

How Climate Change Might Save the World*

ULRICH BECK | LUDWIG-MAXIMILIANS-UNIVERSITY MUNICH

We are faced with questions too big to fail and too big to answer. Most discussions on climate change are blocked; they are caught by catastrophism circulating in the horizon of the problem: what is climate change *bad* for? From a sociological point of view, because climate change is a threat to humanity, we can and should turn the question upside down and ask: what is climate change *good* for? The amazing thing is that if you firmly believe climate change is a fundamental threat to all of humanity, then that belief might bring a transformative, cosmopolitan turn in our contemporary life and the world might be changed for the better. This is what I call 'emancipatory catastrophism'. The question then is: how might climate change save the world?

First thesis: Climate change is the embodiment of the mistakes of a whole epoch of industrial capitalism, and climate risks pursue their acknowledgement and correction with all the violence of the possibility of annihilation.

Global risks are a kind of collective return of the repressed, wherein the self-assurance of the industrial capitalism, organized in form of nation-state politics, is confronted with the source of its own errors as an objectified threat to its own existence. Thus the global risk of climate change is a kind of compulsive, collective memory of the fact that past decisions and mistakes are contained in what we find ourselves exposed to; and that even the highest degree of institutional reification is nothing but a reification that can be revoked – a borrowed mode of action which can, and must, be changed if it leads to self-jeopardization.

Put differently, the sociological significance of climate change lies in the

*This paper is a rough first draft presented at the workshop held in Potsdam in November 2013.

momentum it generates in the re-emergence of the historicity of society and politics on a global scale, thereby allowing us to imagine new beginnings. Therefore, climate change risk can, as we shall see, be made into cosmopolitan communities of shared risks or even into an antidote to war; it induces the necessity to overcome neo-liberalism and to perceive and to practice new forms of transnational responsibility. It empowers the poor countries of the world and gives them a public voice; it puts the problem of cosmopolitan justice on the agenda of international politics; it creates informal and formal cooperation patterns between countries and governments who otherwise ignore each other or even see themselves as enemies. It makes economic and public actors accountable and makes responsible those who do not want to be accountable and responsible, and this happens even when they have the law on their side. It opens up new world markets, new innovation patterns; it changes lifestyles and consumption patterns. Last but not least, it induces new understandings of and caring for nature. All of this happens under the surface of the mantra of disappointments and disillusionments at the *Wanderzirkus* (traveling circus) of one climate conference after the other. From this perspective, climate change means first of all the end of the end of politics with highly ambivalent implications: global risk imposes a historical necessity for a cosmopolitan turn in politics but at the same time – and exactly because of this – it empowers anti-cosmopolitan movements.

In the present moment, however, this re-emergence of politics remains clouded by the dominance of apocalyptic imaginaries in public discourse. It is limited by the inability of sociological thinking to analyse the transformation of the political and imagine new openings. To combat the sources of climate pessimism, we need a new cosmopolitan outlook, in research and politics, capable of grasping the epochal transformations of economy, culture, society and politics set in motion by the global risk of climate change.

Second thesis: Sociologically and politically, the key is to distinguish risk from catastrophe. Risk is not catastrophe, but rather, the anticipation of future catastrophe in the present, as a horizon of the present future. The obsession with risk is to avoid catastrophe; the logic of global risk is one of self-destroying prophecies.

As previous arguments have stated (Beck et al. 2013: 6), global risks are highly ambivalent, since the threat of ending also creates opportunities of new beginnings. Risk arrives as a threat, but it brings hope. Political action

and community building in the age of cosmopolitization is made possible by the perceived globality of climatic threats, which melts the cast-iron system of national and international politics and makes it open to change. Global risks create transnational public concerns, public awareness, and situations that demand immediate public action – in other words, a geopolitics of global publics (Volkmer 2012).

The question we have to pose for the social sciences is the following: what happens if we put the transformative power of climate change into the focus of theory and research?

Third thesis: The second modernity of world risk society breaks with the models of the reproduction of social and political order, setting in motion a whole range of new cosmopolitan dynamics, trajectories and regimes of transformation.

