

New Paradigm of Ecological Crisis through Glimpse of European Borders

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Today we live in a century in which humanitarian and environmental disasters converge. Reasoning and research on the discourse of 'crisis' as a starting-and-ending point of analysis have produced representations about the interconnection between globality, ecological crisis, mass migration, and pandemic. The importance of environmental identity gives us a sense of connection with nature and the possibility for humans to be part of a larger whole. Humanitarian catastrophes are triggering ecological disasters. The European ecological, migration and pandemic crises have pushed the researchers of borders to rethinking the process of re-bordering and de-constructing European border function. The idea "to move from a geopolitical to a biopolitical horizon of thinking" inspired by Foucault and Agamben, have given the possibility to develop a more pluralized view in the development of the policy as such. This "biopolitical horizon of thinking" suggests a radical break of the past. For us, as researchers, the most important are "the shifts of philosophical ideas" that extract sameness even from what is unique in all types of crises.

Keywords: border, ecolinguistics, ecological crisis, environmental migrant, environmental identity, paradigm shift.

Introduction or paradigm shift in condition of global crisis.

The ongoing biggest European refugee crisis is the example of diffraction which is not only a concentration of current wars and conflicts but also represents negative ecological consequences such as poisoning and lack of water and air, destruction of property, terrain, landscape, and sometimes climate change. When analyzing the global crisis, the author uses the theoretical constructions and approach of Peter Hall

and Vivien Schmidt. The paradigm shift is preceded by three "orders of change". First-order changes include adjustments to the settings of an existing tool or policy ideas; second-order change refers to innovation at the level of the tools themselves or program ideas, third-order change includes radical changes in political discourse. Schmidt called it "basic public policy philosophies". It is here that "big ideas" which "usually remain deep in the background" are created and "rarely challenged except in moments of deep crisis". It is here that "big ideas"

which “usually remain deep in the background” are created and “rarely challenged except in moments of deep crisis.”¹ According to Hall, a paradigm can be formulated as “a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing”². He concluded that changes include three levels: instrument settings, the instruments themselves, and the hierarchy of goals behind the policy. Often, paradigm shifts go together with social experiments that are sporadic and look like attempts “to stretch the terms of the paradigm”. An illustration of this tendency is sporadic attempts to close and reopen nuclear power plants and coal mines in the last decades.

A paradigm shift as a salvation from the ecological crisis has more moderate supporters who advocate the idea of its pluralism. They imagine the world which includes many matrixes of alternatives. This process which is named by them “from the universe to pluriverse” cannot be reduced to a single overarching policy framework. In the Kothari view, transformative alternatives do share the ambition “to go to the roots of the problem”, encompassing an “ethic that is radically different from the one underpinning

the current system and reflecting values grounded in a relational logic”.³

For decades EU development cooperation was mainly organized through bilateral geographic and mental borders. Later there was a shift toward a more holistic globalist approach to today’s development challenges. This epistemic change reflects the increased attention to the global tendency, interests, and the universality principle. European Commission discourse uses the definition of universality and underlines that the principle of universalism has become the dominant leitmotiv of Agenda 2030.

Subsequent events in Europe such as mass migration (2015–2017), the pandemic and closure of national borders (2020–2021), hybrid forms of migration expansion on the border with Belarus (2021–2022), and Russia’s war against Ukraine have shown that a paradigm shift is primarily the idea of paradigm pluralism or “matrix of alternatives”, growing post-development values as a part of ecological identity. Brian Massumi named this tendency as the complexity of the interlocking systems and describes that as a non-stopping exception:

“it’s clear that crisis and catastrophe are no longer exceptional, they’re the normal situation, as Benjamin famously said. The complexity of the interlocking systems we live in, on the social, cultural, economic, and natural levels, is now felt in all its complexity, be-

1 Schmidt, Vivien, A. 2011. Ideas and discourse in transformational political economic change in Europe. *Policy Paradigms, Transnationalism and Domestic Politics*. G. Skogstad (ed.). Toronto: Toronto University Press, pp. 36–63

2 Hall, Peter. A. Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: the case of economic policymaking in Britain. *Comparative Politics* 25/3, 1993, pp. 275–296, p. 279.

