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Planetary justice reconsidered
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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Planetary justice reconsidered: developing response-abilities in planetary relations

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ABSTRACT
This contribution puts forward a relational and posthumanist engagement with the idea of planetary justice. The planetary from this perspective should be conceived not to re-enforce, but rather to break apart, the idea that there is such a thing as a 'planetary whole'. When we move away from 'planetary wholes', we also conceive of justice and ethical commitments differently from how they have been traditionally approached. Instead of attempting to create 'justice on the planet', we see that manifold concrete multispecies communities become central to generating 'response-ability in planetary relations'. This article explores how this different orientation to planetary justice not only helps to break down the problematic spatial and temporal scales within which questions of justice are often framed but also points towards some different ways of responding ethically to the recent demands for planetary justice.

Introduction

Calls for 'planetary justice' present an ambitious provocation for how the difficulties of co-existence on a stressed planet might be re-addressed. But on what terms is 'planetary justice' to be developed? What assumptions lie embedded within it – with regard to the 'planetary' and indeed 'justice' and with what effects?

This contribution to thinking through the meaning and implications of 'planetary justice' is developed in the context of the increasingly intense debates in politics and international relations scholarship around different interpretations of the meaning of 'planet/planetary politics'. The last decades have seen many new modalities of responsibility, citizenship, representation

and ethics being developed in the context of the ongoing shifts away from the exclusively humanist assumptions about politics and ethics (see e.g. Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011; Cudworth and Hobden 2011, 2017, 2018, Burke *et al.* 2016, Fishel 2017, Connolly 2017, Dryzek and Pickering 2019, Youatt 2020, Kurki 2020). In this context, new thinking beyond the 'national', the 'international' and 'global' politics has been developed through the idea of the 'planetary', 'planetary politics' and 'planet politics' (Burke *et al.* 2016, Connolly 2017, Conway 2020, Kurki 2020, Chakrabarty 2021).

The language of planetarity is very welcome in the context of the rather ossified, or indeed pathological (Dryzek and Pickering 2019), paradigms of existing political practice still wedded to states and their 'international' organisations. Yet, the notion 'planetary politics' is not a straightforward response to the conundrums of how to generate new political imaginations. This is because the meaning of the planetary remains ambiguous and contested, and as such the implications for political practice equally so. For some, the planetary stands beyond us, like a hyper-object (Connolly 2017, see also Morton 2013), for others it implies we should understand ourselves as part of a 'planetary whole', a realisation which can also help compel 'us all' to action to safeguard earth (Burke *et al.* 2016, Marsili 2020); yet, for others it means something else altogether: a breaking apart of the idea of a 'whole' 'singular' planet (Latour 2017).

I develop here the implications for the emerging debates on planetary justice of taking seriously the perspectives which seek to invoke the planetary not as a new, grander object of governance but rather as something that breaks apart the idea of a 'whole', 'the planet'. Developing Latour's idea of planetary as a challenge to 'the planet' (as a whole), I show that planetary justice can also mean something different from how it has been evoked in current debates, with important practical and political implications for what it means to pursue planetary justice.

Let me be clear; I am not seeking here to either dismiss or to fiercely defend the idea of planetary justice and the recent attempts, discussed below, to develop it into a new paradigm. Instead, I wish to try to encourage more reflection on and, indeed, to provide some alternative meanings to the idea of 'planetary justice'.[1] My core aim is to show that there are *different ways of conceiving, and practicing ethical commitments in the context of the planetary*; including ways which challenge, or push in a different direction, the existing interpretations of planetary justice. In essence, I argue that if we follow up the deep critique of the 'international' and the 'global' embedded in the idea of the planetary, we may become sceptical about the development of a notion of planetary justice that looks something like 'international' or 'global justice'. Planetarity as it is developed here is about a radical *shift in* how to conceive of humans and non-humans, of communities, of justice, and indeed of the planet.

I proceed as follows. First, I review some of the key efforts to develop the idea of planetary justice and raise a series of questions around these interventions. In particular, I point to the singularity of the notion of the planet that still seems to haunt these debates and related questions around how decolonial perspectives might figure in this agenda and also with regard to how planetary justice interacts with concerns around non-humans as a focus of justice.

In the following section, I put forward four inter-related arguments to try to address the questions raised in section one: 1) in relation to planetarity as plural, 2) justice as response-ability, 3) multispecies communities as key to commitments, and 4) the need to break down spatial and temporal ideas about scalarity. In sum, I suggest that, to work with the 'planetary' is to 'come down back to earth' (Latour 2018) as situated eco-systemically processing beings in relations. It is to break apart the 'whole' we can look down upon 'from on high'. Communities that matter exist not only across borders of states but also across species and as such across radically different temporal frames. When we do not perceive the planetary as something 'grand' 'beyond' us but something already existing, in the interstices of the existing political order and multispecies lifeways, we come to a different way of doing planetary justice, as response-ability in planetary, multispecies politics.