What progressive intellectuals could not foresee is that the revolution they were looking for has already happened, albeit not in the transformation of the means of production, but rather in the movements of the carbon circle. In a time when people on both the left and the right lament the lack of revolutionary spirit, it is left to the history of nature's cunningness to make clear that the revolution is occurring. This is an unseen and unwanted revolution – a global revolution of the side-effects of side-effects. Talk of the 'anthropocene' signals that geologists have now caught up with the reality of world risk society (Beck 2009; Latour 2013).

The reinvention of politics and the return of 'societal history' (*Gesellschaftsgechichte*) is not happening intentionally. It is not driven by utopias, or even by political struggles. Instead, it emerges from the laboratories of future-making in economy, science, technology and law, as a modality of not-knowing and not-identifying the causes and consequences. As shown so clearly in the case of the anthropogenic release of carbon, the reflexivity of second modernity arises from the fact that society now finds itself confronted with the unwanted and unintended side-effects of its own modernizing urge. To paraphrase John Dewey from *The Public and Its Problems* (1954), a world risk society is one in which the unintended and accumulated consequences of myriad habitual actions have rendered existing social and political institutional frameworks obsolete, producing a heightened awareness that narratives of mastery and control are impossible fictions.

The geological faults laid bare by the global risks in world politics have served to frustrate routine expectations and to doom the trusted instruments

of theory and politics to failure. This applies not least to sociologists, whose theories and empirical studies tend to inquire into the *reproduction* of the social and political order instead of its *transformation*. The relevant authors go on to inquire with reference to the present and the future about how society continues to reproduce itself, whether in the class system (Pierre Bourdieu), the system of power (Michel Foucault), the bureaucracy (Max Weber) or the autopoietic system (Niklas Luhmann).

However, if we look at the decisive events and trends of recent decades – I have in mind the Chernobyl disaster, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 on the World Trade Center, climate change, the credit crunch, and the crisis of the euro – we find they have two features in common. First, before they actually happened they were *inconceivable*; and, second, they are *global* both in themselves and in their consequences. They are literally world events and they enable us to perceive the increasingly dense network of interconnections between people's lives and actions and to realize that these interconnections can no longer be comprehended with the tools and categories appropriate to the nation-state. These events were not just inconceivable in practical terms within the paradigm of the nation-state and its reproduction; they fall completely outside the national framework and thus render it open to question.

At the dawn of first modernity, the classics of sociology developed a style of analysis which was simultaneously diagnosing 'social transformation' – based on the arch-distinction between tradition and modernity – and, paradoxically, forgetting the historicity of modernity itself. History was caged into the framework of *national* history and the unforeseeability of the future was tamed via narratives of rationalization and progress. The presentism of classical sociology led to the creation of a temporally 'blind' concept of modernization, in which history is always fundamentally the same. Underneath the diagnostics of innovation and social change, the secular religion of the nation dominates and constrains all social and political thinking. This is the in-built contradiction of classical sociology, from Hobbes and onwards: even as history implies an expectation of the unexpected and of the eruption of the 'very other', this kind of expectation is domesticated into the reproduction of the past – or else grasped as a threat of chaos and disorder (cf. Beck and Levy 2013).

Grasping these transformations, however, requires a fundamental break with the dominant metaphysics of social reproduction, which always shows the circular re-emergence of the same basic patterns and dualisms of modernity. Such a break, however, which acknowledges the re-emergence of

historicity, represents an epistemological and political threat in that it challenges the established scientific disciplines and their various monopolies on expert authority. This is visible, for instance, in the way presumptions of the reproduction of socio-political order is built into dominant constructions of globality, including in macroeconomic forecasts and techno-scientific constructions of the global climate (cf. Guyer 2007; Szerszynski 2010). Framed by the metaphysics of reproduction, such globalities may be learned, exported, and used as a common model for integrating and domesticating politics. Since the future is conceptualized as part of the experience of the past, there is no basic disconnect but rather only a matter of linear extensions. It is a model close to timeless eternity: present society dominates and colonizes the future, thus rendering it controllable.

