

# What is 'Cosmic' About Urban Climate Politics? On Hesitantly Re-staging the Latour-Beck Debate for STS

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## Abstract

While Bruno Latour's criticism of Ulrich Beck's cosmopolitanism helped set the stage 15 years ago for the highly productive research approach of cosmopolitics, including as concerns urban ecological politics, a nagging doubt remains that more blood was spilled than necessary in the exchange. In this short discussion piece, I re-stage the Latour-Beck debate as part of on-going inquiries into the more-than-human politics of climate adaptation in Copenhagen, exploring what exact senses of 'cosmos' might be helpful in making sense of this increasingly common-place situation. At issue, I suggest, is the question of what it means to say that 'natures', in the plural, are put at stake in such settings. Far from any synthesis, in turn, I conclude that scholars in STS and beyond might do well to extend a shared hesitation towards both sides of the debate - cosmopolitics, cosmopolitanism - and thus take the opportunity to share unresolved conceptual tensions in the service of posing better problems.

**Keywords:** Latour-Beck debate, cosmopolitics, cosmopolitanism, natures

## Introduction: how to re-stage the Latour-Beck debate?

Why re-open what seems like a case closed? Back in 2004, some 15 years ago, science and technology studies (STS) eminence Bruno Latour (2004) exerted a bit of actor-network theory (ANT) force, in what he staged as a friendly criticism of sociologist Ulrich Beck's (2004) cosmopolitan proposal. While Latour lauded Beck for raising the issue of how diverse groups might find common ground in the face of ecological and other risky planetary disruptions, Beck's cosmopolitanism, Latour argued, was insufficient to the task. Instead of the humanist-multicultural problem of telling the culturally particular from the universally valid, which Latour saw Beck inheriting from previous cosmopolitan thinking all the way from Kant to

the United Nations, we would need, Latour suggested, to pose a question of ontological multiplicity. Since we do *not* inhabit the same world, the same nature or cosmos, Latour asks, how might such a 'common world' eventually be build? How to take the nature of 'cosmos' as itself a question of politics?

In posing these questions, Latour set the stage for a research approach about to gain much influence in STS and beyond: the approach of cosmopolitics, a term itself traceable to Isabelle Stengers (see, e.g., 2015). In previous work, along with colleagues, I myself have benefitted greatly from this approach, not least in attempts to renew the sense of urban politics (Blok and Farías, 2016).

Yet, a nagging doubt remains for me that Latour's critical operation on Beck perhaps spilled more blood than necessary, particularly when it comes to grappling with present-day realities of ubiquitous ecological disruption. In any specific situation of urban ecological politics, I wonder, how readily can we tell just how many 'natures', in the plural, are put at stake in collective disputes, what they are and where they come from? How do we know, indeed, when practices and settlements pertain or not to one, common cosmos?

In this short discussion piece, I briefly sketch the key conceptual stakes of the Latour-Beck exchange and relate this to my empirical interest in urban ecological politics in times of worldwide climate crises, a domain I consider important for STS inquiry (Blok, 2013). I do so with a view to raising a few questions about the precise sense in which this politics is indeed 'cosmic', yet perhaps in ways not fully captured by neither Latour nor Beck.<sup>1</sup> My conceptual re-staging is fed by a limited, even parochial piece of quasi-ethnographic work into recent more-than-human politics in my native city of Copenhagen, focused on civic attempts to accommodate a climate-perturbed future of more and heavier rains. This increasingly commonplace state of urban affairs (see Blok, 2019), I believe, helpfully dramatizes the conceptual tensions at stake in the Latour-Beck debate and pose mutually unresolved issues.

Searching for new inspiration 'in the gaps' of the Latour-Beck debate, in the sense of how their abstract theorizing leaves many mutual blind spots behind, I argue that we may want to re-cast their approaches as disjunctive resources that might be put to more productive joint uses in STS and beyond. After all, as Latour (2004: 450) was frank to admit, his argument with Beck pertained to "a puzzle that has defeated, so far, everyone everywhere". My intuition is that this is still true, pace Latour's own subsequent efforts (e.g. Latour, 2017). For this reason, also, my intervention should in no way be read in the register of synthesis, as if somehow purporting to 'overcome' whatever deep-seated differences *and* to finally 'uncover' whatever deep-seated affinities that prompted Latour and Beck to engage in respectful dialogue. It is better to say that I want to mobilize both into a form of what Martin Savransky (2012)

calls shared hesitation – whereby the exchange of puzzles might help us develop better problems.

