



Climate Leviathan

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Abstract: While there is much justifiable attention to the ecological implications of global climate change, the political implications are just as important for human well-being and social justice. We posit a basic framework by which to understand the range of political possibilities, in light of the response of global elites to climate warming and the challenges it poses to hegemonic institutional and conceptual modes of governance and accumulation. The framework also suggests some possible means through which these responses might be thwarted, and political stakes in that construction of a new hegemony—which, to avoid suggesting we know or can yet determine the form it will take, we call ‘climate X’.

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I.

Carl Schmitt once wrote that “state and revolution, leviathan and behemoth, are actually or potentially always present”—that “the leviathan can unfold in unexpected historical situations and move in directions other than those plotted by its conjurer” (2008a:53). For Schmitt, the modern thinker most closely associated with Thomas Hobbes and his *Leviathan*, this was no minor point of order. Leviathan, whether in the Old Testament or in even older myths, was never a captive of its conjurer’s will, and remains at large today, prowling between nature and the supernatural, sovereign and subject. Yet Leviathan no longer signals the many-headed serpent of the eastern Mediterranean, but Melville’s whale and Hobbes’ sovereign, the “Multitude so united in one Person” to form the “Common-wealth”:

This is the Generation of that great Leviathan, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that *Mortall God*, to which wee owe under the *Immortall God*, our peace and defense. For by this Authoritie, given him by every particular man in the Common-Wealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is enabled to forme the wills of them all, to Peace at home, and mutuall ayd against their enemies abroad.... And he that carryeth this person is called Sovereaigne, and said to have Sovereaigne Power; and every one besides, his Subject (Hobbes 1968:227-8).

How did this figure of sovereign power come to be called Leviathan? Hobbes does not say, but the reference is certainly to the Book of Job. Job, abused by misfortunes cast upon him by Satan, cries out against the injustices visited upon the faithful. God’s reply is not kindly: he reminds Job not only of His justice, but of His might. God taunts Job with the Leviathan, proof of His worldly authority and of Job’s powerlessness:

Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope?
Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook?
Will he keep begging you for mercy? Will he speak to you with gentle words? . . .

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3 Any hope of subduing him is false; the mere sight of him is overpowering.
4 No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me?
5 Who has a claim against me that I must pay?
6 Everything under heaven belongs to me. [...]
7 On earth [leviathan] has no equal, a creature without fear.
8 He looks down on all that are haughty; he is king over all that are proud.
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11 Job 41: 1-34
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13 Although this reference to a worldly king suggested the metaphor of Leviathan to Hobbes, it
14 was roughly transposed.¹ As Schmitt is at pains to explain, Hobbes' personification of the
15 emerging form of state sovereignty with Leviathan "has obviously not been derived from
16 mythical speculations" (Schmitt 2008a:21; Balakrishnan 2000:209-211). Rather, in the text
17 that bears its name, Leviathan is put to work for (what are at least superficially) quite
18 different purposes. Leviathan, a sea monster who seems the very embodiment of nature's
19 ferocity, is figured by Hobbes as the means to *escape* the state of nature. As Schmitt
20 indicates, Hobbes' sovereign is in many ways a machinic anti-monster. And unlike God's
21 taunts to Job, its sovereignty is not rooted in mere terror, but an ordinary social contract.
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34 Schmitt said his 1938 philology of Leviathan was "a response to Benjamin [that has]
35 remained unnoticed" (quoted in Agamben 2005:52). Although aimed specifically at
36 Benjamin's "Critique of Violence", the real point of contention is crystallized in what
37 Agamben (2005:52) calls the "decisive document in the Benjamin-Schmitt dossier," i.e.,
38 Benjamin's thesis VIII on history:
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46 The tradition of the oppressed classes teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in
47 which we live is the rule. We must attain to a concept of history that is in keeping
48 with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about the
49 real state of emergency (1969:258).
