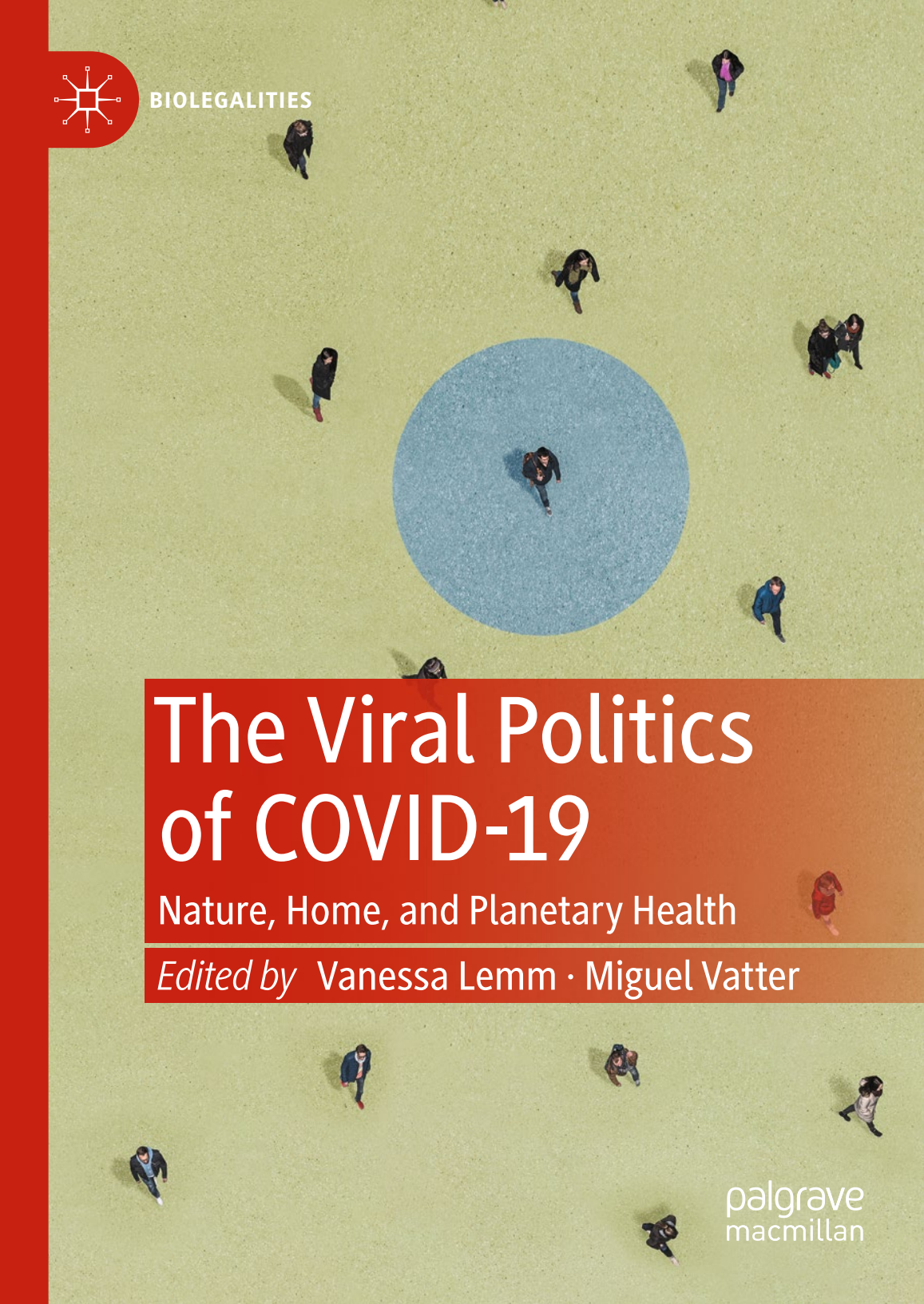
BIOLEGALITIES
The Viral Politics of COVID-19
Nature, Home, and Planetary Health
Edited by Vanessa Lemm · Miguel Vatter
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Biolegalities

This interdisciplinary series on *Biolegalities* engages with contemporary challenges and implications of new biotechnologies and biological knowledges in the field of law. Our series aims to open up a much broader understanding of biolegality that includes a range of biotechnologies and biological knowledge, expanding into areas of immigration law, trade law, labor law, environmental law, patent law, family law, human rights law, and international law. While the growing scholarship on biopolitics has studied the ways in which such practices are entangled with certain modes of governance and neoliberal economies, their translations, deployments, and reconfigurations in the realm of law or legal practice has been relatively understudied. The main objective of this book series is to provide a venue for the study of the complex and often contested ways in which biotechnologies or biological knowledges are reworked by, with, and against legal knowledge.

