

chris crews | WPSA 2019
chris@chriscrews.com
Visiting Professor,
Grand Valley State Univ.

Abstract

While there have been lively debates over the status of the Anthropocene in environmental science and political theory circles, less attention has been paid to whether or not social movements are responding in new ways to the Anthropocene. I argue that some social movements are in fact responding to the Anthropocene, in particular those focused on issues of social and environmental justice and Indigenous rights. Using a comparative lens to look at social movement struggles involving land (drawing on examples from the US, Andes and Himalaya), I argue a new kind of politics of the Earth--an "Earthbound politics"--is emerging in response to the Anthropocene, and outline some of the key dynamics helping to shape this new Earthbound politics.

Rethinking Social Movements and the Anthropocene

Is humanity entering a new period of living on planet Earth? If in fact we are, what are the appropriate social and political responses to this new state of global affairs? While starting as a proposal about the need to create a new geologic epoch, in the years since the concept was first introduced Anthropocene theorizing has bifurcated into two distinct, but still linked, debates. On one hand there are debates over this concept and its political meaning and significance. On the other, debates are taking place over a set of scientific claims about our evolving Earth system and how we measure and demarcate geo-historical time.

Within this growing body of Anthropocene research, scholars have paid little attention to if and how this concept has impacted social movements. This paper argues that it has begun to impact social movements and that we need to pay closer attention to these dynamics. I argue how we study some social movements needs to be reimagined in relation to Anthropocene dynamics, focusing on social and environmental justice movements and Indigenous rights, especially in relation to struggles over land and resources. I argue these social movements defending local communities reveal glimpses of an insurgent Anthropocene grounded in Earth-centered politics.

Drawing inspiration from the 2013 Gifford Lectures by Bruno Latour on Gaia and the Anthropocene, I describe this emerging constellation of social movements as Earthbound people. This paper provides a brief theoretical sketch of these emerging Earthbound people and explores several cases where I argue we can see these dynamics at work.

I begin with some brief remarks on debates over Anthropocene dating and how these discussions can be connected to certain trends in social movement studies. Anthropocene scholars have begun to refer to the post-1950 increase in industrialization and resource use as The Great Acceleration. This moment has been proposed by the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) as a potential start date for the Anthropocene (Steffen, Broadgate and Deutsch). These scholars have compiled an impressive set of graphs which document the massive uptick in resource use, population growth and a wide range of human and Earth system changes. Yet of the twenty-four activities they present, none of the socio-economic indicators they include reflect any of the underlying political changes which gave rise to these trends (Figure 1).

This is problematic, since the period of history that gave rise to The Great Acceleration witnessed a massive wave of global political changes, punctuated by the end of WWII, the start of the Cold War, the division of the world into Communist or Capitalist political blocs. In response to these and other developments, a surge of anti-colonial and nationalist struggles emerged around the world, leading to the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia and the birth to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Many of the issues the Non-Aligned Movement were focused on had some analogs in the Civil Rights movement in the United States, as noted by African American scholar and activist Richard Wright, who attended the gathering and wrote about his experiences in *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*. Wright described the gathering as a collection of the "despised, the insulted, the hurt, the dispossessed—

in short, the underdogs of the human race were meeting. Here were class and racial and religious consciousness on a global scale...This meeting of the rejected was a kind of judgement upon that



Figure 1: The Great Acceleration

Western world!" (Wright 12). While some scholars later criticized Wright for painting an overly romantic picture of Bandung, similar political trends were emerging all over the world at this time. Social movement scholars have described this period as marking the start of a wave of "new social movements" which emerged in the 1950s and expanded throughout the 1960s. This global resurgence gave renewed importance to research on social movements and collective action by academics, leading to renewed scholarly interest in politicized social movements.

Like that earlier period, which saw a flowering of social movements, scholars argued the mid-1990s marked another historical wave of social movement activity, one which appeared to be distinct from the earlier "new" social movement period of the 1950-70s. For example, social movement scholar Donatella della Porta argued that "at the start of the new millennium, possibly for the first time since 1968, the wave of mobilizations for a globalization from below (often identified as the global justice movement), seems to have the potential for a global, generalized challenge, combining themes typical of class movements with themes typical of new social movements, like ecology or gender equality" (Della Porta 2). Sidney Tarrow also highlighted this trend in relation to his research on transnational activism, although he was more cautious in his analysis. "From the 'battle of Seattle' to the movement against the Iraq war, the extraordinary international protests of the late 1990s and the early years of the new century suggest that something is new on this planet of ours. We are witnessing, if not a full-blown global civil society or an international polity, at least a trend toward new forms and new levels of transnational contention" (Tarrow xiii). Building on these findings in their overview of research on growing forms of anti-establishment protests, Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen offered a more explicit affirmation of these trends by noting the "global 'movement of movements' against neoliberal capitalism (variously described as the alter-globalisation, anti-capitalist or

global justice movements) is arguably one of the most important historical events of the early 21st century” (1). It is no coincidence that this second wave of “new” social movements emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, as this period marked the rise of a new geopolitical reorganization under the influence of US-led neoliberal globalization.