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53 Since the US inaugurated its most recent states of emergency via wars on terror and
54 economic crisis, this eighth thesis has received a lot of attention, and rightly so. Much of this
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3 recent work has been inspired by Agamben's claim (2005:14) that "the declaration of the
4 state of exception has gradually been replaced by an unprecedented generalization of the
5 paradigm of security as the normal technique of government".²
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10 The conception and regulation of security under exceptional conditions is
11 increasingly a planetary matter. While the securitization problem is usually posed within a
12 governmental imaginary framed by the nation-state, a series of contemporary dynamics have
13 displaced the state as the most immediate means to security and stable accumulation. Yet far
14 more than the neoliberal contagion of financial crisis and market disorders, it is global
15 climate change that has produced the conditions in which "the paradigm of security as the
16 normal technique of government" is being solicited at a scale and scope hitherto
17 unimaginable. What will become of sovereign security under conditions of planetary crisis?
18 Is a warming planet "fierce enough to rouse" Leviathan? Or will Leviathan "beg for mercy"?
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32 The news on climate change is, of course, uniformly bad and getting worse.
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34 Notwithstanding the global economic crisis, global carbon emissions jumped by 5.9% in
35 2010, the fastest annual increase yet recorded (Gillis 2011; Peters et al. 2012). The
36 International Energy Agency, no revolutionary outfit, warns us that "the world is likely to
37 build so many fossil-fuelled power stations, energy-guzzling factories and inefficient
38 buildings in the next five years that it will become impossible to hold global warming to safe
39 levels" (Harvey 2011). The range of ecological implications grows with each report from
40 science. Many in the global North still seem to find comfort in the belief that the worst
41 consequences—food scarcity, political unrest, inundations and other so-called 'natural
42 disasters'—are far enough away or far enough in the future that they will not live to
43 experience them. That reaction, if perhaps ethically unjustifiable, is nevertheless
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3 comprehensible because the negative consequences of climate change sound out in two
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5 rhythms that are not synchronized.³ There is an almost-imperceptible ambient noise of rising
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7 seas and plodding upward of food prices, but this is hard to hear. The occasional pound of
8
9 stochastic events punctuates this background noise. Consider 2010. The northern
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11 hemisphere cooked through the hottest summer on record; Pakistan suffered historical floods;
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13 Russian wildfires blazed; grain prices doubled. Such exceptions have a sound of their own,
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15 so to speak; thus the real tone of climate change is not yet resounding in our political lives.
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17 Then there are the ongoing wars for the world's energy supplies, with ever more fronts.
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19 Taken together, it is difficult to even contemplate the future; merely to confront the perils
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21 that loom can paralyze us with fear. As Davis (2010:46) notes, the effects of regular
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23 calamities on our political imaginations are almost overwhelming: "on the basis of the
24
25 evidence before us, taking a 'realist' view of the human prospect, like seeing Medusa's head,
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27 would simply turn us into stone". We write, at the risk of being turned to stone, with the aim
28
29 of theorizing the possible political-economic futures that climate change may well induce.
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31 The urgency of such analysis, for all its inherent limitations, stems from the fact that the
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33 looming political-economic formations are no small part of our peril.
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41 In the face of this task, several questions arise. If we are to achieve something like
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43 the commonly identified target of a 90% reduction in global carbon emissions by 2050, how
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45 might we do so? What political processes or strategies could make that happen in anything
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47 resembling a just manner, or in any manner at all? If we do *not* achieve massive social
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49 reconstruction – as seems highly likely to us – and climate change reaches some threshold or
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51 tipping point at which it is globally impossible to ignore or reverse, then what are the likely
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53 political-economic outcomes? What processes, strategies, and social formations will emerge
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3 and become hegemonic? Can the defining triadic form of the modern world – capital +
4 nation + state (see Karatani 2008) – survive catastrophic climate change? If so, in what
5 form? We would crystallize this line of questions into two key problems:
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- 10 1. Do we have a theory for revolution in the name of *climate justice*?
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12 2. Do we have a theory of how capitalist nation states are transforming as a consequence of
13
14 *planetary* change?
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17 We posit that at present, the answer to both questions is negative. Our challenge, to develop
18 a politics adequate to the present conjuncture, calls for us to elaborate responses to these
19 problems—while working within five constraints:
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- 24 1. There is no legitimate basis for debating climate change as such. The climate is
25
26 changing, and anthropogenic modification of the chemical composition of atmosphere is
27
28 the major cause (IPCC 2007; Thompson 2010).
