

# The age of ecology

or: how *this* world  
will not end

From the burning hut | <https://inferno.noblogs.org>

Back in 2021, we published a brochure in which we described the initial outlines of our path. We have now written a further text (<https://inferno.noblogs.org/zeit-der-oekologie/>) that sets out the subsequent course of our discussions. This text is a summary of our thoughts. To all slackers and busy street rioters, we recommend this summary; for everyone else, we would like to recommend the entire text. Not because we think that you have not yet discovered the truth, but because we would like to enter into discussion and exchange with you in order to deepen the analysis of the prevailing conditions beyond superficialities and opinions and to seek strategies for overcoming these conditions. Certainly, neither this summary nor the entire text is complete (if there can be such a thing as completeness at all): cybernetics ekes out a keyword-like shadowy existence, the Global South is only referred to conceptually as necropolitics and the financial market is still waiting to be dealt with in detail; just to name a few gaps. In the hope that you will comment, contradict and discuss further (with us).

The world as we know it is in a state of upheaval. Many are talking about a shift to the right, even the return of historical fascism in a new guise, while others are talking about the final crisis of capitalism, even the downfall of human civilization – although the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. We would like to assert a third position. A position that assumes that we are neither facing the final crisis of capitalism, nor the downfall of human civilization, nor that historical fascism will return in new clothes, but on the contrary: we are facing the possibility of an ecological accumulation regime that will continue the existing catastrophe in a new quality. This will be characterized by all of the above and by none of the above: Green totalitarianism, stability in instability and dehumanization of people.

### **Economy**

Let's start with stability in instability. After historically speaking of a transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist or neoliberal accumulation regime, we are currently in a phase in which the formation of a new accumulation regime is being fought for. Driven by the downward trend in the rate of profit and the crisis in the production of surplus value, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has manifested the crisis of our modern civilization, which goes far beyond the capitalist system. However, the manifestation of a crisis is already a sign that it began long before and that the new is already emerging at the moment of crisis. In this respect, we are right in the middle of it. The invocation of the ecological crisis in the form of catastrophism creates the ability to integrate and legitimize the implementation of the ecological accumulation regime, which formulates its specific program under the names "Green New Deal" or "Social-Ecological Transformation", for example.

Economically, it is characterized by new forms of extractivism and land grabbing. Ideologically, renewable energies and technologies promise a harmonious, infinite cycle; in reality, new territories of resource exploitation, sales markets and economic cycles are being opened up globally to stabilize and expand value-added production.

AI programs, social media and platforms, or more generally and more precisely speaking: algorithms – are central to this as the second axis of the new accumulation of capital. They serve to organize, regulate and

simply network these new energies and technologies. They also promise a qualitative leap in the automation of work processes, which is already reshaping the global labor regime and could lead to renewed increases in productivity and a corresponding redistribution of wealth. However, extractivism and land grabbing in this area also affect the immaterial aspects of human beings. Relationships, emotions and affects are measured, broken-down into information and transformed into statistic data.

Thirdly, extractivism and the land grab of the ecological accumulation regime are reaching into the area of reproduction. Although what we call the care economy can only be automated, rationalized and even valorized to a limited extent, the new regime focuses precisely on those areas of our lives that have not yet been commodified, or have only been commodified to a limited extent, in order to overcome these limitations. Through robotization, biotechnologies, algorithmization and cybernetization of processes, profit increases are certainly conceivable. Especially if we think beyond the care economy and look at the reproduction of life (or survival) as a whole, bio- and reproductive technologies, genetic research and brain-computer interface research open up undreamt-of possibilities for colonizing the body; business and research reports and products already on the market from big pharma and start-up companies speak volumes about this.

Despite all this, our modern, capitalist civilization is fundamentally bound to the limits of growth, to the limits that our souls and bodies impose on exploitation and hegemony, and to the limits of our planet. Thus, the potentiality of the ecological accumulation regime to create stability is at the same time always bound to its own instability.

### **Ecocracy**

The fact that we have used the term "green totalitarianism" merely serves to evoke the historical associations associated with this term in order to illustrate the full maliciousness of the new political regime, which we now call ecocracy. A totalitarianism that is highly flexible due to its form of catastrophism. In this form, it can be randomly imposed on any phenomenon, whether it is a climate catastrophe, a pandemic or war. This is the fundamental difference in essence to historical fascism, which has its foundation in the postulated homogeneity of an entity.