3 Kothari, A., Salleh, A., Escobar, A., Demaria, F. and Acosta A. (eds). 2019. *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. Delhi: Tulika/Columbia University Press, p. xxiv.

cause we're reaching certain tipping points, for example in relation to climate change and refugee flows... *the complexity of the interlocking systems* covers each of them we depend on for stability is perpetually on the verge of tipping over into crisis, with the danger that there will be a sort of cascade of effects through its sister systems, a domino effect. It's a very unstable, quasi-chaotic situation".⁴

As a result, we are covered in a premonition of the imminence of catastrophe, and it becomes a mode of our emotions. We feel direct affective proximity, even if it occurs "at a distance".

In search for environmental identity

The relationship between the natural environment and identity in the conditions of ecological crises and mass immigration are one of the more important questions. First, identity as such is a core psychological construct: a way of describing an individual that locates him within a natural, social, and political context. Environmental identity as a part of a common concept has different approaches such as environmental communication, ecological and conservation psychology, and others. Each of them includes social and moral worldviews, attitudes, and behaviors. The ecological identity, at the same time, includes such

important characteristics as ecology and environmental nature presenting itself as Other or sometimes as an enemy. It includes not only love, care, and saving for the local environment but consuming egoism, fear, and unwillingness to save the animal and plant world. From this view, we should agree that the key to uniting ourselves with nature is by recognizing ourselves as an indissoluble part of the environment. The perception of the environment as Other remains a problem both for European population and for the population of other continents on different levels. Massumi underlines that in this case, we deal with "masking" our recognized human identity.

The environmental identity is possibly divided through horizontal and vertical dimensions. The first dimension means that we have to deal with the sum of ideas, beliefs, imaginations, myths, and prejudices about the natural environment. The second dimension means that identities begin in our social environment where feelings of space, time, culture, and morals give meaning to our constructed identity about nature as such. The horizontal dimension of environmental identity stays in the center of the Derridean concept of human-nonhuman relations. It proposes to banish the logic that consists of radically singularizing the human in metaphysically isolating it. The radical uniqueness penetrates human identity as such and finds its expression in "the presentation of the self of human life, the autobiography of the human species, the whole history of the self that man recounts to himself".⁵

4 Massumi, Brian. 2012. *Affective Attunement in a Field of Catastrophe*. Interview Brian Massumi with Erin Manning. June 6, 2012. <https://www.peripeti.dk/2012/06/06/affective-attunement-in-a-field-of-catastrophe/>

5 Derrida, Jacques. 2008. *The Animal That Therefore I Am (Perspectives in Continental Philosophy)*, New York: Fordham University Press, pp. 29–30.

Using Susan Clayton's methodological approach, we distinguish such special characteristics of environmental identity: the key to recognizing the part of ourselves as part of the environment; the similarity to another collective identity (national or ethnic) giving us a sense of connection; possibility to be part of a larger whole, and with a recognition of the similarity between ourselves and others; the European environmental identity development through rationality, growing solidarity and responsibility. The latter is not just a philosophical and theoretical meaning but is rooted in social practices, restores the link with life, and creates new arguments for ecological collective actions. Contributing to this nowadays ethics of otherness becomes to be visible as more tolerant, less opposite, and eliminative to the radical Other (genders, race, continents, economies).⁶

Posthuman environmental approach

Agreeing with the general opinion that boundaries between the 'inhuman' and the 'non-human' are porous and dynamic it is impossible not to notice the specific point of difference. This point of difference lies in the realm of the concept of identity which gives only a human being the presence of a set of features that determine his identity. Post-humanism uses the concept of an identity matrix, which is relative to

both humans and animals. Massumi writes that a matrix of identity which looks like the important border between animals and humans is not absolute, it is a porous one. It is important in the environmental approach, but it is not the way to radical separation between animals and humans:

