T. J. Demos

Not one, but many, "ecologies" name a multiplicity of knowledge systems and practices that are far from continuous. Some among these are historically and, at present, directly in conflict—a conflict that is nothing less than cosmopolitical in scope, involving a struggle over what kind of world we want to live in, how we relate to others, and indeed "who we are."

Neoliberal ecologies comprise financialization options, cap and trade economics, and market-based mechanisms. Said to address climate change, in actual fact they primarily operate to increase wealth, by greenwashing corporate activities. They save capitalism politically by making it look green and climate-friendly. By greenwashing corporate activities, they save capitalism politically by making it look green and climate-friendly. They take climate change seriously, but a crisis of capitalism fundamentally.

Neoliberal ecologies pass directed directives toward ethical consumerism, as if we were able to shop our way out of the apocalypse. Yet government intervention in the market’s freedom to extract ever more resources from planet earth.

Colonial and neocolonial ecologies take shape as a science of empire, in which botanical, geological, mapping, and extractivist practices work at the sites where knowledge and power converge. The cultural and social frameworks in which these posit various situated views on the intrinsic worth (the value of life itself) and extractivist practices work at the sites where knowledge and power converge. These ecologies usefully schematized the levels of psychic, institutional, and environmental ecologies. In general, political ecologies are insistently inter- sectionalists and examine the unequal distribution of costs and benefits of environmental changes according to social, cultural, geographical, and economic differences, and in relation to their uneven implications. Ecologies without nature reject nature’s fictitious and colonialist purity, not only owing to the thesis of the Anthropocene, according to which human activities are now seen as determining the earth’s systems, but also for historical reasons, noting that nature has been infused with anthropo-cultural terms like naturecultures, eco- biogenesis, and syndromes without biophils. We need a new language for the new ecologies.

These latter verses correlate with ecologies of New Materialism, Object-Oriented Ontology, and Speculative Realism—all recent approaches to objects beyond human epistemological categories, which view the outside of the composed of vital matter with agential capacities and which propose multi- dimensional and multiperspectival complexities. Rather than multiculturalism’s many perspectives on a single nature, those that follow the science of connection see various situations and agential capacities and which propose multi- dimensional and multiperspectival complexities. Rather than multiculturalism’s many perspectives on a single nature, those that follow the science of connection see various situations and agential capacities and which propose multi- dimensional and multiperspectival complexities.

By now technology has become as much a part of life as metabolism.

Lazzlo Moholy-Nagy

The idea came to me, ironically, while driving around Chicago. It was high summer; I was on the city’s shuttered West Side. The urban grid slid by outside the window, residential vernacular on its third or fourth recycle, parched and decayed, with a kind of lost and disjointed vibrancy. Eyes on the traffic, my mind rolled back over the city’s history: its canals and granaries and smokestacks, its formidable industrial century since the arrival of the railroads in the 1850s, its suburban sprawl after the Great Fire of 1873, its post-modern decline made irreversible by the 1960s revolts and the capital flight that followed. Through it all, the university and financial sectors continued their endless rise. There is a profound violence to this place, but also a deep sense of regularity. Chicago is the race-city that turns civil strife into social norms, and splits atoms while abstracting material production into mathematical derivatives. Can we still exist in a place that has successfully been the transport hub, the stockyard, the workshops for the vitrine, the boxing ring, and quite literally the laboratory of modernism? And what could this ideal of experimentalism mean for our future, when its Promethean pasts have reappeared before our eyes as the new geological layer of the Anthropocene? The placement of a “golden spit” is a public documentary practice in contemporary science. Technically known as a Global Stratotype Section and Point, or GSSP, the golden spit is a marker inserted into an exposed sedimentary stratum. It is literally driven into the rock at the lowest level where a fossil characterizing a given geological period can be observed. You can go see it; anyone can. Present to the senses when they are sharpened by knowledge, the rocky outcropping itself becomes exemplary of an epoch’s fossil signature and of its place in earth’s history. Yet the golden spit does not just record a singular fact, nor even just a complex of local or regional observations. Instead, its placement is correlated with observations across the planet, so that the periodization it exemplifies can be recognized by anyone anywhere. As one expert notes: "Before formally defining a geochronologic boundary by a GSSP, its practical value—i.e. its correlation potential—has to be thoroughly tested. In this sense, correlation precedes definition.” Within the scientific community, this activity of correlation is taken on by the International Commission on Stratigraphy. A subgroup of that commission is now debating whether, and where to establish the boundary where the current geological epoch (the Anthropocene) can be distinguished from the previous one (the Holocene). Don’t we need more subgroups like that, of many different kinds? What I want to explore in the Chicago context are experiments in perception, expression, and action that use aesthetic