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Editorial: The 2+n Ecosophies

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Editorial: The 2+n Ecosophies

Contemporary ecological crises fundamentally threaten our ability to continue inhabiting earth, yet geographical research has only tentatively engaged with perspectives that seek to rethink the human-earth relationship. 'Ecosophical' theories, practices and politics recognize that "a global culture of a primarily techno-industrial nature is now encouraging upon all the world's milieu, desecrating living conditions" (Næss & Rothenberg, 1989, p. 23) and that those who subscribe to its arguments "have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes" (p29). This collection of papers seeks to explore ecosophical theories and practices, analysing the relationship between techno-industrial global culture and the world. It offers understandings of attempts to change this relation. Although multiple geographical and social science theories—including feminist perspectives (Gibson-Graham, 2006a, 2006b, Haraway, 1991), post-human and actor-network theory research (Law, 1994, Latour, 1993, Whatmore, 2002), studies of the Anthropocene (Clark, 2013, Castree, 2014), and deconstructionist/phenomenological traditions (Morton, 2007) — have worked hard to rethink the category of 'human' or 'subject'. In their focus on forms of living, being and becoming with the world, environment and non-human, they have done less to rethink the 'world' part of that relationship. Ecosophical approaches offers geography an approach to these questions which starts with how humans relate to nature and non-human at its core, alongside a strong ethical foundation for action. Specifically, it is the position of ecosophical theories that nature and the non-human are valuable independent of their human interaction, and that geography must contribute to ways of rethinking and practicing subjectivity that recognize this.

The 2+n Ecosophies: Guattari, Naess and Deep Ecology

In existing academic literature, two self-labelled ecosophical traditions can be identified. The first has its origins in the eclectic influences that inspired Felix Guattari, and the work that he developed after his collaborations with Deleuze. Guattari in particular develops this vision of ecosophy in relation to the work of Bateson, whose writing had influenced Deleuze and Guattari's earlier work, but who Guattari drew from further in his later writings (Shaw, 2015). Bateson's 'ecology of mind' contains the origins of Guattari's ecosophy, as an attempt to locate thinking and therefore the self in relation to the environment. Bateson argued that all that we call 'thought' is the result of exchanges of information: intellectual activity but also physical interaction, including that of non-humans (Bateson, 1972). Bateson was interested in the individual and its environment as the unit of his enquiry, and it was with this unit that Bateson equated thought and therefore the self. He argued that the act of identifying the subject with the individual, with an embodied actor independent of environment, is 'pathological', and the cause of a damaging ecology which threatens life of earth (1972, p. 486). Guattari agreed, arguing that "rather than speak of the 'subject', we should perhaps speak of components of subjectification, each working more or less on its own, such that the individual "in reality appears to be something like a 'terminal' for processes" " (Guattari, 2000, pp. 24–25). With the co-emergence of social, economic and political crises in the post-Cold War era, Guattari saw a need to "change mentalities... [to] reinvent social practices that would give back to humanity – 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" (Guattari, 1995, p. 120). In other words, subjectivity is produced out of a series of increasingly damaging set of practices, relations and actions.

The response to this problem was for Guattari to search for an ethico-aesthetic paradigm, that is, for an 'ecosophy'. Guattari's turn to ecosophy is largely a pragmatic one, with ecosophy a description of