Vanessa Lemm • Miguel Vatter
Editors

The Viral Politics of Covid-19

Nature, Home, and Planetary Health

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Foreword

Books in the Biolegalities Series are concerned with how technologies of life impinge upon social sensibilities of law, justice, and rights. Since Foucault's theorizing on the concept, the growing scholarship on biopolitics explores a politics of life across time, geographies, and multiple situations. This interdisciplinary series on Biolegalities engages with the ways these life politics become entangled in new questions around legality, legitimacy, and legal knowledge.

The main objective of this series is to provide a venue for the study of the complex and often contested ways in which life's technologies or knowledges are reworked by, with, and against law and legality. Books in the series may include analysis of **technology**, including biotechnology, reproductive technologies, forensic technologies, bioinformation, and Artificial Intelligence, and how they reconfigure the organization of law in society. They may include analysis of **knowledge**, particularly those from the life sciences such as genetics, (post)genomics, neuroscience, immunology, microbiomics, and how these scientific understandings rearrange our knowledge of life and law. And finally, books may include an analysis of **crisis**, including pandemics, bioterrorism, biocolonialism, eugenics, ecocide, and how communities, institutions, and states respond to the variegated forms of harm and abuse on human and more-than-human life, including those from disease, disaster, and violence.

In *The Viral Politics of Covid-19: Nature, Home, and Planetary Health*, Miguel Vatter and Vanessa Lemm chart the crisis-event that is the global pandemic of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. Cognizant the event is characterized by many scholars as biopolitical *par excellence*, they have brought

together a group of established and emerging scholars, who analyze with great knowledge, care, and nuance the many edges and layers of this quintessential biopolitical and biolegal moment in history.

Following the initial outbreak in Wuhan at the end of 2019, the world shut down and nation-states worked at a colossal attempt to contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus. We are amid the third pandemic year as we write this foreword, and the Covid-19 global pandemic continues to be an event of unparalleled character. As of 18 April 2022, 504,432,083 cases of Covid-19, and 6,197,851 Covid-19 deaths have been formally reported according to the Coronavirus Resource Center at the John Hopkins University. Actual numbers are thought to be much higher. As the book attests to, this production of numbers, while forging the ultimate biopolitical justification, does little to convey the enormity and nefariousness of lives impacted, not by the virus itself but by the measures implemented to contain it.

The book is not a collection of chapters that merely succumb to a straightforward biopolitical critique of the state, but it is a well-rehearsed exercise from the very start of the pandemic. While the editors and contributors are not avoiding the analysis of negative biopolitics (characterized by the multiplication and normalization of hyper-surveillance and neoliberal governance during the course of the pandemic), they wish to emphasize instead how an affirmative biopolitics can illuminate a different politics of life and a post-pandemic future that encompasses the health of all on earth, not only those pertaining to humanity. Rather than approach the global pandemic as a natural disaster, and its failure to contain it as a failure of global health, the book starts from the premise that the crisis that is Covid-19 must be understood as a planetary crisis-event. Its future plight therefore rests on planetary health. This starting point allows the scholarship to move in several novel and stimulating directions.

There is the privilege of time to reflect more profoundly on the last few years. While the editors and authors aptly draw on the pandemic literature that appeared in the initial phases of the crisis, they are able to move beyond ad hoc observations and build more durable arguments by placing their objects in a broader—planetary—context and a longer historical framework. The result is not only a rich commentary that ranges from the themes of biosecurity, biosociality, pandemic neoliberalism, and planetary habitability, but also a programmatic intervention: the planetary turn in the study of biopolitics and biolegality.