As Manfred Steger has noted, the “breakdown of the Cold War order organized around the opposing ideological poles of capitalist liberalism versus state-controlled communism and the ensuing wave of globalization have unsettled conventional political belief systems. Across political, economic, and cultural dimensions, the expansion and intensification of social relations across world-space and world-time both generate and respond to new ‘global crises’ beyond the reach of conventional political institutions and their associated ideologies...connected to these complex global problems, we have witnessed a noticeable shift away from state-based international governance mechanisms to transnational networks, NGOs, and non-state actors often referred to as ‘global civil society’ (Steger, Goodman and Wilson 13). Steger argues one response to this new geopolitical reality has been the emergence of a Global Justice Movement with an “alternative visions of a global future based on values of ‘social justice’ and ‘solidarity with the global South’,” and which promotes an ideology of ‘Justice Globalism’ (14).

A similar trend was highlighted by François Polet in his discussion of how global resistance movements are increasingly coming together in struggles over land and resources.

At the same time, new forms of organization – more autonomous and less formal – are emerging, from day to day, in the field, to oppose privatization policies and the pillage of natural resources. Whether they are the unemployed, the precarious, the urban poor or rural communities threatened by the construction of dams and the destruction of their natural environment, they often take direct action such as occupying the land or official buildings, barricading roads, sit-ins, diverting water or electricity supplies. It is also necessary to stress the tendency for flexible and decentralized coordination between organizations that normally work on different issues but decide to join forces to make progress on cross-cutting issues. These

new groupings, like the Coordination for Water and Life in Bolivia (Coordinadora por el Agua y la Vida de Bolivia), Jobs with Justice in the USA and the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand, go beyond specific interests, rise above particular struggles and promote new forms of solidarity. (Polet and CETRI viii-ix)

While the emergence of these forms of global social movement assemblages and resistance to neoliberal globalization have been explored by numerous scholars, scholars have not explored movement synergies that may be responding to the dynamics of the Anthropocene. Polet hinted at this idea, noting the “convergence of these different movements...is indisputably an important development, linked to increasing awareness of the global and interdependent nature of problems—socio-economic, cultural and ecological—which used to be considered separately” (ix).

The realities of the Anthropocene are such that divergent political issues are increasingly crashing into one another like tectonic plates, leading to an intensification of social pressure. I argue this process is being fueled by the dynamics of neoliberal globalization and its extractivist logics. The social movement formations I describe as the Earthbound people are the mountains of resistance forming at points where these tectonic political forces crash into one another. These are the sites where the threats are greatest, and where social movement resistance is stronger. The 2016 Dakota Access protests at Standing Rock (see *Figure 2*) offered an example of diverse social movements converging around a common struggle—from Indigenous sovereignty and the protection of sacred lands to police brutality and climate justice brought people together in resistance. This movement solidarity was articulated in one of the unofficial political slogans often used by Standing Rock supporters—*Mni Wičoni*, Water is Life, a theme echoed in a 2016 Black Lives Matter solidarity statement with Standing Rock. “Black Lives Matter stands with Standing Rock...Our liberation is only realized when all people are free, free to access clean water, free from institutional racism, free to live whole and healthy lives not subjected to state-sanctioned violence...Water is life, and we must all fight to protect it. (Black Lives Matter)”



Figure 2: Black Lives Matter and Standing Rock protestors united in struggle (2016)

Earthbound people remain deeply connected to what Sidney Tarrow called transnational activism, but I believe we need to push further in our analysis. The Anthropocene is giving birth to political responses which cannot be understood simply as “new forms of modularity in the global justice and antiwar movements today” (Tarrow 4). While individual participants may be modulating their social or environmental justice activities to respond to the Anthropocene, the sum total of these actions across social movements is creating new political logics and movement assemblages that seek to redefine the concept of the political, a move which refuses to be limited by older social movement logics and frameworks. By articulating a new cosmopolitical vision, an Earthbound political body is coming into being, not as a return to some older political vision, but as a creation of something novel—a Kuhnian epistemic rupture—in both form and substance.

My formulation of this new political assemblage, which I call the Earthbound people, draws its name from Bruno Latour’s Gifford Lectures on the Anthropocene, where the term was

first introduced. Latour was vague in his lectures, and the later expanded text *Facing Gaia*, about the exact outlines of an Earthbound people, and he has not returned to this concept in any detail.

They appear clearly as a new form of *non-national power that is explicitly participating as such in geopolitical conflicts*. If their territory knows no national boundaries, this is not because they have access to the universal, but because they keep on bringing in new agents to be full participants in the subsistence of the other agents. Their authority is fully political, because they represent agents who have no other voice and who intervene in the lives of many other agents. They do not hesitate to outline the shape of the world, the *nomos*, the cosmos in which they prefer to live. ("Facing Gaia" 252-53)

This work is the first step towards developing a theory of the Earthbound people. I do this by focusing on three different but often overlapping social movements: social justice, environmental justice, and Indigenous rights, which I believe are key parts of the contemporary social movement landscape that are shaping this new *nomos* and cosmopolitics of the Earthbound.