forms of thought and practice that would offer resolutions to the crises of ecology and self. As with the 'plateaus of intensity' he developed with Deleuze (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), Guattari's ecosophy would need to create self-modulating systems in which the social, the environmental and the psychological are all balanced. Despite Guattari and his writing with Deleuze becoming some of social science's most cited work, ecosophy remains an underexplored issue, even in the context of an increased attention to Guattari (note its absence in Gerlach and Jellis, 2015) and environmental crisis. Within geography it appears in fragments, though rarely if ever as a central topic of concern. An exception can be found in Catterall, who makes an argument for further use of Guattari's *Three Ecologies*, the book in which he sets out his most complete vision of ecosophy, as a framework for new ways of exploring the city. He argues that Guattari offers a way of avoiding the "progressive social deterioration" (Catterall, 2013, p268) of techno-scientific capitalism, though here the intervention is framed in terms of Guattari's conceptual creativity rather than in relation to his ecosophical thought. Largely absent in geography, Guattari's ecosophy has been described as an attempt to "put the mole in the molecular revolution ..." (Alliez and Goffey, 2011, p2), to offer a system of radical and creative socio-psychological critique that would also place environmental justice at its heart, and we see this as an aim that fits well with much of contemporary geography

The second approach taking the name ecosophy – both were, it seems, coined independently – is associated with the work of Næss, the deep ecologist whose writings on ecosophy were reworked with Rothenberg in translation into English. For Næss, ecosophy is a set of thoughts or ideas 'where you philosophically belong' (Næss & Rothenberg, 1989, p. 37). By that he means not ideas you particular like, or which suit your understanding of the ways the world works, but a set of ideas or thoughts that help to explain your belonging. Ideas you literally feel at home with. This is a digging down into rootedness, into the whole web of the connections beyond the self that we are implicated in and affect, on what we depend and are affected by. The deep of deep ecology indicates the point at which a 'shallow' ecological awareness of environmental issues, processes and participants transforms into an appreciation of humans as not a part of nature, but as themselves nature (Næss & Rothenberg, 1989, p. 28). People are not merely similar to animals, but are themselves animals. We belong not only to particular places, but also to each other.

Magician and phenomenologist David Abram has carefully drawn attention to the ways in which much of this is about relationships. Abram's (1996) potted history of how humanity has become disenchanted with animals, plants and objects—such as mountains, rivers, winds, and weather patterns—aims to develop a language for reanimating relationships between humans, as a self and collectively. Similar attempts have been made to outline how humans can begin 'thinking like a mountain' (Leopold, 1949) cultivating an awareness of "deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself" (p.137). Leopold is describing the ineffable otherness beyond the human, looking into a dying wolf's eyes and identifying "something known only to [the wolf] and to the mountain" (p.138). This orientation, towards otherness, beyond the human, affirms not only our humanity, and our dependence on the beyond, or ineffable, but crucial too is the relationship with this. In this view, these relationships go beyond mere context or reference points, but are the very things which suture and sustain life itself. Standing in this tradition Joanna Macy regularly refers to the field as 'work that reconnects' (Macy & Brown, 1998). The assumption is that connections and relationships have been broken through various process, practices, but crucially also thoughts and values systems. Amongst many others, these include: conceptions of the self as an 'in-divide-ual', an autonomous, rational actor and agent, or a self which goes no further physically than the body or psychologically than the ego. Similar critiques have been made previously. Ecosophy however contends that being aware that self is not only a body, say, is the initial 'shallow' ecological awareness; what Næss dismissed as the 'thing-in-milieu' concept (Næss & Rothenberg, 1989, p. 28). The Deep Ecology

position is that the self is intrinsically and relationally constituted by environmental others. Awareness that relations are important is one thing, deliberately and purposively cultivating an appreciation that without that relation one could not possibly still be oneself, is another. Much of this work accompanies certain religious sensibilities too, most prominently Buddhism. Though they can be, and are, seen and understood secularly. Often there is also a critique of dominant and totalizing religious conceptions of the self, most prominently Christianity, and the oft-repeated injunction—and as often misunderstood—for ‘man [sic] to have dominion over nature’ (White, 1967). As often as Christianity is the bogie man here, Tielhard de Chardin (1975), Berry (1988) and Boff (1996) provide bulwark examples that this is certainly not a universal position. White himself points to St Francis of Assisi, and it is interesting to note the ecosophical tone of Pope Francis’s recent encyclical *On Care for Our Common Home* (Pope Francis, 2015).

