

Bulletin No. 4 on the Non-Congress

Information on the program and registration for the Non-Congress on 21-23 June 2024 in Berlin can be found at: <https://nonkongress.noblogs.org>

Ecology and economy

Honestly, anyone who hasn't felt at least a tinge of secret joy at the unplanned production stop at Tesla must be very deep in some kind of propaganda swamp. Either in the labour-fetish-socialist one à la Jacobin, or in the electro-green one, who would rather not look into the depths of a lithium mine as long as the CO-2 balance is still right. In any case, one thing seems even more remarkable to us than the quantity of damage, namely the quality of the depth and uncompromising nature of the attack and the published statement. It is not about negotiating with anyone about the expansion of production capacities or environmental regulations and therefore it does not need "pressure from the streets" or the visualization of movement demands, which seems to be the main political content of climate activism in Germany and internationally. It's about destroying what destroys us. So simple and so difficult. We don't believe that theory can replace practice. But we do believe that a theory is needed that is just as radical, profound and uncompromising. In order to dig deeper than the surface of green Tesla capitalism, we need to engage with the concept of ecology.

The age of ecology

We have the impression that we are at an epochal turning point. The world of postmodern late capitalism is saying goodbye to previous social formations and opening up new possibilities for capitalist production of surplus-value. Has the decision for a new era already been made? Despite the inertial forces of the old world, is a horizon already visible that could change the face of the existing? On the one hand, the foreseeable catastrophes and collapses are looming on the horizon, but at the same time the new, flourishing fields of a sustainably cultivated, green, digitalized world of modernized capitalism are also emerging.

What would correspond to the current rationality is that this new age could become the age of ecology - an age of regulation of the living world and the intensified objectification of nature. In the face of the profitability crisis of the neoliberal accumulation regime, ecology could provide any disinhibiting legitimization to extend the limits of capitalism:

"Ecology introduces the question of the purpose of regulating biological cycles and balances. It sees itself as an awareness of our environment. In the same breath, it acknowledges our interdependence with the ecosystems we destroy. The political gesture of this ecology is the attempt to preserve ecosystems. In other words, political ecology is the affirmative attempt to affirm solidarity and our responsibility towards the world in a certain way, to transform the biosphere into an organism.

(L'écologie, économie contre la vie, <https://entetement.com/lecologie-economie-contre-la-vie/>)

This invocation of responsibility towards the world and within it the survival of the human species obscures the continuity of (neo-colonial and patriarchal) violence and destruction on the one hand, and on the other, by shaping the subjects, contributes to the emergence of new possibilities of creating surplus-value for the currently crisis-ridden capital.

This produces "the desire not only to expand the boundaries of capitalism this time, but to abolish them. To become independent of everything material, of energy sources, raw materials, bodies, one's own, but above all of the bodies of the exploited and oppressed, preferably to become independent of life and the whole world. This desire is articulated most radically in the projects of transhumanism, but it can also be found in green ideology and the digitalization and algorithmization closely linked to it." (Aus der brennenden Hütte: Zeit der Ökologie. Das neue Akkumulationsregime, https://inferno.noblogs.org/files/2024/01/Zeit_der_Oekologie-ADBH.pdf, p. 31f.)

Ecology and the relationship between human and nature

The dispositive of ecology cannot be reduced to a social or economic approach to the environment,

but is rather based on the bourgeois separation between human and nature that has prevailed since the Enlightenment. In 1866, the Darwinist Ernst Haeckel created the neologism “ecology” from the Greek words oikos and logos to describe a scientific discipline concerned with the study of the natural habitats of living species. “It is no coincidence that this neologism was formed from the root oikos. If economics is a science of administration and management by calculation, ecology is not simply what connects beings to their environment, but the management of what connects them. What characterizes the discipline of ecology is political economy.” (L’écologie, économie contre la vie, <https://entetement.com/lecologie-economie-contre-la-vie/>) Francis Bacon defined the purpose of science as the mastery of nature for the benefit of society, and so in the thinking of colonial and patriarchal modernity, nature is logically nothing other than an exploitable resource. It can thus be said that the Enlightenment reification of nature gave rise to ecology as the science of access to nature. It was only in the second half of the 20th century that ecology was generally equated with nature conservation. In this way, politically, the protection of nature and habitat became the central mode of legitimization of a new configuration of ecology as “environmental making” (nature and human beings as part of it become a cybernetic relationship system or machine), which continues precisely this Enlightenment objectification and exploitation in a new way. The consequence is then ultimately that only a puny subject remains: “World domination over nature turns against the thinking subject itself”. (Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Philosophische Fragmente, Frankfurt/M. 2001, S.32)