Following the arguments of scholars like Mario Diani and Donatella della Porta, I understand social movements as “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (Diani). Each of the movements I am looking at has its own body of scholarship, but I argue we need to reassess collective synergies in relation to the Anthropocene. Existing social movement literature to date has analyzed these movements as transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink), transnational activism (Tarrow), transnational social movements (Smith), global social movements (Steger, Goodman and Wilson) or climate justice movements (Tokar). As Hans Baer noted regarding these mainstream movements, “climate groups in North America, Europe and Australia tend to focus upon ecological modernisation, emphasising in particular renewable sources of energy, energy efficiency and improved public transport. In the process of emphasising techno-fixes as a primary strategy for achieving climate

change mitigation, they often either ignore or downplay social justice issues” (Baer). It is my contention that the dynamics of the Earthbound transcend such movements and their tendency to focus on issues of technology fixes, state capture, market mechanisms, and global governance.

While they may have some bearing on the politics of the Earthbound, none of these existing approaches or movements capture what is new about these Earthbound movements. Social movements have never had to face the possibility of the Earth becoming uninhabitable due to systemic changes to the established order of things—or what Carl Schmitt described as the *nomos*—the political ordering of life on the planet. Even during the height of Cold War fears about nuclear fallout, there were few who thought life would end as a result of nuclear exposure. For example, a 1987 WHO summary report on the effects of an “all-out nuclear war” using half of all existing warheads at the time noted it “would result in more than 1,000 million deaths and 1,000 million injured people” of an estimated population of 4.8 billion; certainly awful, but a far cry from planetary extinction (World Health Organization). It is this fear that we have pushed the Earth towards an uninhabitable future state that sees in the Anthropocene a global catastrophe.

UNHCR global refugee trends have done little to quell such fears. “We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 68.5 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 25.4 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18” (UNHCR). Recent studies have also shown how environmental refugees, a term introduced in 1985, are a major contributor to these numbers, with some scholars estimating we could see an upwards of 150 million climate refugees by 2050 (Berchin, Blasi Valduga and Garcia 148). This has sparked ongoing debates about the links between climate change and political instability, with climate refugees highlighting the gaps in existing international laws and norms around who qualifies as a “refugee” (Williams 503). This

is where the importance of the Earthbound people and a new cosmopolitics of the Earth matters. Responding to these changes requires acknowledging that what we have taken for granted as the “Holocene norm” underpinning human civilization is vanishing. In practical terms this means vast reserves of cultural knowledge about a Holocene world—information which we rely on daily to help us navigate and plan—becomes meaningless in a future dictated by new climate norms for which we have no historical analogs. We need new solutions and responses to the planetary changes that scientists tell us are already underway, as well as those anticipated in the future—such as global sea level rise, yet our global political systems are all in a state of denial about the severity of the crisis and the root causes of our present predicament.

Responding to the challenges of the Anthropocene requires social movements to move beyond the logic of late liberalism—which means rethinking how we understand some of the most central concepts of the “modern” world: politics, subjects, justice, and even rights. A new kind of biospheric geopolitics is required to navigate an uncertain Anthropocene future. Such a possibility is emerging in these Earthbound social movements and their efforts to imagine a new Earth-centered cosmopolitics and geopolitics.

This new geological era requires a different understanding of environment and hence, crucially, of the changing social context of humanity. Naming our era the Anthropocene signals this epochal shift in human circumstances. It necessitates a rethinking of many other facets of human existence in line with the global ecological context; human security is now entwined inextricably with these larger processes. All of which makes thinking about geopolitics more complicated, but has the huge advantage of finally extricating the link between humanity and its context from residual formulations of environmental determinism, and crude arguments that geography is destiny and a matter beyond human control. The Anthropocene makes it clear that such 19th-century notions, while tempting to pundits who are unsure as to how to interpret contemporary events, are completely inadequate premises from which to discuss 21st-century geopolitics seriously. (Dalby 4)

An Anthropocene cosmopolitics challenges us to expand what is understood as “political” and to put these new ideas into practice in our social movement organizing and mobilizations. “The Anthropocene emphasizes how interconnected humanity is, and that now the collective fate of our planet requires the illusion of separation to be abandoned. The geopolitical cartography of separate and rival Westphalian boxes is completely inappropriate as a series of assumptions if sensible geopolitical decisions are to be taken in the next couple of decades” (Dalby 7). If we are going to forge new ways of being in the Anthropocene, it will be because these new social movement assemblages create political opportunities and offer new social imaginaries that can help foster different ways of being in the world. As the World Social Forum’s slogan stated, ‘Another World is Possible,’ and it may be forged by the Earthbound.

