could be addressed. However, browsing the pages of the book, our feeling is that the authors collected may not explicitly or entirely subscribe to what we have said about immanent critique but at least endorse its spirit. This, therefore, can be regarded as a common denominator of otherwise varied, sometimes contrasting, theoretical orientations and substantive focuses. Similarly, we have suggested that chapters include a section devoted to introducing the topic and its genealogy, subsequently addressing its problem-framing and relevant ideas and contentious issues, and ending with open questions and transformative potentials. Some authors felt comfortable with this structure; others interpreted their remit more freely. Contributors chose equally freely how to connect and balance conceptual elaboration, literature discussion and empirical insight. We believe all this provides the pages of the book with a healthy variety and individuality of approaches.

The field of environmental politics cannot be delimited according to well-established criteria, nor can the issues addressed be displayed according to a consensual organization. That said, the book aims to, and we think does, offer an overview of the state of the art, covering questions of significant relevance for a critical view on environmental politics. Entries have been selected after a great deal of discussion and some inevitable sacrifice – otherwise the reader now would be holding or watching a far bulkier text: too much, we felt. Yet, topics that were not attributed an entry of their own are often addressed within one or more chapters. An example is new materialisms. This emergent theoretical perspective is involved in many ways in a number of chapters, which confirms its relevance for a critical approach to environmental politics, as we have stressed previously. Dispensing with a dedicated discussion, which would inevitably be partial and tentative given the pervasiveness of new ontological perspectives and, most importantly, the pace of their current evolution across the Global South and Global North, was felt to be an acceptable choice faced within space constraints. At the opposite side of the spectrum of potentially significant topics, we have sacrificed issues boasting

a long-established literature to the benefit of less covered issues, or to ways of addressing them in an exploratory, even challenging, way. All things considered, we believe the entries included offer a comprehensive array of questions and outlooks that move across a variety of temporal and spatial scales, institutional levels and cultural perspectives, though – for the reasons outlined above – special emphasis is given to the impact of Western modernity and capitalism on socio-material organization and human–non-human relations, and how such impact has been and is being strengthened and challenged.

For the sake of space we will not follow the usage of synthesizing here each contribution. Giving an outline of the book's structure may suffice to conclude this introduction.

The book is organized in six parts. The first is devoted to theoretical strands of great relevance in constituting the framework of a critical outlook on environmental politics: 'Critical theory', 'Decolonial ecologies', 'Feminisms and the environment', and 'Marxism and ecology'.

The second part addresses notions of the contested status which makes them pivotal to the articulation of academic debates, political actions and societal struggles: 'Anthropocene', 'Buen Vivir', 'Degrowth', 'Limits', and 'Sustainability'.

The third part focuses on key issues, some referring to resources, others to challenges, conflicts, institutional arrangements, knowledge, and regulatory approaches, namely: 'Agrarian development and food security', 'Bioeconomies', 'Cities and the environment', 'Climate justice and global politics', 'The Common(s)', 'The cultural political economy of research and innovation', 'Disasters and catastrophes', 'Energy politics and energy transition', 'Expertise, lay/local knowledge and the environment', 'Extractivism and neo-extractivism', 'Religion and ecology', 'Social metabolism', 'Technological fixes', and 'The values of Nature'.

The fourth part deals with how the relationship between nature and society is regulated and governed (or allegedly so), by means of different types of institutionalized arrangements, with related power effects and agency implications. The chapters included are 'Democracy and democratization', 'Environmental violence', 'Environment-related human mobility', 'Financialization of nature', 'Fossil fuels and state–industry relations', 'Global environmental governance and the state', 'Just transition', and 'Sustainable welfare'.

The fifth part takes a perspective opposite to the former, namely, bottom up. It addresses manifestations of social effervescence concerning the environment, all important but differing according to focus, conception, target, organization, cultural background, and location. The chapters included are: 'Climate change consensus', 'Ecological mobilizations in the Global South', 'Engaging the everyday', 'Environmental movements', and 'More-than-social movements'.