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- 31 2. Humanity may or may not have time to reverse these changes, which are sure to have
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33 dreadful and often deadly consequences—particularly for the relatively weak and the
34
35 marginalized (human and non-human).
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- 38 3. The political-ecological conditions within which the immense decisions about climate
39
40 change are being (and will be) made are fundamentally marked by uncertainty and fear;
41
42 there are no real climate *decisions*, only various reactions.
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- 45 4. The elite transnational social groups that dominate the world's capitalist nation-states
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47 certainly desire to moderate and adapt to climate change—not least to stabilize the
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49 conditions that produce their privileges; yet, to date, they have utterly failed to coordinate
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51 a response (Davis 2010; Bond 2010a).
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3 5. In light of the potential severity of climate change, elites will increasingly attempt to
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5 coordinate their reactions, all while sailing seas of uncertainty and incredulity.
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8 Whether or not Davis (2010:38) is correct that “growing environmental and socio-economic
9
10 turbulence may simply drive elite publics into more frenzied attempts to wall themselves off
11
12 from the rest of humanity,” we must consider the means by which such power might be
13
14 exercised. And we must think these possibilities through beyond the increasingly common
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16 ‘collapse’ narratives (e.g. Dyer 2010; Paskal 2010; Parenti 2011). Even those that do not
17
18 stoop to Robert Kaplanesque voyeurism tend to leave us with a quasi-fatalistic account of the
19
20 “Warre-of-all-against-all” (Hobbes 1998:12). It is not enough to forecast doom, however
21
22 justified it might sometimes seem, in the hope that the mere fear of it will help us find an
23
24 emergency exit. Only an analysis of the political forces that produce the potentiality of
25
26 collapse, and the ways in which those forces might themselves be transformed by that
27
28 potentiality, will lead to an understanding of emerging “relations of force” (Gramsci
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30 1971:180). There are a limited number of forms these will take. Examining the possibilities
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32 is of utmost urgency if we are to produce an effective counter-response.
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41 II.

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43 We posit that two variables will shape the coming political-economic order. The first is
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45 whether the prevailing economic formation will continue to be capitalist or not. While a
46
47 great deal of diversity can be found between capitalisms, all capitalist societies in history
48
49 have been shaped by what Marx (1992[1867]) called the general formula of capital: M—C—
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51 M'. Whether this circuit of capital continues to expand — that is, whether the value-form
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53 will continue to shape social life — is fundamental to the emerging order. The second is
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3 whether a coherent *planetary sovereign* will emerge or not. The question here is whether
4 sovereignty will be reconstituted for the purposes of planetary management. What we call
5 ‘climate Leviathan’ exists to the precise extent that some sovereign exists who can decide on
6 the exception, declare an emergency, and decide who may emit carbon and who cannot. This
7 sovereign must be planetary in a dual sense: capable of acting at the scale of the Earth’s
8 atmosphere (since carbon sequestration presents itself as a massive collective action
9 problem), but also because it must act in the name of planetary management—for the sake of
10 *life on Earth*. A task of biblical proportions, amounting to an impossible global accounting
11 of everything, like determining “a weight for the wind and apportion[ing] the waters by
12 measure” (Job 28: 25).
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27 This pair of dichotomies produces four potential global political responses to climate
28 change, each of which is distinguished by the hegemony of a particular bloc, a mode of
29 appropriation and distribution through which that hegemony is exercised: a capitalist climate
30 Leviathan; an anti-capitalist, state-centred climate Mao; a reactionary capitalist Behemoth;
31 and anti-capitalist, anti-sovereign climate X (see figure one). The top pair in the box reflect
32 capitalist futures. The left side of the box represent scenarios where planetary sovereignty is
33 affirmed and constructed.
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43 [Figure one about here]
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46 Our central thesis is that the future of the world will be defined by Leviathan,
47 Behemoth, Mao, and X, and the conflicts between them. This is not to say that all future
48 politics will be simply determined by climate, which is certainly wrong, but rather that the
49 challenge of climate change is so fundamental to the global order that the complex and
50 manifold reactions to climate change will restructure the world along one of these four paths.
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3 To say the least, the continuing hegemony of existing capitalist liberal democracy cannot be
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5 safely assumed.