A first step in unsettling a political order is to redefine political actors and allegiances. The distribution of agency in a new Anthropocene politics, Latour suggested, would not be limited solely to humans, but would include a multiplicity of animate entities, other than human beings, natural forces, and various spirits which inhabit multiple and overlapping cosmos. This aspect of Latour’s intervention into Anthropocene debates is helpful for rethinking social movements in ways that disrupt established anthropocentric claims about who or what can be a political subject rooted in the classical Humanist politic-legal tradition. “But if cosmos is to mean anything, it must embrace, literally, everything—including all the vast numbers of nonhuman entities making humans act” (Latour, "Talking Peace" 454). If we are willing to embrace these enlarged visions for how we define politics and agency, then we can create openings to grant legal rights to rivers or other natural entity. Examples from Ecuador, Bolivia, New Zealand, Australia, India, and Uganda have shown these shifts can be put into practice, albeit with varying success. This is one example among many where a cosmopolitics of the Earth

has the potential to take what were previously unimaginable ideas and transform them into actual political realities.¹

“A common world, if there is going to be one,” argues Latour, “is something we will have to build, tooth and nail, together” (“Talking Peace” 455). These struggles will inevitably require social movements to ask questions like: What are our goals and how can we achieve them? Who are we mobilizing against and who are our allies? How do we operate and make decisions and who are we accountable to? This is why Latour argues people need the space to “clearly state your goals, describe your cosmos and tell at last your friends from your enemies” (Latour, “Gifford Lectures” 85). This translation of diverse collectives begins when they “state explicitly who they are, what friends and foes they have and on which conditions they could enter into some cosmopolitics without any Providence atop them all to distribute their roles and their fates” (Latour, “Gifford Lectures” 82). New political spaces are likely to emerge where and when we can begin assembling a critical mass of sympathetic people together, and this has been part of the project of social movement experiments that gave rise to Zapatismo, the Battle for Seattle, the World Social Forum, Rights of Nature Tribunals, and Occupy Wall Street. But what makes one Earthbound exactly, and how could we identify our friends from our enemies?

Earthbound People in Practice

When Latour initially proposed this idea of Earthbound people (or people of Gaia), he offered little in terms of specifics for an Earthbound politics. He said we must “specify what sort of people they are,” declare “what is the entity or divinity that they hold as their supreme

¹ This obviously raises some complicated questions about political strategies of change and whether the “Rights of Nature” framework should be adapted to fit existing legal frameworks or if entirely new legal understandings must be developed first, but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

guarantee,” and “identify the principles by which they distribute agencies throughout their cosmos” (Latour, "Gifford Lectures" 83). In order to flesh out a theory of Earthbound people, I propose four initial criteria to help identify Earthbound social movement. I see these acting as affinities or reference points for a family resemblance analysis of current social movements.

- A cosmopolitics in which the boundaries of politics, agency, and representation are expanded to include a range of other than human actors, processes and forces.
- Practices which take seriously a need to reorganize societies to protect and honor Earth.
- Active political resistance against neoliberal globalization and extractive politics.
- Commitment to egalitarian and horizontal forms of decision-making grounded in free, prior and informed consent.

Of these four aspects, it is the first which I believe functions as the strongest and most distinct criteria in relation to other social movements. It is becoming more common to find social justice and environmental justice movements arguing for acting to protect the planet by changing our social behaviors, which may include challenging fossil capitalism and patriarchy. But calls for an expanded cosmopolitics, in addition to these other three factors, sets these Earthbound movements apart from similar climate justice or environmental and social justice movements.

One might argue that many Indigenous political movements today already appear to embody these four aspects in their practices, which I believe is true, and as such they are a natural starting point for developing a theory of Earthbound people. But what has been missing even from Indigenous actions so far were the interconnected global networks which, when united, could bring to bear political influence beyond local spheres of influence. There is a reasonable case to be made that Indigenous political resistance may well be a Ur-wellspring of inspiration for emerging Earthbound movements, and as such, they play a central role in both providing leadership and inspiration for broader, non-Indigenous social movements, some of which have been working with Indigenous-led communities for decades. The global rise of

Indigeneity is an important aspect of the story behind the emergence of these Earthbound social movements in recent years, but I want to be careful not to collapse them together and present an overly simplistic or romantic picture of Indigenous communities as homogeneous, unified or “naturally” living in a perfect balance with nature, and thus more likely to be somehow culturally predisposed to an Earthbound politics. While it is true that many Indigenous communities are on the frontlines of social and environmental justice struggles around the planet, these struggles are neither natural nor inevitable. Each struggle over land and resources has its own history, and it is important when comparing global social movements that we are attentive to these nuances.

The Earthbound people are concerned about the future of all life, not just humans, and this broad-based love of nature may act as a symbolic marker of an Earthbound friend. To place this in an American pop-culture context, these abstract values are materially embodied in figures such as The Lorax, Captain Planet, the Ents and the Na’vi, all of which serve as simple yet effective markers of a person’s eco-political affinities. It is certainly possible to appreciate such figures (and the media they appear in) without being committed to an Earthbound politics, but someone who looks on such figures with scorn or disgust is unlikely to be an Earthbound ally.