### The 'cosmic' in urban climate politics: a conceptual sketch

It is important to note that Latour's (2004) original criticism of Beck pertained centrally to the question of science, and therefore to questions that go to the core of STS as a research field. While Beck is right to search for a social science with global scope, Latour suggests, he inadvertently short-circuits the task ahead by prematurely assuming an ontologically unified cosmos. Beck does so, in turn, because he disregards those heterogeneous material-semiotic realities showcased in part by STS work on the techno-sciences. More specifically, Latour continues, Beck fails to realize that cosmopolitanism rests on an unquestioned faith in science "to know *the one* cosmos" whose "solid certainty could then prop up all efforts to build the world metropolis of which we are all too happy to be citizens" (Latour, 2004: 453).

By contrast to this *mono-naturalism* – a term borrowed from anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro – Latour advances his own version of de Castro's *multi-naturalism*, taken as largely co-extensive with constructivist ANT tenets. Put briefly, Latour (2004: 458ff) casts multi-naturalism as premised on protecting politics from a premature closure of 'cosmos', as the question of what human-nonhuman attachments and mediations constitute multiple and clashing *worlds*. Such ontological multiplicity, Latour suggests, is always and everywhere a political challenge. Hence, it is equally at work in the spectacular encounter of Amerindian animists with European colonialists in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as in the more humdrum ways that scientific fabrications shape public-political controversy. It thus also frames how one would think cosmo-politically about the Copenhagen climate case, to which I return later on.

Overall, Latour's has always seemed to me a well-taken and convincing criticism of Beck on this point of ontological multiplicity. It is debatable, however, just *how* far removed this actually is from what Beck (2004) presents as his *realistic* (and largely methodological) cosmopolitanism. Responding to Latour, Beck (2005: 3) draws a historical contrast: whereas first modernity indeed

rested on the regulative principles of Western rationalism and universalism, such certainties are now gone in the second, risk-prone modernity heralded by ecological disruptions since the 1960s. Instead, he continues, we today “experience the unity of the world but only in its threatened dismemberment”, generating new conflicts over the loyalty and identity of persons, nation-states, “and even natures” (Beck, 2005: 5). To Beck, in other words, the core notion of global risk signals a new and ambivalent worldwide territory, torn in-between the breakdown of old affiliations and the prospect of a new, cross-boundary unity.

It is hard to know precisely what Beck intends by the plural form of ‘natures’. Presumably, he means to signal that diverse (techno-)cultures around the globe understand ‘nature’ in different ways, shaping also diverse responses to new global risks such as climate change. In this multicultural sense, the plural form (‘natures’) stands in some tension, arguably, with Beck’s general argument on the second modernity of risk society, which relies on the notion that global risks precipitate a new and *shared* condition of enforced transboundary enmeshments of collective fates across the planet (Beck, 2011). This is what he dubs the side-effect principle, according to which, for instance, ours is a world in which carbon emitted as part of high-consumption lifestyles in one region of the world, say Copenhagen, may return in the shape of intensified storms or floods in another, say Surat in India (Beck, 2010).

Side effects, in turn, constitute the core of what Beck (2011) dubs ‘cosmopolitization’, the realistic force of socio-natural change that is gradually precipitating a new sense of unity in world risk society. Simply put, the risks of climate change brings with them not only new types of catastrophes and new forms of collective vulnerability, but also a newfound sense of planetary interconnectedness and shared, worldwide fate. This is what Beck means, in other words, when speaking, as in the quote above (Beck, 2005), about the new twinning of (present) dismemberment and (future) risk-based unity characteristic of the ambivalences of our present, ecologically distressed age. Strictly speaking, then, and contra Latour’s (2004) depiction, Beck’s is less a theory of (philosophical) cosmopolitanism and more a (soci-

ological) theory of the gradual cosmopolitization of the world in the face of global ecological risks.