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8 Among these possible futures, Leviathan is presently leading but is neither
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10 consolidated nor uncontested; because of its likely dominance in the near term, the possible
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12 futures that exist outside climate Leviathan may largely be seen as responses to it. Behemoth
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14 is Leviathan's greatest immediate threat, and, while unlikely to become hegemonic, may well
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16 remain disruptive enough to prevent Leviathan from achieving a new hegemonic order. If
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18 Leviathan essentially reflects the dream of a sustainable capitalist status quo, and Behemoth
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20 reaction, Mao and X are competing revolutionary figures in the worldly drama. X is in our
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22 view ethically and politically superior, but Mao is more likely to enter the scene from stage
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24 left. Let us consider each in turn.
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32 *II.1. Climate Leviathan*

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34 Climate Leviathan is defined by the dream of a planetary sovereign. It is a regulatory
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36 authority armed with democratic legitimacy, a panopticon-like capacity to monitor and
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38 discipline carbon production, consumption, and exchange, and binding technical authority on
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40 scientific issues. The UN-COP negotiations on emissions reductions—notwithstanding their
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42 abject failure even on their own ecologically and socially inadequate terms—represent the
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44 first institutional manifestation of this dream of planetary regulation, a process that the
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46 dominant capitalist nation-states will surely accelerate and consolidate as climate-induced
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48 disruptions of accumulation and political stability become more urgent. Although binding
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50 agreement could not be reached in Copenhagen, Cancún, or Durban, the terms of a potential
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52 agreement are clear enough. To begin, capitalism itself is not a question on the table, but
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3 rather treated as the solution to climate change. Indeed, filtered through the COP lens,
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5 climate change appears to capital as an opportunity. Trading in carbon-emissions permits
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7 ('cap-and-trade'), judicious market assessments of 'tradeoffs', nuclear power, corporate
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9 leadership, carbon capture and storage, green finance, and ultimately, geoengineering: this is
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11 Leviathan's lifeblood.
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15 Why call this 'Leviathan'? In the first place, climate Leviathan is a direct descendant
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17 in the line from Hobbes' original to Schmitt's sovereign: when it comes to climate, Leviathan
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19 will decide, and is constituted precisely in the act of decision. It is the pure expression of a
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21 desire for, the recognition of the absolute necessity of, a sovereign—indeed, the first truly
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23 planetary sovereign—to seize command, declare an emergency and bring order to the globe.
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25 If Agamben (2005:14) is correct that “the declaration of the state of exception has gradually
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27 been replaced by an unprecedented generalization of the paradigm of security as the normal
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29 technique of government”, then the consolidation of climate Leviathan represents the
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31 rescaling of the “normal technique[s]” to encompass planetary security, or the making-secure
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33 of planetary life. With this achievement the state of nature and the nature of the state would
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35 enmesh perfectly.
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41 Geographically at least, climate Leviathan exceeds its lineage, for it must somehow
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43 transcend the state-based territorial container fundamental to Hobbes' and Schmitt's thought.
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45 Even for those states most committed to national autonomy, it is increasingly clear that
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47 independent regulatory regimes are inadequate to the global challenge of sharply reducing
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49 carbon emissions. This contradiction — rending deep fissures in the UNFCCC process —
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51 may lead, as with other 'public good' collective action problems, to the construction of a
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53 nominally 'global' frame which is in fact a political and geographical extension of the rule of
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3 the extant hegemonic bloc, i.e. the capitalist global North. But this is by no means certain,
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5 partly because climate change has broken the surface of elite consciousness at a moment of
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7 global political-economic transition. Any realizable planetary climate Leviathan must be
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9 constructed with the approval of a range of actors formerly excluded from global
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11 governance—China and India most notably, but the list could go on. Ensuring China's
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13 support for any binding carbon regulation complicates the role of capital in the Leviathan.⁵
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17 We conjecture that Leviathan could take two forms. On one hand, a variety of
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19 authoritarian territorial sovereignty, arguably truer to Hobbes' own vision, could emerge in
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21 nations or regions where political economic conditions prove amenable. We name this
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23 possibility 'climate Mao', and discuss it below. On the other hand, we could see Leviathan
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25 emerge as the means by which to perpetuate the extant rule of northern liberal democratic
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27 capitalist states. Arguably the most likely scenario is that sometime in the coming decades
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29 the waning US-led liberal capitalist bloc will endeavour to impose a global carbon regime
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31 that, in light of political and ecological crisis, will brook no opposition in defense of a human
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33 future for which it volunteers itself as the last line of defense. The pattern of mobilization
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35 will likely be familiar, in which the United Nations or other international fora serve as a
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37 means of legitimizing aggressive means of surveillance and discipline. This could make the
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39 construction of climate Leviathan a key means by which to salvage American international
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41 hegemony—a prospect that, if anything, only increases the likelihood of its consolidation.⁶
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48 How might a potential capitalist climate Leviathan will press for its diplomatic
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50 resolution? One might find, for example, the personification of this effort in John Holdren,
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52 Harvard physicist and National Science Advisor to President Obama. Since his 2008
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54 appointment, right-wing media have derided Holdren as a harbinger of a climate police state.