Planetary politics, planetary justice: some initial questions

The debates on planetary justice in environmental political theory, political theory and international political theory are important and interesting, not only because they challenge the classical political theory paradigms for thinking about what justice might involve but also the conceptual parameters of how justice is approached. These debates sit within the broader interest in current social and political sciences to think through the challenges of the Anthropocene and the concomitant propositions that we must face in the environmental, eco-systemic, climatic, societal and economic realities on the planet. Indeed, the idea of planetary justice is part of a much wider attempt to rethink the international and global governance, ethics, philosophy and politics in the context of the troubled relationship with the earth system and ecosystems (Biermann 2014, Connolly 2017, Latour 2017, Fishel 2017, Yusoff 2018, Dryzek and Pickering 2019, Chandler et al. 2020). Planetary justice is invoked, as indeed are related ideas such as planetary politics (Burke et al. 2016, Kurki 2020), to tackle a kind of a 'hollowness' in the calls for responses to problems on the planet within the existing international frameworks, where the earth system is seen as a mere inert background to calls for justice for human communities (see e.g. Biermann and Kalfagianni 2020).

But what does planetary justice mean? Biermann and Kalfagianni's (2020) key contribution to planetary justice develops the idea as a way to recognise the need to develop new notions of justice to respond to climate and environmental struggles in the Earth system. They provide a framework for assessing different kinds of avenues to planetary justice, seeking to 'bring structure, clarity, simplicity and comparability among different inter- pretations of justice in global change research' (Biermann and Kalfagianni 2020, p. 1). Analysing three key issues which all analysts of justice are concerned with – subjects of justice and their relationship; the metrics and principles of justice; and the mechanisms on the basis of which justice is pursued (Biermann and Kalfagianni 2020, p. 1) – they set out five broad normative perspectives from which these questions can be approached – liberal egalitarianism, cosmopolitanism, the capabilities approach, libertar- ianism, and 'critical perspectives'. They argue that we require a parsimonious framework for understanding and mapping justice claims in debates on planetary justice and in order to allow for this they argue that these five perspectives are a helpful starting point – and by no means, for them, a fixed end-point. Indeed, developing planetary justice is a challenge precisely because 'it becomes impossible to start off with one unifying definition of what justice actually means' (Biermann and Kalfagianni 2020, p. 3).

Dryzek and Pickering (2019) also develop the notion of planetary justice but from the perspective of their notion of reflexive ecological politics. Their core aim is to show how and why planetary justice needs to tackle the challenges of existing 'Holocene' reference points for justice debates, but without throwing the baby out with the bathwater. For them, in today's context of ecological destruction, we need to engage, rethink and redirect justice frames, who they encompass and how we engage them. Indeed, Dryzek and Pickering arguably seek to develop a new framework for thinking on planetary justice which, while recognising the contested nature of justice, also pushes beyond classical Holocene and humanist conceptions of justice towards justice for non-human actors.

These projects, and related developments of the notion, such as the interventions in the key planetary justice special issue of *Earth Systems Governance* in 2020 (see e.g. Kashwan *et al.* 2020, Hickey and Robeyns 2020, Stevis and Felli 2020) are important and productive. I agree not only with the driving impulse – that we should have more developed and serious engagements with what justice could mean in a planetary frame – but also with the emphasis on thinking through contested and multiple views on planetary justice. Yet, I remain uncertain about these frameworks for a set of inter-related reasons.

First, in encountering the planetary justice debates one cannot help feeling puzzled about the lack of reflection on how 'justice' or the 'planet' are seen as something we can have multiple perspectives 'on', in essence as 'things' that

can be 'captured', even if in multiple ways. But is there such a thing as 'planetary justice' or indeed 'a planet' or indeed 'justice' which we should try to 'capture'?

Latour (2017) helps us think through this issue. He argues that while the planetary is an important notion to work with, an attraction to the idea of the planetary as a singularity or wholeness haunts many current evocations of the planetary. What is of interest about the 'planetary' for Latour (something we will return to later) is precisely *not* that it makes us think of the whole planet, as one. The planetary for Latour is not about developing concerns in relation to 'the whole', but rather the idea of the planetary, 'bursts the bubble' of the Globe, it breaks apart the idea that 'the planet', or human/non-human relations 'on' it, can really be captured as a 'whole'.

Second, and relatedly, while recognising multiple ways of coming at justice, there is still arguably an attraction in the scholarship on planetary justice to the idea that justice concerns how we deal with the 'whole', that is, how we apportion blame or justice to actors on 'the planet', viewed as a whole. Scholars then – recognising different normative traditions – try to 'capture' the different views of justice in relation to 'the' whole (humans as well as earth system). To quote Pickering and Dryzek: we need the new concept planetary justice (rather than, say, the old term environmental justice) precisely because 'it denotes justice that relates to the Earth system as a whole' (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, p. 68).

