

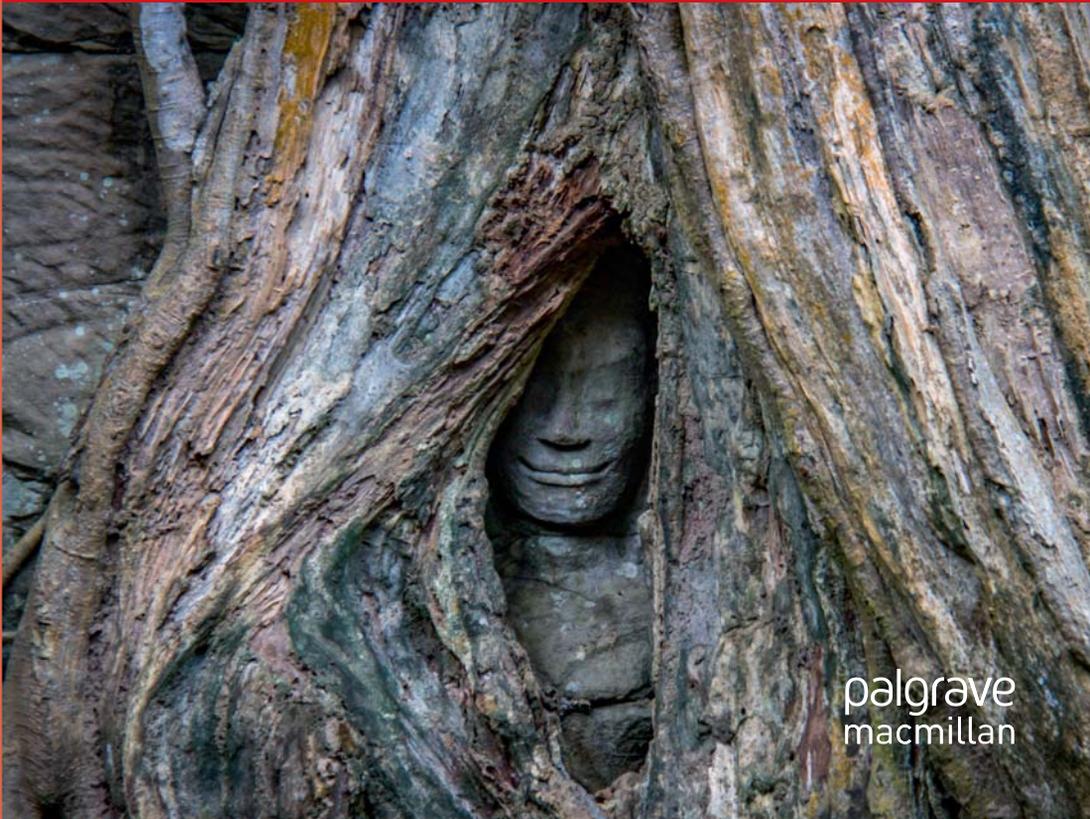


PALGRAVE STUDIES IN DISASTER ANTHROPOLOGY

# Dealing with Disasters

## Perspectives from Eco-Cosmologies

*Edited by* Diana Riboli · Pamela J. Stewart ·  
Andrew J. Strathern · Davide Torri



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# Palgrave Studies in Disaster Anthropology

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Andrew J. Strathern · Davide Torri  
Editors

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## SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE: EPISTEMOLOGICAL BLENDING IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

Trends in anthropology tend to emerge from the blending together of emergent topics. The present volume owes its existence to this blending process, bringing together studies of environmental crisis and disasters with the ways in which people develop and adapt cosmological views of the world in response to such crises.

Eco-cosmology is the outcome of this processual blending. What this topic reveals is that cosmologies, when examined closely, often exhibit a close connection with, or a development out of, ecological concerns that are fundamental to the long-term sustainability of people's environmental practices.