The final part is devoted to emergent issues and perspectives. These are fundamentally concerned with whether and how human and non-human agential powers and societal goals can or should be reframed, also as a result of technological change. The chapters included are 'Decolonizing environmental politics', 'Digitalization and other promissory infrastructures for sustainability', 'Eco-feminism and the commons', 'Geopower', 'Post-work and ecology', and 'Transformative innovation'.

NOTES

1. <https://ukcop26.org/pre-cop/youth4climate-2021/> (accessed 27 December 2021).
2. <https://ukcop26.org/pre-cop/pre-cop-milan/> (accessed 27 December 2021).
3. Baseline year for the Kyoto Protocol.
4. Ratification year of the Kyoto Protocol.
5. See: <https://www.carbonindependent.org/119.html> (accessed 27 December 2021).
6. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cop26_aув_2f_cover_decision.pdf (accessed 27 December 2021).
7. At the time of writing this chapter, gas and nuclear energy are seriously being considered for inclusion in the EU sustainable investment taxonomy; see <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/gas-and-nuclear-fate-of-eu-green-taxonomy-now-in-the-hands-of-von-der-leyen/>. Moreover, the war in Ukraine is likely to deepen this trend.
8. The UNFCCC established an international environmental treaty to tackle ‘dangerous human interference with the climate system’. It was signed by 154 states at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. It established a Secretariat headquartered in Bonn and came into force in March 1994. The treaty called for ongoing scientific research and regular meetings, negotiations, and future policy agreements designed to both reduce greenhouse gasses and allow ecosystems to adapt to climate change.
9. The Green Climate Fund is a fund established within the framework of the UNFCCC as an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism to assist so-called developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices. The objective of the Green Climate Fund is to ‘support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties using thematic funding windows’. It is intended that the Green Climate Fund be the centrepiece of efforts to raise Climate Finance under the UNFCCC.
10. Yvo de Boer, Dutch, has been Executive Secretary of UNFCCC from 2006 to 2010. After him, the role has been filled by Costa Rican Cristina Figueres (2010–16) and Mexican Patricia Espinosa (2016–ongoing).
11. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/climate-2010-an-exclusive_b_520531.
12. It should be underlined that these figures refer to production-based rather than consumption-based emissions, thus, owing to far-reaching processes of delocalization, we can expect that they underestimate the Global North’s contribution to carbon emissions, as demonstrated by some studies (Peters et al. 2012; Steinberg et al. 2012; Wiedman et al. 2015).