To sociology, breaking with the reproduction of social order and working towards a social theory of cosmopolitan transformation implies its own set of epistemological and methodological difficulties. In first modernity, there exists an elective affinity between orthodox appeals to the reproduction of social structures and the practice and authority of empirical sociology: the metaphysics of reproduction allows for the establishment of social laws and regularities, enabling sociologists to make prognoses, do comparative studies, and so on. In second modernity, the situation of sociologists is akin to what Tocqueville said of the 'human spirit': if modernity breaks with continuity, since the past stops to throw its light on the future, the human spirit (i.e., the sociologist) is lost in darkness! When taking historicity seriously, then, sociologists find themselves in a difficult situation, since they can no longer use the past or the present to talk about the future; from now on, they have to concentrate on the future itself, without the security belt of the past. Cosmopolitan sociology, in short, must reorient itself towards an unknown and unknowable future, made present in the temporal horizons of global risk. With global risks, old monopolies on reality definitions are being dissolved, and expert definitions of reality relying on the metaphysics of reproduction become irrational.

The apocalyptic climate change is, maybe, the best documented fact we ever had. We never knew more about the present global warming, but knowing seems not to stimulate action but rather the opposite: to deny the facts.

Fourth thesis: The main source of climate pessimism, which underlies the present dominance of apocalyptic imaginaries, lies in a generalized incapacity to rethink fundamental questions of social and political order – specifically, the

understanding of 'the political' including the dualism between national and international politics. The secondary side-effect of climate change has transformed the logic of 'either-or' (national politics) into a 'both-and' of 'global domestic politics' (Beck 2012). In this sense, there is a certain affinity between the theory of risk society and Ernst Bloch's principal of hope – because global risk implies the message that it is high time for us to act! That is the paradox of encouragement we derive from global risks.

Many environmentalists and climate scientists believe that because of the looming catastrophe, science has to dominate politics; some even argue (behind closed doors) that in order to save the world, politics needs a technocratic turn against democracy.

But there is also an important ignorance concerning environmental issues which is shared not intentionally but unintentionally just by referring to the concept of 'environmentalism'. Speaking of 'the environment' implies separating the world of politics from the world of nature and its destruction. If 'the environment' only includes everything which is not human and not social – that is, only 'nature' – then the concept is sociologically and politically empty. If the category of 'the environment' includes human action and society, then it is scientifically mistaken and politically suicidal. The concept of 'catastrophic environmentalism' is emptying ecology of its politics, as Bruno Latour has shown in *Politics of Nature* (2004). If climate scientists and ecologists ever had the clout necessary to meet the threats they were so good at revealing, it is because they hoped to bypass politics for good.

John Urry criticizes excess capitalism. Here again we have the same deadlock: capitalism is seen as a major force of the reproduction of order. It is conceptualized as 'excessive' in a (somehow) linear way, but the question of 'transformation of capitalism by the production of excessive global risks' is not being asked with the same intellectual energy and imagination.

Anthony Giddens rethinks the politics of climate change implicitly affirming and reproducing of the international relations. In principle, climate change can be related to this image of national and international politics in two ways: firstly, politics of climate change can be seen and analyzed as *subordinate* to the reproduction of the Westphalian order; secondly, climate change can be seen as a major force *transforming* it – redefining, remaking – state and interstate politics. If a theorist chooses the first framing of the problematic, like Anthony Giddens does, then his diagnosis is locked in the system of national and international politics. He doesn't take into consideration the increasing *dysfunctionality* of nation-state politics in itself

and of all kinds of organizations and institutions on the international and the national level which are facing the existential risks. Under the stress of time he raises the question of what state politics can do for climate politics. He analytically excludes the global observation that there is an emancipation against state politics on its way which might continue until the 'political' itself has been reshaped.

In his book *The Nomos of the Earth*, first published in 1950 and written in Berlin during the Second World War, Carl Schmitt seems to have touched early on the nerve in the relationship between geopolitics and climate change and the transformation of the world order. The concept of *Nomos* by Schmitt means the concrete spatial order of a community. It is a 'law of nature' which exists prior to any particular positive laws. '*Der Nomos der Erde*' is thus roughly equivalent to 'world order' or 'the Law of the Earth' and thus defines a problem space in which notions of world order, climate change, and international politics intersect.

Schmitt is above all a territorial thinker. But he is more than that; he is a thinker believing in the anthropological necessity of an earthbound character of humanity. *Nomos*, as he puts it, is a '*fence word*' (Schmitt 2003: 75): it creates territory, defines locality, marks places, separates backyards, and defines households. *Nomos* therefore is the counter concept of 'globalization' and 'cosmopolitization', forces which strip human kind of its ties to the earth and orientation on it.

