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

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

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

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

This state of division flies in the face of many twentieth-century strategies of political ecology – especially the principle that the high stakes of political ecology justify bypassing the tedious process of negotiation and deliberation typical for political action. Unanimity was supposed to rally the masses in a strong revolutionary push to "save the planet." However, for the last forty years, we have seen that ecology does not unify. Instead, ecology divides. It divides the generations who will deal with its failures from those who will escape its consequences; it divides the regions already affected by climate

disasters from those that are protected; within each region, it divides the classes that suffer disproportionately from decisions made by other classes; furthermore, it divides each one of us at the personal level: for each decision we face, we know there are cascades of unintended consequences that make it hard to distinguish the right actions from the wrong ones. What Bruno Latour has elsewhere called the "New Climatic Regime" poses problems at every magnitude of scale and blurs the classical political cartography.[1] As Chun-Mei Chuang writes in this issue: "Our place is neither conservative nor progressive. It is molecular and planetary."

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

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

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

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

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

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

When one world vampirically preys upon the resources of another, diasporas may play the mediating role of stitching together torn geographies, as Nadia Yala Kisukidi proposes. She emphasizes the modalities of living in several worlds at the same time rather than assigning a place-based identity to diasporas. By exploring this form of geopolitics, Kisukidi traces a path away from the "poor dialectic" that binds France and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For Yuk Hui, the figure of the diplomat mutates into that of the "knowledge producer," promoting a planetarization based on a diversity of ways to understand technology. A new appreciation of technodiversity might help us break out of the global hegemony within which planetarization has become stuck. And with a concern that this situation may result in new forms of "techno-molecular colonialism," Achille

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Mbembe draws the contours of an ethic that is not based on a "diaphanous universalism," but on "commonality and incalculability" among the living.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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