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T.W. (1973), *Negative Dialectics*, New York: Continuum.
- Adorno, T.W. (1998a), Marginalia to theory and praxis, in T.W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 259–78.
- Adorno, T.W. (1998b), On subject and object, in T.W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 245–58.
- Adorno, T.W. (2006), *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964–1965*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Agamben, G. (2021), *Where Are We Now? The Epidemic as Politics*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Aykut, S. (2020), *Climatiser le monde*, Paris: Editions Quae.
- Allen, A. (2016), *The End of Progress. Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Benjamin, W. (2019), Theses of the philosophy of history, in W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, pp. 196–209.
- Blaser, M. and de la Cadena, M. (eds) (2018), *A World of Many Worlds*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Brand, U. (2016), 'Transformation' as a new critical orthodoxy: the strategic use of the term 'transformation' does not prevent multiple crises, *Gaia: Ecological Perspectives for Science and Societies*, **25** (1), 23–7.
- Brand, U. and Wissen, M. (2012), Global environmental politics and the imperial mode of living: articulations of state–capital relations in the multiple crisis, *Globalizations*, **9** (4), 547–60.
- Carbon Brief (2021), Which countries are historically responsible for climate change? accessed 11 October 2021 at https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-which-countries-are-historically-responsible-for-climate-change?fbclid=IwAR0s7ALJHHTeyjLKc0DMAsLpFIP3oYMY2lvsdVGOjdr5wdD6Tp2S5_cdSA.
- Centemeri, L. (2018), Commons and the new environmentalism of everyday life. Alternative value practices and multispecies commoning in the permaculture movement, *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, **59** (2), 289–313.
- Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E. and Zucman, G. (2021), *World Inequality Report 2022*, Paris: World Inequality Lab.
- Clark, N. (2013), Geoengineering and geologic politics, *Environment and Planning A*, **45** (12), 2825–32.
- Coole, D. and Frost, S. (eds) (2010), *New Materialisms*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Corporate Watch (1999), Greenhouse gangsters vs. climate justice, accessed 10 October 2021 at <http://www.corpwatch.org/sites/default/files/Greenhouse%20Gangsters.pdf>.
- Cox, R. (1981), Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, **10** (2), 126–55.
- Dardot, P. and Laval, C. (2017), *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*, London: Verso.
- De Angelis, M. (2013), Does capital need a commons fix? *Ephemera*, **13** (3), 603–15.
- De Moor, J. (2018), The 'efficacy dilemma' of transnational climate activism: the case of COP21, *Environmental Politics*, **27** (6), 1079–100.
- Descola, P. (2014), *Beyond Nature and Culture*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Di Chiro, G. (2008), Living environmentalisms: coalition politics, social reproduction, and environmental justice, *Environmental Politics*, **17** (2), 276–98.
- Dolphijn, R. and van der Tuin, I. (2012), *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press.
- Eagleton, T. (1998), Postcolonialism and 'postcolonialism', *Interventions*, **1** (1), 24–6.
- Epstein, G., Pérez, I., Schoon, M. and Meek, C.L. (2014), Governing the invisible commons: Ozone regulation and the Montreal Protocol, *International Journal of the Commons*, **8** (2), 337–60, <http://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.407>.
- Escobar, A. (2010), Latin America at a crossroads, *Cultural Studies*, **24** (1), 1–65.
- Foucault, M. (1988), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, L. Martin, H. Gutman and P. Hutton (eds), London: Tavistock.
- Foucault, M. (2000), On the genealogy of ethics: an overview of work in progress, in P. Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works*, vol. 1, London, Penguin, pp. 253–80.
- Foucault, M. (2007a), What is critique? in S. Lotringer (ed.), *The Politics of Truth*, Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), pp. 41–82.
- Foucault, M. (2007b), *Security, Territory, Population*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault, M. (2008), *The Birth of Biopolitics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fraser, N. (1989), What's critical about critical theory? The case of Habermas and gender, in N. Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 113–43.
- Fraser, N. (2009), Feminism, capitalism and the cunning of history, *New Left Review*, **56** (March–April), 97–117.
- Fraser, N. (2019), *The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born*, London: Verso.
- Gentili, D. (2018), *Crisi come arte di governo*, Macerata: Quodlibet.
- Go, T. (2016), *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gómez-Baggethun, E. and Naredo, J.M. (2015), In search of lost time: the rise and fall of limits to growth in international sustainability policy, *Sustainability Science*, **10** (3), 385–95.
- Gore, T. (2020), Confronting carbon inequality: putting climate justice at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery, Oxfam Media Briefing, 21 September.
- Gorz, A. ([1978] 1980), *Ecology as Politics*, Boston, MA: South End Press.