Cosmology folds into itself knowledge about the environment and rituals through which people affirm this knowledge and put it to work in the service of their daily livelihood. When environmental changes happen, the prevailing systems are thrown into instability. Efforts to recover may be phrased as a return to the past, or as the grasping of new worlds of opportunities. In either case, the crystallization of such processes is often marked by special forms of ritualized behavior, signaling that a new order of being is sought after. The emergence of such an order may be unproblematic but more likely it is marked by struggles and conflicts vested in the processes of obtaining a mode of living from the land or other available resources. Shamans or healing practitioners may be called on to mediate such conflicts, thereby conflating sicknesses in people's individual bodies and the collective context of social life. By treating the individual level,

they may also endeavor to extend their influences over the other, collective, level. The ritual process is therefore also a political process. The underlying ecological aims of ritual help, then, to explain the important part that rituals play in circumstances of marked environmental change.

The vibrant in-depth studies in this volume illustrate the application of theoretical themes such as we have just sketched. The combination of deep-ethnographic knowledge with a critical stance toward the actions of outsiders in the sphere of economies and the environment produces a rounded set of studies that invite the reader both into the world of indigenous meanings and imaginations and into the struggle of engagement with alien forces such as the impact of extractive industrial practices. These studies show the process of engagement with the outside world, and in doing so, they also show how people attempt to transform their lives by resisting the corrosive effects of capitalist enterprises, or, alternatively, how they are beaten down in these processes. In the background, there is always the environment itself, registering the effects of development on it and sending out warnings when these effects exceed a certain range.

We have written about this topic in a number of venues, prior to the recent massive epiphany of problems stemming from the coronavirus. Themes in our work in three sites in the Papua New Guinea Highlands speak to this complex of topics. Among the Duna people of Hela Province, there is an explicit cultural concern with declining fertility of the land, and an elaborate ritual complex called *rindi kiniya*, “healing” the land, was developed in order to set the environment along productive lines again (Stewart and Strathern 2002a, Strathern and Stewart 2004). Underlying the specific concerns of loss of fertility of the soil or vitality of the population, the ever-present perceived need to make sacrifices of pigs to spirit categories, notably ancestors of the clan leaders, was what drove rituals forward, transforming ecological facts into the motivations of spirit entities and vice versa. The same process is discernible in the original stories of major religious festival complexes in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea, where the story of how a major set of practices centered on a powerful Female Spirit began invariably focusses on the incidence of storms, floods, and bad weather destroying harvests of crops and eliciting a ritual response of sacrifice (Stewart and Strathern 1999, 2002b). Comparable concerns underlay practices among the Wiru of the Southern Highlands Province (Strathern and Stewart 1999).

A concern with the environment appears also in small practices in folk contexts in Europe and even in improvised rituals that we have taken part in while running a course on ritual at the University of Augsburg in Germany in 2019. In one such ritual, a leader counselled all participants to remove their shoes and to feel the grass at their feet and then to get together and collectively improvise artistic representations with materials taken from parts of the environment. In another context, a specialist in healing by touch had us gathered together and conducted some prayers over us and then asked us to explain what we each had felt in this spiritual encounter. While this ritual was not especially about the environment as such, its intention was to connect us to the environment of our own selves so as to understand ourselves better and employ appropriate rituals to heal us of any ill-being and replace it with well-being.

Illnesses may have massive collective effects if they turn into epidemics or pandemics, as has been the case with the 2020 pandemic of the coronavirus, COVID-19. Science-based rituals such as testing and socially based rituals such as staying at home or observing “social distancing” of 6 feet between people are all vulnerable to being ignored, and large-scale ritual responses have to wait the development of both therapies and vaccines. COVID-19 has caused a global planetary crisis, bringing about both ritual shutdowns and calls for opening up of international cooperation. Both medical research and ritual studies have significant future stakes in how that future will eventually turn out.

Pittsburgh, USA

Andrew J. Strathern  
Pamela J. Stewart

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# Introduction

*Diana Riboli and Davide Torri*

The writing and editing of this volume took place during in uncertain times. By the end of 2019, the virus named Covid-19 spread to all continents, regardless of national borders and political regimes. Behind the more or less scientific or fictitious fanciful theories about the possible causes of the pandemic, one fundamental question lies: Was the newborn (?) virus and/or its spread caused by or linked to anthropogenic factors? The same question recurs in most of the scientific analyses and debates on the alarming increase of natural disasters worldwide.