This attraction of the whole is also revealed in the repeated 'return' to the idea of 'global justice' as a reference point. Biermann and Kalfagianni, for example, explain that 'Global justice comes closest to what we refer to here as planetary justice . . .' (2020, p. 2). Hickey and Robeyns (2020, p. 2), in their discussion of the concept, suggest the same and Stevis and Felli (2020, p. 3) too accept that many 'consider using the two [notions] interchangeably'. But the global and the planetary are not interchangeable. On a relational reading of Latourian kind, one deeply challenges the other. I take Latour to suggest that it is precisely the 'whole', the 'Globe', as a totalising singularity which the notion of planetary challenges and that therein lies its radical potential.

The stakes are not insignificant for another reason. As many decolonial scholars argue, implicit in 'one-world'/'one whole planet' views may also lie hidden colonial assumptions (Law 2011). The idea of 'one-world' it is argued has been a mode of erasing alternative cosmologies and non-Western nature–human relationships. It then may well be that the attraction of 'the Globe' in how we come to understand 'the planetary' (Latour 2017, see also Chakrabarty 2021) brings to the table also coloniality and Euro-centricity of ideas of justice and indeed of 'the planet'.

This is not an irrelevant concern for, as Biermann and Kalfagianni (2020, p. 4) admit, their work on planetary justice does not at present

encompass non-Western traditions on justice or non-human or indeed posthuman notions of justice or ethics. Their decision to focus on more classical humanist discourses of justice is made for 'practical reasons':

> planetary justice framework is informed by a need to assess existing political documents, scientific debates or integrated assessment models in global change research and debate. In a mainstream political document it is less likely to encounter references to Confucian philosophy or Pachamama. (Biermann and Kalfagianni 2020, p. 4)

While understandable in some sense, these decisions go against the current push to decolonise and diversify sources knowledge construction in the social and political sciences (see e.g. Shilliam 2022) – and thus inadvertently reproduces the existing international order built on Western origins and power relations, including conceptions of 'justice' and 'the planet' (see also Celermajer *et al.* 2021).

This in turn may lead to the side-lining of other injustices, including injustices experienced by non-humans. Indeed, despite the planet, or the earth system, looming large for 'planetary justice', there is arguably no consistent interest in the non-human (animals, plants, rivers, mountains) as reference points of justice. This interest in non-humans is clearly evident in Dryzek and Pickering's (2019) approach, which proposes precisely that non-humans must be key reference points of planetary justice, but in other work the focus is squarely on the humans, as for example in Kashwan *et al.* (2020) pro-poor, humanist approach to planetary justice. In other works, the implication for non-humans is ambiguous: for example, while they are interested in the health of 'the planet', Kalfagianni and Biermann (2020) ultimately frame their concerns about justice around human communities in their – admittedly varied – ideas of justice.

But if our human communities are *not* human-only and if our politics is already interspecies politics as Youatt (2020) argues, then why are only humans at the table of defining how justice 'about the planet' is refracted politically. Human rooms, human tables, human ethics, to deal with the 'planetary'. This is despite the fact that there is increasing recognition that animals too speak (Meijer 2019, 2023), as do forests (Kohn 2013), even if in different ways. How then are inter- and multispecies[2] concerns, or multispecies justice (Celermajer *et al.* 2021), to be built into debates on planetary justice?

This relates to a further concern: the rather abstract nature of the ideas of justice and community underpinning debates on planetary justice. One of the key contributions of scholars such as Haraway (2008, 2016), Tsing (2015) and Youatt (2020) has been to show that we already live in concrete multitudes of inter/multi-species ethical

encounters which our 'abstract' concepts of politics, community or justice (state, cosmopolis), however, can 'shut out' from our fields of view. When we do 'social science' or 'politics' we are in a way 'lifted' – conceptually – outside of our 'real multispecies relations' of co-dependence and ethical encounter.

Is planetary justice destined to become another abstract term that (pre-) defines a set of communities and responsibilities and thus metaphorically pulls us out of concrete multispecies ones? And how do we do planetary justice without imposing particular abstractions (about communities, relations that matter) on others? How do we observe and treat justice as a matter of *relations we exist in*, rather than the ones we *imagine as if from the 'outside'*, as if we could pull ourselves 'off' the planet and find ourselves 'looking down' on 'planetary justice' on it?