As editors of the Biolegalities Book Series it befits us to signpost the biolegality of planetary health, seen from the vantage point of a global society in pandemic turmoil. Vatter explains how Covid-19 exemplifies new biolegal articulations of home that should be placed within the larger context of planetary habitability. The biolegality of home in the crisis-event of the global pandemic seems to produce a particular kind of knowledge, a knowledge based on the spherical milieu as the new configuration of political space. Here, bodies are turned into border-making entities as they can only cross certain spaces when tested and vaccinated, evidenced by the right kind of (digitized forms of) documentation. The juridification of movement, described in many of the chapters, comprised disciplining measures on the one hand (through for instance biometrical devices) and neoliberal governmentality on the other (for instance by the changing habitats of social distancing). Moving away from a thanatopolitical analysis, however, the chapters emphasize the importance of imagining planetary habitability within this very same space. This presupposes a reworking of biolegality and a reckoning with foundational binaries informing modern life, most acutely that of nature and society/law. It also means losing narratives of conquest and war, working instead toward more biosocial and symbiont forms of cooperation. After all, as Muecke so eloquently formulates at the end of this collection, "[N]ature is full of surprises: perceiving so-called natural things means being surprised by their attributes." Let us be distracted by these chapters, and sharpen our theoretical tools and methods so as to create a space where we are able to conceptualize an emerging architecture of planetary health, cooperation, and habituality.

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Introduction

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, probably no event in recent world history has mobilised so much specialised scientific and academic discourse within the public sphere, both seeking to guide governance responses and inciting fierce exchange of opinions among the citizenry, as the COVID-19 pandemic. But whereas the former event, a good decade before the term 'Anthropocene' was first coined, may serve to date the apogee of the process of globalisation, the current pandemic may in the future serve to date a turn in the *Zeitgeist* towards awareness of the 'planetary' dimension of human existence on Earth. From such a 'planetary' perspective, the dynamics and processes of natural history, measured in geological epochs, no longer function as the silent and static backdrop against which humanity unfolds its self-referential drama. Rather, the natural 'scenery' appears as continuously shifting and 'intruding' into the play, proving to be no less determinant to human-centred history than the old theatrical deus ex machina. Conversely, the human species unleashes planetary dynamics and processes of its own, whose feedback character is destroying the living conditions for much life on the planet. After the pandemic, few will seriously doubt that society and politics consider, and perhaps have never ceased to consider, that the capacity of human beings to choose their ways of life and forms of self-organisation requires taking into account that humankind is a biological species living with, among, and through other living kingdoms and species on this planet and its various systems. The chapters in this volume offer inter- and multi-disciplinary perspectives on the pandemic that thematise the overlap and tension between global and planetary dimensions of analysis of our shared bio-social, bio-political, and

bio-legal condition. They seek to understand the imbrications between technosphere and biosphere at social, economic, and political levels, and open up new vistas on the challenges posed by the prospect that how to inhabit this planet can no longer be assumed as a self-evident fact.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the global governmental responses to it have drawn attention to planetary health models, such as One World One Health, that are based on the premise that most Emergent Infectious Diseases (EIDs) are caused by zoonotic viral pathogens, so-called because their 'reservoirs' are found in animal hosts. Planetary health posits a basic link between the health of the environment and human health. The One Health model registers the increased frequency of human interactions with other living species crossing the wild/domestic boundary, and thus the heightened risk posed by viruses 'jumping' between species due to changes affecting the plant-animal-human-fungal-microbial interfaces and caused by human-made environmental destruction. A basic principle of planetary health is that safeguarding environmental health and the integrity of ecological systems is the best way to prevent future pandemics. The chapters in this volume present a critical yet affirmative engagement with the model of planetary health and with attempts to extend its principles to understanding the challenges for contemporary global governance posed by the ongoing environmental catastrophe. The chapters address the call from the public health community for transdisciplinary approaches to the study of the interconnectedness of all life-forms on earth and planetary health as an issue of the health of humans, animals, plants, and ecological systems.

Part I, 'Biosecurity and Planetary Health,' contains three chapters that introduce the planetary perspective into the analysis of the bio-political and bio-legal measures that governments have adopted in order to combat the spread of the virus. From the very beginning of One Health, with the formulation of the '12 Manhattan Principles of One Health' in 2004, the model attracted the attention of specialists in international politics and securitisation studies within the framework of global health biosecurity. The geopolitical dimensions of biosecurity became apparent at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the discussion on the presumed origins of the virus in the wet markets of Wuhan was quickly weaponised both by Trump's infamous tweets about the 'Chinese virus' and by the Chinese authorities, whose draconian lockdown measures were and continue to be indicated as evidence of their superior 'social model' when dealing with such public health crises, or alternatively rejected by libertarian critics of

pandemic governance as an indication of a presumed 'totalitarian' slide inherent to global health policies.

