“The ‘State’ of Nature: Developing a Transnational Environmental Ethic in a Fragmented World”

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Presented at

2015 Western Political Science Association Annual Conference

Caesar’s Palace- Las Vegas, NV

Introduction

Both political and international relations theorists have struggled with how to overcome the paradox of the nation-state as it relates to the production and correction of global environmental problems. Although there is wide agreement among those who study global environmental politics that international cooperation is a necessary step in alleviating global environmental problems, the shape of this cooperation, the social and political forms that cooperation takes, and the role of the state in cooperation are all topics of contestation (See Conca and Dabelko 2010).

Informing this debate are the material realities and norms that underpin globalization, neoliberal capitalism, and state sovereignty, which all serve to naturalize certain (neo)liberal forms of social and political interaction and obscure alternative forms of local-state-global relations. Indeed, overlapping tensions manifest between increasingly transnational connections and fragmentations of authority, including the traditional nation-state system. As Ken Conca and Geoffrey D. Dabelko (2010) note, “We live in a world that is at once fragmented by the political division into sovereign states and reassembled by pervasive flows of people, goods, money, ideas, images, and technology across borders” (p. 2). In short, borders and identities are increasingly subjected to forces that both contest their rigidity and re-inscribe new forms of sovereignty and authority on both nation-states and groups that straddle these traditional borders (See Ong 2006).

 Despite the tensions between continued fragmentation and transnationalism, however, the nation-state remains powerful, and uniquely positioned in world politics. External and internal sovereignties, while contested, are far from obsolete. For example, while Robyn Eckersley (2005; 2007) argues that states still possess a great deal of power, and states themselves must change their configurations in order to address and engage meaningfully to solve global problems that span borders. Aside from their more traditional role of creating political subjects and monopolizing legitimate force, states have also begun to uphold and reinforce global norms and transnational practices. For example, William Connolly (2013) argues that states are vital to the functioning of the neoliberal world order, because states create conditions necessary for the operations of markets. Likewise, however, states also exist as necessary sites for legitimate social action that can contest the naturalization of neoliberal market rationality (Connolly 2013). Furthermore, states are also implicated in producing and reinforcing exceptions to neoliberalism and neoliberal exceptions, in addition to the traditional sovereign exception discussed by Giorgio Agamben (See Ong 2006; Agamben 1998). Eckersley, too, acknowledges the dual role that states can and do play as both advocates of constitutive structures such as “international anarchy, global capitalism, and administrative hierarchy” and as potential sites of counterhegemony and democratic politics (Eckersley 2005, p. 162).

If the state is both implicated in the production and reinforcement of global neoliberal hegemony, yet also constitutes a potential site for contesting these forms, where does the state fit, in particular, with regards to both environmental degradation and green politics? To investigate this question, I utilize Robyn Eckersley’s concept of “cosmopolitan nationalism” (See Eckersley 2007) as a starting point for understanding the role of a territorially rooted politics in combatting global environmental problems and neoliberalism generally. In particular, I will examine the utility of Eckersley’s emphasis on the vital role of states in global politics generally, and her use of the notion of “inclusive sovereignty” in developing a foundation for transnational environmental ethics. Ultimately, I find her critical political ecological position compelling but inadequate to the task of radically re-situating the state and the concept of statehood as a basis for combatting transnational and global environmental problems.

State Power and National Community under the Global Neoliberal Order

 Declining to accept that calls for transnational and cosmopolitan justice and democracy are sufficient endpoints for fully understanding the moral contours of the relationships between states, societies, and world politics, Robyn Eckersley (2007) has called for a “rescuing and reframing, of national identities so that they take on a more cosmopolitan character” (p. 675). For Eckersley, this rescue mission acknowledges the importance of both the power of nation-states and of membership in a national community for enabling meaningful political action, especially at the global level. Ultimately, finding solutions to global problems requires a reframing of the nation-state, its place in global politics, and its relationship to national civil society (Eckersley 2007).

 Although state power has shifted because of the rapid acceleration of both globalization and transnational networks, Compagnon et al (2012) argue that fully functioning states (as opposed to limited and failed states) retain exclusive rights of control over a particular territory. Likewise, they argue that in the context of global environmental governance and the proliferation of hybridized authority structures, the state still ultimately determines the success or failure of these governance mechanisms and whether or not they can act within certain contexts (Compagnon et al 2012). Since states are often ultimately responsible for their own environmental successes, they also tend to be highly responsible for environmental degradation within their borders. Eckersley (2005), for example, argues that radical political ecologists focused on developing global structures of environmental protection tend to downplay and overlook the responsibility that states have in perpetuating environmental destruction.