The more and more frequent appearance of epidemics and pathogenic agents seems to be connected to environmental changes such as deforestation, pollution, human overpopulation, exploitation of natural resources and climate change (Singer 2009, 201). Despite the fact that it seems possible that Covid-19 may have evolved from an older animal-infecting coronavirus and transmitted to a human host via a spillover process, the

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more or less direct connections between health and environmental crises are multiple and complex. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) around eighty percent of the world's population experiences some level of water scarcity, while just one in four healthcare facilities worldwide lacks basic water services.<sup>1</sup> Considering the fact that, up to now, the most effective prevention is to practice basic hygiene, the lack of (safe) water—one of the most evident consequences of climate change—put at risk about six billions people worldwide with 1.1 billion of people totally lacking access to water.

A recent study conducted at the Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health demonstrated the relationship between air pollution and coronavirus in the United States. According to the results of this study, even an increase of just one microgram of fine particulate matter known as PM2.5 per cubic meter corresponds to a 8% increase in Covid-19 deaths (Wu and Nethery 2020). The study reveals that poor, minority communities run a much higher risk of developing serious conditions and complications from Covid-19 in part due to air pollution caused by white Americans' consumption practices.

The pandemic represents a major threat for indigenous communities the world over, urging the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations to ask Member States and the international community to include “the specific needs and priorities of indigenous people in addressing the global outbreak of Covid-19.”<sup>2</sup>

After centuries of colonial domination, the more recent neocolonial intrusion equipped with increasingly powerful technological means continues to devastate and radically transform most of the ancestral territories to which indigenous culture and eco-cosmologies are linked. The process of industrial extraction and exploitation of natural resources already deprived many indigenous communities and vulnerable minorities of fundamental human rights for secure livelihood and preserved ecosystems. The consequences of climate change are amplified by the destruction of many ecosystems: violent floods and landslides cancel in minutes human settlements and cultivated fields in deforested areas. Wildfires are becoming extremely frequent worldwide, from Siberia to the Amazonian forest, as droughts cause the forest fuels—the organic matter that burns and spread wildfires—to be much drier than in the past.

The earth is not only “angry” (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999) but also deeply wounded. Risks of potential disasters on a local and global level arise from each wound.

It seems strange to think that merely a couple of decades ago, the dimension of risk was recognized as a prerogative of the so-called risk societies (Beck 1992 [1989]) or capitalistic societies living in “high modernity” (Giddens 1991). Nowadays, risks and anxieties about hazards took the stage, often in the role of protagonists, in indigenous and minorities’ worldviews and eco-cosmological philosophies. In the words of Jakob Arndt:

Risks are not *actual* but rather *potential* dangers...risk is the opposite of pure chance, because it involves human agency. For the same reason it is also the opposite of random acts of nature. What we often refer to as natural causes is something that suspends human responsibility...But when humans can be held responsible, risk emerges. (Arndt 2009, 8–9)

It is increasingly complex to distinguish natural from man-made disasters as natural forces become particularly destructive when combined with man-made environmental modifications. Anthony Oliver-Smith highlighted the complexity of what we define as a disaster and the difficulties in finding an exhaustive definition for the term. His analysis focuses on the multidimensionality of disasters as “physical and social event(s)/process(es)” (Oliver-Smith 2002, 24–25). Despite the fact that the study of disasters is a field of growing importance in anthropology, there is still a certain lack of studies focused on indigenous perceptions and strategies of resistance adopted by indigenous communities in dealing with catastrophic environmental events. Not only dangers but also risks play an important role in indigenous’ worldviews as well as in processes of cultural change and adaptation. An important further step is to study the multidimensional ways in which potential risks and catastrophes are understood and experienced.