Yet it is possible to advocate for environmental or social justice without calling for the expansion or redefinition of the boundaries of the political. In fact, practically speaking, this is the norm amongst most people associated with social or environmental justice movements. This is one reason why the movement for the Rights of Nature, which can be traced back at least to the 1980s, if not earlier, remains on the fringes of mainstream environmental politics today. Support for these broader political claims reflect an expanded understanding of what constitutes the political and who or what is deserving of political rights. Support for expanded legal and political rights, coupled with a belief that we should take non-human agency and representation

seriously, are aspects that set the Earthbound people apart from liberal social and environmental justice movements still operating from a position of human supremacy. This question of non-human political agency is a key litmus test for where one's political allegiances truly lie.

When exploring the democratic potential of the Anthropocene Robyn Eckersley argued that, if theorized in ways that keep sight of the emancipatory potential of radical critiques of liberalism, it may offer a space for engaging with questions of non-human agency.

I offer a more critical interpretation of the Anthropocene that questions the association of human geological agency with political or technological mastery. This interpretation rests on a nonanthropocentric ontology of entangled human and non-human agencies paired with a non-anthropocentric and 'geopolitan' imaginary of time, space and community that repositions and decentres humanity in Earth's geostory. This new narrative is shown to have radical democratic potential by exposing the complicity of liberal democracy in undermining Earth systems processes while also providing a basis for cultivating a more reflexive democratic political culture in liberal democracies in ways which are much more attentive to links with other socio-ecological communities and larger Earth systems processes. (Eckersley 985)

Ideas such as Eckersley's "Geopolitan democracy" are part of an emerging conversation about how to bring new forms of relational politics into practice: Gaian politics, terrapolitics, radical democracy, horizontalidad, *sumak kawsay*, and buen vivir all have roots in social movement discourses which are contributing to this emerging Earthbound cosmopolitics.

Social Movement Examples

I want to turn now to some examples that capture the spirit of these Earthbound people and larger social movement shifts in the Anthropocene. The following examples can be thought of as nodes or spokes in this emerging global network of Earthbound movements. One examples of these emerging networks is the Pachamama Alliance, a US-based education and advocacy organization with a focus on the Amazon. Their guiding principles read in part: "Human beings

are not separate from each other or Nature. We are totally interrelated and our actions have consequences to all” (“Mission”). While they learn more towards a New Age spirituality in their overall orientation (a reflection of their Bay Area roots), they are an example of how people interested in learning more about Earth-centered perspective can become engaged without requiring extensive political commitments. They offer educational tours of the Amazon with their Indigenous partners and through various online learning program, including the ‘Game Changer Intensive’ and ‘Awakening the Dreamer,’ both of which serve as outreach arms. They describe the Game Changer Intensive as a “powerful training program that catalyzes both the inner and outer resources needed—who we need to be and what we need to do—to engage in effective action in the world” in which participants go through an eight-week course with themes such as evolutionary activism, how the current political and economic system is rigged, the power of local democracy movements, and the need for climate action (Pachamama Alliance).

As part of my doctoral research I enrolled in one of these eight-week sessions in 2016. While I personally found much of the content simplistic and overly invested in spurious New Age claims about how we can shift planetary consciousness by “changing the narrative” of the rigged system, it was obvious how an emphasis on local communities, democratic values and a genuine desire to make personal lifestyle changes in line with broader social and environmental justice concerns acts as an important entry point into potentially deeper political transformations. For example, some of the individuals in my group were active in local progressive politics and political organizing in the run up to the 2016 Presidential election in the United States, while others were involved in the Move to Amend campaign, which seeks to limit corporate power. This is a good example of the lighter side of new social movements that are starting to stick their proverbial toes into the deeper waters of support for ideas like the Rights of Nature.

A second example which speaks to the social movement driven political shifts was the adoption of a “Rights of Nature” section in the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution. The opening section of Title II, Chapter 7 states: “Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes” (Georgetown University). Similar language was also adopted in Bolivia soon after. While both countries have a long way to go before the idea of the rights of nature has more than largely symbolic power in national politics, it signifies an important ideological shift by its very appearance within a legal document as important as a national Constitution.

Building on these ideas, activists in New Zealand pushed to protect the Whanganui river, referred to as *Te Awa Tupua* by the Māori, as a legal entity entitled to the same rights as people. This legal recognition was won in 2017 as a result of decades of litigation involving the Treaty of Waitangi and the status of Indigenous political sovereignty. Speaking after the ruling, Māori negotiator Gerrard Albert said they had “fought to find an approximation in law so that all others can understand that from our perspective treating the river as a living entity is the correct way to approach it, as in indivisible whole, instead of the traditional model for the last 100 years of treating it from a perspective of ownership and management” (Roy). Barely one week later in India a similar legal victory was announced when a court in the north Indian state of Uttarakhand granted the Ganga and Yamuna rivers the same legal rights as people, citing the Whanganui river case. The judges ruled that the two rivers should now be considered “legal and living entities having the status of a legal person with all corresponding rights, duties and liabilities” (Safi).