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3 One website claims he has called for “forced abortions and mass sterilization” to “save the
4 planet” (http://zombietime.com/john_holdren/). Paranoid hyperbole, certainly, but the
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6 underlying critique is not entirely misplaced. Holdren was an early visionary of what we call
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8 climate Leviathan. Consider these lines from the conclusion of Holdren’s 1977 textbook on
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10 resource management, in which he outlines a new sovereignty he calls “Planetary Regime”:
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16 *Toward a Planetary Regime*: ... Perhaps those agencies, combined with UNEP and
17 the United Nations population agencies, might eventually be developed into a
18 Planetary Regime—sort of an international superagency for population, resources,
19 and environment. Such a comprehensive Planetary Regime could control the
20 development, administration, conservation, and distribution of all natural resources....
21 Thus the Regime could have the power to control pollution not only in the
22 atmosphere and oceans, but also in such freshwater bodies as rivers and lakes that
23 cross international boundaries or that discharge into the oceans. The Regime might
24 also be a logical central agency for regulating all international trade, perhaps
25 including assistance from DCs to LDCs, and including all food on the international
26 market. The Planetary Regime might be given responsibility for determining the
27 optimum population for the world and for each region and for arbitrating various
28 countries’ shares within their regional limits. Control of population size might
29 remain the responsibility of each government, but the Regime would have some
30 power to enforce the agreed limits (Ehrlich, Ehrlich, and Holdren 1977:942-3).
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36 Holdren’s coauthors, the Ehrlichs, are well-known Malthusians. But this vision of a capital-
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38 ‘R’ Regime owes more to a German legal theorist than the British Reverend.
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40 We emphasize the specifically capitalist character of the climate Leviathan to whom
41 this call appeals. In contrast to the sovereign Leviathan conceived by Schmitt – for whom
42 capital was at best an epiphenomenon – capitalist climate Leviathan emerges in a manner
43 reminiscent less of National Socialism than of the disparate efforts to save capitalism after
44 1929, retrospectively collected under the umbrella-term ‘Keynesianism’: a concentration of
45 political power at the national scale in combination with international coordinating
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3 institutions that attempt to render liberal hegemony immutable—allowing, as with the UN,
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5 for specific constraints on capital’s dominion.
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8 The notion of ‘green-washing’ hardly does justice to the pretensions of this transition
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10 to globalized green capitalism. As Edward Barbier describes in his outline of a “Global
11
12 Green New Deal” (2010) – perhaps the most sophisticated call for a capitalist Leviathan yet
13
14 written – it will require both an institutional-juridical structure of planetary climate
15
16 sovereignty, and the construction of sophisticated and liquid global markets in a series of
17
18 novel enviro-financial instruments whose status as functioning ‘securities’ is by no means
19
20 clear (Lohmann 2009; 2012). Nevertheless, climate Leviathan will be the fundamental
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22 regulatory ideal motivating elites in the near future. Yet it is neither inevitable nor
23
24 invincible; it is strong and coherent, but not uncontested. Not only is it threatened within by
25
26 the usual burdens of any state-capitalist project divided by multiple accumulation strategies,
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28 but it is almost impossible to imagine that it will actually reverse climate change. Given the
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30 drive for incessantly expanded accumulation without which capital ceases to be, the constant
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32 conversion of the planet into means of production, and the material throughput and energy-
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34 intensivity through which it is operated, capitalism is effectively running up against its
35
36 planetary limits. If there is a “spatial fix” (Harvey 1982) for this contradiction, it is as yet
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38 unavailable.