One way deep ecologists have used Næss’ ecosophy practically is as ecopsychologists. “Ecopsychologists believe there is an emotional bond between human beings and the natural environment out of which we evolve” (Brown, in Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995, p. xvi). In this school of thought psychological ‘disorders’ come from—at root—a lack of appreciation and experience of connection to life beyond the human. The tight link between external otherness, and internal wholeness can be seen in Griffiths’ book *Wild* (2008), she concludes by locating wilderness—an ever-problematic term—not ‘out there’, but within the self. Here, the connection is as much recognition of internal otherness leading to external wholeness, playfully problematizing the in/out distinction. Ecopsychology is an eclectic school, but they call for appreciation of wilderness, regular exposure to outdoor activities and rites of passage as far from cultural and social society as possible. The influence of this can be seen in activities as varied as vision fasts (Carlin, this issue), forest schools or wilderness experience therapeutic group work (Key, 2015). This assumes a forgotten and recoverable ‘deep’ human eco-orientation, akin to Ricoeur’s claim that connection and relatedness between selves is *Oneself As Another* (2008). An ethic put most bluntly perhaps by Kumar’s title: *You are Therefore I Am: a declaration of dependence* (2002). The influence of Derrida’s cat Lutece on thinking though otherness in human-animal relationships pushes this further (Derrida, 2008). But this outwards orientation looks for otherness beyond human or animal others, beyond Buber’s (2004) even more numinous I-Thou other. It instead looks for connection to what ecopsychologist Hillman (in Roszak et al., 1995) calls ‘a psyche the size of the earth’, of which our personal psyche is only an aspect.

Ecosophy obviously takes the human and environment relationship and puts it at its heart, but it also engages other geographical concepts. Ecosophy changes the way that scale is conceived. Scale as ‘level’ in ecosophy is not taken as a given, but is seen as a fallacy. Between relations, systems or actors of different sizes, there are myriad connections. Scale is not about layers or hierarchy, but rather interacting scales which are immanent. The self and the local are in the global, and the global is present within them. This can be seen most neatly and poetically in the old quote from Blake ‘See the world in a grain of sand/ And heaven in a wild flower / Hold infinity in the palm of your hand / And eternity in an hour.’ Several of the papers in this issue speak of practices such as mediation and yoga which seek to attune the conscious self towards this scalar fluidity. If this sounds quasi-spiritual, it is because, again, many of the influential theorists in this area draw from religious, particularly but not exclusively Buddhist, writings. The ecosophical move is to scales as inherently imbued within one another, mutually unfolding. Developing this, space and place are reimagined with a specific form of fluidity. On the one hand, space is understood as multiple: so for Guattari, “there are as many spaces as there are modes of semiotization and subjectivation” (1993, p140). Every-body is simultaneously intersecting with a series of lived and imaginary spaces. On the other, the self is always located, and is located in relation to its environment. Place matters because it is

where one can become ecosophical. A repeated environmentalist mantra that “you gotta dig where you stand” (McIntosh, 2001), captures this locatedness being as more a call to action, movement and engagement than a static predestined rootedness. Jones states that “there is no retreat from the political” (2002, p357) in Guattari’s ecosophy. Ecosophical space, place and scale thus all turn upon the relations producing self and world-as-home; not just for the self but also for multiple others. At first glance, ecosophy is geographical only because of its focus on the human-environment relationship, but the necessity of place based rootedness, spatial imaginaries and scalar interlinking, show that ecosophy is firmly geographical in all its guises.