By opening up to these ways of rethinking justice and planetarity in a different register, we can also challenge the ideas of scale (local, national, international, global, planetary) which still haunt debates on planetary justice. Planetary has a great attraction in appearing to be the 'grandest' scale; somehow grander than the local, national and international, and even grander than global justice. But this inadvertent 'enlarging' of scale is perhaps part of the same problem of the 'whole'. Following Latour and the idea of pluriversality, and the notion of ethics as response-ability, there is a sense in which planetary can be seen to, not enlarge, but instead to *melt these scales*.

In sum, what I seek to argue below – in four inter-related sections – is that planetarity should necessitate a deep challenge: the bursting of the bubble of the singular 'planetary' and in part the idea of 'justice' attached to that. From this arises a reframing of ethics as concrete encounters of non-humans and humans in relations.

Refracting planetary justice: towards pluriversal planetary response-abilities

From the one-world world to the pluriverse

> Where are you when you are looking at a globe, when you look at the world as a sphere? . . . There is no global view! And if there is no global view, you are always inside (Latour in Salter and Walters 2016, pp. 12–13).

A seemingly well-accepted aspect of debates on planetary politics and also planetary justice is that this is needed because new threats and challenges are facing 'the planet' and all inhabitants on it. Our normative commitments should now be considered not in isolation but as tied to those emanating from the planetary realities. Thus, rather than being formed in parochial, partial communities of fate unaware of each other

or how our actions affect the planetary ecosystems, we think in relation to the planetary whole. This is why we need Planet Politics (Burke *et al.* 2016) or Earth Systems Governance (Biermann 2014) or indeed 'Planetary Justice'. But what is the 'planet'?

Planetarity, like the 'global', are conceptual constructions with specific histories (see e.g. Van Munster and Sylvest 2016). So what kinds of constructions are they in these debates? I start, intentionally, with Latour's provocations, for Latour, alongside other important thinkers (Haraway 2016), has, to my mind, shown most directly why we should be interested in the idea of the planetary *not* because it presents us with 'another whole', a replacement for 'the global' but precisely because it breaks apart the 'globe', the idea of a 'whole'.

In *Facing Gaia* (2017) in particular, Latour develops the importance of using engagement with Gaia, the planetary, to break apart modernist need to create 'wholes' and to 'capture wholes'. Latour shows that the idea that we live 'on' 'the' 'Globe', conceived as 'a whole', is a very attractive 'factish' (Latour 2010) that pulls on our concepts, our imagination; it pulls us 'off' the planet to look back down on it: 'look, there it is the "blue dot", the planet!' But this process of pulling out, to see the planet as an interconnected 'whole' – visualising it as a whole, a beautiful sphere – also necessitates a certain kind of detachment from it, as if we were no longer on it.

In contrast, Latour's point is precisely that the Gaia is *not a 'whole'* but a series of relations. For Latour, Gaia is multiple and it is terran, of relations. The planetary, Gaia, is precisely the 'thorn that deflates the obsessions of the Globe' (Latour 2017, p. 289). It is through engagement with the idea of planetary that we start to break down the obsessions of the 'moderns': the 'whole', the 'singular' to be managed, and 'come back down to earth' (Latour 2018).

I take Latour to be warning us: the seeming singularity of the planet carries with it the singularity of the Globe; and the globe carries within it the modernist (and also colonial) dreams of globalisation, and as such wholes to be tapped and managed (see also Chakrabarty 2021).[3] How we think of the planetary then is not a trivial question; it is a crucial question for how we refract the planetary, for the ethics and politics of the planetary.

To start to break apart the whole, another useful concept, arising from the so-called ontological turn is the idea of the pluriverse (Law 2011, Blaney and Tickner 2017, Escobar 2020, De La Cadena and Blaser 2018). As I understand it, pluriverse is a notion which directly seeks to challenge the tendency – culturally specific Western/Northern tendency – to think on the world 'as one'. Even as it is attractive to think on 'reality' not only as 'out there' but also as 'singular', this assumption is not universal or obvious. In fact, many conceive themselves – and non-human kin – to be of worlds not captured by the idea of one-world. These worlds, pluriworlds, embody different ways

of being, connecting, communing, becoming human, non-human and more-than-human (Querejazu 2016, 2022)

Pluriversality entails not a) a 'defensive' autonomy of sovereign communities against globalising forces (which is how some interpret this notion) or b) a mess of plural communities of fate with no connections. Rather, as I interpret Escobar and others (Law 2011, Querejazu 2016), pluriversality refers to an attempt to reject the calls of the 'singular' world assumption with an emphasis on the existing of multiple different, sometimes partially overlapping, 'worlds', which cannot, however, be captured or known, from the outside. Pluriversality is about engaging relations which make lifeways and to engage relationalities is to recognise the inconceivability of 'pulling out of them' to 'capture' them.[4]

The core challenge to grapple with then is that the 'one-world' way of conceiving the world is itself what creates the damage to our capacity to understand, grasp and enter into the lives of others, the life-ways of other communities who live, think and practice relations, in other 'worlds'. In a sense when we are pulled on by the myth of the 'one-world world' the pluriversal, place-based and multiplicitous nature of the actual worlds we live in and negotiate become invisible. The 'whole' and our wish to 'see it' and 'manage it' as 'a whole' silences the realities of our pluriversal relations.

