

Reference Materials for Pills Cluster: **CRISES**

BORDER POLITICS/DISPLACEMENT: Split your project in two camps and pitch one against the other.

Uninterrupted borders were a constituent factor of the modern sovereign nation-state – and modernity and enterprise meant first and foremost to colonize space, and close it off to the ‘other’. Controlling a portion of space demarcated by a fixed, continuous border that creates an ‘us’ inside as opposed to ‘them’ outside. The patrolling, control and monitoring of borders is a systematic strategy of bio-governance that militarily presides over the life of humans and discriminates who is and who is not allowed in. Borders and boundaries concerns the realities of inside/outside, inclusion/exclusion, identity, belonging and difference. The current tendency of multiplying strategies for closure reveals a complex entanglement of citizenship, identity, security, and the legal-political system of governance. For instance, immigration control is enacted according to factors that are not based on the rigidity or porousness of borders. Rather it concerns both the global distribution of inequalities of access as well as the besieged mentality of those societies that see themselves in need of boundaries to be protected from (imagined) outside threats - while exploiting those very same boundaries to spin a fictive narrative of identification and cohesion. This is how the too-familiar and spurious equivalence between otherness and hostility is built, reaffirming the prejudice that democracy cannot exist except in closed, homogeneous spaces. The opposite approach is to foster hospitality as what all humankind shares by inhabiting the same planet. Displaced persons – who have lost their place (exiles or refugees) or left it (emigrants or travellers) – are made to experience estrangement: a distancing, both literal and metaphorical, that is supported by strategies of exclusion, closure and lack of access.

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PEAK-OIL: Find yourself in a world where extraction is no longer possible.

The imminent depletion of fossil fuel resources is what has come to be known as “Hubbert’s peak.” In the 1960s petroleum geologist Hubbert predicted a peak in global oil production for the latter decades of the twentieth century. According to the bell-curve model once the peak is reached, the decline is rapid. There is nothing the globalized economic world can do to enable the planet to produce more oil, commensurate with the world increasing demands for energy. This theory is based on the finite nature of fossil fuel reserves, and allows us to calculate the point after which production would decline. By using the term ‘exhaustible’ rather than ‘non-renewable’ resources Hubbert nailed the argument: we must focus not on the fantasy of an infinitely renewable earth but on acts of expenditure, depletion and exploitation as the key characteristics of extractive capitalism. Decarbonization is the process of shifting from a fossil fuels-driven economy to one that runs almost exclusively on clean, carbon-free energy. The changes required are not only infrastructural: they will have significant social, cultural and ontological implications, as the values that inform a decarbonised mode of existence must be rethought entirely to transition to living fulfilled and complex existences, without capitalist hyperconsumption (this is what some describe as “Paleolithic with good dental care”). What is a low-carbon existence as opposed to the one imposed by petrocapiatalism and its oil-bound ways? How can it be imagined and reached by 2050?

READINGS

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EXTINCTION: Your world has been terminated.

What do we mean by extinction? For philosopher Claire Colebrook, there are three senses of extinction: the sixth great extinction event (which as humans we can imagine and perversely anticipate); extinction of other species by the hand of the humans (the growing list of endangered species witness to human destructive zeal); and self-extinction: “the capacity for us to destroy what makes us human”. In the pop-culture genre that can be described as “apocalypse porn” contemporary telling of extinction stories reflects the necropolitics of the Anthropocene haunting the way we talk about life, death and extinction. As the gravity of extinction is acknowledged, multiple other narratives of mass extinction are obscured. In a asymmetrical distributed scenario permeated by violence at different speed (slow violence, fast eradication) where some ‘critters’ are actively exterminated, some are labelled and valued into the category ‘biodiversity’ and

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many others, neglected, are sent on their way to an unmarked planetary grave. Extinction is a process of mutation. With 99.9 percent of all species that have ever existed in the history of this planet extinct, it is the most natural thing in the world and yet, at the same time, utterly unimaginable. It forces us humans to think at what we conveniently call 'nature', that realm 'out there' we can comfortably feel separated from, almost as if 'nature' could exist as a realm untouched and unshaped by our human affairs. This, however, is a view of nature that has ceased to exist a long time ago. Extinction also forces us to face what we, equally conveniently, call non-human. Philosopher Giorgio Agamben reminds us that the human is neither a clearly defined biological species, nor an established substance, but rather an artifice whose goal is the production and the constant recognition of itself. We humans are, in other words, an anthropogenic machine. To be human we have to keep on acknowledging and imagining what is not us. This ongoing manoeuvre of 'humanization' is a technology. Put differently, the anthropogenic machine that creates the human is essentially an optical machine, as it relies on strategic mirrors that by reflecting what is, exclude what is not.

READINGS

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POST-ANTHROPOCENE: Fast forward to the planet after all humans have gone.

The post-Anthropocene is unimaginable. We are told that we live in the new era of the Anthropocene - This term was coined by scientist Paul Crutzen (2003) who proposed that we have now left the Holocene and entered- the 'time of human' - when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet" (Braidotti 2013: 5). Geologists and climate scientists base the Anthropocene hypothesis on a number of human-driven processes that are likely to leave a lasting mark on the planet; for tens of millions of years. These include rising oceans due to the emission of greenhouse gases; ocean acidification; urbanization; habitat destruction and extinctions; environmental degradation. Human activity, particularly since the Industrial Revolution, is seen to be altering the planet on a scale comparable with some of the major events of the pre-historic past and are now seen as permanent, even on a geological time-scale. Can the post-Anthropocene be imagined without immediately falling into extinction anxiety, cinematic dystopia or the fallacy of human exceptionalism? To do so means to think about planetary entanglements, hybrid ecologies of the human and the nonhuman (but also the perceptible and the imperceptible). Post-Anthropocene in this sense means the effort to speculate on the nonhuman on a planetary scale. It also means that the notion of the Anthropocene per se must be contested. There is hubris in describing this age as the age of the human when the anthropos have never been only human. As it makes explicit the human impact on the planet, at the same time the Anthropocene reveals the fragility of the traditional figures of thought that have for centuries pitched human against nature, human against nonhuman, the animated vs the inanimate, life and nonlife, the organic and the nonorganic in a top down hierarchy.

This means to reject the foolishness of human exceptionalism (Haraway): the idea that there is a hierarchy of species with the Anthropos at the top of the pyramid. That's why any speculation on the post-Anthropocene concerns the non-human. What has been defined as the 'nonhuman turn' is at the centre of current debates where we find a number of terms used to describe slightly different version of the same thing: nonhuman, inhuman, posthuman, other than human: they all strive to express the otherness and the challenge of thinking what is not 'us'. These new intellectual fields of inquiry attempt to craft a mode of philosophy, ethics, and interpretation that rejects the classic humanist divisions of self and other, mind and body, society and nature, human and animal, organic and technological. The Post-Anthropocene can be imagined as a world-without-us, or as a planetary cohabitation of multiplicities where the human is not the most important entity.

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