- Graeber, D. (2011), *Debt. The First 5,000 Years*, New York: Melville House.
- Grosz, E. (2005), *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1983), Theodor Adorno: the primal history of subjectivity – self-affirmation gone wild, in J. Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 99–110.
- Haiven, M. (2016), The Commons against neoliberalism, the commons of neoliberalism, the commons beyond neoliberalism, in S. Springer, K. Birch and J. MacLeavy (eds), *Handbook of Neoliberalism*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 257–29.
- Holbraad, M. and Pedersen, M.A. (2017), *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Horkheimer, M. (2002), Traditional and critical theory, in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. New York: Continuum, pp. 188–252.
- Iofrida, M. and Melegari, D. (2017), *Foucault*, Rome: Carocci.
- Jacques, P., Dunlap, R. and Freeman, M. (2008), The organization of denial, *Environmental Politics*, **17** (3), 349–85.
- Kant, I. (1784), *An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'*, repr. 2009, London: Penguin.
- Klein, N. (2015), *This Changes Everything*, London: Penguin.
- Koselleck, R. and Richter, M. (2006), Crisis, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, **67** (2), 357–400.
- Kothari, A., Salleh, A., Escobar, A., Demaria, F. and Acosta, A. (eds) (2019), *Pluriverse. A Post-Development Dictionary*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lamont, M. (2012), Toward a comparative sociology of valuation and evaluation, *Annual Review of Sociology*, **38** (August), 201–21.
- Latour, B. (2004), Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern, *Critical Inquiry*, **30** (2), 225–48.
- Lazzarato, M. (2012), *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).
- Lazzarato, M. (2015), *Governing by Debt*, Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).
- Leonardi, E. (2017), Carbon trading dogma, *Ephemera*, **17** (1), 61–87.
- Leonardi, E. (2019), Bringing class back in, *Ecological Economics*, **156** (February), 83–90.
- Marchart, O. (2007), *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- McIntyre, L. (2018), *Post-Truth*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- McNeil, M. (2010), Post-millennial feminist theory: encounters with humanism, materialism, critique, nature, biology and Darwin, *Journal for Cultural Research*, **14** (4), 427–37.
- Mol, A. (1999), Ontological politics. A word and some questions, in J. Law and J. Hassard (eds), *Actor Network Theory and After*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 74–89.
- Mol, A. and Law, J. (2006), Complexities: an introduction, in J. Law and A. Mol (eds), *Complexities. Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 1–22.
- Mouffe, C. (2013), *Agonistics*, London: Verso.
- Muniesa, F. (2011), A flank movement in the understanding of valuation, *Sociological Review*, **59** (2), 24–38.
- Nagel, T. (1986), *The View from Nowhere*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- O'Connor, J. (1973), *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, London: Routledge.
- Oreskes, N. and Conway, E. (2010), *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*, New York: Bloomsbury.
- Pellizzoni, L. (2016), *Ontological Politics in a Disposable World: The New Mastery of Nature*, London: Routledge.
- Pellizzoni, L. (2021a), Commodifying the planet? Beyond the economy of ecosystem services, *Stato e mercato*, **121**, 23–50.
- Pellizzoni, L. (2021b), Prefiguration, subtraction and emancipation, *Social Movement Studies*, **20** (3), 364–79.
- Peters, G.P., Davis, S.J. and Andrew, R. (2012), A synthesis of carbon in international trade, *Biogeosciences*, **9** (8), 3247–76.
- Rockström, J., Steffen, W., Noone, K., Persson, Å., Chapin, F.S. III, Lambin, E., et al. (2009), Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity, *Ecology and Society*, **14** (2), art. 32, accessed 2 October 2021 at <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art32/>.

- Sachs, W. (2019), Foreword. The Development Dictionary revisited, in A. Kothari, A. Salleh, A. Escobar, F. Demaria and A. Acosta (eds), *Pluriverse. A Post-Development Dictionary*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. xi–xvi.
- Said, E.W. (1993), *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Vintage.
- Schlosberg, D. (2019), From postmaterialism to sustainable materialism: the environmental politics of practice-based movements, *Environmental Politics*, 8 March, accessed 10 July 2021 at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2019.1587215>.
- Steinberg, J., Roberts, J.T., Peters, G.P. and Baiocchi, G. (2012), Pathways of human development and carbon emissions embodied in trade, *Nature Climate Change*, **2** (2), 81–5.
- Stokes, D.E. (1997), *Pasteur's Quadrant – Basic Science and Technological Innovation*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Viveiros de Castro, E. (2014), *Cannibal Metaphysics*, Minneapolis, MN: Univocal.
- Wahlström, M., Kocyba, P., De Vydt, M. and de Moor, J. (eds) (2019), Protest for a future. Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays For Future climate protests on 15 March, 2019 in 13 European cities, accessed 3 October 2021 at http://cosmos.sns.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/20190709_Protest20for20a20future_GCS20Descriptive20Report.pdf.
- Walzer, M. (1990), Two kinds of universalism, in M. Walzer, *Nation and Universe. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 11, Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, pp. 509–56.
- Wiedman, T.O., Schandl, H., Lenzen, M., Moran, D., Suh, S., West, J., et al. (2015), The material footprint of nations, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, **112** (20), 6271–6.
- Williams, R. (1983), *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yates, L. (2015), Rethinking prefiguration: alternatives, micropolitics and goals in social movements, *Social Movement Studies*, **14** (1), 1–21.