This matters because many of the key ambitions of social scientists or political activists tend to live in the 'one-world'. Indeed, it is in the 'one-world world' – or 'container-world', so called because in this cultural conception the world 'contains' all of us and our views (Law 2011) – that we often think we practice science (know reality) and do politics (negotiate balances of interests). And of concern for us here, it is in this one-world world of 'the planet' that we also 'apportion duties' in relation to the 'whole'. *It is where we develop 'justice' frames.*

But what if one opens lifeways to the radical relationalities of the pluriverse, a pluriverse within which multiple realities, worlds, multiple ways of being and traversing across difference exist, quite apart, although sometimes also in some connection, with each other (Querejazu 2016, Blaney and Tickner 2017)? How do we deal with planetary justice in a relational pluriverse? Is there even 'a planet' or 'justice' in such a pluriverse? What would it mean to think of planetary justice as of multiple worlds relating, encountering, negotiating, without trying to capture justice on 'the planet'?

Engaging with this possibility entails quite foundational shifts for debates on planetary justice. It certainly seems to have consequences for attempts to create planetary justice frames from within a largely Western philosophical repertoire and it also has implications for how we think on justice as

a concern of multispecies communities, not least because in many indigenous frameworks, Andean cosmopraxis for example, communities of fate include non-humans (Querejazu 2016, 2022). But if we are denied the one-world world, how do we conceive of justice?

Justice, ethics, response-ability

Ethics, morality and justice are a perennial concern of Western political thought. We are to follow and to develop ethical laws, norms, rules or expectations that should govern our behaviour and balance our duties and obligations to others. But ethical and moral reasoning is also a strange practice, in part because it tends to assume that moral codes apply to all – a universal all (cosmopolitan) or perhaps a community-based all (communitarian). Not only does this ethical and moral reasoning tend to assume that the subjects and agents of moral reasoning are human beings, it also seems to assume that we owe something, morally, to (at least some) other humans, by virtue again of being part of a 'whole', 'the' or at least 'a' human community.

Yet in recent years there has been increasing concern around justice and morals as problematic registers, in particular around the ways in which these notions universalise and abstract ethical commitments by invoking general rules. They have also come under criticism for prioritising human-only concerns and the anthropocentrism that emanates from the very language of justice and morality (Barad 2007, Zylinska 2014, Tsing 2015, Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, Dryzek and Pickering 2019, Zanotti 2019, Kurki 2020, Celermajer *et al.* 2021).

Lacking the space here to explore all these approaches – including relational ethics, intra-active ethics, participatory ethics and ethics of care – in detail, but drawing on their driving impetus, I highlight here just one specific concern of relevance for the debate on planetary justice: that as it is currently framed, it seems to call on us to develop 'justice' in the context of a planetary 'whole', rather than develop it from relations. As I have explored above, in planetary justice debates when responsibility is discussed, it tends to be discussed in terms of how responsibilities should be divided in relation to a 'whole' (humanity, international or planet). Indeed, the very language of apportioning blame or responsibility is based on the expectation that there is a (whole) 'cake' to be apportioned, even if it is a messy and contested process how this is done. But perhaps it is precisely this abstraction of a 'whole planetary cake to be apportioned' that we need to call into question when we approach ethics in a planetary register. If the planetary calls into question the idea of a 'one-world world', then perhaps maybe it also calls into question the idea that we can have justice within a 'whole' – and that *ethical commitments are developed in wholes*. To my mind, so far the planetary justice debates have not explored this idea enough. Incipient in the very idea of planetary justice

may rather be a radical challenge to the origins, ways of thinking and ways of practicing ethics, via 'justice' as a matter involving 'a whole'.

The challenge of how to do ethics in a more thoroughgoingly relational frame has been explored by many excellent scholars. Haraway (2016) and Barad (2007) have perhaps most directly explored ethics as explicitly non-abstract, always relational and always as more-than-human. Crucially, for them ethics are born *in relations*, including multispecies relations. Ethics is in the world and of the world; a form of responsibility, or as Haraway calls it response-ability (2016).