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45 Moreover, capitalism’s tendency to deepen inequalities of wealth and power is tightly
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47 linked to the challenge of confronting climate change (Marx 1992; Walker and Large 1975;
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49 Harvey 1982; Smith 1984; Karatani 2003; 2008; Foster et al. 2010; Wainwright 2010). Any
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51 attempt to reduce planetary carbon emissions will require sacrifices and transnational
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53 alliances; deep inequalities, within and between nations, are fatal to such efforts. Intra-
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3 nationally, because inequalities make it difficult to build coalitions around shared sacrifice
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5 and entrench the capacity of the wealthy to prevent the conversion of carbon-intensive
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7 economies into more sustainable alternatives. And internationally, because the world's
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9 extraordinary inequalities of wealth and power prevent the sort of agreements that will be
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11 necessary for Leviathan to rule effectively. Thus, even if climate Leviathan can come into
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13 being – through a global consolidation of ecological and economic sovereignty, via some
14
15 combination of coercion and consent – it is unlikely to secure a confident hegemony. But it
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17 will not die a quiet death. Even now it watches the world, in search of a containment strategy
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19 for its foes.
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24 Yet again, what we call 'Leviathan' – the left half of our four-square – could take two
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26 distinct forms, depending on whether an emerging sovereign acts to defend or overthrow
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28 capitalism. Let us now consider the latter.
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34 *II.2. Climate Mao*

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36 Of the two incarnations of climate Leviathan, one lies at the end of the red thread running
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38 from Robespierre to Lenin to Mao. Climate Mao is marked by the emergence of a non-
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40 capitalist Leviathanic domestic authority along Maoist lines. If capitalist climate Leviathan
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42 stands ready to confront carbon governance within an evolving Euro-American liberal
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44 hegemony, climate Mao asserts the necessity of a just terror in the interests of the future of
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46 the collective. Concretely speaking, this means that it represents the necessity of a planetary
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48 sovereign but wields this power *against* capital. The state of exception determines who may
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50 and may not emit carbon—at the expense of unjust wastefulness, unnecessary emissions, and
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52 conspicuous consumption.
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4 Relative to the institutional means currently available to capitalist liberal democracy
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6 and its sorry attempts at consensus, this trajectory has some distinct advantages, particularly
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8 in terms of the capacity to coordinate massive political-economic reconfiguration quickly and
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10 comprehensively. To recall the questions with which we began – how can we possibly meet
11
12 the necessary emissions reductions targets? – it is this feature of climate Mao that
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14 recommends it most. As climate justice movements all over the planet struggle to have their
15
16 voices heard, most in the global north are premised on an unspoken faith in a lop-sided, elite-
17
18 biased liberal proceduralism doomed to failure in the face of changes of a scale and scope
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20 hitherto unimaginable. If climate science is even half-right in its forecasts, the liberal model
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22 of democracy – even in its idealized Rawlsian or Habermasian formulations – is at best too
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24 slow, at worst a devastating distraction. Climate Mao reflects the demand for revolutionary,
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26 state-led transformation today.
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32 Indeed, calls for variations on just such a regime abound on the left. Mike Davis
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34 (2010) and Giovanni Arrighi (2007: pt. IV) have more-or-less sided with climate Mao,
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36 sketching it as an alternative to capitalist climate Leviathan. We might even interpret the
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38 renewal of enthusiasm for Maoist theory – including Alain Badiou's (2010:262-79) version –
39
40 by the prevailing crisis of ecological-political imagination. Minqi Li's is arguably the best
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42 developed of this line of thought, and (like Arrighi) he locates the fulcrum of world climate
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44 history in China, arguing that climate Mao offers the only way out of our current planetary
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46 conditions. His analysis:
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51 [U]nless China takes serious and meaningful actions to fulfill its obligation of
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53 emissions reduction, there is little hope that global climate stabilization can be
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55 achieved. However, it is very unlikely that the [present] Chinese government will
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57 voluntarily take the necessary actions to reduce emissions. The sharp fall of
58
59 economic growth that would be required is something that the Chinese government
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3 will not accept and cannot afford politically. Does this mean that humanity is
4 doomed? That depends on the political struggle within China and in the world as a
5 whole (Li 2009:1055-7).