The New Zealand ruling still stands, but the Indian Supreme Court reversed the ruling of the Uttarakhand High Court a few months later, claiming the ruling was “unsustainable in law”

because the legal purview of the Uttarakhand High Court did not extend to interstate waterways (Vaidyanathan). This is a good example where we can see the tension between two opposed notions of law—Natural Law and Positive Law—clear reflected. In the Indian case, as well as in others, the idea that the “rights” of the river would suddenly stop because the water passed over some imaginary political line on a map is nonsensical and runs contrary to the spirit of granting rights to bodies of water of any kind. As the abrupt reversal in the Uttarakhand case highlights, trying to claim rights for nature is extremely disruptive to entrenched legal powers and understandings of politics and rights. Despite growing social movements calls in India for the recognition of the rights of nature, there is still considerable pushback on the idea of expanding the notion of rights in these more radical directions. Earlier this year the government of Uganda amended their 1995 National Environmental Act, Section 4, to include a section on the Rights of Nature, including the “right to bring an action before a competent court for any infringement of rights of nature” (Gaia Foundation).

A third example which speaks to the power of these transnational networks to mobilize around a common global project is the Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth, which was drafted in 2010 during the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The Declaration articulates an Earthbound cosmopolitics by arguing that “we are all part of Mother Earth, an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings with a common destiny” (World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth). Efforts have continued since 2010 to build support for adoption, and organizers hope that one day UN members states might ratify the Declaration so that it could eventually gain a similar customary legal weight as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enjoys today.

A fourth example at the global governance level, and related to the previous example, is the annual “Report of the Secretary-General on Harmony with Nature” presented to the UN General Assembly. As of 2019 there have been 8 formal reports, with the 2015 Report offering a clear expression of Gaian politics in the global context. The purpose of the UN report was to “examine the evolution of science, governance and economics in the light of new understandings of our interconnectedness with Nature, which, in turn, have led to practices that further an ethical relationship between humanity and the Earth and life in harmony with nature” (“Harmony with Nature”). This document expresses these ideas through international policymaking and illustrates how Earthbound social movements are advancing political claims that draw on and deploy Earth System science as a political resource. “Major groups and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), indigenous groups and civil society organizations worldwide, have also voiced the need for humankind to recognize the fundamental rights of the natural world...Earth system science has paved the way for Earth system governance, Earth-based law and Earth-based economics, all of which are also addressed in this report” (United Nations). Given its role in global policymaking, the UN is a natural home for social movements that seek international attention for their ideas and proposals. For example, the 2018 Harmony with Nature Report highlighted the supporting role Earth Jurisprudence could play in meeting national obligations and political targets under the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

Discussing these social movements as he saw them reflected nearly two decades ago in the Peoples’ Earth Summit during the 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, Religious Studies scholar Bron Taylor suggested these “interrelated ideas, that we need ‘earth-centered’ values and loyalty, hints at the possibility that what is emerging here is a kind of earth nationalism or civic earth religion. It seems clear that such an ideology, where it

exists and is emerging, is grounded in a spirituality of belonging and connection to an earth and universe considered sacred” (Dark Green 187-88). Support for these global Earth-centered movements has continued to gain visibility since the 2002 Earth Summit, including in the last Earth Summit which took place in 2012 (Rio+20 or Earth Summit 2012). Further examples since 2012 might include the Papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si* in the fall of 2015 and the Preamble to the 2015 Paris Agreement, which calls attention to “the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and noting the importance for some of the concept of ‘climate justice’ in addressing climate change” (“Paris Agreement” 4).

Can we think about the dark green religious phenomenon that Bron Taylor’s describes as a new civic Earth religion as sharing a family resemblance with the Earthbound people as a new political body in the Anthropocene? Could this movement of movements have enough unity to forge an alternative global cosmopolitics able to challenge the dominant logics of neoliberal globalization? Can it speak to both secular and spiritual participants, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, in a coherent voice without alienating anyone? Latour thought it was possible, but it would take work. He suggests such an Earth-centered perspective allows us think about these challenges through the Anthropocene and that perhaps Gaia was “the only entity able to mobilize in a new way science, politics and theology” (Latour, “Gifford Lectures” 8). Rather than being a pseudo-scientific attempt to dress up eco-paganism as Earth science—as some religious conservatives and skeptics have claimed—Latour claimed that Gaia was the “most secular figure of the Earth ever explored by political theory” (8).

The examples discussed above point to some of the efforts I believe are playing a role in the emergence of these Earthbound people. As I have tried to show, these efforts are still quite

dispersed, and sometimes the links may exist but are not readily apparent, making it challenging to say when something might be a part of these new Earthbound movements rather than simply another examples of already existing social or environmental justice activities within a broader framework of global social movements or transnational activism.

Two final examples may be helpful to once again call attention to what I have suggested are some of the unique aspects of these Earthbound movements. The first example is the Climate Justice, Gender and Food Sovereignty caravan, which came through Kathmandu, Nepal in late November of 2014 as part of a parallel People's South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (P-SAARC) gathering alongside the official SAARC meetings taking place in Kathmandu (see *Figure 2*). The local hosts of the caravan were the All Nepal Peasants Federation of Nepal (ANPFA), one of the peasant groups with roots in the early peasant social movements of the 1950s, and the All Nepal Women's Association, who have been vocal advocates for gender justice issues in post-conflict Nepal. "The main message of the caravan was to highlight the planetary emergency which is in force," noted Bangladeshi activist and caravan organizer Badrul Alam. He then went on to articulate some of the social movement linkages I have argued may help to unite the Earthbound people together.