“The species converge not through a matrix of identity (“the” animal, “the” human), but through the speeds and slowness of ecologies. Thinking this way perhaps allows us to consider how fields of resonance through the coexistence not of identity structures (the human, the self) but through ecologies that are as many rhythms as “beings”. The point is not that there is no identity – no human, no animal, no plant – but that the species is not where the process begins or ends. Our proposition is not to negate species or identity, but to become aware that the force of collective individuation happens in the interstices where the ecologies are still in active transformation”⁷

From the view of Stacy Alaimo, environmental identity is grounded on such definitions as trans-corporeality and trans-locality. From her view, crossing the territories of environmental materiality the human changes the social perception of the self and radicalises the notion of trans-locality, resulting in a change in the idea of space as

6 Clayton, Susan, D. and Saunders, Carol, D. (2012). Introduction: Environmental and conservation psychology, pp. 1–8, *The Oxford handbook of environmental and conservation psychology*, S. D. Clayton (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199733026.013.0001>

7 Massumi, Brian. *Affective Attunement in a Field of Catastrophe*. Interview Brian Massumi with Erin Manning, June 6, 2012. <https://www.peripeti.dk/2012/06/06/affective-attunement-in-a-field-of-catastrophe/>

something ‘internal’ and ‘external’. If trans-locality traces the flows and migrations of people, and identities across places, the trans-corporeality is a conceptual descriptor for the flows and discourses across bodies. The emergence of new mass migration flows reconfigures the boundaries between the self and the environment, as well as between the self and material borders.⁸

All these characteristics produce a common image of environmental identity and show the boundaries reconfiguring between the self and the environment, migration, and borders. At the same time, ecological identity is a part of post-human identity. Rossi Braidotti describes posthumanism as “the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between humanism and anti-humanism and traces a different discursive framework, looking more affirmatively towards new alternatives”.⁹ From her view, the posthumanism perspective goes further in exploring alternatives, without sinking and ignoring the rhetoric of the crisis of man or history. Braidotti considers that the great emancipatory movements of postmodernity are driven by the resurgent “Others”: the women’s rights movement; the anti-racism and de-colonization movements; the anti-nuclear and pro-environment movements. These social and political movements are simultaneously the symptom of the crisis of the subject and the expression of positive, active alternatives. Also, its existence is evidence of the crisis of the former humanist

center position and dominant subject position ignoring the environment and nature. Braidotti considers that posthuman identity is a way to bypass contradictions between a globalized and culturally diverse Europe on the one hand, and the narrow and xenophobic definitions of European identity on the other. She looks at the critique of anthropocentrism as an expression of ecological awareness and recognition of new pluralistic multicultural perspectives.

Braidotti and other researchers add that the posthuman identity is the opposition to the aggressive universalism of the past. The post-humanist project embraces new political and ethical projects, it revives tolerance as a political tool of social justice and develops a new kind of post-nationalist European identity in which environmental identity will take an important place.

“Ecosophy” as instrument for environmental communication

Ecotheory is a convergence of ecology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, literature, feminism, sustainability studies, environmental justice (including indigenous and postcolonial studies), queer theory, and numerous adjacent fields that seek to deepen understanding of the close relations of humans and nonhumans. In the new materialism framework, nature is not a passive construct but “an agentic force that interacts with and changes the other elements, including the human”.¹⁰

8 Alaimo, Stacy. 2010. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

9 Braidotti, Rosi. 2013. *The Posthuman*, Cambridge: Polity press, p.37.

10 Alaimo, Stacy and Hekman, Susan. 2008. Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory. *Material Feminisms*. Alaimo S. and Hekman S. (eds.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 1–19, p. 7.