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9 Taking inspiration from Mao, Li argues that a new revolution within the Chinese revolution
10 could transform China and save humanity from doom. Of course, Li does not suggest such
11 an outcome is likely; one need only consider China's massive highway expansions,
12 accelerated automobile imports, and subsidized urban sprawl (compare Wen 2010). But he is
13 right to emphasize that if an anti-capitalist planetary sovereign is to emerge that could change
14 the world's climate trajectory, it is likely to emerge in China.
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23 Even today, when the Chinese state invokes its full regulatory authority, it can
24 achieve political feats unimaginable in liberal democracy. Perhaps the most notable instance
25 of state-coordinated climate authority is the manner in which Beijing's air quality was re-
26 engineered during the 2008 Olympics, as flowers were potted all over the city, traffic barred,
27 trees planted in the desert, and factories and power plants closed—to successfully create blue
28 skies for the Games (Wang *et al.* 2009). Recall, too, that in early 2010 the Chinese state
29 effectively killed General Motors' gas-guzzling Hummer when it blocked the division's sale
30 to Sichuan Tenzhong Heavy Industrial Machinery due to the vehicle's emissions levels (*Los*
31 *Angeles Times*, 25 February 2010). One can also point to the 'Great Green Wall' against
32 desertification, which, if successfully completed, will cross 4,480 km of northern China, and
33 various tree-planting programs will give the country 42% forest cover by 2050 (*Guardian* 23
34 September 2010). And since vowing in the summer of 2010 to apply an "iron hand" to the
35 task of reducing emissions, the Communist Party closed over 2,000 steel mills and other
36 carbon-emitting factories by March 2011 (*New York Times* 1 March 2011). Such changes
37 foretell the possibility of climate Mao, if China were to become a global hegemon and also
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3 undergo a revolutionary green twist. To be clear, China is emphatically not on this path
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5 today. The CCP appears committed, at least today, to slowly building climate Leviathan.⁷
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8 Still we insist on speaking of climate Mao, not climate Robespierre or Lenin, for both
9
10 theoretical and geographical reasons. Mao was a Leninist who insisted on combining a
11
12 populist faith in the masses with a vanguard party. Yet his great theoretical contribution to
13
14 the Marxist tradition was to analyze the distinct class fractions within the Chinese peasantries
15
16 and to argue for re-center revolutionary practice around the poor and (some of the) middle
17
18 peasants, in union with the urban proletariat (a relatively marginal class in China during the
19
20 1930s). Mao emphatically denied that only a fully-proletarianized class could serve as the
21
22 basis of a revolution, or to put this otherwise, he argued that even “poor peasants” and the
23
24 “semi-proletariat” could achieve revolutionary class conscious in Marx’s sense (Mao 1926).
25
26 This is a crucial insight in an era where the world is home to large and growing social groups
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28 that, to put it mildly, do not fit neatly into the bourgeois-proletariat distinction. This is
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30 where geography comes into play.
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36 Climate Mao is, in the near future, a specifically Asian path, or better: climate Mao is
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38 a global path which can only be cut from Asia. In contrast to sub-Saharan Africa or Latin
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40 America, for example, only in Asia—and only with some revolutionary leadership from
41
42 China—do we find the combination of factors that make climate Mao realizable: massive and
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44 marginalized peasantries and proletariats, historical experience and ideology, existing state
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46 capacity, and skyrocketing carbon emissions. The key contrast here is with Evo Morales’
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48 Bolivian state, which serves as the most powerful voice on the left within the UNFCCC
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50 progress, promulgating the Cochabamba accord in counterpoint to the US/EU Copenhagen
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52 framework. While the view from Cochabamba is certainly radical—its accord calls for a
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3 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2017, while rejecting carbon credits and “the
4 consumption patterns of developed countries”—it is difficult to see how it could translate
5
6 into global transformation.⁸ By contrast climate Mao is not impossible in Asia because of the
7
8 confrontation between millions of increasingly climate-stressed poor people and the political
9
10 structures that abet those very stresses, not to mention the living legacies of Maoism. In the
11
12 imminent confrontation of Asia’s historical-geographical conditions with catastrophic
13
14 climate change, too many people have too much to lose, too quickly—a formula for
15
16 revolution. Mao writes (1937:321-2): “Qualitatively different contradictions can only be
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18 resolved by qualitatively different methods. [... T]he contradiction between society and
19
20 nature is resolved by the method of developing the productive forces.” The logic of climate
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22 Mao, in sum, is that only revolutionary state power based upon mass mobilization would be
23
24 sufficient to transform the world’s productive forces and thus result our planetary
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26 “contradiction between society and nature.”