Schmitt's *Nomos* reminds us that we find ourselves totally unprepared to deal with the material conditions of our atmospheric existence. He looks at the transformation of *Nomos*, but at the same time makes it very clear: there is *no* transformation of politics. "A world in which the possibility of war is utterly limited, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of a friend and enemy and hands a world without politics." (Latour 2013: 35)

One of the main objections which come to mind is that Schmitt liked what he saw. He raised the friend-foe-dualism; he distilled from the perverse, war-driven politics of 20th century Europe to the rank of eternal law of all and any politics. In and for this world of uncertainties Schmitt has the vision and mission of a transcendental truth: the unconditional, unchanging, irreversible concept of 'the political' – the inner-connection between war and politics.

As Bruno Latour (2013) puts it: "Schmitt's choice is terribly clear: either you agree to tell foes from friends, and then you engage in politics, sharply defining the borderlines of real enough wars – 'wars about what the world is made of' –; or you shy away from waging wars and having enemies, but then

you do away with politics, which means that you are giving yourself over to the protection of an all-encompassing State of Nature.”

Surprisingly, Latour agrees. “It will be Germany May 1945: unconditional surrender. It’s a stark choice, I agree: either nature extinguishes politics, or politics resuscitates nature – that is, finally agrees to face Gaia... How I wish I could entertain you with smoothing words about the splendor of natural parks, the beauty of God’s Creation or the stunning new discoveries of the earth system sciences! But the dark job of politics has to be done first. For this we have to define (a): What is the threat, (b) who are the enemies and (c) which sort of geo-politics we will end up with?” (Latour 2013: 106)

Fifth thesis: Realistically, it might be impossible to achieve a positive consensus in world risk society, but it is most likely to achieve a negative consensus on what, under all conditions, has to be avoided: the global catastrophe. From this arrives the cosmopolitan imperative: cooperate and share or do not cooperate and die.

Here we have reached a radical and surprising outlook: that creating cosmopolitan communities of shared risk does not depend first of all on existing structures or (national or international) institutions, or even on democracy. Rather it depends on what has been neglected in the debates on climate change and what sociologists ‘once upon a time’ named ‘society’; or to say it in other words: a new social basis or contract for an agreement and simultaneous action across borders against a backdrop of anticipated catastrophes. In this context, the common interest to cooperate starts to become part of each competitor’s national self-interest. The new cosmopolitan politics of climate change is about bridging the friend-foes split of national politics. A common interest in survival beyond borders can be constructed.

Therefore in world risk society, paradoxically, cooperation between foes is not about self-sacrifice, but rather, about self-interest. To put it another way, we could say that the more intense, visible, and threatening the anticipation of the emerging catastrophe to humanity becomes at one level, the greater the drive towards bridging differences and creating cosmopolitan risk communities (between world cities) – facing all kinds of resistances, frictions, contradictions and dilemmas.

Having seen that creating trans-border risk communities fundamentally depends neither on democracy nor on existing institutional structures but actually on a new kind of *cosmopolitan common sense* – enabling an

agreement to act simultaneously – we arrive at yet another surprising conclusion: that the issue of whether each nation's (or city's) decision to cooperate in such an agreement is made democratically or in some other way is entirely secondary. The primary issue is simply *the fact* that all nations (or cities) have agreed to cooperate – the fact they see cooperation as in their self-interest. Only then are cosmopolitan risk communities between democratic and non-democratic nations/cities possible. From this we could imagine that while democratic nations may decide to participate in binding transnational and trans-local law (Blank 2006) or cosmopolitan regimes as a result of their authoritarian internal democratic processes, non-democratic nations may do so by the simple decision of their own government.

So far, we have asked what the basic conditions for the rise of cosmopolitan politics are. However, we have to ask the opposite question as well. What are the basic obstacles for a cosmopolitan turn in politics?

Sixth thesis: The reproduction of the national order depends simply on this principle – elections are organized nationally; democratic legitimated politics is, so far, monopolized by the nation-state.