A good example of convergence is the 'One Health Movement', which is inspired by Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), who argues that there should be no dividing lines between animal and human medicine. The One Health initiative is an interdisciplinary alliance that unites scientific health and environmentally related disciplines, on the basis of a hypothesis, which is the isomorphism of structures between humans and animals in immunology, bacteriology, and vaccine developments. The mission of this movement is defined as “recognizing that human health (including mental health via the human-animal bond phenomenon), animal health, and ecosystem health are inextricably linked. One Health seeks to promote, improve, and defend the health and well-being of all species by enhancing cooperation and collaboration between physicians, veterinarians, and other scientific health and environmental professionals.”¹¹ In pandemic times this exclusive and alternative view helps to support the idea that by protecting animals, we preserve our future and save human lives.

Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess described “ecosophy” as a research theory and discipline which is based on analytical thinking and examines nature and our relationship to it. An ecosophical concept being part of a personal worldview determines the interaction of a person with the non-human natural world. For him, an ecosophical concept is the concept that does not have the status of a scientific theory but governs the process of the formation of

moral values related to the human interaction with the non-human natural world.

If we try to compare Arne Naess and Felix Guattari ecological conceptions, we will find that difference between key ideas lies in their understanding of ecosophy as such. For Guattari, ecosophy can be of three types: environmental, social, and mental ecology. Guattari wrote that the more important question is the following:

“If it ever had it – a sense of responsibility, not only for its own survival. but equally for the future of all life on the planet, for animal and vegetable species, likewise for incorporeal species such as music, the arts, cinema, the relation with time, love and compassion for others, the feeling of fusion at the heart of cosmos?”¹²

As a result, we should protect not only our environment but our mentality and our psyche. The future of the world belongs to the human possibility to change the types of subjectivity. Naess’ ecosophy concept is linked with the possibility to grow and develop a personal worldview and a personal code of values. For him, to affirm the intrinsic value of every life form is ecosophy’s general goal. Both of them confirmed the necessity of economic, political, and social reforms. But Naess pays more attention to moral issues, Guattari in his turn - to social and political ones.

11 *One Health: A New Professional Imperative*, 2008, p.5. https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/resources/onehealth_final.pdf

12 Guattari, Felix. 1995. *Chaosmosis. An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. P. Bains and J. Pefanis (trans.). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 119–120.

More than fifty years ago, Arne Naess wrote that the term “argumentation patterns” is not often applied to people.¹³ He left recommendations for objective public debate that need to be remembered and applied today when we communicate and present migration and refugee subjects. Naess asked in the public debate to avoid tendentious statements of fact, irrelevance, ambiguity, and quoting, information that should never be untrue or incomplete. He underlined the necessity to avoid a tendentious tone of presentation (irony, sarcasm, pejoratives, exaggeration, subtle (or open) threats. These are famous and simple rules violated in mass media during some last years.

Wittgenstein as ecolinguist in searching environmental philosophy

One of the important ecological approaches is based on Wittgenstein’s moral philosophy, ethics, and ecolinguistics. Following him, Einer Haugen presents ecolinguistics as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment. “The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. Language exists only in the minds of its users, and it only functions in relating these users to one another and to nature, their social and natural environment”.¹⁴ The metaphor occupies an important place in ecological linguistics; in fact, it uses the same terms

and definitions as ecological philosophy. Examples of such symbolic meanings are typical for ecological language vocabulary: ‘linguistic eco-system, ‘language habitat’, ‘environment of language’, and ‘language pollution’. This list could easily be continued. Nicholas M. Sarratt names Wittgenstein a protoecolinguist but understands the reasons that make this definition difficult to prove: a lack of textual evidence from the Wittgenstein corpus and the specificity of historical context. As another reason Sarratt labels “both processes of massive losses of biological and linguistic diversity which grow fast during the second half of the twentieth century, and the awareness about this massive extinction of biodiversity and languages which emerged in the 1980s.”¹⁵ Sabatt named this second problem “a historical asynchrony”.

Wittgenstein’s view does not espouse the intrinsic value theory for different reasons, but mostly that these human beings are not ends in themselves. For them something that is superior to them always exists (God, Demiurges, High power, or Numen).