Catastrophism

Inscribed in the age of ecology is catastrophism in connection with technological-instrumental and patriarchal reason, which awakens the legitimacy for new forms of domination that are willingly reproduced by the ecological subjects. For this emerging ecological future cannot be understood as a promise. Even the most creative think tanks cannot avoid preparing for new forms of states of emergency and security policies in the face of increasingly ungovernable zones and geopolitical competition for the necessary extractivism of resources and the remaining non-capitalized areas of life.

In catastrophism, the present is the transition from the past to a worse future in the downfall of humanity. This makes a perpetuation of the present supposedly necessary - the possibility of interrupting the present seems unthinkable with a technological solutionism fetish, since the continuum of the present is the catastrophe.

Within the horizon of ecological catastrophism, ecology presents itself as a frightening “either ... or ...”: either extinction of the species or ecological renewal. “In this sense, the experience of catastrophe is never conveyed, but its fantasy. Interestingly, the subject never faces the object of danger, but only its announcement, whose formulation in the heat of the moment mystifies the absence of the object - since it is not yet there - into an abstract presence. In fact, the announcement of the catastrophe misses the catastrophe (it only announces it), and in the emergency situation the announcement merges with the catastrophe (although it is not yet there). Your experience is always only that of the announcement. It therefore misses the intended object. Nevertheless, the fear is felt very well, and it would be terrible to deny it.” (Écologie et pouvoir, <https://entetement.com/bifurcation-dans-la-civilisation-du-capital-ii/>)

Questioning and rejecting catastrophism also means questioning our actual capacity to act and reflecting on where powerlessness leads us to both self-sacrificing activism and reformism. “In the face of climate change, the constant appeal to listen to scientists and the closure of thought to the institutions of knowledge actually invite practice to detach itself from theory and lose itself in an activism that must act ever more immediately in the face of an urgency that transcends it.” (ibid.)

The economics of ecology

Whether we look at the Atacama Desert in the lithium triangle between Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, or at the Bayan-Obo mine, where the rare earth metals for wind turbines and solar panels are mined. The fact that the new form of capitalism is only green in its PR is old hat. So is everything the same,

or is something changing after all? What does it mean if every place on earth is a potential area for solar panels (like in the Sahara) and wind turbines or hydrogen (like in Ukraine), and it would take so much more of it in the future to make capitalist growth renewable? In any case, we are seeing an expansion of territorial struggles in the regions that are being destroyed in order to make the global North clean and sustainable. And as much as we may despise the geopolitical view of the world, we feel the impact of the reorganization of international relations on our lives, whether as capitalist war or peace.

In any case, the green transformation of capitalism seems to us to consist of more than just an exchange of its energy sources. This brings us to the question of the connection between digitalization and ecology. We can already see smart green cities on the horizon that organize our lives under an ecological paradigm, from correct waste separation to effective traffic planning. So far, we have discussed far too little about biotechnologies and the control of reproduction. Who is ensuring that the development and marketing of green technologies play such a central role, who is actually investing in all the risk technologies of the future and how is the relationship between the state, high-tech corporations, financialization and the market actually changing?

No future?

Isn't it about time we gave up on saving the world from climate collapse? Not primarily because the endeavor seems hopeless or time seems too short, but also because the programs of this rescue always rely on state authority or technological power. Whether as environmental dictatorship or futuristic geo-engineering, the only thing they save is the continuity of oppression and exploitation. So maybe we should stop pretending that we can or should save this world and instead talk about how we live and struggle in it when everything around us is collapsing? Perhaps the very question of whether the world as a whole is ending or not is wrong, and we should rather look at the nonsynchronism that high-tech capitalist enclaves produce in the midst of devastated territories and seek in both the emerging spaces for struggles for liberation?

With such a conscious disillusionment, do we escape the trap into which the leftist mobilization of hope has so often led us? And how do we confront in this way a capitalist (eco)catastrophism that uses the scenario of doom for its false alternatives?