In her interesting study on the 1991 Oakland (California) firestorm, Susanna Hoffman analyzes the symbolic dimension of natural disasters in societies that recognize a division between nature and culture. In this case, through a process of embodiment, nature is described as a benign entity, a Mother, while the disaster is disembodied and becomes a “monster” (Hoffmann 2002). On the contrary, as the majority of the chapters in this volume demonstrate, in indigenous eco-cosmological views and in animistic complexes in particular, nature and natural forces are not understood as two different entities. This is probably in part due to the fact that

the same elusive and abstract concept of nature (at least in the contemporary way most eurocentric cultures define it), as well as the term itself are absent from many indigenous philosophies and languages (Ducarme and Couvet 2020; Descola 2005).

It is noteworthy that, at least on a symbolic and spiritual level indigenous communities and religious specialists placed emphasis on to the human factors behind natural disasters, somewhat earlier than contemporary scientists. In cosmological views where the cosmos is multidimensional and inhabited by other-than-human beings with souls and personality (animals, plants, spirits, atmospheric phenomena, and elements of the landscape), humans represent just a link in the chain. Angela Roothaan discussing the indigenous, modern, and postcolonial relationship with nature highlights that in non-indigenous perceptions the earth becomes a “free playground for mankind” as the modern approach “frees human agents from fear of other beings with soul.” Therefore, aside from the anxiety surrounding the potential of aggression of other men, the only fear left is that “forces of nature may cause natural disaster, disease and death” (Roothaan 2019, 45). On the other hand, in cultures deeply linked to specific territories and natural environments and groups that have experienced many forms of direct, structural and cultural violence perpetrated against them by other humans, causes of natural disasters are often attributed not to nature itself, but to human misbehaviors, moral corruption, egoism, and greed instead.

This does not mean that the mythological frameworks in which indigenous discourses about disasters take place are completely divided by the practical and empirical one. A good dose of “indigenous realism” is always present and perfectly complementary. The Yuchi scholar Daniel Wildcat discusses indigenous realism in terms of people accepting their responsibilities as members of the planet’s complex life system (Wildcat 2009). Indigenous peoples around the world are of course perfectly able to understand that a landslide or a flood may assume catastrophic proportions and have even more disastrous consequences because of rampant deforestation and climate change, but these events are also interpreted as a punishment or revenge of other-than-human beings. On a practical level, people living in contact with nature of course know the consequences that the lack of trees and roots may have in the event of violent downpours. In this case, extreme climatic phenomena are perceived as means by which other-than-human beings manifest their discontent for the environmental damage. Therefore, the real and primary cause which gives rise

to catastrophe revolves around human behavior and actions. In this sense, basically indigenous and scholarly interpretations of many natural disasters often converge despite through different paths: bulldozers cut the forests, mining activities and pollution cause climate change/non-human beings' wrath and their disastrous consequences.

Most of the times in indigenous perceptions chaos and disorder originated from human harmful and/or inconsiderate acts hurt and offend the Earth, a powerful deity in many cultures, or other spirits connected with atmospheric phenomena and the sacred landscape.

Of course, the symbolic dimension of disasters plays a fundamental role not only in indigenous mythologies and ontologies, but in most of the religious and philosophical traditions of the globe.

## HUMAN HISTORY AS DISASTER

In a sense, we are all survivors. Our life-worlds are just accretions on the rubbles of previous cataclysmic events, as in the famous image of the angel of history, the *Angelus Novus* by Paul Klee, interpreted by Walter Benjamin (1940).

Human collectivities have survived, and kept track of, catastrophic events and disasters. Religious traditions sometimes have enshrined them, in connection with a framework interpreting them as divine intervention. Creation myths, for example, make ample use of disaster imagery to describe the magmatic and transformative process bringing a life-world to existence. Recursive disasters mark the progress of time, from one age to the other, i.e., the four yugas of the Indian traditions or the five suns of Mesoamerican mythologies, where every segment of the creation is destroyed in order to bring forth the next one. In some contexts, disasters occur when deities are angered or displeased, as in the biblical accounts. In others, the calamity is perceived as the effect of some cosmic, and almost automatic, movement, as expressed by the etymology, for example, of the word *disaster*: “In the English speaking world all of these phenomena are generally called disasters. This word has an equivalent in German (*Desaster*, *Unstern*, meaning ‘under the wrong star’) and in the Romance languages (French *desastre*, Italian *disastro*, Spanish *desastre*)” (Schenk 2007, 12). Disasters do not belong to the past only. There is a consistent literature of several religious traditions dealing explicitly with the fateful events allegedly waiting for us at “the end of time.” Eschatology, or the study of the last things (Gr. *ta eskhata*), is a branch of

religious knowledge literally bathed in cataclysmic imagery, describing a time of extreme cosmic events foreboding the end of the present world(s).