However, Latour’s question of ontological multiplicity is still relevant to pose vis-à-vis Beck’s theorizing of global risks. Amidst global risks like climate change, we should ask, how much of ‘nature(s)’ is in Beck’s account shared at the level of ontological assumptions across diverse groups locally and globally, and how much is multiple and divergent? Even as climate change is surely backed up and carried by global science (including in famously controversial ways) (see Mahony and Hulme, 2018), how much does this scientific inscription-work (over-)determine more culturally rooted senses and practices of locally relevant ‘nature(s)’? Conversely, to the extent that understandings of ‘nature(s)’ follow cultural lines, how are we to understand such differentiations in world risk society? In other words, what are the lines of cultural alliance and tension around ‘nature(s)’, locally, nationally, and globally?

Posing these questions may make it sound as if we do better by simply re-affirming the shift that Latour advocates, from Beck’s cosmopolitan proposal to his own cosmopolitics, attuned as this latter approach is to these very questions. Yet, as I hope to unfold in what follows, conceptual tensions of a not-too-different kind *also* seems to me to haunt Latourian multi-naturalism, once we engage with the domain of urban climate politics. This becomes visible when reading across Latour’s 20 years of pronouncing on the politics of nature, in ways that span from the clearly situated (ecology as a matter of *this* river, *that* landscape) to the more ambiguously planetary (ecology as a matter of facing Gaia as a new earthly condition), without any obvious way of bridging the two (see Latour, 1998; 2017).

Such a span raises questions, in a nutshell, pertaining to certain gaps that can be detected – in ethnographic work as well as in discussions on cosmopolitics in the socio-cultural sciences writ large – in-between notions of ‘cosmos’ and ‘globe’ or, as we might prefer, ‘the planetary’. By this latter term, I mean simply to invoke the STS-informed sense in which, as Jennifer Gabrys argues (2018), climate change “is an event that comes into view through planetary computation”, made knowable by global infrastructures. Yet, precisely for this

reason, climate change *also* raises questions about situated ways of knowing and living in common, including how to deal with multiple and sometimes incommensurate ‘cosmic’ attachments of human-nonhuman constituencies. Reconciling such tensions in turn poses questions, I believe, in equal measure to Latourian cosmopolitics and Beckian cosmopolitization.

In important ways, then, and despite popular meta-narratives of an Anthropocene era (see Blok and Jensen, 2019), just *how* the planetary of climate change comes to matter in any *specific* situation of ecological dispute, urban or otherwise, cannot be conceptually foreclosed through some notion of the common cosmos. To summarize on this note, the conceptual sketch set forth here is meant to suggest that, while both important and inspiring, neither Latour nor Beck quite resolve the issues they themselves pose (partly via their dialogue). Rather, Latourian cosmopolitics and Beckian cosmopolitization may usefully be deployed side-by-side in ways that acknowledge their mutually unresolved tensions. I turn next to rendering this point vivid and conceptually fruitful through an empirical illustration.

### **Urban cosmo-politics in action: setting the empirical scene**

On July 2, 2011, a major cloudburst hit Copenhagen, leaving many streets and basements flooded. In the months and years to follow, climate adaptation would climb up the ladder of priorities for policy-makers, expert professionals and citizens alike, setting in train what at first glance appears a telltale version of Latourian-style urban cosmopolitics. Provisionally, following Latour’s (2007) own elaboration, I take this to imply an agonizing sorting out of conflicting cosmograms of human and nonhuman co-habitation, and thus a search to reassemble urban common worlds of co-existence (see also Blok and Farías, 2016). Importantly, the common cosmos is cast here not as what precedes, but as what may follow from, a joint but antagonistic inquiry into an uncertain, heterogeneous, material-semiotic urban situation.

With Copenhagen sewage capacities exposed as grossly inadequate for the future, the local search was on for ways of handling excess

rainwater on the urban surface, itself a translated version of a trans-locally mobile idea (see Blok, 2019). In the process, planners, engineers, and landscape architects would set about digging new rain-beds, park reservoirs, and much else besides. Meanwhile, civic groups joined in as well, adding their level of technical activism. Most importantly, a coalition of organized and grassroots civic voices emerged and gained momentum for their vision to excavate or, in the vernacular, to ‘daylight’ a stream of water, known as *Ladegaard*, nowadays running invisibly as a subterranean canal underneath a traffic-heavy part of inner-city Copenhagen. Once excavated, the stream would once again meander on the surface of public space, as it had in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Together with colleagues and students in anthropology and sociology practicing what we call teaching-based research, we sat out back in 2014 to trace these civic riparian aspirations and to similarly uncover or ‘excavate’ what kind of techno-politics of urbanized ecologies it engendered (Blok et al., 2017). In loosely multi-sited form, we would interview civic leaders, read through technical reports, join groups on social media, conduct walking ethnographies in the area and visit local history archives – all meant, in a clearly hyperbolic gesture, to attain a view of the city from the streams’ point of view.