 Likewise, states remain powerful in that they uphold and reinforce the dominance of neoliberalism at the global level. For neoliberals, markets are not inherently rational, according to Connolly, but are fragile and require vigilant protection from state actors and institutions. For Connolly, states constitute self-organizing systems that remain powerful and necessary to the hegemony of neoliberalism in general. Given this power, however, states also can constitute critical actors and contesters of the neoliberal order, as territorially bounded sites of collective action. The creative potential of the state as a site of contestation, for Connolly, indicates both the fragility of neoliberalism (which is not self-sustaining, but rather, vitally requires the consent of and dissemination of values by states) and the fragility of current configurations of state power that uphold the neoliberal ideal (Connolly 2013).

 But accordingly, states do not constitute homogenous territorial units, and it is vital to examine the relationship between sovereignty, territoriality, and the production of citizens and inhabitants to understand the way that the role of the state has shifted with the neoliberalization of markets and state apparatuses. For example, Aihwa Ong (2006) argues that the nation-state no longer acts as a container of power, whose territorial boundaries sync up nicely with its administrative and coercive power. States remain powerful, of course, but developing states also often delegate power to non-state actors, especially MNCs, who subsequently exercise authority upon designated economic zones within state borders. In this regard, sovereignty no longer exists as “uniform effect of state rule but as the contingent outcomes of various strategies” (Ong 2006, p. 100). In this context, Ong focuses on the potential of states to invoke positive “exceptions,” that “create opportunities, usually for a minority, who enjoy political accommodations and conditions not granted to the rest of the population” (Ong 2006, p. 101).

 While the Global North tends to project and uphold the neoliberal order through the production of citizen consumers as the primary subject of the techniques of government, the South and what Compagnon et al refer to as limited states do not possess nearly as much control over the their sovereign territory as fully developed states. They argue that these “limited states” do not enjoy the same rights that fully developed states enjoy in the international arena; they survive on external sovereign recognition by other states, multilateral development aid, and borrowing. In short, these territorial units lack full authority over their territory. According to these authors, states are becoming increasingly subject to intrusion from transnational networks, MNCs, NGOs, and illegal networks in addition to being punished and subjected to global standards that they usually had no hand in developing (Compagnon et al 2012).

 As mentioned, states remain powerful in the global system, and a number of authors who do not consider themselves realists or neoliberal institutionalists have made this point, such as Connolly, Eckersley, and Ong. Critical constructivists like Eckersley have argued that the nation-state remains the most powerful producer of the social bond, contending that membership in a particularistic political community is necessary for the development of trust and reciprocal recognition. These social bonds, in turn, are essential for the pursuit of common goals (Eckersley 2007). This republican vision of how democratic nation-states function provides one reason why Eckersley sees the nation-state as essential to the production of values that could orient a particular society outward, toward an ethic of concern for outsiders and external ecological spaces—toward cosmopolitan sentiments.

 Equally important, Eckersley (2007) acknowledges that the social bond of citizenship and nationality is neither static nor uncontested. She argues that, “national identities are not simply inherited but actively produced and reproduced through social, political, and cultural practices” (p. 688). The nation as a people begins with the acknowledgement that citizens exist as situated selves within these communities. In this regard, Eckersley advocates a bottom-up approach to reframing the state as an inclusive, outward looking ally in the fight against global environmental degradation (Eckersley 2007).

Inclusive Sovereignty and Cosmopolitan Nationalism

 Despite the empirical realities of overlapping sovereignties and limited states in the Global South, Eckersley develops a notion of inclusive sovereignty that is particularly applicable to Western states based on the assumptions of republicanism and the importance of political community. In terms of “greening” the state through the norm of inclusive sovereignty, Eckersley argues that inhabitants of the nation-state must embrace norms of “nationhood and citizenship” that are oriented to the outside. For example, the nation-state should refuse to participate in environmental degradation that would impose environmental and social harms on future generations or outsiders/other nation-states (Eckersley 2005). Importantly, these new externally-oriented norms would be inclusive because the nation-state would now consider the environmental harms which might come to other actors in global society as a result of its degrading actions. For Eckersley, precaution would constitute one vital principle through which states and communities could at least partially ensure that their economic activities do not negatively affect outsiders (Eckersley 2005).