If we consider the notion of disaster beyond its purely mechanistic aspects, i.e., “a great calamity, an event occurring abruptly with serious consequences like the harming or loss of life for humans and animals, material damage and large-scale destruction” (Schenk 2007, 12), we can easily recognize that disasters are also experienced and imagined as momentous events. As a *caesura* in the passing of time, which several collectivities interpreted in various ways to meaningfully incorporate it into their memories and ontologies, a disaster entails also the possibility of reconfiguration on various levels. As such, they equate to turning points, or radical upheaval moments (Gr. *katastrophé*, literally “overturning”), enabling to overcome preexisting structural assets and paving the way to different worlds. In this sense, a disaster is also a possibility, disorder being the source of creative processes: “granted that disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the materials of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realized in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognize that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolizes both danger and power” (Douglas 1966, 95).

There is an inherent danger in trespassing from one world to the next, and it is of course possible to get lost in the process, as testified by many written and oral mythic narratives, including shamanic ritual narratives. While this book will prevalently deal with indigenous eco-cosmological ontologies and their views, interpretations and responses to disasters, we cannot but acknowledge how contemporary concerns regarding the climate change and others catastrophic events unfolding in the so-called Anthropocene seem to show a convergence of sort. Some of the solutions to the present constellation of crises could come from the long dismissed voices of the indigenous peoples, who, despite being historically the less culpable for the depletion of the ecosystems of the biosphere, are in fact at the forefront of its backlashes.

## THE DISASTERS OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

The age of human beings is an epoch of great disasters, we know that. And we know it precisely because we, as a species, learned how to keep memories of it, and to discuss it. To tell the truth, we are not the only ones to keep track of past events. Eventful moments are also recorded in tree rings, geological strata and ice, just to mention a few. But Anthropocene is also the age when we realized that humans (with different degrees of responsibility) could well be considered the disaster. While there is no agreement on that yet, the term Anthropocene was originally proposed by Eugene Stoermer in the 1980s, and later employed by Paul Crutzen in his paper *Geology of Mankind* (2002). It is now amply used to indicate the current age of human beings as the main geological force, whose activities are massively impacting the other processes of the biosphere. A similar idea was already proposed by the geologist Angelo Stoppani (1824–1891), who coined the expression *era antropozoica* (Anthropozoic era). Notions toward the formulation of the concept of a planetary unified system which included organic and inorganic forms of life were included also in the so-called Gaia hypothesis of James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis (Lovelock 2000 [1979]; Lovelock and Margulis 1974). Particularly important for the Gaia hypothesis were the notions of symbiosis, synergy, and co-evolutionary processes, stressing the relevance for a holistic approach in order to decipher and understand complex patterns characterizing human and non-human interactions on a planetary scale.

The growing impact of the human beings as a species on the ecosystems is being monitored by several agencies, including the Anthropocene Working Group, established since 2009, and, prior to that, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), established in 1988. While there is still no consensus on the official adoption of the term Anthropocene to indicate a new geological phase on planet earth, there is a growing acknowledgment that several of the factors being monitored indicate a time of fast changes potentially leading to massive loss of biodiversity in a relatively short amount of time. The overarching paradigm of modernity, i.e., “man” as a rational species conquering and harnessing the powers of “nature” for his own benefits and progress, is turning into its opposite: Human beings are apparently undermining the basis for their own survival and that of countless other species, survival. In addition, the holistic approach blurs the boundaries between human and non-human,

thus erasing another tenet of modern thought, based on the essential division between the reified notions of “man” and “nature.”