Chapter 1, 'Cryopolitics of SARS-CoV-2: Biosecurity in Laboratories and Wet Markets,' by Frédéric Keck offers a sophisticated analysis of what might lie behind the contrasting narratives as to the presumed origins of SARS-CoV-2. Discussing the hypothesis that Asian 'wet' markets—where animals are slaughtered 'fresh' and the meat is sold 'warm'—represent an illustration of the vanishing frontier between wild and domestic animals, and thus a particularly favourable site for transmission of zoonosis, Keck follows an alternative origin-story that focuses on the so-called cold chain of food production and distribution, based on frozen goods, which is also shared by virus cultivation in laboratories. This 'colder' path to tracking the origins of zoonotic viruses takes us from the cultivation of mink for their fur (and thus protection from the cold) to ferrets, their domesticated relatives, which are often used in laboratories to study the effect of respiratory viruses because they replicate human symptoms such as sneezing. Keck's chapter suggests that such temperature differentials in the origin-stories of zoonotic viruses indicate an underlying 'crypolitics' to the traditional Foucauldian account of biopolitics and pandemic management which adds a planetary dimension to biosecurity and the present challenge to manage global warming.

In Chap. 2, 'From Global to Planetary Health: Two Morphologies of Pandemic Preparedness,' Lyle Fearnley takes us to the heart of the tension between global and planetary perspectives on public health. The chapter offers a brief history of the shift from an international to a global approach to health and pandemic viral outbreaks. Whereas the former approach was state-driven and operated with national strategies of containment, the SARS outbreaks at the start of the twenty-first century led to the establishment of decentred global surveillance mechanisms that tracked zoonoses back to their 'hot spots' and provided 'early warning' of outbreaks. Fearnley argues that in the case of COVID-19, the world was not caught 'unprepared' because governments quickly implemented policies based on models of global health security. However, he suggests the problem now lies precisely with the narrow scope of global virome analysis that has not yet integrated a planetary approach focussed on ecology of viruses and habitat suitability.

Chapter 3, 'COVID-19 and the Contradictions of Planetary Health: Envisioning New Paradigms,' by Susan Craddock focuses on how the protective measures put in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 have

auto-immunitary consequences by accelerating the destruction of ecosystems. Her examples are the vertiginous increase of single-use plastics in packaging and personal protections equipment (PPEs) leading to a 'plastic pandemic,' and the impact of the pandemic on industrial chains of food production that increased food insecurity, but also are themselves sites for potential pandemic outbreaks. Both are expressions of a 'turbo-charged' capitalism that places the social and ecological dimensions of pandemic response at odds with each other. Craddock discusses the One Health paradigm as holding the promise of a more holistic approach to planetary health, but only if it is willing to relinquish its 'western-centric assumptions' about health and its tendency to police the frontiers between human and non-human life rather than in exploring their interconnections. To do so, Craddock argues, planetary health needs to integrate indigenous knowledges and practices on health because, arguably, they are based on principles of gift-economy and multispecies justice that foster a living-with, rather than against, the non-human.

Part II, 'Bio-social Dimensions of Public Health,' provides a series of historical frameworks within which to think critically about the relation between humans and microbes that is determinant for human and non-human health. In the public discussions and polemics that have erupted worldwide in the wake of pandemic governance, the opposed fronts with regard to preventative measures often seem to share a basic postulate, namely, that the relation between humans and viruses is one of war, and in war, unlike in societal relations, 'laws are silent' as Hobbes said. Hence, those who argue that 'society must be protected' from the onslaught of the virus even if this requires the (perhaps only momentary) suspension of legal rights, just as much as those who argue that pandemic governance reduces human life to mere 'biological' life ('bare' life in the terminology of Giorgio Agamben), hold on to a schematic separation of the social from the biological that ultimately equates biopolitics with thanatopolitics. The chapters in this section, in contraposition to the above view, work with the hypothesis that disease and health are bio-social from the start: they are outcomes of the complex interplay between social and biological, human and non-human factors. In so doing, they offer new perspectives from which to think about an affirmative viral politics, one that places at the forefront social inequalities linked with racism, poverty, and sexual discrimination in the analysis of the differential damage caused by pandemics and future policies to redress this situation.