Politically and ideologically, the Ecological Accumulation Regime expresses itself through the dream of complete control over nature, in which survival as a whole is organized, regulated and sold back bit by bit by the disaster administration in commodity form. Thereby, we can observe the establishment of a state of emergency that moves with the suspension of law in the name of law, between bourgeois democracy and absolutism, between law and politics, and in a circular movement coagulates again and again into a permanent state of emergency, until once again – legitimized by a (real) catastrophe – the classic state of emergency is declared. This permanence of the state of emergency is illustrated, for example, by the “politics” of regulations and general decrees and ideologically by arguments of necessity and technological solutions. We can therefore speak of a disaster management state that can only view all social life, be it its own or that of other societies, as a threat and risk. This requires national security (armed forces), civil-military cooperation, homeland security, preventive policies in the welfare state institutions and the mobilization of society as a whole against society in the name of society.

Here too, algorithms and reproductive and biotechnologies play a decisive role in the control of subjects. On the one hand, it is the self-techniques, such as Preparedness, that teach us to absorb the permanent uncertainty of ourselves and within ourselves; on the other hand, it is the biotechnologies that offer us control over our bodies. Algorithms, on the other hand, play a dual role: while algorithms in general, in their supposed incorruptibility, make us believe in the predictability of the world and thus reassure us, they also make us aware of the inevitability of the world, and specifically serve to regulate the disaster management state, in which predictions, diagnoses and solutions are developed by collecting information and data. The purpose is to maintain and permanently rehearse acceptance of the status quo. In the unholy alliance of algorithm, disaster management state and biotechnologies and policies, the subjective body (in German: “Leib”) is reduced to the objective body (in German: “Körper”). This is because the body is dysfunctional for the maintenance of control. This tendency is underscored by the ongoing digitalization of our lives, in which we interact with others safely and sterilely from our computers and practice blunt thinking in ones and zeros. Ecolocracy ultimately leads to isolation, the dematerialization of life

and the colonization of the soul; that is what we called the dehumanization of humans at the beginning.

In the context of the political form of the ecological accumulation regime, we should not fall prey to the error of believing that it is exclusively represented or supported by one of the political milieus or classes as we have known them up to now. On the contrary: in this regime, both the right and the (self-proclaimed) left can be part of the elites supporting the project if, as it currently seems, they are both related to catastrophism. While the right pursues disinhibition in the sense of a liberation from the restriction of enjoyment, i.e. no longer in the service of prohibition, but in the service of freedom as a rejection of expert authority, the left is trapped in precisely this discourse, the discourse of the university, in the expertise of power. Its disinhibition also consists in the projection that liberation from the restriction of enjoyment is possible. However, this is not organized through the rejection of the prohibition, but through the knowledge that is supposed to enable one to achieve this enjoyment through rules, discipline and renunciation. Both, however, are discourses of repression: The right-wing discourse is a simple repression that manifests itself, for example, in simple ignorance of man-made climate change. The left, on the other hand, engages in secondary repression by trivializing the horrific. Its logic is to dramatically exaggerate the crisis, which is then broken down into individual parts and successively presented in a smaller form. Apocalypse, climate crisis, carbonization makes decarbonization necessary, makes e-scooters, solar panels and free public transport necessary. The opposite of measures that would be appropriate for a catastrophe. Both the left and the right are splitting off part of reality and the experiences made in it. The controllability of the disaster becomes the remedy for the disaster. Green bureaucracy is nothing other than the perfect administration of survival. We can therefore speak of a post-ideological totalitarianism that does not tie the ecological accumulation regime exclusively to the ideal type of the German Green.

A second aspect that illustrates the flexibility and openness in relation to the political class is the concept of security, which we understand as a longed-for state without worry, used by the right, the left and the Greens alike. Psychoanalytically speaking, the original unity of man and nature/environment, which does not exist, only cloaks the phantasm of man’s

fundamental separateness from his surroundings and others. This means that dependence on others is always a lack, because it reveals dependence. However, because dependence can also be rejected, we are dependent and independent at the same time and try to find a way of dealing with our fundamental dependence. In this respect, the liberal and right-wing pursuit of security is, not surprisingly, a patriarchal one, as it attempts to dissolve the aporia of (in)dependence into the illusion of absolute freedom and the negation of dependence in the spirit of the bourgeois-autonomous subject. The corresponding principle from the left is the totalization of dependency, which is supposed to create absolute security through collective protection and the outsourcing of autonomy, but in the end also succumbs to the phantasm of the original unity of man and environment. For there is always the possibility that the other will behave differently than I demand, precisely because it is separate from me. As a subject, there is always the possibility that I decide to behave differently than is demanded of me, precisely because I am separate from the other. So there can be neither freedom as absolute autonomy, nor security as control of my/principal dependence. Ultimately, all these political milieus, some consciously, others unconsciously, work on the patriarchalization of care, which is supposed to create freedom over individual or collective security.