Developing Ecosophical Geographies

From these two approaches, then, we want in this special issue to make the case for ecosophical geographies as the spatial and scalar implications of existing practices and ideas which seek to reorient subjectivities towards the ecological. They are the results of rethinking and reliving our relationship to the ‘eco’, that is, to the earth as home. Ecosophical geographies require us to reflect on the interrelated characteristics of being, so that life as a whole is placed equitably in the core of our understanding of society. Simply put, without self there is no earth and without earth there is no self. Ecosophical geographies do not posit a monadic understanding of earth, and do not (inherently) require a ‘Gaia’ or totalising earth system. What they do reject, however, is the notion of separation. Selves and others are interdependent, intertwined and make no sense in isolation. As a word itself, ecosophy – translated as knowledge of the home, or knowledge of the homely world – does not have to imply the ecosophy of either Næss or Guattari. For Guattari, what is needed are a series of fluid and open systems of thought and practice that have a “creative processuality” (Guattari, 1995, p126). These are systems which cannot create a structure or system of thought that is universally consistent and unchanging. Indeed, both see ecosophy through what might be called a ‘realist’ lens. For Næss, “all things hang together” (Næss and Rothenberg, 1989, p36): being is interconnected, and an ecosophy is simply a way of recognising and knowing this. For Guattari, similarly, subjectivity is multi-modal, produced socially, environmentally and psychologically. An ecosophy is an “ethico-political articulation” that can ensure that the relationships between these modes are not destructive. In this special issue, what we present are possible ways of developing ecosophical geographies that would respond to these demands, but none of what is contained in these pages should be read as programmatic or a manual for how an ecosophical geography must be.

Those caveats aside, we argue that it is necessary or at least beneficial for geography to develop ecosophical sensibilities. To date, ecosophy has barely registered in the discipline. The three most prominent ways that geography has moved from descriptive, realist theories towards normative theories have been feminist, Marxist and postcolonial interventions. In different ways, the green movement has somewhat jarred with the aims and worldviews of these outlooks, despite notable exceptions for each, whereby scholars have shown potential intersections of for example ‘red-green’ Marxism, ecofeminism and the non-Western heritage of much deep ecological thought. Geography has also been sceptical of work which appears to have spiritual implications (Rose, 2011), and despite their insistence on rootedness, ecosophical theories undoubtedly draw from a vocabulary which can superficially seem to be quasi-religious or transcendent. Other trends in the discipline, however, show that scholars are looking for ways of responding to changing human-environment relationships. Most obviously, the recent proliferation of ‘Anthropocene’ geographies have attempted to respond to the apparent lack of reflection on the intersections between humanity as a species and the earth as its environment. Anthropocene, as a concept, seeks to codify a recognition of the inherent co-dependence of earth and society (Castree, 2014, p438). As Yusoff argues, this “creates a geologic corporeality for humans as a collective surge on an inhuman scale” (Yusoff, 2013,

p782): humans are fundamentally reconceived not as separated from the earth but as key geological agents. She develops this further, exploring how being is always being geologic (p792), always about making and remaking a multiplicity of relations with earth. This work pushes anthropogenic conceptions of subjectivity in new and interesting directions, and it is here that a greater consideration of ecosophy can make significant contributions. In a different direction, activist-scholar literatures have encouraged geographers to think reflexively about the conditions of knowledge production, about the self-environment relationships within which we work (Chatterton, 2008). More-than-human geographies and other post-human theories have refocused the object of scholarly attention away from humanity, but have arguably proliferated actors without fundamentally changing our imaginations of the relations between them. Where ecosophical geographies can add to the debate is by also focusing on the subjectivity of the researcher's gaze, building on activist-scholar arguments to enhance a more-than-human geography.

Specifically, the papers here then outline steps towards an ecosophical geography. Both Carvahlo (this issue) and Buckingham (this issue) look to the adoption of Eastern practices in the West as an empirical evidencing of what ecosophical practices might look like. For Carvahlo (this issue), meditation is critically held as both with potential to act as a salve, or escape from injustices in the world, and as a digging deeper, facing up to what Buckingham terms 'micropolitical' (this issue) practices that are the grounding of prior and primary injustice. Buckingham uses yoga as a window to reflect on her selfhood, as both an academic and activist, embodied self and thinking mind. This moves beyond the call for geographers to reflect on and declare their positionality, to an entire rethinking of our subjectivities. What emerges is an awareness of ecosophical practices being both particular and different to regular practices. Yet also, it is the manner in which these practices are engaged with which forms a crucial aspect. Again, there is a digging down to the psychological, social and cultural rootedness to which we belong or are transplanted into. Yet it is also a cultivating consciousness of the relationships that open up affordances, perspectives, solidarities and collaborations with many different others.