We have to distinguish clearly between *legitimation* and the (*in*) *effectiveness* of politics. Because the monopoly of legitimation by the nation-state still exists and is being reproduced, even nation-centric politics becomes dysfunctional. There is no answer to global problems, but there is no voting for cosmopolitan politics so far. In the European crises it can be observed that taking the next step to a cosmopolitan Europe might bring about accusations of breaking the constitutional law. Thus, it is the national law system as well reproducing the national order of politics.

However, it is not only national law and national politics but *international competition* as well that obscure the cosmopolitan turn in politics. In other words, it is not that politicians don't understand the urgency to revive politics transnationally. It is perhaps not a question of better knowledge or of 'cosmopolitan enlightenment', but rather, it is that they fear that the turn to cosmopolitan politics will harm the economic competitiveness of their national industries in the global market. The problem, then, lies not so much with the individual politicians or government, but with the competitive relationship between nation-states. It lies with the fact that no government can rely on all other governments to implement the same regulations. Indeed, each can fairly confidently rely on others *not* doing so because all of them seem to have no choice but to keep their economies internationally

competitive. The reproduction of the national order of politics and society does rest on this fear all nations have of losing out.

Therefore, there is *a hidden coalition between neo-liberalism and nationalism* – against the cosmopolitan turn. The international competition between nation-states *empowers* mobile capital. The more individual states are replaceable and interchangeable with one another, the more the power of capital grows.

Also, we should not underestimate that cosmopolitization is seen as an aggression which threatens the national order in the eyes of nationalists. Many people experience cosmopolitization through global risks as an outside attack to national sovereignty and identity. Because cosmopolitization overrules even ‘anthropological certainties’, the reaffirmation of those certainties becomes the main resource for anti-cosmopolitan movements both inside and outside of the party systems. For example, in Europe, there has been a revolutionary movement, but this movement is not in favor of (more) Europe but rather of less Europe, and it is anti-European in its motives and mission.

Last but not least, cosmopolitization can lead to two opposite forms of cooperation and integration: either participation in terms of *equality* (reciprocity) or hierarchical dependence: *hegemony*. As Europeans, South Americans, etc. have experienced in the NSA scandal, on one hand, the superpower USA defines its national security interests globally, ignoring the security interests of their partners and friends, while on the other, asking them for help and cooperation to do so. Between more or less powerful nations there is a great temptation to exploit the need to cooperate with other nations for hegemonic purposes.

Seventh thesis: Cosmopolitization is irreversible and normative while political cosmopolitanism is not. Cosmopolitization, i.e. the fact that in a world of global risk and existential interconnectedness ‘the other’ cannot be excluded any longer, does provoke contradictory reactions: anti-cosmopolitan mentality, identities, movements, and cosmopolitan consciousness and necessities for cosmopolitan visions and agendas at the same time.

There is a false separation between cosmopolitan politics and the politics of conflict (Martell 2009). I argue that we are at a moment where nations have a choice between:

- (a) a cosmopolitan regime which adapts to another cosmopolitan

modernity so that new threats can be countered or

(b) a return to Hobbesian war of all against all in which military might replace global law. (Beck 2006: 125)

Those alternatives – that is the point! – do not exclude each other. In fact, in order to solve global problems in a cosmopolitan way, (a) is a necessary condition, but also recognition that this will be structured by (b) and conflict between groups such as states over the solution, in which actors would be best off assessing were to take sides in the conflict rather than hoping for consensus. The first (a) needs to be pursued, but within a context that understands that it will be a matter of conflict and struggle between competing interests rather than one of ‘cosmopolitan consensus’.

We have to look at the conflictual basis that makes cosmopolitan politics problematic. The goodness of the good is not enough to make the case for cosmopolitanism. It must also be realistic, and an optimist of the cosmopolitan outlook can also be a pessimist of the cosmopolitan mission. Analyzing the problems of real cosmopolitanism involves looking at its ambivalents, ambiguities and ideological misuses. We have to raise the issue of how normative visions in the past have been linked to ‘imperialism, colonialism, two World Wars, the Holocaust, the Stalinist Gulag’. My hope is that the normative cosmopolitan vision will not be ‘torn apart’ by its own ‘contradictions and adversaries’. Thus ‘for social science and politics, hope is too little’ (Beck 2000: 95).