Our only living planet so far found in the whole universe, earth, is in peril due to the global climate change as well as global warming...(TNCs) are playing pivotal role in Green House Gases effect on the atmosphere and the mother earth. They are doing everything for their own profit and capital. The human beings and existence of the mother earth is below their profit making target. They are just profit-mongers, nothing else. The caravan defended the declaration of the right of mother earth adopted in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2010 which recognized the living existence of the earth and the importance of its ecology...The main objective of the caravan is to build a strong grassroots movement network in South Asia which will be a complement to the global campaign on climate justice...We demand system change, not climate change. We have to go hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, united. (Alam)



Figure 3: Caravan activists in Kathmandu march as part of the street protests

An official Declaration was drafted by the caravan, which was then presented at the P-SAARC gather in Nepal as well as to the UNFCCC meetings (COP 20) in Peru the following year. The statement described its participants as “men and women, small farmers, Adivasis [Indigenous], agricultural labourers, workers, fishfolk, landless people, plantation workers, hawkers and youth” who share a common goal “to bring people together for climate justice and peoples solutions to the climate crisis... Together we are part of the global people’s resistance for climate justice” (South Asia Caravan). The Declaration included twelve demands, including issues of land reform, Indigenous rights, and rights for Mother Earth. But most interesting were the global networks that linked this movement together and which were made explicit at the end of the declaration, in this case articulated as a movement for climate justice.

Our demands form part of the wider movement for climate justice emerging across the world enshrined in the 2010 Cochabamba Declaration. We call for a further intensification of international solidarity between farmers’ movements and networks (such as La Via Campesina; Asian Peasant Coalition; South Asian

Peasant Coalition; People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty, Jubilee South Asia and the Pacific on Debt and Development) Climate Justice Networks such as Climate Justice Now! and Climate Justice Action; trade unions; and indigenous and Dalit peoples movements. (South Asia Caravan)

These are important examples of the networks and social movement linkages I have been arguing are emerging when these social and environmental justice and Indigenous rights efforts overlap around common political struggles in defense of people and the planet.

When I originally began some of this research in the late 2000s, I was more focused on social movements in Latin America, as Indigenous social movement activity was widespread, highly visible and raising cosmopolitical issues and our relationship to the Earth as a part of movement discussions that helped win Rights of Nature inclusions in Ecuador and Bolivia. In the Andean context, Indigenous social movements encompass a wide range of issues, but cultural and ecological preservation, sustainable development, political empowerment, and challenging extractivism are common themes articulated in most popular movements.

The intertwining of ecological and cultural preservation—sometimes referred to as biocultural preservation, biocultural heritage or biocultural diversity—has been gaining interest in recent years thanks to Indigenous movements and their impacts on international conservation bodies (e.g., UNESCO, UNDP, and UNEP) and key global political agreements (e.g., ILO Convention 169, CBD, UNDRIP). These venues have been used by Indigenous groups and social movement allies to push for recognition of land rights claims (including the Rights of Nature), to help protect their traditional agricultural and conservation practices, and as a tool to promote alternative forms of livelihood development and economic empowerment. There are a variety of organizations active across and within social movements that help to facilitate and foster these

international networks and support engagement with international policy issues, and I want to end by looking at two examples that show how social movements and global networks meet.

The first example is the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), a UK-based policy and advocacy organization that works to promote Indigenous knowledge, especially in relation to issues of land stewardship and legal rights. In 2005 they hosted a workshop titled “Protecting Community Rights over Traditional Knowledge: Implications of Customary Laws and Practices.” Workshop participants included individuals from India, China, Kenya, Panama and Peru working on protecting traditional knowledge, including an emerging international environmental concept known as Collective Bio-Cultural Heritage:

Knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities which are often held collectively and inextricably linked to traditional resources and territories; including the diversity of genes, varieties, species and ecosystems; cultural and spiritual values; and customary laws shaped within the socio-ecological context of communities. These components of knowledge systems and their ongoing interaction are vital for the use, creation and transmission of traditional knowledge, and are often linked to knowledge of cosmic forces (as part of indigenous peoples ‘cosmovision’ or holistic worldview). (International Institute for Environment and Development)

These ideas led to growing interest in developing Indigenous Biocultural Heritage Areas (IBCHAs) and Indigenous Biocultural Territories, such as the Andean Potato Park, which covers approximately 9,280 hectares (22,931 acres) in the Andean highlands outside Cusco, Peru which is collectively managed by six Indigenous Quechua communities as a center for genetic diversity of Andean potatoes and a demonstration site for Indigenous biocultural preservation (Parque de la Papa). The 2005 gathering included several individuals and organizations that would go on in 2014 to form the International Network for Mountain Indigenous Peoples (INMIP), with early members from Bhutan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines,

Taiwan, Tajikistan, and Thailand. This network articulates many Earthbound ideas, as seen in this statement on biocultural heritage landscapes and territories and cultural and spiritual values.