Instead of embracing a Habbermasian notion of the importance of procedural norms and free discourses surrounding those procedures as a basis for a cohesive national identity, Eckersley identifies cultural and nationalist sentiments as more likely to confer a sense of community, unity, and political commitment than procedural and communicative norms (Eckersley 2007). As mentioned, for Eckersley the production of cosmopolitan national sensibility comes “from below” i.e. from a combination of civil society, government, and other actors that constitute and produce national identities. She argues that,

A cosmopolitan national culture would need to be actively produced by cosmopolitan social agents within the nation to the point where a commitment to cosmopolitan justice is embedded in national institutions. Such agents would most likely include non-government organizations working in the areas of environment, aid, development, and health, student movements, internationalist trade unions, and the educational sector, from primary to tertiary levels. It would also include political leaders and cosmopolitan political parties and an independent, diverse and critical media that engages in extensive international reporting to the nation, helping it to understand and fix its place in the world (Eckersley 2007, p. 689).

Indeed, Eckersley’s vision of cosmopolitan nationalism invokes an internationally oriented state, which works at the international level through multilateral procedures and interactions to address issues of environmental degradation and justice (Eckersley 2007).

 Cosmopolitan nationalism (as a moral orientation to the external) and inclusive sovereignty (as a new method for orienting domestic policy toward external concerns) both rely on the democratic commitments of the state, accountability, and civic nationalist sentiments (Eckersley 2005; Eckersley 2007). This variant of national commitment does not prevent or discourage commitments to groups or individuals across borders. Indeed, the emphasis on national community, for Eckersley is necessary for meaningful political action both at the state and the global levels. Ultimately, the state and its orientation toward broader commitments of justice, democracy, and sustainability depend vitally on the commitment and solidarity of civil society actors and citizens at large within states. A sense of community and mutual recognition amongst citizens are both necessarily a priori to any broader commitments that one could hope to manifest toward the external or the global.

 To re-emphasize, cosmopolitan nationalism and a statist commitment to inclusive sovereignty vitally depends on the presence of a shared culture, especially a democratically oriented civic nationalism. Indeed, Eckersley (2004) argues that, “Without knowledge of and attachment to particular persons or particular places or species, it is hard to understand how one might be moved to defend the interests of persons, places, and species in general” (p. 190). Furthermore, “local social and ecological attachments provide the basis for sympathetic solidarity with others; they are ontologically prior to any ethical and political struggle for universal environmental justice” (Eckersley 2004, p. 190).

 Overall, then, Eckersley’s emphasis on these moral and practical commitments does not deny the importance of global commitments, but rather, emphasizes that these commitments are unlikely to be fostered without some form of community that is territorially rooted, values democracy, and therefore, political action (Eckersley 2004; 2007). Although Eckersley does not necessarily deny or ignore the overlapping layers of sovereignty that have emerged in the climate of neoliberal globalization, her vision is Western-centric, and does not deal with these “mutations in sovereignty” in a way that will empower territorially situated local communities to gain control over their own lives, livelihoods, and situations (See Ong 2006, cover). This critique will be extended in subsequent sections.

Implications for Global Environmental Politics

 For Eckersley, an inclusive green state can facilitate ecological citizenship, whereby multilateral environmental agreements can extend concern and ecological citizenship to those who might be affected by ecological degradation, but lie outside the borders of states that create those harms. Importantly, however, Eckersley eschews David Held’s commitment to the all-affected principle as overly idealistic and potentially exclusionary. Communities and citizens within particular states, instead, still constitute the primary object of international environmental agreements in Eckersley’s schema (Eckersley, 2004).

 As many authors of international relations and global environmental governance have noted, the boundaries of environmental problems and ecosystems themselves usually do not align neatly with the territorial borders of sovereign states. Given the global scope of many environmental issues, Eckersley acknowledges that states will have to become outward-looking for any meaningful progress to occur on environmental issues. Moreover, the state remains the primary actor in regulation and finance, situating it in a privileged position for devoting resources, time, and expertise to solving environmental problems both at home and abroad. Perhaps most importantly, Eckersley has argued that it is dangerous to assume that nonstate actors in global governance are more ecologically responsible, committed to ecologically sustainable outcomes, or more democratically accountable than more traditional state-based multilateral environmental governance or state government (Eckersley 2005).