There is a pragmatic approach to cosmopolitan politics (Martell 2009), an understanding of the conflicts involved over, say, environmental issues; judgments on what sides certain economic interests, political objectives and outcomes lie; calculations about possibilities for alliances or multilateral (rather than global) agreements along such lines; and politics around such a view of conflict and alliances. This is an international politics – a means in pursuit of cosmopolitan and humanitarian objectives. But it is based on conflict and alliances where they can be sought out and built, rather than on a hope for global common consciousness in a world divided by divergent economic interests and ideologies.

The main misunderstanding arises from my statement: The cosmopolitan condition is irreversible: ‘the falling of leaves in autumn can’t be prevented by looking the other way, and certainly not by insisting that you hate winter... Even the most radical anti-cosmopolitanism can re-erect the old boundaries only in theory, not in reality.’ (Beck 2006: 117) This is what Luke Martell and others (Yishai Blank, etc.) find most controversial.

At the same time, of course, you can watch the cosmopolitan momentum of climate change in the dynamics of national-international politics, but obviously there is a national *backtack*. In the face of the most perilous challenges of our time the nations of the world are paralyzed. Are the problems too big, too interdependent, too diverse for the nation-state? Or is it the national orthodoxy which renders the cosmopolitan turn in the case of climate politics ineffective? Are there any other potent actors to be considered as pioneers of cosmopolitan politics? Yes, and these are: global cities.

Eighth thesis: We have to distinguish between nations and (world) cities in the age of cosmopolitization. Nations dominantly re-nationalize and cities dominantly become cosmopolitan actors in structures and identities. If this can be proven to be the case, then the emancipatory potential of climate change is present and observable in different (world) cities differently; but it is less present and observable in different nation-states differently. This, indeed, could be one of the, or the indeed the most important, major clue of our research project and findings – and of methodological cosmopolitanism: making visible world cities as cosmopolitan actors and architects imagining new openings in and for a world at risk.

The cosmopolitan vision has its location in the city. *Stadtluft macht frei* ('urban air makes you free'). The air of the city is the air of freedom, but the air of the city can make one sick as well. In global cities the visibility of climate catastrophe collides and explodes with the longing for democratic participation and political freedom.

Large cosmopolitanized cities share far more with other cities across the world in terms of challenges and the resources they need than with the rest of the area within their national states. Also, cities share a specific position in the global governance system. There is a '*cosmopolitan affinity*' among cities when it comes to global problems and needed resources. Making the city a pioneer for cosmopolitan politics might be one of the most effective ways of 'achieving protection without national protectionism' (Sassen 2013: 170).

If we open up macro level regimes to this sub-national scale, it becomes critical to recognize the specificity and the specialized differences of the local level. Three features stand out in this regard. 'The city level makes possible the implementation and application of forms of scientific knowledge and technological capacities that are not practical at a national level. The cities' multiple ecologies enable the mixing of diverse forms of knowledge and

diverse technologies in ways that the more abstract 'national space' does not. This difference also means that the city introduces a type of environmental governance option that takes a radically different approach from the common and preferred choice of an international carbon-trade regime. Their aim becomes addressing the carbon and the nitrogen cycles in situ by implementing measures that reduce damage in a radical way.

Also, the city level substitutes the traditional vertical forms of governance by forms of horizontal governance, as can be seen in diverse urban initiatives to solve climate change problems.

Climate change politics has a major obstacle: the invisibility of man-made climate change. But this invisibility on the abstract level of global and national modeling is being overturned because climate change becomes visible by suffering. This everyday visibility by suffering can indeed be turned into a mover of cosmopolitan politics. City politicians and leaders have had to confront these direct impacts of global conflict and environmental crisis on the movement of people.

And, last but not least, in the urban space you find economically and politically successful transnationally-connected middle class professionals (living here and there simultaneously, working here and there simultaneously), who are sensitive to transnational problems and do have a powerful status in city elections, as observed lately in New York City, but also in Zurich, Munich, Seoul, San Francisco etc.

"At the same time local governments are increasingly becoming major actors in the *emerging global legal order*. They are obtaining international duties, powers, and rights; enforcing international standards; forming global networks involved in the creation of international standards; and becoming objects of international regulation. It has indeed become impossible to understand globalization and its legal ordering without considering the role of localities: They have become prime vehicles for the dissemination of global capital, goods, work force, and images.