In Chap. 4, 'A Foucauldian Moment or the *Longue Durée*? COVID-19 in Context,' Maurizio Meloni critically discusses the claim that the COVID-19 pandemic verifies the paradigms of biopolitics worked out by Foucault and Agamben. Meloni argues that it is important to question the assumption that biopolitics is a modern artefact in order to articulate a discourse on biopolitics that is not saddled with modernist assumptions, above all the separation of nature from culture. These assumptions reinforce an asocial picture of biological life and stand in the way of a more holistic approach to human health as part and parcel of planetary health. In this chapter, Meloni centres his attention on examples of pre-modern 'politics of life' in which the civic life both within cities and in the countryside was always already embedded in an ecologically minded 'healthscape.' In so doing, Meloni seeks to disrupt the assumption of an internal link between biopolitics and logics of exception and exceptionality that have contributed to polarising the public discussion during the pandemic and have distracted attention from a more bio-social approach to pandemic governance.

In Chap. 5, 'Zoonoses and Medicine as Social Science: Implications of Rudolf Virchow's Work for Understanding Global Pandemics,' Abigail Nieves Delgado and Azita Chellappoo offer a careful discussion of the thought of Rudolf Virchow (1821–1905). Virchow was the first to theorise the phenomenon of zoonosis and to identify environmental factors of disease that anticipate on several fronts the turn to planetary health. As Nieves Delgado and Chellappoo show, Virchow's innovation consisted in viewing disease as a bio-social phenomenon, thereby linking the medical approach to epidemics with the need to provide solutions to social inequalities. Their discussion of racial and ethnic disparities in the burden of COVID-19, and evidence that socially constructed categories of race carry with them epigenetic effects, highlights the sense in which one should understand Virchow's belief that 'politics [is] nothing but medicine on a grand scale.' Directly related to this belief is Virchow's advocacy for physicians as social and political actors, a role that has been highlighted in the current pandemic, where epidemiologists have been standing side by side with elected officials. However, Nieves Delgado and Chellappoo point out that with the assumption of increased policy-making power, Virchow insisted that physicians had a heightened responsibility not only to maintain their independence from governmental dictates but also to alert whether and how governments were tracking social and economic inequalities. Likewise, his understanding of complex organisms as a 'state of cells'

makes him a fundamental figure in the discourse on biopolitics because of the pioneering insight that organisms are symbiotic assemblages of distinct cellular components that show a level of self-organisation that can be understood as 'political' in opposition to the neo-Darwinian image of organisms being the result of egoistic genes engaged in a continuous war of all against all.

The starting point of Eben Kirksey's chapter (Chap. 6), 'Living in Peace with Coronaviruses,' is precisely to deconstruct a viral politics that is based on metaphors of war, in which the virus is presented as an eternal 'enemy' of humankind. The chapter profiles the work and thought of Alexander Gorbalenya, the virologist who first described the coronavirus genome and identified the virus causing COVID-19 as belonging to the SARS species. Kirksey shows how virology entered its current phase as a highly securitised discourse, where protection from infection has become the highest priority, in direct contrast with the research conducted by Gorbalenya and others that tends to show viruses as symbiotic partners of most forms of life, such that no living organism on the planet is free from viral infection of some kind, and indeed viral infections seem to account for half of the human genome and viruses keep shaping our genome, for good and bad outcomes. These considerations on symbiogenesis lead Kirksey to pivot on the difference between the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and the disease (COVID-19) that it may cause in certain hosts, with mortal outcomes in about 2% of the infected human population, in order to argue for a shift from seeing viruses as pathogens to seeing them as symbionts, while keeping focused on the bio-social conditions that disproportionately expose minorities and less-privileged groups to the risk of death.

Part III, 'Social Distancing and Community,' transitions the discussion of COVID-19 from its biological, viral basis to a more sociological analysis of governmental, bio-political responses that seek to control the spread of the virus and of the viral politics that it incites. The initial shock caused by projections of very high mortality rates should the infection be allowed to take its 'natural' course, infect most of the population, and lead to 'herd immunity' and endemic status was compounded by the shock of draconic measures taken by governments worldwide to prevent infections in the population, including long-lasting home lockdowns, closure of international borders and creation of new internal borders, quarantine measures, introduction of social distancing parameters, later followed by vaccine mandates and new surveillance mechanisms such as vaccine passes. The chapters in this part thematise the implications of the new practice of

'social distancing' and question whether society is possible purely as a function of protection from contagion. These chapters take stock of what this panoply of controls mean for our understanding of social interactions, the possibility of a politics developing alongside and against bio-political measures, and the future of community within the new imperative to 'live with the virus.'