We are, it seems, on the verge of a huge epistemic gap, predicated upon the recognition that such binary crystallizations (human being vs. nature) are not universally and equally shared by human collectivities. In his seminal work *Par-delà nature et culture* (*Beyond Nature and Culture*), Philippe Descola highlights how the naturalist approach, grounded on objectification, is but one of the possible ontologies, together with animism, totemism, and analogism. While Descola claims to be indebted with the Achuar people of the Amazonian forest and their shamans, he appears to be equally indebted with Michel Foucault’s four similitudes, i.e., the operative frameworks through which the world was represented through the ages (Foucault 1966, 32–59). Descola pursues his main argument, that human beings, as it seems, do not experience and live the world the same way, and thus multiple worlds exist altogether, in later works too (Descola and Pálsson 1996; Descola and Ingold; Descola 2011, 2014). Moreover, the blurring of the boundary between human and non-human brings the human exceptionalism on a grinding halt. With the end of this dichotomy, we finally face the rise of hybrid networks, and the resulting collapse of binary systems. This hermeneutical collapse brings back the rhizome theory of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), combined with the tentacular visions of Donna Haraway’s *Chtulhucene* (2016).

Evoked by Bruno Latour lectures on Gaia, non-humans confront human beings as an assemblage of discomfoting data showing the depth and breadth of an unfolding disaster not only indifferent, but even hostile to human life, a new climatic regime to which we, as species, have to come to terms with before annihilation (Latour 2017). As shown by the data collected by the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, between 1750 and 2010 several processes underwent a sharp rise. Collectively termed the *great acceleration*, several parameters show unprecedented depletion and loss of renewable resources and the concomitant growth of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, methane, stratospheric ozone, surface temperature, ocean acidification, aquaculture, devastation of coastal zones, loss of tropical forest, increase of domesticated land. These processes lead to relevant loss of biodiversity potentially escalating into the sixth mass extinction, and the general degradation of the biosphere (<http://www.igbp.net/globalchange/climatechangeindex.4.56b5e28e137d8d8c09380002241.html>, retrieved 15 May 2020). The

scale of the process is so massive that it eludes or, better said, transcends our everyday epistemological grasp, qualifying as a hyperobject (Morton 2013).

Debates and discussion on the Anthropocene issues also blurred the disciplinary boundaries between natural sciences, philosophy, and social sciences. One of the most interesting effort to investigate the entanglements between human and non-humans is the work of the AURA (Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene) team, where the focus on interconnections pervades and animates several researches. Anna L. Tsing, Nils Bubandt, and others, whose attention is particularly drawn to explore disturbed landscapes, haunted by the intrinsic violence of modernity (Tsing et al. 2017).

Coming back to indigenous eco-cosmologies, it goes without saying that their landscapes have been recursively disturbed by modernity's disasters. In fact, in addition to the usual number of calamities, several groups have witnessed the end of their worlds happening again and again, and have spent the last few centuries on the verge of annihilation (Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 2017). The very same annihilation we seem to face now collectively as a species. It is not by coincidence, in fact, that in the past few years we have seen the resurgence of environmentalist movements on an unprecedented scale: After a phase of growth during the 1980s—and especially after the Chernobyl incident—they seemed to enter a declining phase only to reappear in virulent forms, with links with alternative or anti-capitalist global movements. In many different countries, in fact, indigenous movements appear at the forefront of environmentalist mobilization processes and struggles. While the issues are almost invariably locals, the perspective is undoubtedly global. The *Zapatista* movement could be identified as anticipating some of these trends, in bridging the gap between different ontological dimensions: The local and the global, the economic and the social, the indigenous and the international, and even the human and the non-human appear in fact considerably intertwined in many of their public statements broadcasted and diffused since 1994. In the Fourth Declaration from *the Selva Lacandona*, the then Subcomandante Marcos stated:

There are words and worlds which are lies and injustices. There are words and worlds which are truths and truthful. We make true words. We have been made from true words. In the world of the powerful there is no space for anyone but themselves and their servants. In the

world we want everyone fits. In the world we want many worlds to fit. (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation Mexico, January of 1996)