The evolving global status of local governments manifests itself in international legal documents and institutions, transnational arrangements, and legal regimes within many countries. To date, however, there has been almost no academic account of this significant legal transformation. International legal theory has remained captive to methodological nationalism, according to which they are mere subdivisions of states and thus undeserving of any theoretical analysis." (Blank 2013)

Given the nation-states' resistance to cross-border collaboration and cosmopolitan politics, the 'turn to the city', epistemologically and politically,

is important to, in order to discover or establish alternative institutions for cosmopolitan communities of shared risk, address the multiplying problems of a cosmopolitanized modernity without surrendering the democracy that nation-states traditionally have secured. 'In order to save ourselves from both anarchistic forms of globalization, such as war and terrorism, and monopolistic forms, such as multi-national co-operations, we need global democratic bodies that work, bodies capable of addressing the global challenges we confront in an ever more interdependent world.' (Barbar 2013: 4) Nations, inclined by their nature to rivalry and mutual exclusion, seem to be part of the problem and not of the solution in the world risk society of the 21st century.

In a post-national world global cities might re-conquer a central position similar to that which they inhabited long ago in the pre-national world. Humankind began its adventure to politics in the 'polis' – the city. The city was democracy's pioneer. But for millennia, cities relied on monarchy and empire and then on newly invented nation-states to produce and reproduce social and political order. Today the nation-state is failing on global risks. The cities, which in history were the social ground for civic movements to freedom, might in today's cosmopolitanized world of global threats once again become democracy's best hope.

References

- Barbar, Benjamin. 2013. *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Beck, Ulrich. 2000. *What is Globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- _____. 2006. *Cosmopolitan Vision*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- _____. 2009. *World at Risk*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- _____. 2012. *Twenty Observations on a World in Turmoil*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, Ulrich, Anders Blok, David Tyfield and Joy Y. Zhang. 2013. "Cosmopolitan Communities of Climate Risk: Conceptual and Empirical Suggestions for a New Research Agenda." *Global Networks* 13(1): 1-21.
- Beck, Ulrich and Daniel Levy. 2013. "Cosmopolitanized Nations: Re-imagining Collectivity in World Risk Society." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30(2): 3-31.
- Blank, Yishai. 2006. "Localism in the New Global Order." *Harvard Journal of International Law* 47(1): 263-81.
- _____. 2013. "The Reality of Cosmopolitanism: The Turn to the City in the New Global Legal Order." not published manuscript, Tel Aviv.
- Dewey, John. 1954. *The Public and Its Problems*. Chicago: Swallow Press.

- Guyer, Jane I. 2007. "Prophecy and the Near Future: Thoughts on Macroeconomic, Evangelical and Punctuated Time." *American Ethnologist* 34(3): 409-21.
- Latour, Bruno. 2004. *Politics of Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- _____. 2013. 'Facing Gaia'; not published manuscript, Paris.
- Martell, Luke. 2009. "Global Inequality, Human Rights and Power: A Critique of Ulrich Beck's Cosmopolitanism." *Critical Sociology* 35(2): 253-72.
- Sassen, Saskia. 2013. "Recovering the City Level in the Global Environmental Struggle" in *Routledge International Handbook of Social and Environmental Change*. Edited by Stewart Lockie, David A Sonnenfeld and Dana R Fisher. London: Routledge.
- Schmitt, Carl. 2003 [1950]. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*. New York: Telos.
- Szszzynski, Bronislaw. 2010. "Reading and Writing the Weather: Climate Technics and the Moment of Responsibility." *Theory, Culture & Society* 27(2-3): 9-30.
- Volkmer, Ingrid. 2012. "Deconstructing the Methodological Paradox: Comparative Research between National Centrality and Networked Spaces." Pp. 110-21 in *Handbook of Global Media Research*. edited by Ingrid Volkmer. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

ULRICH BECK coined the term risk society and was a professor of Sociology at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich until 2009. He holds a professorship at Munich University and at the London School of Economics. *Address:* Institut für Soziologie Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München Büro Prof. Dr. Ulrich Beck Dipl.-Soz. Albert Gröber Konradstr. 6 / 203 80801 München [*E-mail:* u.beck@lmu.de]