 As a critical constructivist, Eckersley also argues that agents can redefine international norms of external and internal sovereignty, and in turn, can redefine the nation-state’s exclusive relationship to territory in order to better address environmental issues that cross borders at the international level through multilateral agreements and actions (Eckersley 2005). Overall, then, Eckersley is optimistic about the agency of citizens to redefine the role of the state in international society. Indeed, for her

Critical constructivists understand state sovereignty as a protean concept, the meaning of which is determined by a web of constitutive discourses, that are constantly contested and evolving (such as the norms of nonintervention, self-determination…the so-called right to develop, the principle of permanent sovereignty over national resources, and so forth). The lesson for the green movement is that by playing a more informed and self-conscious role in the debates over the meaning and application of these norms, the movement might help to redefine sovereignty as an ally in its broader global project (p. 160-1).

The hope then, for the greening of the nation-state, is that civil society actors can utilize their agency and their situatedness to redefine the norm of sovereignty in a way that ultimately enhances the ability of other states to have a say in what goes on within the territory of other states, who are often responsible for devastating ecosystems and creating global environmental problems that do not remain within their own territorial borders (Eckersley 2004; Eckersley 2005).

Critical Observations on Sovereignty and Statehood

The first problem that emerges in Eckersley’s work relates to the fact that she only discusses changing the norm of external sovereignty, which only partially solves the problem of the exclusionary tendency of states. Indeed, it is unlikely that the norm of external sovereignty can be shifted without a radical departure in the structure and norms surrounding internal sovereignty, or the “monopoly [of states] on legitimate force” (See Weber 1946). Although Eckersley does acknowledge that internally, national communities are more likely to possess orientations towards cosmopolitan values if they are democratic, this emphasis on national community, common shared values and culture, and democracy does not overcome some fundamental issues that internal sovereignty itself produces at the level of the nation-state. This section will illuminate some of these fundamental issues and why changing the norms of external sovereignty do not necessarily overcome the problems with sovereignty that have manifested in the current climate of neoliberal globalization.

First, internal sovereignty and national communities are fragmented and states now permit “violations” of their external sovereignty by MNCs and NGOs that have particular visions of world politics. For example, Aihwa Ong has argued that, “the neoliberal stress on economic borderlessness has induced the creation of multiple political spaces and techniques for differentiated governing within national terrain” (Ong 2006, p. 77). Ong’s concept of graduated sovereignty illustrates this point and invokes changes in both internal and external sovereignty. Ong argues that under conditions of graduated sovereignty, neoliberal non-state actors do not necessarily utilize territorial borders as their frame of reference when making political and economic decisions. Rather, she argues that neoliberalism has created differential zones of governing and discipline, resembling a patchwork of sovereignty across developing states (Ong 2006). In particular, she argues that,

Negatively defined, some zones are freed from national laws regarding taxation, labor rights, or ethnic representation. Spaces defined positively promote opportunities to upgrade skilled workers, to improve social and infrastructural facilities, to experiment with greater political rights, and so on (Ong 2006, p. 78).

According to Ong, these patchworked zones create not only differential applications of state sovereignty and state influence, but also create differential or graduated forms of citizenship. For example, she argues that neoliberalism itself calculates which populations are advantageous for global markets and which are not, and this logic is supported by “practical adjustments and compromises in national sovereignty” by the state (Ong 2006, p. 78).
 In this regard, internal sovereignty no longer provides a universal shield against the intrusion of non-state actors into positions of authority over both citizens and non-citizens confined within territorial borders. Likewise, states, rather than being powerless to stop these “intrusions” on internal sovereignty, are often implicated in creating and reinforcing neoliberal exceptions to the meaningfulness of citizens as subjects of state authority and sovereign power. State actors often agree to neoliberal arrangements that “either purposely or by default renege on the protections of their citizens and territories that historically imparted legitimacy to their rule” (Peluso 2007, p. 90). Significantly, internal sovereignty becomes fragmented, creating differing degrees and gradations in citizenship and sovereign state authority over populations (Ong 2006).

 Similarly, an analysis of NGO work within developing and lesser developed states, especially within the environmental arena, also indicates that certain groups of citizens and noncitizens are more subject to intrusion by outside actors than those who constitute ideal citizens, according to state and neoliberal doctrines of political subjectivity (see forthcoming section on the production of political subjectivity). This point will be discussed further as it relates, in particular, to environmental governance and non-state actors acting within the developing world.