Now, to cut a long story short, these practices of ours lend themselves easily to the Stengerian-Latourian notion of cosmopolitics. Most obviously, we were latching our inquiry onto a proliferating set of civic explorations aiming – so it looked to us – to re-assemble, tooth and nail, all the ingredients making up this urban landscape, shaping a variety of socio-cultural, technical, and ecological relations into a new situated urban cosmogram (Latour, 2007), an emplaced instantiation of an encompassing world. Here, not only would the impinging reality of climate-induced rains meet with an accommodative gesture. Car-based infrastructures, moreover, would be dug down underground, lessening air pollution; and the channelized stream would burst forth in a new green-blue urban landscape of recreation, bicycles, plants, insects, fish and other elements of a biodiverse, livable, more-than-human city.

If, as scholars like Adrian Franklin (2017) suggest, we associate the Latourian cosmopolitical proposal foremost with the enactment of such a multispecies city, where critter of all sorts become important companions to human urbanites, then all we had to do, it seemed, was to register carefully these civic-public explorations. In their critical questionings, the stream's proponents would articulate a cosmogram in which plural and more 'agentic' natures would now claim stronger cultural-political legitimacy, and stronger material presence, in the city. However, as we would soon realize, simply tacking along with these groups, and the way they sought to reconnect the ecologized city of the future to a pre-modernist past of water flowing openly through the urban fabric, was also to miss too much of how the planetary moment of climate change came to bear on the situation and influence its trajectory.

Hence, as Latour (2007) would be the first to predict, the issue of excavating the stream did not stay solely in its civic modality for long. Rather, once the civic coalition gained momentum in Copenhagen, a whole apparatus of formal knowledge and power kicked in, making visible the workings of the city's environmental technocracy. Engineering consultants, in particular, would come to play a key role. In the official 2016 pre-project report commissioned by the municipality, engineering experts took over the cost-benefit tool standardly deployed by the Danish Ministry of Finance. Excluded here, they duly noted, were many of the projects' assumed benefits, including those of biodiversity. Nevertheless, what stuck in the public imagination was the number itself: a so-called tunnel solution would cost in the range of 1 to 1.5 billion Euro, making it 'macro-economically unviable', as the report had it.

In subsequent years, *Ladegaard* became known as the popular stream that Copenhagen will never get – until recently, when a scaled-down version of civic ambitions to excavate the stream got re-entangled into the politics of a much-hated remnant of Copenhagen's high-modernist 1960's car infrastructure set for likely demolition. In this sense, the stream continued to offer itself up as a useful way of tracking the shifts and turns of urban techno-politics, and the grounds potentially generated for civic groups to democratize

otherwise technically framed issues of more-than-human co-existence. Foremost amongst these issues, for present purposes, is the question of what happened to the planetary of climate change, or what Beck would call its global risks, in the situation: how was this latter entity mediated and translated, inside which alliances, and with what consequences for how events unfolded?

In the language of Latourian cosmopolitics, helped along by Noortje Marres (2007), the events just outlined might be summarized by saying that the collective experience of climate-induced rains had sparked a new critical urban public into being, oriented to a comprehensive search for a different, more-than-human city. This notion of publics stems from pragmatist John Dewey, for whom civic-public collectives arise from the shared experience of the indirect and troublesome consequences of political-economic decisions – and by way of their publicly articulating shared matters of concern. Interestingly, while less attentive than Latour to its more-than-human aspects, Beck (2011) would similarly invoke Dewey to articulate how the side-effects of industrial modernity's economic prerogatives here return, in the shape of global climate risks, to animate a critical public counter-response.

