

which cannot be reduced to lateral, technical problems, but on the contrary, they help shape the institutional effectivity and collective significance of principles.

To conclude, the book does deliver on its promise on providing an interdisciplinary view on topic of institutions. Still, this is not a book that will give you simple and clear answers if you just want to familiarize yourself with the subject. On the other hand, if you want to further your knowledge, or you just need a fresh perspective in your research on the topic of institutions, the articles by eminent scholars compiled in *Institutions in Action* are a great place to start.

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*United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2020. The Next Frontier Human Development and the Anthropocene, director and lead author Pedro Conceição, New York: United Nations, 412 pp.*

The series *Human Development Index* published under the auspices of the UN has been for three decades of its existence an invaluable source both of data and of analyses of global development, its achievements and problems. Developed by the economist Mahbub Ul Haq, it has been inspired and supported by the work of the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen; indeed, the present volume begins by Sen's tribute to Ul Haq, who passed away in 1998. The series offers invaluable materials to theoreticians interested in global development, and, relevantly for our reader, to philosophers working on global issues and on perspectives of cosmopolitan approach to ethics and politics. The present volume is particularly interesting in this respect, since it deals with the most burning global issues. The issues, collected here under the general title of "Anthropocene" encompass ecological themes, prominently climate change and pollution, and health issues, made recently prominent by the new pandemic. Thus, the book sketches the new playground on which the cosmopolitan debate is taking place, quite different from the traditional one that has inspired pioneering contemporary authors, like Peter Singer, some decades ago.

The Part One entitled "Renewing human development for the Anthropocene" develops this new diagnosis, and the last, Part Three offers the quantitative data. However, the Part One concludes by pointing to the direction in which the problems diagnosed could be solved, and the road to solution is the topic of the central part, Part Two, entitled "Acting for change". "We are entering the Anthropocene: the age of humans" the section begins. And goes on by claiming: "For the first time in our history the most serious and immediate, even existential, risks are human made and unfolding at planetary scale." (20–21; the numbers in brackets stand for pages). The "Anthropocene" the word was coined and the concept introduced by Eugene Stormer in the 1980s and popularized by Paul Crutzen in the 2000s (see Frank Biermann 2018 *Global Governance in the "Anthropocene,"* in Chris Brown and Robyn Eckersley (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Political Theory*, Oxford University Press, 467–479).

Let me point to some factual characterization offered in the book. It lists climate change and then mentions the phenomena of biogeochemical cycles disrupted (especially with nitrogen and phosphorus), ocean acidification, land-use change and biodiversity loss (49). This goes together with abundance of new materials of pure anthropogenic origin (aluminium, concrete, plastics), presence of radionuclides linked to atmospheric nuclear weapons testing, altering the diversity, distribution, abundance and interactions of life on Earth. Then come increasing species extinction rates, habitat losses, overharvesting, and growth of invasive species (49).

The next phenomenon characterizing the new playground, are the pandemics. "A new normal is coming. Covid-19 is the tip of the spear", we are warned (4). All these factors are then taken to construct new indices of human development. The basic idea is to identify the amount of "planetary pressure", the ecological pressure that a given country place on the planet Earth (235). The two main components of the pressure are the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the "material footprint per capita". For the first component, emissions are attributed to the country in which they physically occur. The second one concerns biomass, fossil fuels, metal ores and nonmetal ores. It is calculated as raw material equivalent of imports plus domestic extraction minus raw material equivalents of exports. Material footprint per capita describes the average material use for final demand.

This yields a new top lists. The present index has Ireland at the first place, then Switzerland, followed by Great Britain. Hong-Kong's position is unclear, but then we have for certain Denmark, Germany, and then Sweden on the safe sixth place. Croatia, the home country of this journal, has made a huge progress, 19 places upwards and is now No. 43 on the list. On the other hand, Australia falls 72 places in the ranking, while the United States and Canada fall 45 and 40 places respectively, due to their disproportionate impact on natural resources. China drops 16 places from its current ranking of 85.

So much about the Index. But let me note that the descriptive part does not stay with the diagnosis of the problems; Part One, characteristically, concludes, with possible future directions. Let me quote a typical passage:

Social cohesion and mitigating inequalities are enablers—not just prerequisites—for human development

It was frequently emphasized that a reconceptualization of human development that addresses cohesion across and within society—relations between countries or across generations and relations with nonhuman natures and ecologies—is threatened by a grossly unequal world and by the narratives, technologies and processes that perpetuate inequalities. Social cohesion requires vertical and horizontal trust within societies while respecting diversity of beliefs and worldviews. Enhancing social cohesion, mitigating inequalities and restoring the value of social and socionatural relations require the inclusion of multiple voices and perspectives. (113)

The main part of the book is dedicated to such possible solutions of the problems listed in Part One. Its first chapter, the fourth in the book as the whole, bears characteristic title “Empowering people, unleashing transformation”. The next is entitled “Shaping incentives to navigate the future”, and the last in Part Two “Building nature-based human development”. The reference to the beginning of HDI points to the continuity of motivation: The transformational changes required to ease planetary pressures and redress social imbalances call for another reorientation of goals and choices like the one that the HDI encouraged 30 years ago (227).

The volume connects ecological issues with political matters in a clear and quite radical way: How can we use our power to expand human freedoms while easing planetary pressures? The Report argues that we can do so by enhancing equity, fostering innovation and instilling a sense of stewardship of the planet. It stresses the need to empower the disadvantaged groups: “Inequalities in empowerment today are at the root of environmental problems, many threatening the wellbeing of future generations. Important for a better tomorrow is to empower disadvantaged groups and actors today” (77).