Biocultural heritage includes the traditional knowledge, biodiversity, landscapes, cultural and spiritual values and customary laws of indigenous peoples and local communities, which are all inter-connected and interdependent. The vision for Biocultural Heritage Territories is captured in the following definition: 'Land use mosaics encompassing indigenous and traditional land tenure, production and exchange systems, cultural identity, community organisation and simultaneous goals of endogenous development and biodiversity conservation.'

The cultural and spiritual values of indigenous peoples are critical to developing appropriate strategies to climate change adaptation in agriculture. The cultural and spiritual practices of indigenous mountain peoples' have developed out of a deep respect for the natural world and the relationships between human and natural environments. These traditions have enabled indigenous peoples to inhabit harsh, mountain environments as well as to adapt to climatic changes over the centuries. Responses to climate challenges that are consistent with indigenous peoples' worldviews are proven to be more effective in attaining food sovereignty and endogenous development goals, and serve as a means of strengthening community capacity. For indigenous peoples, responses to climate change require a renewed respect for nature, landscapes and food systems and the societies that sustain them. (International Network of Mountain Indigenous Peoples)

This idea of living well finds concrete expression in the Quechua concept of *sumak kawsay*, which embodies a holistic sense of communal health and well-being encompassing both human and nonhuman worlds, and similar notions exist among Andean Indigenous communities. Indigenous calls for a holistic sense of living well embodied in terms such as *sumak kawsay* have also been used to support wider political reforms, such as in the case of the Ecuadorian and Bolivian constitutions in recent years, which were some of the first countries to include rights for the Earth and to recognize Indigenous nationalities through various forms of plurinational and intercultural frameworks, both of which speak to the radical, democratic potential that is one aspect of the Earthbound people as I have theorized them here. While not without their problems, these examples point to the larger shift which I see tied up with these Earthbound movements.

Similar efforts have led to a growing link between mountain communities in the Himalaya and the Andes around issues such as biocultural heritage, food security, and climate adaptation in mountain communities which are highly vulnerable to glacial melt, floods and changing rainfall patterns, some of the same issues raised by the P-SAARC South Asia Caravan. The Bhutan Declaration on Climate Change and Mountain Indigenous Peoples, which was issued as part of the 2014 Mountain Communities Workshop on Climate Change and Biocultural Heritage held by INMIP, is another example of these global movement networks. The Bhutan Declaration included a list of 10 points which participants highlighted as key political themes. Several are of special interest given their links with the themes I have been exploring here:

1. Recognize the sacred nature and inherent rights of Mother Earth, particularly to its diversity, richness and the welfare of all its children, including plants, animals, rivers, mountains, birds, wind, rocks, spirits, etc., and adhere to the principles of reciprocity and balance with nature, which nurtures life for everyone.
2. Acknowledge and respect the world views and cultural and spiritual values of indigenous peoples and traditional farmers, and recognize the sacred nature of their seeds.
3. Respect and promote the Biocultural Heritage rights of indigenous peoples and traditional farming communities and fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
4. Promote the use of indigenous and traditional languages as living libraries of critical traditional knowledge associated to mountain biocultural heritage, and provide adequate funding for indigenous educational processes, learning models and pedagogical practices, involving the youth and elders in knowledge transmission.
10. Support the strengthening of local governance, customary laws, traditional authorities, and the Wisdom and participation of elders. (International Network of Mountain Indigenous Peoples)

As the various examples I have discussed in this paper suggest, existing social movement networks are pushing into new territory with cosmopolitical claims about reciprocity with nature and the welfare of the nonhuman world that go beyond simple claims about protecting species. The idea of an enlarged kinship network takes on not only affective political dimensions, but it

also informs deeper and more fundamental notions about law, politics and who counts as part of our community. That such arguments are finding resonance outside of Indigenous communities suggests that something new is emerging in the cross-pollination of these different movements. We can see this in the way the language of caring for Gaia, Mother Earth or Pachamama is being woven into social movement discourses, and in emerging movements for the Rights of Nature, which of both engage the state in different ways, some of which are still too radical for inclusion. What links them together are these new Earthbound social movement dynamics.

One the biggest theoretical challenge moving forward is to better understand if social movements are merely adapting or actually evolving in response to the New Climate Regime and Anthropocene geopolitics. If they are evolving, at what point do changes become significant enough to warrant new analytic categories to help us make sense of them? How should we think about the appearance of what scholars such as new civic Earth politics linked to various forms of eco-spiritual activism and “dark green” politics (Taylor)? Could an Earthbound social movement fuse secular Gaian Earth science with a belief and reverence for the Earth as sacred and alive? Is there a broad cosmopolitical vision with enough support to assemble a diverse global movement of peoples into something like an Earthbound political body? I believe the answer is a tentative yes. The Earthbound people are a bricolage or assemblage of diverse, interconnected movements all striving in their own way to manifest the World Social Forum’s spirit of “Another World is Possible” under a common reality experienced through the realities of the Anthropocene.

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