

BOOK REVIEW

## Cambiamenti climatici. Antropocene e politica

by **Daniele Conversi**, Milano, Mondadori Università, 2022, 184 pages, price: 13 € (paperback).

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Daniele Conversi published a short and instructive volume on the relations between climate change and politics. Conversi puts on the table the interconnections between climate change, the apex of many other environmental disasters, and the world of nationalist politics, with the latter being anchored to predominant nation-state logics, even in the face of planetary challenges.

In four chapters, the author addresses the ‘climate change science’ and sociopolitical responsibilities pertinent to the nation-state. He asserts that a state of ‘collective stupidity’ (p. 6) and the clouding of intellectual faculties, pushed aside by mediatic mainstream, have engendered a sort of alarmism and, at the same time, a refusal to rethink economic growth or liberal capitalistic development. The phenomenon of skeptical deniers’ tautological distortion of scientific evidence has hindered the effective governance of planetary problems. This lack of political response has led to the expansion of regional tipping points tending to become global ones. As the regional transforms into global, with no sufficient measures taken by policy-makers, this process poses high risk to the planet, given the unpredictable cascading effects it originates.

Conversi uncovers the triadic reality of interconnected scientific, social, and state-nation political dimensions, while advocating for the need to adopt a transdisciplinary science to address climate change. His position implies that science may not necessarily be democratic in the production of knowledge. However, it requires democratic transparency in order to disseminate that knowledge and, consequently, provide means of pressure on politics.

In the first chapter, Conversi historicizes the first development of scientific environmental studies and the first signs of ecological consciousness, initiated in the 1970s (Earth Day, Green Peace, the 1972 Limits to Growth Report, etc.), that showed the fallacies of the dominant Western economic model. As neither interest, nor concrete action had been taken by states during the Reaganian years of so-called ‘devolution’, the role of nation-states in the developed world regarding greenhouse gas emissions was only conceptualized in 1992 (with no public funding). Yet, the two conflicting paradigms, that is, no limits to development and economic growth vs. anthropogenic responsibility, remained unbridgeable.

The second chapter introduces the biopolitical dimension, inspired by Bruno Latour, of contemporary emergencies. As asserted by Conversi, climate change is the corollary of conflicts, pandemics, wars, poverty droughts (e.g., Syria, Somalia, Sudan, etc.) which are consequential to soil depletion, desertification, and deforestation, acidification of the oceans, extinction of species, and so on; up to the demographic pressure of ‘climigration’ of masses from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe (p. 26). Here, the author posits the challenge of the denationalization of both politics and policies worldwide. This is the core reflection of Conversi’s book. Global phenomena, such as mass consumerism, the overpopulation of the planet, pollution of chemical and/or radioactive isotopes from nuclear scoriae, all impact climate change and the emergencies deriving from

it. These have thus far been ignored by political studies on nationalism. According to the author, humanity finds itself in a new age, that is, the Anthropocene. The latter refers to the geological time-scale dating from the commencement of significant human impact on the geology, ecosystems, and natural resources of the Earth, which has witnessed exponential acceleration, since the age of industrialization and consequent globalization.

The radical effects of human activities on planet Earth present 'planetary boundaries' implying a crossroad for humanity as a whole. The Anthropocene, which began in 2000, aggravated the different ramifications of previous historical and sociological epochs. Major historical turning points, such as the European invasion of the Americas, the industrial revolution, the consumerist 'great acceleration' of the last post-war period, were followed by an exacerbated self-destructive economic expansion, engendered by neoliberal globalization. The author defines the accumulative result of these processes as the opening shot of Anthropocene. According to Conversi, the neoliberal socioeconomic order puts in motion a homogenizing nationalism, which is an almost homeostatic reaction to the pressures exerted on society by globalized industries. As a result, there is an intrinsic need for an interdisciplinary approach for intellectual elites to be mobilized against nationalism and populism. Cross-nationalisms have so far prevented concerted action to halt the climate crisis, influencing all international agreements, including those that have been relatively successful. Therefore, new concepts should be adopted in social sciences, as existent ones are insufficient to describe the epochal changes and challenges our world faces.

The author postulates his multilateral geo-ethical cosmopolitanism of survival as the ideological attitude to adopt in relation to the omnipresent 'resource nationalism' and 'green nationalism'. This dimension is especially in contrast with the geopolitical dimension, as dominated by nation-states, permeating the practice and discipline of international relations. Moreover, nationalism is attached to the capitalistic present and is exclusionary by definition, with no right for future generations or other nations. Even when applied to localist political tendencies, the nationalist rhetoric builds on 'continuity' by combining the cult of a homeland with the politics of various contemporary autonomist and independence movements. In chapter four, Conversi unpacks the cases of Scotland and Catalunya as subnational green nationalist parties (i.e., SNP and ERC Left republican Catalan party). He generalizes that political opportunism and consensus over growthism ambiguity is easily found in independentist parties.

On a national level, the author mentions some European countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark Finland, Switzerland, Germany that are pioneers of state-initiated sustainability, implementing both local and national-level lasting policies. He exemplifies the green new deals and sustainable nationalism, as programmed by the EU 2019 carbon neutrality by 2050, since overcoming nationalism becomes an imperative. Conversi's call is thus centered on widening and deepening the path toward transnational progressive politics and policies regarding climate change.

In this respect, the author's reasoning is formulated in a clear-cut perspective which puts together Conversi's years-long empirical research on nationalism and transdisciplinary dialogue. Hence, the book successfully explores new directions in the relationship between politics, nationalism, and environmental governance. Conversi's book is a valid contribution to the literature available in Italian regarding the nationalist logics of contemporary politics, which condition the ability and readiness of politicians and policymakers to structurally face the dramatic emergency of climate change. More than a scientific treatise addressing specialists, the volume would be a beneficial reading to students and young scholars who wish to learn and develop research paths in the field of public policy, international relations, and environmental global governance.