His ethics is mostly pragmatic and utilitarian, and he described a strong foundation for that in the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* where he proves that ethics discourse does not have a clear reference and is nonsensical. He thinks that the successful application of the rules used in the community does not guarantee ethical truth. Ethical truth depends on the connection between the individual and the world on different levels and this sphere

13 Naess, Arne. 1966. *Communication and Argument. Elements of Applied*. Totowa, New Jersey: Bedminster Press, p. 444.

14 Haugen, Einar. 1972. *The Ecology of Language: Language Science and National Development*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 325.

15 Sarratt, Nicolas M. 2012. *Ecological Forms of Life: Wittgenstein and Ecolinguistics*. Denton: University of North Texas, p. 357.

belongs to freedom of will and personal or social group choice. For him, ethics is never hedonistic, environmental consciousness includes more obligation than rights.

He defines pragmatism as a worldview with the goal to satisfy the interests of individuals: “I don’t call an argument a good argument just because it has the consequences I want (Pragmatism)”.¹⁶ Wittgenstein’s idea of identification of ethics with aesthetics, not touching the relationship between ethics and culture allowed him to look for a basis for ecological thinking from another side. He finds the basis for this in the sense of the world as an organized system, in which using one element, its extraction or its absolutization, becomes the reason for destroying the harmony of the world’s wholeness.

Peter Takov describes why the look on Wittgenstein’s ethics is clearly ecological. “This simply means that everything that is the case should be preserved for us to remain in harmony with other things which cannot be destroyed without affecting us in a certain way. It is at this level that aesthetics plays a key role in Wittgenstein’s ethics.”¹⁷

Environmentally displaced people in the entangled world

Global warming is responsible for most of the drastic climate changes happening

around the world. Cases of entire regions, towns, and villages being evacuated due to flooding are not uncommon and nowadays occur in highly developed countries. As a result, the adverse effects have displaced millions of people. Climate change is expected to have a strong bearing on future migration. Nowadays it is practically impossible to clearly and distinctly identify an environmental migrant or refugee. The reason for this is that migration is not caused by a single variable. The issue of significant concern refers to the fact how an environmental migrant is pictured in the media (usually an environmental migrant is portrayed as a helpless victim yet the one to be feared). For climate refugees, these problems are complex and become more complicated when the move is to a foreign country which is a neighbouring country and which has limited resources. Environmentalists and researchers of conflict studies see common ground in a discussion about ‘environmental refugees’, even if the linkages between the environmental crisis and violent conflict remain to be proven. The next important question is whether discourse on climate change and migration can be implicated in wider questions about race and religion. The post-colonial approach is very important in nowadays situation where animosity towards migrants is so prevalent. Identity arises from interacting with others and coming to the realization that one has much more in common with them.

We deal with definitions “environmental migrants”, “environmentally displaced people” or “climate refugees” as people who must leave their homes and communities

16 Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1974. *Philosophical Grammar*. R. Rhees (ed.), A. Kenny, (trans.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 185.

17 Takov, Peter. and Djia, Voltaire. Wittgenstein’s Ethical Individualism as a Foundation for Environmental Ethics. *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 10, 2020, pp. 427–442. Doi: 10.4236/ojpp.2020.104030.

because of the effects of climate change and global warming. Statistics is critically dependent on this definition and a process that might well be seen as impossible given the multiple and overlapping causes of most migration streams. The influence of the environment and environmental change is largely unrepresented in standard theories of migration, whilst recent debates on climate change and migration focus almost entirely on displacement and perceive migration to be a problem.

Norman Myers described environmental refugee as “a person who no longer gains a secure livelihood in their traditional homelands because of what are primarily environmental factors of unusual scope”. He added that environmental conflicts will become the “principal threat to security and peace” in the years ahead.¹⁸ (Myers 1993).

An initial difficulty in researching the phenomenon of ‘environmental migrants’, concludes in the different approaches of them and their stratification. Most of the researchers distinguished the difference between refugees from natural disasters; degradation of land resources; involuntary resettlement; the aftermath of war; and climatic changes. Many of these cases represent an example of a mixture of all the above reasons. Some politicians and researchers think that for many ‘environmental refugees’ migrations are a part of a customary coping strategy. In this sense, the movement of people is a response to spatial-temporal variations in climatic and

other conditions, rather than a new phenomenon. The subject of environmental migrants is necessary to be examined in the wider context of border and conflict studies. Territory and borders are very important actors in this subject of research.