 Given these fragmentations that occur within the territorial borders of states, it is difficult to imagine creating the type of inclusive external sovereignty imagined by Eckersley in the face of differential gradations of citizenship, especially in the Global South. Under neoliberalism, the state (and especially Southern states) no longer acts as glue that holds together the national community of citizens; the promises of citizenship are no longer simply guaranteed by states but rather are granted and revoked through the interaction of states with the forces of neoliberal markets (Colectivo Situaciones 2002). Granted, many states have historically violated the human dignity of their citizenry, but the current configuration of power between the state and neoliberal authorities rests on an implicit assumption that neoliberalism constitutes the ideal of good global governance.

 Indeed, even fully developed states in the North, though less subject to the intrusions on sovereignty by neoliberal actors still exercise the power to decide who constitutes the ideal of citizenship and who does not count as a citizen. This traditional authority of states is now intimately tied to the neoliberal ethic as well. In Northern states, the ideal citizen is no longer the rights bearer with obligations to the state, but rather the consumer (See Connolly 2013; Colectivo Situaciones 2002). Just as Connolly suggests that states are vital to operation of neoliberalism itself, states also remain vital to the production of citizens that accept the capitalist order. In particular, then, states have lost their central importance as the sole legitimate producers of political and economic subjectivities. Indeed, the free market/ consumerist subjectivity produced by the neoliberal capitalist ethic has superseded the state’s production of political subjectivity. In this regard, the state now exists as a supporter of neoliberal ideology and attempts to produce political subjectivities that are, at the very least, friendly to and supportive of the neoliberal order.

Ultimately, Eckersley’s emphasis on inclusive external sovereignty is too hasty because it ignores both the current configurations of internal sovereignty that prevent the production of a national community of citizenry with cosmopolitan loyalties and external orientations toward sustainability, and the fragmentations in sovereignty that produce new subjects that do not coincide with traditional state central authorities. Giorgio Agamben (1998) has extensively referred to the first problem with internal sovereignty as the “sovereign exception” or the “sovereign ban,” whereby sovereignty is not simply the ability of states to exercise ultimate authority over their populations, but rather the structure of rule where the law acts as its own referent. In short, the concept of sovereignty as ruling over a population is the power to decide on life and death; the power of the sovereign is the power to decide who is included and who is excluded as a legitimate subject of the law and, therefore, deserving of life (Agamben 1998).

The entire foundation of the state system, therefore, is built upon a false premise: that there is some legitimate basis to the concept of rule over a people within a particular territory. By contrast, however, the sovereign authority of the state derives from its power (not its inherent right) to designate exclusions, and exceptions to the norm of citizenship and the citizenry’s relationship to the law itself. The sovereign state itself is exempt from the law, and this constitutes a top-down, imposed form of rule that is neither ultimately accountable to the inhabitants of a particular territory, nor ultimately legitimate as a fixer of territory itself.

Although Eckersley argues that agents within a state can change the norms that produce certain dominant conceptions of sovereignty, with which I concur, she neither interrogates the inherent problems with the foundation of internal sovereignty itself (the sovereign right to designate the exception) nor does she problematize the current configurations of exception that exist primarily in the global South (and are often imposed upon “Southern” populations that inhabit the North), that fragment national communities into sectors which are subject to different experiences of authority, and therefore, exception and exclusion.

The State and a Cosmopolitan Environmental Politics?

The struggle against global environmental problems is very much territorially situated, and at least partially dependent upon the particular social and political situation within a particular territory. Eckersley and others who advocate for a greening of the state from the perspective of loosening the exclusive norms of external sovereignty fail to acknowledge that global environmental problems have differential effects that are unlikely to be solved by multilateral agreements that may fail to take the differential capacities of states into account, but which definitely cannot account for the fact that certain groups and states are differentially impacted by environmental change. Given these complexities, three major problems emerge due to Eckersley’s focus on both inclusive sovereignty and cosmopolitan nationalism in the environmental context.

First, Eckersley assumes a global narrative of environmental change and degradation that would empower citizens within states in the North to converge around these narratives and extend their concern (or cosmopolitan national sentiments) beyond the borders of the nation-state. The problem with this narrative, however, is that it fundamentally ignores the complexities of global environmental change, broadly, and climate change in particular. Perhaps most importantly, it is at best unclear how cosmopolitan selves can be nurtured in a context where global environmental change might actually benefit that particular national population. For example, O’Brien and Leichenko (2010) argue that certain groups and regions may experience the “net benefits” of climate change including “lower winter heating costs owing to warmer temperatures, a longer agricultural growing season, increased forest productivity, or an expansion of tourism owing to land use changes. In other words, global environmental change is likely to create both winners and losers” (p. 158).