It is less clear, however, how either of these approaches – cosmopolitics, cosmopolitization – invites us to understand the key question of a possibly 'common' ground in-between the civic collective and the municipal bureaucracy in the case, and how climate change is or is not part of that commonality? For cosmopolitics, the question seems one of the extent to which a new situated urban cosmogram, one that accommodates climatic concerns alongside other human-nonhuman attachments, achieves gradual stabilization through a due process of inclusive inquiry (Latour, 2007). For cosmopolitization, in turn, the question is rather the extent to which global climate change indeed heralds a new urban-political situation whereby actors are forced to attend to, and seek to learn from, the risky trans-local connections and side-effects at work in this phenomenon (Beck, 2011). As I will argue next, neither expectation quite bears out in practice; yet, their intersection still proves analytically interesting.

## How many 'cosmoses' did the *Ladegaard* events activate (and how do we know)?

In Latourian multi-naturalism, as noted, the common ground of cosmopolitics is conceptualized as the always-provisional end-point of a politics of multiple urban worlds, understood in ontological terms of heterogeneous human-nonhuman assemblages. Here, unlike helpful post-colonial critiques already registered in these debates from scholars like Marisol de la Cadena (2010), my case lends itself to an interest in what Candea and Alcayna-Stevens (2012) call 'internal others'. That is, to differences and divergences *within* a Euro-American setting presumably marked by an official 'mono-naturalism' which, as work in ANT and STS has documented, nonetheless tends to enact natures of various kinds in multiple, divergent, and non-coherent forms (Law and Lien, 2018). This line of work, as noted, shaped our initial, cosmopolitics-inspired approach also to the *Ladegaard* case.

The cosmopolitical proposal is often mobilized in the first place towards *undoing* modernist exclusions, such as along nature-city, global-local and science-public boundaries (e.g. Franklin, 2017). However, as one instantiation of internal others, and as Beck would surely insist, various influential environmentalisms have arguably *already* been chewing away on some of those modernist exclusions at least since the 1960s. The very articulation by civic activists of the *Ladegaard* stream as a public matter of concern bears witness to such internal divergence, replete as this cosmogram is with non-polluted airs, plants and insects, extreme rains and changing climates. Such entities, we should note, hail from different moments of collective history and potentially constitute incommensurate attachments to diverse, more-or-less extensive ecologies. Their commensuration, in turn, should not be taken for granted, but rather analyzed *as* a mode of cosmopolitics.

Based on such a realization in my group, as hinted, we started asking ourselves just what was shared and what was divergent – what was the space of (in-)commensurabilities – between the two core 'cosmoses' or cosmogrammatic projects agonizing in our case, those of the civic collective and the municipal bureaucracy, respectively? In one sense, the divergence is initially radical,

as it pertains to the difference between (future) existence and (current) non-existence of the excavated stream. In another sense, however, and even before the prospect of a compromise emerged, the substantive overlaps between the two world-building coalitions were striking. Notably, both projects recognized the strivings for a more-than-human city of biodiverse livability, and both took climate-induced heavy rains as a new and – importantly – non-negotiable entity with which to re-compose the city. They did so, even as they diverged on the question of which exact knowledges and techniques to rely on in going forward.

Put starkly, it thus turns out on closer inspection to be hard to tell whether this is a situation of mono-naturalism, the telltale sign of modernist ontology, or whether and if so *how* the situation had morphed into one of multi-naturalism, a clash of divergent nature-cultures. In particular, it proved harder than anticipated – by *us*, at least – to gauge what difference the new presence of a certain planetary entity, expressed in the climate-induced rains, made to this question in the situation at hand. Did this entity, we wondered, in fact move us closer to a situation of inclusive multi-natural inquiry, as Latour might envisage, in light of new radical indeterminacies in science and (urban) politics? Or, did it herald a situation of twinned experiential world unity and dismemberment, as Beck might predict, leading actors to seriously question their new trans-local risk interconnections?