In Chap. 7, 'The Micropolitics of Social Distancing: Habit, Contagion and the Suggestive Realm,' Gay Hawkins argues that social distancing should be understood as a form of de-securitising the 'war' against the virus because it is a form of engagement with the virus that relies on social cooperation, at the same time as it is employed by governments to steer individual behaviour or conduct in the pursuit of public health policy. Employing the ideas of French sociologist Gabriel Tarde on social interactions as the result of 'action at a distance' exerted through dynamics of imitation and suggestion, Hawkins highlights the process whereby individuals form new habits in the attainment of collective goals in and through the modification of their environment or milieu. For Hawkins, the societal response to COVID-19 also demonstrates the pertinence of Tarde's controversial claim that society is a 'suggestive realm' in which individuals are affected and affect others as a function of a 'contagious communication.' The chapter considers that individuals are always already 'contaminated' by each other prior to the advent of any viral infection, and it is this very capacity to be contaminated that allows for a bio-social accommodation of human and virus in the mode of cooperation rather than one characterised by fear, panic, and war metaphors.

Chapter 8, 'Visceral Publics and Social Power: Crowd Politics in the Time of a Pandemic,' by Yasmeen Arif explores the converse of social distancing, namely, the role of the crowd and the mass in pandemics and its viral politics. Arif reflects on an interesting global phenomenon during the pandemic: the continued assembling of individuals in political protests despite the fear of contagion from the virus. Arif discusses the massive social protests that took place in India on the occasion of new 'Farm Bills' at the height of the pandemic and while lockdown and social distancing measures were also in place. Her chapter reflects on this seeming contradiction between a biopolitics predicated on immunity from (biological) contagion and a need to seek out (social) contagion and lose the fear of being touched by others in the experience of the crowd. Arif postulates that while bodies can be separated and distanced, the social cannot, for it agglomerates individuals around sites of conflict. While bio-political

governmentality employs biology to embody and individuate difference, for Arif, the social deals with difference through groups and collectives, and politics is a function of collectives seeking to immunise themselves against other groups. The social resists the bio-political wish to attain an immunity from community, but it also leaves open the question of the singular, the biological individual who is abandoned by the state unless they manage to collectivise themselves.

One of the most striking phenomena of the viral politics of COVID-19 was the simultaneous mobilisation of the global 'republic of letters' at the onset of the pandemic. In Chap. 9, 'Ideologies of Contagion and Communities of Life,' Vanessa Lemm gives an analysis of this case of 'spiritual' suggestion and 'ideological' contagion. Against the background of home lockdowns and social distancing, and the sudden grinding halt of globalised exchanges and chains of production, there arose calls for a deeper human community, global moral imperatives, and even communism in the face of the viral onslaught. For Lemm, these reactions were symptomatic of a resurgence of humanism and a religious approach to history that are at odds with the need to form communities of life with non-human beings and in awareness of humankind being part of a natural and cosmic history that bears no trace of divine providence or guidance.

With Part IV, 'Pandemic Neoliberalism,' this volume shifts to consider COVID-19 from the point of view of a new planetary approach to the conception of home. The home acquired a new significance in the light of the global policy of lockdowns and quarantines, which along with signifying that state protection of its citizens ultimately rested on the preservation of the bourgeois, domestic interior, highlighted dramatically the plight of those who did not have access to such protective bubbles and those whose confinement in such bubbles led to damage to their mental health, increased spousal and child domestic abuse, and serious educational deficits due to 'home learning,' to name only some of the consequences of this policy. Likewise, the concept of 'home' or 'household' is central in economics, from its root in the Greek terms *oikos* (household) and *nomos* (legal order). For some time now, the development of late capitalism termed 'neoliberalism' has been known to rely on mechanisms of 'privatisation' that seek to separate and oppose the state to the market and disband social welfarist conceptions of market capitalism. More recently, neoliberalism has also been viewed as a regime of appropriation, production, and reproduction centred on home ownership and 'family values'

that uphold racist and sexist normative hegemonies tributary of a long history of colonialism and imperialism.

