Hammer: "If the place isn't hotting up, we're f*cked"

Beard: "Here's is the good news. The UN estimates that already a third of a million people a year are dying from climate change. Bangladesh is going down ... Methane is pouring out of the Siberian permafrost. There is a meltdown under the Greenland ice sheet ... Two years ago we lost forty per cent of the Arctic summer ice ... The future has arrived, Toby."

Hammer: "Yeah, I guess"

Beard: "Toby, listen. It is a catastrophe. Relax"

From: Ian McEwan, *Solar*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2010, p. 216-217)

ANTHROPOCENIC PROMISES

The End of Nature, Climate Change and the Process of Post-Politicization

Erik Swyngedouw

Geography, School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester

"If we do nothing, the consequences for every person on this earth will be severe and unprecedented - with vast numbers of environmental refugees, social instability and decimated economies: far worse than anything which we are seeing today ... We have 100 months left to act." (Prince Charles, March 2009)

"Let's start by stating that after 'the rights of man', the rise of the 'the rights of Nature' is a contemporary form of the opium for the people. It is an only slightly camouflaged religion .... It is a gigantic operation in the depoliticization of subjects" (Badiou 2008: 139).

Preamble

- Dynamics of de- and re-politicization
- The spatially and historically variegated socio-spatial and socio-ecological processes that accompany (configure?) de- and re-politicization.
- Interrogating 'the political' and 'politicization'
- 'Climate Change' and the paradox of de- and re-politicization.

Anthropocenic Promises

1. Welcome to the Anthropocene?

1. Concensualizing Climate Change as Object-Cause of Desire

2. Re-visiting the Political: Post-Politicization and the Colonization/Disavowal of the Political

3. Climate Change as Trojan Horse of Post-politicization

4. Conclusion: From Environmentalizing Politics to Politicizing the Environment.

1. Welcome the Anthropocene?

- The Anthropocene as new geological era: The IUGS' and **Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy's** conundrum (2016)

- Re-affirming the Political Nature of Nature: bringing the political into the environment. – The Earth as matter of concern and terrain of public dispute (requilting Nature)

- The Production of Nature revisited (Stopani, Vernadsky, Smith, et al….)

- What's in a name?: Capitalocene (J. Moore) – Oliganthropocene (an epoch of a few men and even fewer women)

1. Welcome to the Anthropocene: "Ecology as the new opium for the people"

- "[R]eplacing the declining religion, it [Ecology] takes over the old religion's fundamental function of having an unquestionable authority that can impose limits." (S. Žižek, 2008)

- "In the name of indisputable facts portraying a bleak future for humanity, green politics has succeeded in de-politicizing political passions to the point of leaving citizens nothing but gloomy asceticism, a terror of violating nature and an indifference towards the modernization of modernity." (U. Beck, 2010)

2. Climate Change as Object-Cause of Desire

- Consensualizing Climate Change
- 'Ecologies of Fear' and the Promise of the Catastrophe to Come(IPCC, Al Gore, Charles, ...)
- Techno-organizational fixes – the politics of bio-immunity (Espinoza) and the prophylactic qualities of the market.
- From Combined and Uneven Catastrophe to Crisis Management: how to change radically so that nothing has to change.

2. Climate Change as Object-Cause of Desire

The consensual scripting of climate change as a clear and present danger, and it associated imaginaries, arguments and policies arguably reflects a particular process of de-politicization.

3. Re-visiting the Political: Post-Politicization and the Colonization of the Democratic

- **Post-politicization as consensual techno-managerial regime**
  - A specific 'retreat of the political'
    - A permanent state of emergency
    - the economization of politics
    - the de-politicization of the economic
    - expert management
    - populist – The People
    - the 'tyranny of participation' and 'unauthorized' actors (governance)
    - techno-managerial dispositifs – institutionalized social
      management
    - dispute versus dissensus
    - 'La Pensee Unique' – The censoring of politicizing signifiers
    - Fukuyama's truth

  ➔ **From a Bio-Political Regime to a Bio-Economic Regime of Governance**

3. Re-visiting the Political: Post-Politicization and the Colonization of the Democratic

'Democratic' Institutional Regimes versus the Democratic Political

a) The Political Paradox (Ricoeur): le politique – la politique
b) Re-Thinking/Re-treating the Political: Three trajectories
- The Heidegerians
- The Lacanian 'Real'
- The Democratic as Interruption (Ranciere)/Fidelity to the Event (Badiou)/the Politica Act (Zizek) : "The political as emergent".
c) Modalities of de-politicization (meta-, para-, archae-, ultra-, post-)
d) The Democratic Political
- the empty place of power
- the presumption of equality
- egaliberte as contingent foundation
- affirmation of society's absent ground
- the democratic against democracy (the political versus the police)

4. Climate Change as Trojan Horse of Post-Politicization

– Invoking 'THE' people (if not Humanity as whole in a material and philosophical manner)

– Cuts across ideological and social differences. It is predicated upon a common threat or challenge to both Nature and Humanity.

– Based on a politics of 'the people know best' (although the latter remains often empty), supported by an assumedly neutral scientific technocracy.

– Short-circuiting matters of fact/matters of conern (IPCC - Nobel prize committee)

– Direct relationship between people and political participation (participatory governance)

4. Climate Change as Trojan Horse of Post-Politicization

- Invokes Apocalyptic futures – Disavows the real of combined and uneven catastrophe

- No privileged subject as agent of social change

- The 'externalization' of the 'enemy.' The 'enemy' (CO_2) is fetishised, ambiguous, socially empty, homogenized.

- Problems, therefore, are not the result of a fatal flow inscribed in the system (but an outsider). That is why the solution can be found in dealing with the 'pathological' phenomenon, the 'excess', the resolution for which resides in the system itself.

- Climate activism/policies becoms expressed in particular demands (reduce CO_2) addressed to the elites

5. Conclusion: From Environmentalizing Politics to Politicizing the Environment.

- **Taking the Anthropocenic Promise seriously: politicizing socio-natural assembling**

- **Fully avowing that the socio-ecological catastrophe is already here (for some in some places): combined and uneven apocalypse**

- **Reclaiming the democratic (as the presumption of equality) as the condition of possibility for different possible socio-ecological orders and assemblages.**

- **The democratic political as emergent (Taksim Square, Sao Paulo, …….) at a distance from the state: "…the people is those who, refusing to be the population, disrupt the system." (Foucault 2007)**