Within this kind of a frame our ethical commitments do not belong to abstract communities, or 'wholes', for abstract reasons; they arise *from relations* which give rise to recognition and the development of a kind of ethics of traversing together, with difficulty but recognition. The aim of this process is *not to follow* general moral rules, generated through reference to an abstract community (state, family, humanity), but to *relate* to others and their collaboration problems. As such we are called to live in relations, exploring in so doing how we might pay attention to others so as not to make others so readily 'killable' as Haraway (2008) would have it. Indeed, as I see it, Haraway pitches this sense of response-ability as an *alternative* to the abstract idea of justice. She writes:

> Accountability caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions; these mundane, prosaic things are the result of having truck with each other. Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world-making. Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with – all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape. (Haraway 2008, p. 360)

This kind of relational ethics is decidedly not very grand – it invokes no universal moral law – and it is not trying to capture the 'whole', apportion the world or parts of it (abstracted from the whole: 'women', 'poor, 'animals') for us to 'treat right'. Rather it instead asks us to *be and become* in the world, relate, amplify relations, tying us to each other ethically, but also cats and dogs, fungi, fish and trees – with recognition, response-ability, not a standard obligation derived from universal moral laws, essentialised categories or indeed abstract notions of species.

The point is then to not start with attributing blame in relation to whole, work with abstract categories (human, animal) but to start with relations – cross-species relations – and ask, what response-abilities are we bound with, should we 'sit with', and work through. In other words, we live in real worlds; not in an abstract 'world' or, as Haraway (2016, p. 31) puts it: 'Nobody lives everywhere; everybody lives somewhere.' It is from the where – not the everywhere – that we develop ethical responses.[5]

Through such a notion of ethics we are moved away, at first perhaps imperceptibly but on reflection, rather forcefully, from the very language of 'justice', which implies generality. Rather than planetary justice, then, perhaps what we should be focused on developing is *response-ability in (pluriversal) planetary relations*. The two notions may at first glance appear similar; but there is an important tonal (and philosophical and practical) difference: language of planetary justice tends towards the abstract and the whole and apportioning of duties and responsibilities of the whole; language of response-ability in relations tends towards concrete relations, unfolding, decision-making (even if not to save). Tendencies matter for, as Haraway (2016, p. 35) reminds us: 'it matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds'. This move back to concrete ethics of 'response-ability in relations/worlds' over the attraction of more abstract notions of 'justice on the planet' also has important consequences for our engagement with non-humans.

Concrete multispecies communities

In Ukraine, many people are currently fleeing, fighting, hiding and dying as a result of the military aggression by Russia. The unfolding disaster is of intense concern to many people, armies, countries and scholars. It is also a disaster for the multi-species communities of non-human and human collaborators in the region. It is not just human family members torn apart, it is also animals, plants, surroundings and various forms of dependencies across these divides that are affected. Indeed, it is these lives, response-abilities in real 'wheres' that are torn asunder, human and non-human, both bound up with each other (Coulter 2022).

My point here is not to develop some sort of an abstract theory of community or of animal rights. It is rather to make the rather simple point that the *concrete communities* we live in are not only human; they are intensely inter- and multi-species. Every species – including the human – is a 'multi-species crowd' (Haraway 2008, p. 105). This also means that politics and international relations, as they already exist – negotiations of borders, territory, rights for example – are inter- and multi-species. Indeed, as Youatt (2020) powerfully argues, paying attention to and thinking through our actual inter- or multi-species communities will pay dividends for 'us', not only in understanding the role of non-humans we traverse with, but also because it allows us *to better understand how our actual human communities also work* (Youatt 2020, p. 92).

Why does this matter for our concerns here? It matters because it focuses our attention squarely on thinking through *concrete multispecies communities* as a central concern of planetary response-ability/justice. As

we have seen, concern with non-humans has been inconsistent, fleeting and on occasion non-existent in existing approaches to planetary justice. But if our human communities are not human only and if our politics is already multi-species politics, then how do we bring the non-humans to the consideration: directly as actors and not just as objects of justice concerns. The tendency to wish to 'speak for' others and lack of interest in developing active modalities of communication with non-humans leads to a hierarchy, inadvertent as it is, which reproduces the systematic exclusion of the non-human from the realm of politics and justice. For example, as Meijer (2019) shows, animals actively communicate with us about injustices they face; as do plants (Kohn 2013). They do not wait to be 'spoken for'; and yet, we still treat them as a background of, or an object of, rather than actors of justice demands. This is not due to difficulty in communication – these difficulties are often exaggerated – but due to the difficulties that 'humans' that separated themselves from 'others' have in being attentive to those we have made a 'passive background' to 'our' action.

As Youatt directs us to ask: how is inter-species-ness to be built in – and on *inter-specific* terms rather than *human-only* terms – in the debates on planetary justice? The challenge of planetary justice is to think through how we build more attentive inter- or multi-species politics rather than speaking for others from the perspective of 'planetary justice'. Important lessons are to be learned here from those developing the idea of multispecies justice, not least because here also interest in translation capacities fostered in Indigenous communities, for example, are explored (Celermajer *et al*. 2021). Indeed, response-abilities in planetary relations may look more like what has been termed multispecies justice than it does planetary justice.