In Chap. 10, 'Contradictions of the Bailout State,' Martijn Konings tackles one of the most discussed features of the governmental response to the pandemic, namely, the apparent abandoning of the analogy between household deficits and public deficits that underpinned neoliberal discourse with regards to fiscal issues, coupled with the new phenomenon of undoing the distinction between workplace and home. Konings explains that the 'bailout' mechanism employed to finance the COVID-19 response is not alien to the discourse of neoliberalism but one of its principal systematic features adopted in order to deal with internal and external 'crises' of capitalist development well in advance of the pandemic. Konings traces the origins of the bailout mechanism prior to neoliberalism in the Keynesian welfare state and its ideal 'middle-class politics,' but unlike many critics of neoliberalism who tend to associate it with an ideology of the elites, Konings points out that neoliberalism enters the scene as a way to 'realise' the same middle-class politics based on speculation over asset values as a way to transition out of working-class, wage-owning status, among which speculation on the value of the home plays a crucial role.

Federico Luisetti's chapter (Chap. 11), 'The Neoliberal Virus,' also situates the COVID-19 pandemic within the logic of neoliberal globalisation as it encounters and negotiates the rock of planetary conditions. For Luisetti, the planetary discourse of One Health is more a symptom than a solution to the problems caused by the 'ecological order of neoliberalism' that leads to EIDs through zoonosis, where such viral jumps between animal and human species would not have been possible had it not been for the ecological disruptions occasioned by turbo capitalism and its 'globalisation' of nature. Luisetti considers how COVID-19 has become a 'neoliberal virus,' that is, it has been 'socialised' into neoliberal forms of governance that understands the 'state of nature' to be one characterised by socio-natural evolutionary forces such as natural selection, competition, and adaptation that give rise to spontaneous normative orders like free markets and characteristics like resilience. Luisetti worries that through the pandemic governance, neoliberalism is in the process of colonialising not only the global dimension but also the planetary one, employing as its Trojan horse narratives about the Anthropocene which, in the language of Earth systems, mimic the same neoliberal economic requirements to adapt to bio-social mechanisms that social actors are powerless to change.

The chapters in Part V, 'Pandemic Habitats,' thematise the concept of home as central to ecological considerations of planetary health through the idea of 'habitat,' the 'interface' between 'wild' and 'domestic' forms of life, as well as new borderings intended to constitute homelands. One of the best-known expressions of the shift from the global to the planetary is formulated in terms of the Gaia hypothesis, where the Earth systems are considered, within a certain range, to form a self-regulating and self-maintaining whole. When considered from a planetary dimension, the ecological conception of habitat becomes something that living beings create for themselves through complex loops of interaction and feedback, giving rise to analogies with the control of the environmental conditions within the interior of homes. However, from a planetary perspective, where the survival and adaptation of the human species is no longer considered as the final aim of natural history, what is threatening exterior and welcoming interior are no longer drawn along humanist lines. The chapters in this last part all pursue reflections from a posthumanist perspective on what governing through habitat or milieu entails post-COVID-19.

In Chap. 12, 'Biometric Re-bordering: Environmental Control During Pandemic Times,' Mark Andrejevic and Zala Volcic address the changes in our understanding of habitat brought about by the pluralisation of borders, established and policed through the use of digital technology in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their analysis considers how the planetary concern with 'safe operating spaces' for life-forms is translated by the 'first global pandemic of the smartphone era' into strategies for securing human mobility. The chapter pays special attention to the way in which the 'digital enclosure' of bodies through biometric monitoring and surveillance undermines claim to equality of rights by modulating in a differential way the environment in which individuals move.

In Chap. 13, 'Planetary Health and the Biopolitics of Home,' Miguel Vatter examines the discourse of planetary health as a function of a new bio-political and bio-legal articulation of the idea of the planet as a 'home' for life. The chapter discusses the idea of planetary habitability in the light of a holistic conception of biology whose central principle is the unity between organism and environment. Vatter analyses the bio-legal implications of planetary habitability in relation to the societal conflicts around rights to 'health' and to 'free movement' that have emerged during the governance of the pandemic. The chapter concludes with a reflection on

the problems posed by environmental devices such as vaccine passes from the perspective of a posthumanist phenomenology of embodiment and rights.