It is not only, or no more, a political issue only. It is a matter of cosmopolitics: Human and non-human beings discover themselves as intimately connected in previously unimagined ways (Stengers 2010, 2011). Recent anthropological and ethnographical enquiries have focused on the entanglement between thinking forests (Kohn 2013), earth-beings (de la Cadena 2015), and humans living *with* them in a “world of many worlds” (de la Cadena and Blaser 2018). The multiplicity of relations established between different actors in and between different worlds calls also for a re-appreciation of the role of indigenous shamans as brokers, mediators, and translators. It is not by chance that, on the anthropological side of the ontological turn, we find primarily scholars who have been engaging with shamans for years, as in the case of Viveiros de Castro, Descola, de la Cadena among others. It could be also worth recalling the framework offered by the revisitation of animism as a relational epistemology (Bird-David 1999).

Anthropocene, eco-cosmology, and disasters appear compounded in the autobiographical account of Davi Kopenawa (Kopenawa and Albert 2013), where the recent history of the Yanomami people is retold against the background of a massive economic, social, and spiritual assault on the Amazon. The life-story of the Yanomami shaman becomes a powerful reflection not only on the inner process leading to (shamanic) awareness of the surrounding, but also reveals the intrinsic ecological value of some indigenous thinking. In addition, it reconfigures past events and current crisis in a discursive way, framed in prophetic, eschatological language, successfully transforming the autobiography in a major outcry, and a sharp critique, against the constellation of practices of environmental and social exploitation which could lead to the definitive disaster, the falling sky (the end of the world). The message is very clear and simple:

You cannot fill your belly by clearing and burning all the forest! This only attracts Ohiri, the hunger spirit, and the man-eater beings of the epidemics, nothing else. If we mistreat the forest, it will become our enemy. (Kopenawa and Albert 2013, 398)

The current Covid-19 pandemic is just one more hint that there is actually no separation between the human and the non-human, and that unseen, yet material, agents have the power to smash the once-presumed primacy of human beings over the biosphere: The spread of the virus sparked a major global economic, social, sanitary, and political crisis. It started, as it seems as we write, as a zoonotic disease spilling over from a reservoir animal (rumors say a bat, or a pangolin) into a novel host species. Some analysts proposed the Wuhan wet-market as the ideal place for the spillover to take place. Interestingly, if we think as the wet-market as a place where multiple worlds collapse one into each other (the human and the non-human, the wild and the domesticated, the rural and the urban, the subsistence economy of the countryside and the bourgeoisie culinary diet, the exploiters and the exploited, etc.), it is easy to see it as epitomizing many of the conflicts we were hinting at in the previous paragraph. Reflecting on Mary Douglas' notions of purity and danger (1966), we could say too many borders have been transgressed, and each liminal threshold entails dangerous outcomes. These are times for disasters, and full of dire consequences, but, as in the famous Hölderlin's poem *Patmos* (1803), "where there is danger, salvation grows too."

### CHAPTERS OVERVIEW<sup>3</sup>

In her chapter, **Diana Riboli** discusses the interpretations and perceptions of natural disasters among the Chepang of Central and Southern Nepal and the Batek of Peninsular Malaysia. Both these groups maintain deep links with the world of the forest and its creatures. The narratives of the Batek about the tsunami, which started from Sumatra in 2015 and the interpretations of earthquakes, floods, and landslides among the Chepang have many points in common. The other-than-human beings' rage caused by the destruction of the environment and wild exploitation of natural resources transcends local boundaries assuming global proportions. In both case-studies, religious specialists—whose authority is particularly affected by economic, cultural, and religious transnational neocolonialism and State policies—are called to restore the eco-cosmological order and balance.

Widespread logging and extractivism have seriously disrupted the lives of many indigenous communities worldwide. **Emanuele Fabiano** analyzes how the Urarina of Chambira basin (Peruvian Amazon) cope with environmental disasters caused by oil spills and neo-extractivist