

Response

Best Practice in Climate Change Adaptation: When algae and ticks Take the Lead

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If the Sargassum algae and ticks would meet, what would they say? Would they congratulate one another on their shared thriving? Would they share their concerns about their thriving and its impact on their environment, neighbours and friends? Would they wonder what it means for the long-term ecological web they are a part of? Whether this “new normal” is one to keep and settle into?

Reading through this edition of Cultural Analysis on the topic of climate change adaptation, it seems these two more-than-human species do adaptation best. Amid all the changes to their ecological environment and their multispecies entanglements, they flourish. The multispecies entanglements in this issue reflect the fine balances that life as we know it is structured around and embedded in. As one of Arno Pascht’s interlocutors shares in an interview on the meaning of climate change (*klaemet jenj*): “Everything is no longer in its place,” suggesting that we all have a place within the larger whole: ticks, seaweeds, humans. Adaptation may then be about finding this place again or anew.

However, these places are entangled in a closely knitted ball of relationships, and as Laura McAdam Otto reminds us, this is why climate change is so often referred to as a *wicked problem*. What makes adaptation and climate change response

even more complicated is that things have a different place according to different perspectives. Taking the wickedness one step further, Tim Morgan (2020) calls this the *wickedest problem of all*: a multi-verse of worlds, cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies coming together, adapting, and responding. How do we go about tackling climate change and its manifold manifestations while living in a world of plenty? Arno Pascht’s article shows how the well-intended ideas of NGOs and state agencies may generally be good approaches in creating a more resilient food production system but on the local Vanuatu level fail, because they do not fit within the ontologies and experiences of the island’s rural population.

Laura McAdam-Otto’s article points to another difficulty in adaptation, describing how the growth of Sargassum algae is impacting the lives of many different people with different interests and different relationships to a place. The strong heritage of the local community to the sea, the land and its changes established over long periods of time, stands in stark contrast to the short-termed, consumerist attitude of many tourists. McAdam-Otto’s case study seems to be embedded in a Capitalocene (Haraway 2015; Malm & Hornborg, 2014), where the economy and globalised capitalist marketplace heavily impact the responses and chosen adaptation strategies. The *Sargassum-case* reminds us that not only the causes of climate change are closely linked to a globalised world powered by a growth-based market-driven economy; adaptation and other climate change responses are sought within this system too. From this perspective, climate adaptation only addresses the consequences, not the causes. I cannot help but see the

Sargassum algae and the ticks in Sanna Lillbroanda-Annala's contribution as the real radicals. Not only do they manage to thrive in a world of ecological decay, but their growth also imposes limits on the human sense of entitlement to move, design and change at their own pace and on their own terms (see Morton, 2013).

This brings me back to a series of questions: when is everything in place? What is this "balance" and who's balance is it? Is it a concept that is mostly applied to the past and as a future desire while often absent in the present? *Solastalgia*, a term introduced in this issue by Sanna Lillbroanda-Annala, seems a comforting term then. It means that people still know, still remember, perhaps still feel in their bones what once was, what personal and communal heritage they treasure. It is a term that indicates a time before and a time after. In that sense, solastalgia is about knowing what was and how it differs from what is. In contrast, adaptation is about what is and the uncertainty of not knowing what will be.

This is what Sanna Lillbroanda-Annala's final question points to: "Is it the ticks and the tick-infested nature we fear, or is it the changes in our habits and ways of perceiving the nature we are afraid of?" A question that captures some of the essence of the difficulties with adaptation. Adaptation asks us if we can accept changes to the familiar and comfortable, at a time we may not be ready and perhaps never will be. Solastalgia, this beautiful term, may work against adaptation then, when the sentiment already arises before the distance between past and present has been shaped by time. Instead, it may be a solastalgia for the future that we need: what's ahead that we desire?

Works Cited

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