The volume concludes with Chap. 14, 'Creative Responses to COVID-19,' by Stephen Muecke, where an imaginary overlap of domestic and wild habitats brings to bear a multispecies perspective on contagion, infection, death, and cure. The first part approaches the question of non-human planetary agencies through an engagement with Michael Taussig's calling into question the nature/art divide as well as with Bruno Latour's and Isabelle Stengers' reformulations of the Gaia hypothesis. In the second part, reflecting on the 'new normal' of post-COVID life and its 'resetting' trope, Muecke's text engages the tensions between Marxist and Green approaches to the imbricated deployments of the 'Economy' and 'Nature,' proposing ways in which aesthetics and myth can help us live on in the Earth's 'Critical Zone.'

The inter- and multi-disciplinary perspectives on the pandemic reflected in the chapters in this volume thematise the tension between global and planetary dimensions of analysis of our shared bio-social, bio-political, and bio-legal conditions, highlighting the complexities, challenges, and opportunities the entanglement of human and planetary health present for humanity. We hope that this collection of chapters opens up new ways for us to address these challenges and opportunities collectively.

Vanessa Lemm
Miguel Vatter

PART I

Biosecurity and Planetary Health

Cryopolitics of SARS-CoV-2: Biosecurity in Laboratories and Wet Markets

Frédéric Keck

The debate on the origins of COVID-19 raises important questions on biosecurity: how should the circulation of living materials be controlled in such a way that it does not cause the emergence of new infectious agents? This question mobilized a range of experts who assessed the risks of emergence in the different spaces where living material circulates (Lakoff and Collier 2008). COVID-19 has been described as an emerging infectious disease of probable animal origin, which distinguishes it from zoonoses naturally transmitted across vertebrate species (Haider et al. 2020). The World Health Organization published a report in February 2021 investigating the different scenarios for the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 (WHO 2021). From an anthropological perspective, these different scenarios of the past can be considered as imaginaries of the future in spaces where regulations will be imposed. If rules of biosecurity aim to prepare contemporary societies for zoonotic viruses, how do these rules express changing relations between humans and non-human animals in these societies? How do experts on biosecurity imagine material exchanges between

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humans and animals in spaces of biological accumulation such as laboratories, farms and markets? In this chapter, I will argue that this imaginary mobilizes the cold chain as a technique of conservation of living material which casts anew the question of domestication.

The Hypothesis of Imported Frozen Products

In June 2020, Chinese health authorities discovered traces of the SARS-CoV-2 virus on cutting boards used for imported salmon in the Xinfadi market in Beijing. They then carried out systematic tests on imported frozen products: American pork, shrimp from Saudi Arabia, and Brazilian or New Zealand beef. The discovery of the active virus on frozen food imported into Qingdao justified the screening of 11 million people in this port city. In the eyes of Chinese experts, the hypothesis that the virus was imported via frozen foreign products ruled out the possibility of a viral emergence in the Huanan seafood wet market in Wuhan. The detection of a cluster of COVID-19 among workers and customers in this market was very similar to the scenario of the SARS crisis in 2003 (Chan et al. 2020). What retrospectively came to be called SARS-CoV-1 had been detected among workers in wet markets in the Guangdong province, raising the hypothesis that the new virus had been transmitted from horsheshoe bats to civet cats sold in these markets (Woo et al. 2006). This led to orientalizing descriptions of wet markets as unsanitary places where humans are in contact with wild animals (Zhan 2005). But in the eyes of Chinese experts, the discovery of SARS-CoV-2-like viruses in human samples in Italy and France as early as fall 2019 suggested overseas circulation before the first cluster in Wuhan was identified in December 2019.

According to other virologists, however, it was 'highly unlikely' that SARS-CoV-2 was actively preserved in frozen products and more likely that the contamination in markets selling frozen products was accidental. Frozen foods may provide surfaces where the virus survives, but they are not environments where it can replicate. The hypothesis of a contamination from abroad would request to trace back the entire import chain to be proven. Why was this baroque hypothesis proposed in an international report?

In the language of virologists, the hypothesis of viral transmission through frozen foods could be a 'red herring': a logical fallacy designed to divert attention from the real target. Indeed, the term 'red herring' refers to the use of smoked herring as a lure for hunting dogs. The term was