This is where I want, hyperbolically perhaps, to link our own sense of ethnographic perplexity in the face of these questions to certain gaps, or unresolved puzzles and tensions, equally but differently at work in both Latourian cosmopolitics and Beckian cosmopolitization. Put abstractly, and borrowing again from Savransky (2012: 264f), this is the puzzle of how to bring worlds, urban and otherwise, "together in a way that attempts to take seriously the multiple modes of existence of the entities that compose them". In this context, the multiplicity I have in mind pertains, in only seemingly paradoxical terms, exactly to 'the planetary' or, more specifically, to the risky assemblages of climate crisis, itself a vast and multi-faceted set of spatio-temporalities

(Blok, 2010). Put concisely, it seems to me that this climatic entity *itself* potentially spans the cosmic and the planetary in multiple and non-coherent ways; ways not quite captured in either Latourian or Beckian terms. Moreover, I suggest that the *Ladegaard* situation made this apparent 'in the negative', as it were, by way of its exclusions and silences.

On this note, it is indeed striking to observe the highly particular, circumscribed, and exclusionary ways in which spatio-temporally far-flung and expansive climatic changes were allowed or rather *not* allowed, by civic and municipal agencies alike, to impinge on the search for common ground around the Copenhagen stream. Put bluntly, at no point was there any sense that this ground might, as it were, be shaken up in more thorough ways underneath the largely shared and hegemonic sense of urban nature-cultural ordering played out (see Law and Lien, 2018). Notably, for instance, seeing how cars would in no ways or numbers be expelled from the city when excavating the stream, but simply channeled through it differently and underground, civic actors failed to articulate any alliance or alignment between the stream proponents and proponents of low-carbon traffic transitions. The climates of these two civic groups, we might say, was equidistantly apart from that of the municipality; not to mention from those excluded and far-away others involuntarily suffering the climatic consequences (Beck, 2010).

Conversely, in a telling set of events to which Beck (2011) might well give the label of cosmopolitan risk community, civic activists and municipal planners alike would invoke their own creative sense of a newly globalized commonality when jointly pointing to Singaporean experiences of river daylighting as relevant to the Copenhagen situation. Lost from this set of far-flung translations, however, was any sense of those situated cosmic attachments to multiple ecologies presumably at work, quite likely in conflictual ways, in this Singaporean site. Rather than an inclusive moment of learning across divergence, then, such transboundary 'cosmopolitan' gestures were themselves reduced to their merely technical import, far from the sense of dismemberment to which Beck aligns climatic risks. Neither did such gestures lead to any inclusive, Latourian-style inquiry into divergent nature-cultures.

This is a situation, in short, in which the localized translation of the travelling planetary entity of climate change, as known not least through techno-scientific infrastructures, exerts effects that confound somewhat the expectations of Beck and Latour alike. Along Beckian lines, whatever planetary interconnectedness gets staged along with the risky climate-induced rains in Copenhagen hardly amounts to any encompassing, trans-local renegotiation of the city's nature(s). Conversely and relatedly, along Latourian lines, the open-ended search for new human-nonhuman attachments looks strangely foreclosed, given what we might think of as the local black boxing of an otherwise potentially unruly, globalized assemblage of climatic connections (Blok, 2010). In short, the Deweyan public, to which both protagonists subscribe, proved to be configured in rather more locally circumscribed, and rather more scientifically and politically conventionalized ways, than what cosmopolitics and cosmopolitization suggest.

While this may at first seem more of a challenge to Beck's cosmopolitan proposal than to Latour's more staunchly situated cosmopolitics, it is important to realize, as hinted, that Latour's own recent pronouncements on climate politics paints a different picture. Here, for all Latour's (2017) assertions that the figure of Gaia is not a 'God of totality', there is no escaping the observation, I think, that Latour's invocation of Gaia-graphy posits a new planetary condition, a new climatic regime, as *itself* the refigured common ground faced by collectives all around. However, to paraphrase Deborah Danowski and de Castro (2016), evident elisions between situated cosmic attachments and planetary exigencies raise the suspicion that planetarity *itself* may be assembled without due process (see Blok and Jensen, 2019). As Mike Hulme (2017: 29) puts it, socio-cultural analysis then must contend with how "people may increasingly encounter multiple climates"; or, as in my case, how such multiplicity is tamed.