### **Ecological subjects**

But what do the subjects of the ecological accumulation regime look like? In our previous texts, we spoke of neoliberal subjectivation in order to first understand the subject structures that have emerged in recent years and decades. Still relatively at the beginning of our discussion, we would like to introduce the concept of the ecological subject in order to at least outline the first phenomena that appear to us to be part of the new subject constitution. The neoliberal subject no longer knew or needed society, it was the entrepreneurial self and thus also responsible for its own fate: morality instead of politics. External and self-influence coincided in the subject. Rules and codes of conduct were supposed to provide orientation and security. The motto was: enjoy yourself and be disciplined. The controlling function of the “father” as the superego was replaced by the discourse of the university. Today, especially in the young-

er generations, we are experiencing the replacement of the superego by the ego-ideal, i.e. a further shift of control into our own consciousness. The ego-ideal is the ideal that one has of oneself without really understanding that it is partly socially mediated. As the topos of the ideal already describes, it is unattainable for the individual, only an approximation is possible. Nevertheless, this permanent approximation, the failure to achieve it, is perceived as a failure, which in turn only reinforces the efforts to achieve the ideal through further self-imposed rules. Here, the sense of guilt of neoliberal subjectivity subtly shifts into a sense of inferiority of the ecological subject. This not only accounts for the subject’s agony and thus receptivity to offers to perhaps achieve their ideal after all, but also the paradox of egocentricity with simultaneous aggressive reference to the outside. On the other hand, there is an intrinsic human drive that builds on the narcissism present in each of us, the need for affirmation and recognition. However, in capitalism, this is transformed and the narcissistic subject becomes one with its self-identification: I am the ultimate truth!

In the ecological modernization discourse, we can now observe how society is returning. Not as a necessary entity of recognition in the Hegelian sense, but as an audience that the narcissist needs to confirm and control himself. In this function, society merely takes on the role of a figurative surface of my self, although ideologically a mutual dependence and responsibility is propagated. The regulation to approach the ego-ideal is associated with the invocation of a selected catastrophe that they know best how to master. In dealing with corona, saving energy during the Ukraine war or saving water, people preach individual renunciation with reference to responsibility for an abstract humanity and feel pleasure in doing so. However, the collective reference and relationship to society is individualistic and narcissistic. A tension arises in which one should renounce for society, while sociality is conceived as a danger, as an ungrateful audience, and purely individual possibilities for action exist. The resulting tension can manifest itself in different ways: in a regulation of one’s own life and a moral arrogance and contempt towards others who do not do the same; in individualistic prepping in order to survive when the catastrophe occurs; or in the hope and drive to save the world – which is usually also accompanied by regulation and mor-

al arrogance. Either way, the resilience that the Ecological Subject develops in this tension must be described as what it is: the internalization of the police, the police siege of the soul. The ecological subject is one that feels inferior because it does not achieve its ego ideal, and in doing so is dependent in permanent fear and joy on the booing or jeering audience called society. Anti-society as society and anti-morality as morality. Catastrophism serves to mobilize the voluntarily submitting subjects. At the same time, in its dual capacity as intrinsically narcissistic and socially motivated, it seems particularly open or empty of content or flexible, simply conformist: optimism and a spirit of optimism with a pronounced awareness of the problems posed by planetary challenges; self-image as a changemaker and initiator of global transformation; open to new syntheses of values: Disruption and pragmatism, success and sustainability, party and protest; sustainable lifestyle without renunciation ideology, Protestant renunciation ethic with or as hedonism.

In addition to these more psychoanalytical considerations on subjectivation, bio- and reproduction technologies as well as algorithmization also play an important role by turning subjects into parts of a machine structure (role as user, raw material, tool or product) and increasingly transforming thinking into machine thinking. We could also speak of a technological subjectivation and rationality that colonizes the soul, splits it into different pieces of information, recomposes it into data, splits it into information, and so on. It is like tearing the soul into Horcruxes, except that the soul is not something inherent to the human being. It is permeated by breath and wind, it is the living thing that connects us to the world. The catastrophe is no longer the Christian apocalypse that promises an interruption of the sinful world, but in its secularized form only a simplification and quantification in facts, figures and images that are intended to conceal the fact that catastrophism does not provide for redemption. Medialization does the rest by erasing multidimensional experience, in which images of life replace life itself. The reality of catastrophe is incomprehensible using the very means that helped to bring it about.