At stake here is how and whether we can use this notion of planetary justice to frame real, concrete communities (interspecific) or whether it becomes another abstract term that defines an abstract set of communities, justice and politics. How do we do planetary justice without imposing particular abstractions on others? How do we engage communities – and response-abilities – without controlling, setting, limiting what can be a community and what ethics can arise? Important questions also arise for how we think spatially and temporally around communities and politics. It is to this I now turn.

Scalarity and temporality

Do we have the political imagination to see sovereign communities – wolf packs – that exist on a different temporal scale than ours? And can we engage with the conditions of their self-dissolution – even under conditions that are

partly externally driven – without taking up the impulse to intervene and save them in the name of their own sovereignty? (Youatt 2020, p. 93)

One of the challenges of thinking planetary justice in a frame that is not 'universal', but engages the real communities, concrete multispecies communities in which we exist is that it does have the effect of messing up our expectations of what the 'scales' of relevance to 'politics' are.

Of course, the community that is the state has long haunted our imaginations, our visualisations and, as a result, our experienced realities of politics. But if the state itself is made up of and relies on multiple real multispecies and inter-species communities and politics between them, as Youatt (2020) for example shows through his analysis of borders and state security agendas, then our scales of politics are not simply 'national' or 'international'. Inter- and multi-species frames render the scales of international politics porous (see e.g. Youatt 2020).

Equally, what also disperses, or blows up, is the idea of the 'global' as a 'beyond-the-international' which appeared to us as a kind of a 'whole'. But if we 'burst the bubble of the Globe' as Latour asks us to do, we also do not have this 'whole' to turn to build politics on ('global governance'). And crucially, what planetary politics is/could be and what planetary justice could/should entail is not to be built on an aspiration to be 'like the global' but 'somehow' different as we also bring in the earth, the planet. It is something different which is not on the *scale* map of:

local – national – international – global – planetary

Indeed, the planetary is not the largest 'end point' of 'this' kind of a scale – as if it was a spectrum – but quite the contrary, it is the *undoing of the idea of a spectrum of scales*. We are not just moving 'up' scales, we are undoing the idea of scalarity. In other words, the planetary is right 'here' so to speak and planetary, all at once.

This is significant because as Andreas Hejnol reminds us on the hierarchies implied in 'spectra' of scale (also often built into the idea of evolution by 'ladders' or 'levels' or indeed ideas about 'simplicity' and 'complexity') are precisely what structure anthropocentrism and our incapacity to grasp the nature of others around us. This is why for Hejnol we need to tell 'very different stories with dramatically different metaphors' (Hejnol 2017: G87) and in so doing refuse to lose 'the place' where our relations are weaved.

If we think in different terms where we live is not just 'local' and as such insignificant; where we live is the basis of our politics, shooting across and implicated in what is often called the 'levels' of international, global, planetary. Yet crucially relations cannot not to be reduced to one or the other 'scale metaphor' (see also Escobar 2020, p. xvii). Indeed, as Bold (2019, p. 11) argues, 'it may be that modern conceptions of scale as well as accompanying

ontological convictions are complicating the issue', rather than helping. Rather than thinking through scales, becoming trapped by them, we should instead think on 're-communalisation' (Escobar 2020, p. xix) of places, meshworks, relations, so as not to fall into the 'globalocentric traps' which, through abstractions like the Globe and the Planet, hide real relationalities from our view and experience. Planetary response-abilities, are not an 'end' of a spatial scale category for 'wholes' but perhaps rather entail an attentiveness to ways of engaging worlds and becoming in relations.

If planetarity messes up our spatial scales, it is important to note that it also entails important implications for temporal scales. The temporalities of a 'state' are generational, cross-generational, relatively long-term (even as they are short-term of course in wider biological or geophysical frames, for example). But key to planetary response-ability is also exploring the different, also much shorter, temporal frames that push at and beyond abstract temporal frames. Temporalities of multispecies communities with house spiders for example are arguably rather different from those you have with your family or the state for example.

And as Youatt (2020) so powerfully shows, communities form but they also dissolve. Wolf packs disassemble, human communities disassemble, by their own doing or through external pressure. This disassembling is not *necessarily* a tragedy. To assume that community – human or animal or multispecies – should last 'forever' and to build politics on this assumption is to wed our sense to a very Holocene interpretation of politics, of 'the planet' and of community. We should thus also engage community and justice/response-ability dissolution as much as community and justice/response-ability formation.

Conclusion

> We are in a knot of species co-shaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down. Response and respect are possible only in those knots, with actual animals and people looking back at each other, sticky with all their muddled histories (Haraway 2008, p. 42).