They encompass disadvantaged groups in general and developing countries in general. Even more demanding, one should empower “everyone through knowledge, change in norms and stewardship of nature”, as well as various majorities in various communities, as well as local communities themselves. The list also refers to indigenous peoples. Finally, the political changes have to be global: “Changing incentives to preserve biodiversity is difficult given the complexity of the fabric of life. A key challenge is that biodiversity remains undervalued in current markets, despite the increasing appreciation of its contributions to people” (172).

The chapter, most importantly, notes the following: “For climate change and biodiversity loss, individual actions and even national actions will not do enough to ease planetary pressures” (173).

Philosophers working on the prospects of cosmopolitanism can appeal to these suggestions to argue that the present-day statist arrangements, even supported by UN and similar institutions’ optimism, are dramatically insufficient to deal with problems on the new playground. We shall return to this point in a moment.

So much about the main claims and main proposals of the book, with apologies for all the topics there was no space-time to mention here. Let me now pass to the discussion. First, a linguistic-conceptual question. The book features “Anthropocene” already in its title. But is the term right? Is it really the work of the human species, of all of us? Or is it rather the work of the richest, a small minority of humanity?

Interestingly, the positive answer is suggested at least by one author in the book, Gaia Vince, in her chapter. Vance is the author of a very thorough recent (2014) book on the topic *Adventures in the Anthropocene: A Journey to the Heart of the Planet We Made* (Chatto and Windus). She notes that “the richest people in the world are doing the most to damage the environment that we all rely on for clean air, water, food and other resources” (2014: 121). And she adds that “they experience few consequences and the least danger from this environmental damage. The richest 10 percent of the

world's population are responsible for half of carbon emissions, while the poorest 50 percent are responsible for just 10 percent." Further, she tells the reader the wealthiest people contribute less socially, paying in the least to the collective pot. Here is her illustration: "In relatively equal Scandinavia the richest 0.01 percent illegally evade 25 percent of the taxes they owe, far higher than the average evasion rate of 2.8 percent.<sup>17</sup> In the United States the richest 400 families pay a lower effective tax rate than any other income group. An estimated \$9–\$36 trillion is stored in tax havens around the world" (121). She notes optimistically that how poor people get rich will strongly shape the Anthropocene.

Given that there is quite a lot of agreement in the literature that the relevant phenomena are primarily the work of the rich minority, I disagree that "Anthropocene" is the right term. The work is not done by us, the non-wealthy majority of the mankind, and the has been misnamed. I propose to call it rather "Plutocene", like in "plutocracy" from Greek: "ploutos", wealth.

Let us pass to more principled topics. *The Report* is published under the auspices of the UN, and is proposing measures that would fit an advance but still statist global system. However, the reader might often feel that the tasks specified, as part of what it would be "Acting for change", as the title of the Part Two of the volume suggests, central for the global therapy of humanity are very hard to be fulfilled within the firmly statist system.

Start from the claim we quoted above that "Human development is possible only within planetary boundaries". The economic development, authors claim, should be "reinterweaved" with environment (113). And the enablers for this are "social cohesion and mitigating inequalities" (113). The take-home message we quoted tells that enhancing social cohesion, mitigating inequalities and restoring the value of social and socionatural relations is urgently needed, and that this task requires the inclusion of multiple voices and perspectives. This sounds like an appeal to very tightly knit world, and it seems quite impossible to achieve the required social cohesion, enriched with "vertical and horizontal trust" within a firmly statist global society: such social cohesion seems to require political and trust-supported connections at various levels, bringing together "multiple voices and perspectives", which normally disappear in a purely statist perspective.

Similarly with the demands of equity, we quoted above. For the authors "procedural equity relates to how decisions are being made in reference to institutions, governance and participation (64). And they claim that "...inequalities in empowerment today are at the root of environmental problems, many threatening the wellbeing of future generations. Important for a better tomorrow is to empower disadvantaged groups and actors today (77).

The same requirements re-appear when we look at slightly less general considerations. Take as the example the list of "actors to be empowered", we just quoted. Who could effectively empower developing countries? With the statist system, it will be the biggest and strongest states that will decide; who could force Trump's US or Putin's Russia to empower developing countries? Who would accept to empower indigenous peoples and their local communities all over the world? The present day Bolsonaro's Brazil is a good example of the impotence of the international community in the face of a determined cynical despot, supported by the white urban majority within

his country. Who can empower “everyone through knowledge, change in norms and stewardship of nature”?

This kinds of tasks demand a differently organized global community, say a supra-nationally controlled loose federation or confederation, where the sovereignty of states is dispersed regionally and globally. And only a strong democratic control could guarantee the literal empowerment of everyone “through knowledge, change in norms and stewardship of nature”, as the requirement goes.

Similarly with biodiversity. Remember our quote from Chapter Five: “For climate change and biodiversity loss, individual actions and even national actions will not do enough to ease planetary pressures (173). And let me add that, quoting Elinor Ostrom, the authors note that what is needed is a polycentric approach to the problem of climate change and talk of “enhancing international and multi-actor collective action.” Indeed, Ostrom herself, in the 2009 paper referred to, speaks of “multiple scales and decisionmaking units” (“A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change, The World Bank Development Economics,” Office of the Senior Vice President and Chief Economist, October 2009, 39).

To conclude, I would suggest that the best way to read all these suggestions is in the direction of a less centralized, more multi-leveled spheres of influence. However, this goes again beyond the statist global model. We need a polycentric global model, and this seems to point beyond the UN-style statist system. It is encouraging that the official publisher, the UN, is publishing and promoting a book that pretty much suggests both its principled impotence and the existence and the appeals of a much more cosmopolitan solution to the problems from the present-day playground.

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