Last but not least, we would like to say at least one sentence about the most radical manifestation of the above, transhumanism. This is probably the most frightening representation of the ecological accumulation regime, because it no longer merely seeks to extend the boundaries of

capitalism, but to abolish them. Regardless of the question of its ideal-typical realizability, transhumanism, rarely overt, mostly subcutaneous, whether in the form of bionic prostheses, artificial organs, gene therapies or augmented or virtual reality, is already an integral part of the emerging epoch.

### **Concept of ecology**

So why do we call this new accumulation regime “ecological”? Before ecology became a kind of synonym for nature conservation in everyday understanding, a definition was established from the 19th century onwards, parallel to the establishment of capitalism, which understood ecology as the science of the relationship between organic life and the external world surrounding it. The ecological question is thus based on the bourgeois separation between man and nature, which objectifies nature. In fact, it was this separation that gave rise to the concept of ecology in the first place. Today, we are witnessing the staging of a schism between fossil capitalism and green capitalism or between fossil capitalism and ecology. However, both separations conceal the real problem: the concept of ecology serves as a central dispositive of capitalist disinhibition and left-wing interpretations of the concept of ecology also reproduce the objectification of nature, thus remaining stuck in the modern, bourgeois subjugation of nature. In this respect, any reference to sustainability and regeneration, beyond the superficialities of political science, is an affirmation of the repetitive and ongoing destruction and management of life in and of itself. There is no real sustainability and regeneration, only the immediate and necessary interruption of it, as it keeps us trapped in the eternal loop of the capitalist present. Thus we currently find ourselves in a no man’s land of contempt for transcendence and denial of immanence, which is becoming increasingly total in its tendency and from which we must seek a way out.

### **Panorama of the dominion**

To make it perfectly clear: the ecological accumulation regime will not “simply” open up new sectors of the economy, but will involve a new, capitalist social project that encompasses not only new economic forms, but also new legal, political, cultural and subject forms. If we assume

that the ecological accumulation regime will prevail on a massive scale in the future, we could paint a gloomy picture: A world of multiplying conflicts over resources and energy, in which there are places that resemble ecological oases: green, saturated, smart, digitalized, sterile and prosthetic, while – between these oases – the global “third” world is streaked by mine holes and dams, it is narrow and it is subject to digitalization and biotechnologies as a means of repression and necropolitics. Here are the furrows of global and unstable infrastructure and the logistics of capital, protected by the military and contested in many ways. Only questioned by the outcasts, dissatisfied and border crossers of this epoch. Under these conditions, the international division of labor and production, the urban-rural relationship, demographics, our everyday coexistence, our physicality itself and the nature of nature, etc., will change fundamentally. Imagine this as a description of your city, your country, nothing more ...

#### **Panorama of dissidence**

In view of the gloomy development trends of further abstraction, totalization, subcutaneous condensation and authoritarianization of domination and exploitation, the core of the search for new strategies and practices seems to us to lie in the question of power. Historically, the vast majority of the left’s strategies have always been concerned with reforming, gaining or conquering power, or at least shifting power relations in preparation for revolution or building up counter-power from below. But what if power is too powerful, too obscure, too cunning to be subjected to our will? Instead of a strategy and practice that places itself in a dialectical relationship to power, which has often failed historically and is even more of a lost cause under the current conditions, we believe that what is needed today is a methodical (not principle!) break with this form of the question of power, as it has been posed in the left for decades. It is about developing a destitutive and deserting theory and practice that is neither absorbed in the destruction of power nor in life “as-if-not”, as if the laws, rules and norms no longer applied, but only escapes the question of power in their interplay. Only in such an idea, still to be developed, can we create a different temporality and spatiality beyond that of capital, in order to break out of the captivity of the present,

which all too often disguises itself as future-oriented. From this other forms of communication, perception and movement can be made possible, a separate form of politics can be developed that does not allow itself to be steered by the events of the day, discourses, (supposedly) real attacks or defenses of capital, but sets its own points and thus becomes incalculable and unpredictable.

We believe that there is a human core, something indelible, something that cannot be colonized: the urge for freedom, equality and beauty. This is where capitalist late modernity will reach its limits and fail. The non-movements are already pointing in this direction, even if they have only left behind revolutionaries without a revolution so far. It is our task – we who are not non-movementists, but only radical leftists, i.e. not revolutionaries, but also without revolution – to find out what a destitutive and deserting practice can or must look like in the face of this fact. Noise, irritation, confusion, silence, destruction, listening are the conceptual cosmos in which we want to think and act. Soul, perception, life form, boundless oases and global communes are the conceptual cosmos in which we want to relate to each other.