Carlin (this issue) looks to an indigenous native practice in North America, the vision fast, a coming of age ceremony. While Carlin is critical of the ways this is contemporarily adopted, utilised and engaged with, these are forms of practice which attempt a purposive (re)alignment of subjectivity with the ecosophical imaginaries outlined above. Anderson (this issue) and Taylor Aiken (this issue) focus on Western examples. Anderson (this issue) examines these attempts on an institutional level. He investigates the 'leading European eco-centre'—as they offer an equipping and inspiring beacon for promoting broadly ecosophical values, practices and initiatives in relation to mainstream society. Taylor Aiken critically investigates the burgeoning permaculture movement, particularly their expression as the Transition movement, in seeking to more closely design and mimic natural patterns within social structures and activities. Each of these offer a wide variety of perspectives into practices that may be considered ecosophical. This list is, again, not exhaustive, but an opening into how collecting the variety of ecosophical practises 'out there' can revivify geographical understanding of the role of subjectivities in human-environmental relationships.

Næss is clear that ecosophy requires both a reorientation of practice and of thought (Næss & Rothenberg, 1989). Two papers in this volume focus in greater depth on the ways in which rethinking the self-earth relationship, which is at the heart of ecosophical geographies, can influence thought more broadly. Jones (this issue) explores how body is the central scale or tool of engagement for our engagement with the earth, emphasising the ways in which thought is always already part of a body-earth relationship. His concept of 'embodied cognitive ecosophy' expresses this, and he makes a powerful case for the argument that as subjectivity becomes isolated from its

embodied and ecological components, so its potential for damage increases. Here, there is a strong exploration of exactly the sort of relationship that Guattari emphasises between the nature of subjectivity, and the way that we relate to the world. Shaw (this issue) turns the focus more centrally on geography, exploring the tension between the two prefixes ('geo' and 'eco') that are found in the term 'ecosophical geographies'. By delving into the differences that understanding our planet as 'earth' or as 'home' might imply, he offers an overview of the ways that an ecosophical geography might encourage new thought and reflection for the discipline. The aim in this paper is to pay the same attention to the 'earth' that we have paid to the 'human', as part of the rethinking of the earth-human relationship.

We are aware of, in a discipline that has had a proliferation of 'isms' over the last twenty years, that the act of offering yet another theoretical term to the mixture may seem to have a level of arrogance or introspection to it. Our intention is for this collection, and the concept of ecosophical geography, to be complimentary to the variety of sympathetic geographical, social science and philosophical approaches which are also referenced in this collection. The papers in this special issue come from a variety of perspectives, several of which contain significant reservations about 'ecosophy'. Finally, it is important to of course note that there are undoubtedly a multitude of ways that one could approach rethinking the human-earth relationship, and that one could approach those theories that take the label ecosophy. Næss names his ecosophy, *Ecosophy T*, as only one amongst the many possible ecosophies that could exist. Hence, taking not as our title not only the two examples of Guattari and Næss here, but a potentially infinite '2+n' number. We write, however, with a strong belief that geography has not yet sufficiently engaged with the wider implications of ecological crises, and their imbrication with other forms of social and psychological crises. In particular, the papers in this volume all share a commitment to developing ways of thinking and/or practising our relations with the world which would place the human-earth relationship at their heart, with a vision making this relationship, the fundamental condition of the continuation of life on Earth, a core point of study and reflection.

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