In this article, I have set out to engage, but also to interrogate and to develop further the notion of planetary justice. In a relational and posthumanist frame I have sought to refract planetary justice as 'response-ability in planetary relations'. Where does this leave us?

To some this may seem rather unambitious compared to the much grander paradigm shift planetary justice invokes. Does this mean a kind of 'giving' up on the 'big' questions of achieving justice for all on the planet? Does it mean abandonment of precisely those that need help ('poor', 'women', 'animals')? Justice claims are ultimately needed precisely because

they enable intervention to improve lives of 'all' and in particular the lives of whole 'categories' of people.

These are important concerns. But they need careful consideration. An immediate jump back to the 'one-world world' – where we can retain 'justice' as we knew it and blame from on high, and a view of the whole – while attractive, also comes with much trouble, not least the danger of losing the actual worlds and relations through which planetary connections and commitments are weaved. I am not saying this is a paradigm to jump into either; but it is a way of building ethics otherwise, elsewhere, beyond the grand visions of planetary justice. What does this mean in concrete terms?

Kalfaggiani and Biermann, in their reference point contribution on planetary justice, finished by setting out their principles on 'subjects of justice', 'metrics of justice' and 'mechanisms of justice'. I have tried to think in these terms, not least to facilitate a productive conversation. But this is also tricky as it forces a return to notions and a language which might hinder more than help.

With this proviso, let me attempt to put forward the alternative phrasings around each of the focal points suggested for planetary justice. From the viewpoint of 'response-abilities in planetary relations' proposed here the *subjects of responsibility* are multiple and also porous, human and non-human. *Metrics of justice* arise from and are developed in relations, in communities, human and multispecies; there are *no* abstract principles or metrics of justice, only relational ones. *Mechanisms of justice* are less 'mechanistic' (and let's not forget that the idea of mechanisms has a very specific cultural origin and political effects; Foley 1990): open-ended, attentive and also affective ways of engaging multispecies relations are encouraged. Instead of universal mechanism of resolving conflicts or proposing solutions, a kind of weaving into lifeworlds and attentiveness to response-abilities in them is given rise to.

What planetary justice amounts to from this perspective then is not anything like 'global justice' but more the dispersal and re-calibration of a spirit of curiosity, care, listening, and plurilogue (Behr and Shani 2022) including to/ with the non-human processes which make worlds. And this looks less clear in scalar terms than existing political institutions – national, international and global; immediate, mid-term, long-term. Politics looks like 'something else', an open-ended, multi-species politics of negotiation, undoing and re-weaving or re-communing (Escobar 2020) – but always somewhere, not from an abstract everywhere.

So what? What difference will this refraction of planetary justice make *in practice*? It depends on whom you ask. This might look like giving up on grand narratives and missions to some. But for those trying to reimagine governance in and for (and beyond) the Anthropocene, the kinds of shifts pointed to here are not out of line with what they look for: shifts to increased recognition of uncertainty, complexity, non-completeness, participatory ethics (see also Katzenstein 2022). And this approach also speaks to those who seek to do

practical politics in new ways. Observe the Embassy of the North Sea or the Tribunals of Nature Rights in action, for example. Neither reduces justice to humans or planet to singularity. Neither works on abstract principles but from grounded experiences. They amplify concerns, response-abilities, in the interstices of the existing order. This is not a giving up then, it is a recalibration. And it has implications for all of us in relations too. How do I negotiate with the community of spiders in the bathroom? How to negotiate the concrete ethics of killability of specific chickens for pets' dinner? These relations too are concrete, material, difficult, troubled; and they are also always weaved into complex planetary relations, including power relations to be followed up with intrigue and concern. Engaging these planetary response-abilities may not look 'grand' and does not 'solve' the problems of justice for all; but it may nevertheless – or perhaps precisely because of this – enable an important new route to planetary justice.

Notes

1. Nor do I seek to simply move to another concept, multispecies justice for example, even as I am concerned about multispecies dynamics and am very sympathetic to the multispecies justice agenda. For multispecies justice see a recent special issue (Celermajer *et al.* 2021).
2. Literature uses both inter- and multi-species as terms of reference. Both notions recognise the multiplicity of cross-species relations and the mutability and historically constructed nature of the idea of species.
3. Arguably this imagination of the whole is also present in more relational and left-leaning accounts of the global. Thus, world systems theory concerned with inequality also seeks to capture the relations of production on the globe 'as a whole'.
4. As I conceive of the pluriverse and relationality, they are complementary.
5. A response to this account of ethics is that it is very 'local' and not ambitious in addressing concrete others at a distance. While often levelled, this criticism misunderstands the basis of the argument: touch or relationality is always planetary, *never* just local. Indeed, it undoes the idea of 'local'.

Acknowledgments

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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