Deleuze and Guattari made a great impact on the explanation of the difference between such definitions as nomad and migrant.

“The nomad distributes himself in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle. It is therefore false to define the nomad by movement. It is therefore false to define the nomad by movement”. From their view, “the migrant leaves behind a milieu that has become amorphous or hostile, the nomad is one who does not depart, does not want to depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest, where the steppe or the desert advances, and who invents nomadism as a response to this challenge”¹⁹

Perhaps in this sense “environmental refugees” are closer to the nomad than to the migrant.

Gaim Kibreab thinks that the term ‘environmental refugee’ is seductive from the reason that “the answer lies in the agenda of policy-makers, who wish to further restrict

¹⁸ Mayers, Norman. 1993. *Ultimate Security: The Environmental Basis of Political Stability*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

¹⁹ Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p.381.

asylum laws and procedures”²⁰ Today we observe this tendency clearer.

The problem of environmental refugees has been becoming increasingly important, and the perspective that this problem generates, forces us to rethink such phenomena as a lack of drinking water, soil barrenness, constant flooding in places where this has never been seen before, and persistent malnutrition. All these concerns push hundreds of thousands of people to move around the planet and this trend will only intensify due to the deepening of the ecological crisis. For many years, policy researchers have believed that such a tragic situation is peculiar only to poor developing countries. The latter attitude often sounds like a mockery or a rebuke. Just previous summer showed that Europe is also not protected from environmental disasters, likewise the African continent. We could observe unprecedented flooding and heat which are not typical for these regions. All these events conclude and demonstrate that the Western world is not really protected from environmental disasters, though the level of their spread and the size is not comparable yet.

Conclusions

We live in a time that radically intensified the relationship between the natural environment and identity. The ecological crises (pandemic and mass migration are a part of that) start to exist on the same level of danger, scale of distribution, and

²⁰ Kibreab, Gaim. Environmental Causes and Impact of Refugee Movements: A Critique of the Current Debate. *Disasters*. 21/1, 1997, pp. 20–38, p. 21.

unpredictability. The research through the discourse of ‘crisis’ as a starting-and-ending point of research has produced representations about the interconnection between globality and all kind of crises. The ongoing biggest European refugee crisis is an example of the diffraction which includes a concentration of many crises such as current wars, domestic religious and ethnic conflicts, and negative ecological consequences of climate change.

An environmental identity can be similarly important to another collective identity (national, ethnic, regional, or religious), giving us a sense of interconnection and the possibility to be part of a larger whole. The sense of environmental identity gives us a new vision that life and non-life, human and nonhuman, are only different forms through which an agentic force interacts with and changes the other elements, including the human. Growing environmental rationality, solidarity, and responsibility are not just theoretical constructions. They are rooted in social practices; they have revived a sense of being and have mobilized.

The European ecological, migration, and pandemic crises have pushed researchers to rethink the process of re-bordering, finding innovative conceptual frameworks, and creating a new vocabulary. The post-human theory develops a new kind of post-nationalist nomadic European identity that challenges bordered nation-bound identities. The “biopolitical horizon of thinking” suggests a radical break from the past. The image of future development has come together to form a new vision of European ecological and migration crises.

Contemporary research about paradigm change has theorized different degrees of changes and levels of political ideas. Discourse on climate change and migration should be implicated in wider problems about territory, borders, and race. The subject of environmental migrants which has been actualized during the last decade is necessary to examine in a wider social and political context by focusing on the postcolonial approach.

Recent events in Europe such as mass migration, pandemic and closure of national borders, hybrid forms of Belarus migration expansion, and Russia's war against Ukraine have shown that a paradigm shift is primarily the idea of paradigm pluralism or "matrix of alternatives", building up post-development values as a part of ecological identity.

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