While commonplace, the implications of such observations are far-reaching enough, I believe: just as Latour (with Hermant 1998) once suggested to think of urban life in Paris as partly a matter of the kinds of sociologies flowing through the city's streets, the same is surely true nowadays for the kinds of planetary geo-histories flowing

– and *not* flowing – through a city like Copenhagen. On our own part, as stream inquirers, we decided in fact to act as Gaia-graphers ourselves (Blok et al., 2017). Invoking the Latourian figure of an ‘earthling’, alongside a bit of science fiction, we attempted to intervene by way of public debate on the part of a differently figured cosmos, one in which *more* aspects of this entangled reality were allowed to bear on the ground. Our small piece of public imagination, however, mostly signal the gaps at work: the fact, that is, that earthlings remain here the people that are missing, as Danowski and de Castro (2016) would say, in the shape of those diverse human-nonhuman constituencies summoned by the exigencies of climate crisis yet rendered invisible on the ground in Copenhagen.<sup>2</sup>

### STS sharing hesitations between Latour and Beck?

Be that as it may, I want to end here by briefly suggesting that gaps and elisions of this Latourian kind, pertaining to how we should think about our ecologically endangered (urban) worlds as both *one* and *many* at the same time, may be interestingly diffracted – although in no ways ‘solved’ – via a further detour through Beck’s (2011) risk-induced cosmopolitization. More strongly than (‘late’) Latour, ironically, Beck was always attentive, I would argue (Blok, 2019), to how global risks like climate change would depend for their effects on a whole series of trans-local translations, semiotic *and* material, by which they would exert something like Doreen Massey’s (1991) global sense of place. This would be a planetarity both local *and* extra-local, as it were, build up from the densification of ANT-style mediations across divergent registers of scientific, artistic, activist, and other ways of knowing together in public.

It is interesting here, I think, to return to Dewey’s notion of publics as an important point of convergence. To Beck (2011), in particular, publics troubled by the risky side-effects of industrial modernity’s routine operations nowadays question core principles of legitimacy, democracy and survivability, as ways of striving for a different common world. As for Latour, then, the question of the common ground is key. Except that, if we take seriously Beck’s (2004) twinning of exper-

iential world unity and dismemberment, the contemporary urban ‘ground’ would be one of an imaginative trans-local geography of shared-but-troubling risk affinities seriously rewriting what it means to pertain to a demanding collectivity. Arguably, this would be a progressively ‘cosmopolitan’ public whose precise contours escape also Beck’s conceptual grid, raising instead a horizon of comparative trans-local inquiry yet to be filled in (see Blok, 2019).

This is where Beck’s (2011) strictly *methodological* cosmopolitanism is in fact interesting also for STS, I believe, as a matter of searching for new tactics for studying trans-local and risky interconnections. While Latour (2004) is thus ultimately off mark, I think, in aligning Beck (2004) too squarely to a ‘major’ Kantian tradition of philosophical cosmopolitanism – although the tensions in Beck’s oeuvre are real enough for sure – he is still on mark, I think, in critiquing Beck’s too-early ontological unification of the one common world of global risks. Indeed, it is significant in this respect to note that Beck (2005: 2) concedes as much in his response to Latour: yes, Beck replies, the search for commonality in our disintegrating, high-risk world is ever ongoing, and as socio-cultural analysts, we must attend closely to how it unfolds. Moreover, he continues (Beck, 2005: 3), “we are very far from knowing how to conceptualize that situation”, including when it comes to theories of nature-society relations (Beck, 2005: 7).

Beck’s hesitation, I believe, is well taken and continues to be relevant. This is true, even as it also overlooks somewhat the specific ways in which Latourian cosmopolitics does indeed provide an inspiring and perpendicular approach to these very issues; only, as I have argued, to run up against its own version of rather similar conceptual tensions. Ultimately, I argue, this realization ought to instill in us, in STS and beyond, a hesitation *shared* and writ large towards *both* of their claims, when taken as unified conceptual registers. In other words, we may want to bend Latourian cosmopolitics *and* Beckian cosmopolitanism towards the *variable* urbanizations of *multiple* planetarities in the age of the (so-called) Anthropocene. Multi-naturalism and multi-culturalism must be swallowed at once, I argue, if we are to contribute to a much-needed re-mapping of urban socio-ecologies for a survivable future.



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## **Notes**

- 1 I am grateful to a recent Berlin symposium invitation by Ignacio Farías, Regina Römhild, and Jörg Niewöhner for the prompt to revisit these cosmo-political questions.
- 2 See <http://turbulens.net/at-dromme-kobenhavn> (in Danish).