Second, the norm of noninterference has already been demolished in many developing nation-states, and parks preservation examples in the Global South demonstrate how reconfiguring this norm has neither halted environmental degradation nor empowered local constituencies. Nancy Peluso argues that states in the Global South have willingly allowed NGOs to take control of local lands in order to gain power over local communities. In short, NGOs can manage parks or natural resource areas at the behest of the state, disempowering local communities and sometimes forcibly removing them in the name of preservation (Peluso 2007).

Likewise, for at least three decades the World Bank has utilized loan conditionalities that effectively force states to accept water privatization in exchange for development and other vital World Bank loans. Oftentimes, these programs further restrict the access that communities have to fresh water, and construct poverty ridden communities as consumers who should pay for access to clean water (Goldman 2007). In this context, multinational corporations often gain control over the building of water distribution and sanitization systems, which confers the costs of this construction onto already poverty-stricken, desperate communities. In South Africa, for example, rich white communities have widespread access to clean water, while struggling minority communities continue to be subject to forms of sovereignty from non-state actors who exercise control, ultimately over their lives, essentially treating them as bare life—as disposable consumers (See Goldman 2007).

These fragmentations in sovereignty allow corporations to produce consumers as the subjects of governance, rather than cohesive national communities. It is far from clear whether loosening the norms of external sovereignty to combat environmental degradation would ultimately alleviate the suffering of local communities or whether it would open up new possibilities to extend the power of the sovereign ban to nonstate actors.

And finally, by accepting internal sovereignty as given, Eckersley does not account for the possibility of states of exception to be declared in response to ecological crises.For example, Mick Smith argues that, “the state’s recognition of ecological crises will certainly not lead it to encourage an ecological politics. Quite the contrary, it will be co-extensive with the imposition of emergency measures and potentially disastrous technological, even militaristic ‘ﬁxes’” (Smith 2009, p. 110). Ecological crises and global environmental change, in this context, may only empower states to re-entrench their grip on internal sovereignty, thereby completely ignoring their potential role in producing and nurturing ecological and cosmopolitan selves.

Overall, the dominance of neoliberal capitalism, and the entanglement of both powerful states and developing states with these ideals may preclude even the bottom-up construction of cosmopolitan selves eager to extend concern for environmental problems across borders. Although both states and neoliberal actors now act as sovereigns, produce consumer subjectivities, and designate exceptions, the lack of focus on internal sovereignty in Eckersley’s work ignores the ways in which the sovereign exception itself allows for fragmentations in sovereignty within traditionally rigid territorial boundaries. The danger that the declaration of exceptions could extend to the management of ecological crises also precludes the possibility that new norms of external sovereignty might emerge in the first place. In short, the sovereign exception must be dismantled in order for communities to gain control over the production of their own identities, their own situations as they relate to environmental change and degradation, and their development of concern across borders, especially with other communities who may be able to help or who may be similarly affected by environmental change.

Conclusions and Future Research

 Overall, this essay has interrogated the role that states play in environmental degradation, the production of subjectivity, and the maintenance of both internal and external norms of sovereignty by critically examining Robyn Eckersley’s work on greening the nation-state. While compelling, Eckersley’s concepts of inclusive sovereignty and cosmopolitan nationalism fail to deal with the problems of fragmented sovereignty and the sovereign exception itself. Similarly, the greening of the state democratically and from the bottom-up not only requires the cultivation of new norms of cosmopolitanism within national communities, but also fundamentally requires the reconfiguration of internal sovereignty in a way that would empower communities to create their own identities as subjects of governance and as situated selves in the context of global environmental change.

 Future research should focus on how, precisely, norms of internal sovereignty fundamentally disempower particular actors within nation-states while empowering and extending full citizenship to others. In particular, research must theorize the following question: how can communities escape the limitations that both fragmentations in sovereignty and the sovereign exception itself places on their agency while also extending their concern for the welfare of others across traditional national boundaries? Importantly, current configurations of sovereignty and subjectivity production not only fragment national communities, but also structurally situate the haves (the consumers/the real subjects of government and citizenship) against those who can be marginalized, dislocated, or even killed in the name of (sustainable) development, preservation, and neoliberalism.

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