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34 Thus we are not suggesting that climate Mao will emerge via an ecological
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36 awakening on the part of Indian or Chinese peasants. Asian peasants – and recently
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38 urbanized former peasants – will respond not to carbon emissions *per se* but to (a) state
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40 failures to act in response to existential crises (shortages of water, food, shelter, and so on),
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42 and also (b) the elite expropriations certain to come in the face of climate-induced
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44 instabilities. Yet again, China’s state is presently building climate Leviathan. How we get
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46 from here to climate Mao depends principally on the Chinese proletariat and peasantry. As is
47
48 commonly noted, China’s emissions are growing daily, and the economic growth with which
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50 those emissions are associated is the basis of much of the legitimacy enjoyed by the Chinese
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52 state and ruling elites (Li 2008; Harper 2010). If the Chinese working class responds to
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3 massive climate change-induced disruptions in growth, the possibilities for an energetic
4 climate Mao are substantial. Moreover, the preconditions for the rise of climate Mao are
5 extant, and in some cases thriving: outside of the Maoist tradition in China itself, the Maoist
6 Naxalites of India's eastern "red corridor" is actively engaged in armed conflict with India's
7 coal mafia; Maoists effectively now hold power in Nepal; and North Korea, although of
8 course not exactly Maoist, is not going away.⁹ Certainly any collective embrace of the
9 West's vision of capitalist Leviathan on the part of Asia's peasant and proletariat classes
10 seems unlikely (Li 2008:187). Rather, the opposite is more plausible: the rapid rise of more
11 authoritarian state socialisms, regimes that use their power to rapidly reduce global carbon
12 emissions, and maintain control during climate-induced 'emergencies'.
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27 [insert figure 2 around here]
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29 What, if anything, makes climate Mao a plausible basis for global transformation?
30 Consider figure two, a pair of maps which make two points uncomfortably clear. First, the
31 countries where per capita CO₂ emissions are greatest (USA, Canada, Australia, and some oil
32 producing states) are home to very few people who are at risk for the direct negative effects
33 of climate change. Second, there is an extraordinary unevenness to the world's at-risk
34 population. They live mainly in East and South Asia, between Pakistan and North Korea: a
35 belt of potentially revolutionary change. (The terrible floods of 2010 in Pakistan foretell
36 something of the magnitude of potential unrest.) Bear in mind that by 2025 Asia will not
37 only be home to the majority of humanity, but also will be the center of the world's economic
38 geography, the hub of commodity production and consumption as well as carbon emissions.
39 We might expect, therefore, climate-induced social turbulence to combine in a region with an
40 enormous, growing capacity to reshape the consumption and distribution of all the world's
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3 resources. Thus it is a far more interesting thought experiment to ask how radical social
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5 movements in Asia could challenge Leviathan than to imagine a would-be climate Mao
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7 emerging in, say, Lagos or La Paz.
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10 11 12 *II.3. Climate Behemoth*

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14 While Climate Mao looms over Asia, the spectre haunting the world's core capitalist states
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16 today is that of reactionary conservatism. That reaction takes one of its most important forms
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18 as a mode of Climate Behemoth, represented by the right half of Figure 1. Behemoth
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20 opposes Leviathan *qua* planetary sovereign, which is itself not a bad thing in our view.
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22 When Schmitt remarked that “state and revolution, leviathan and behemoth” are always
23
24 potentially present, Behemoth takes the revolutionary position. So it should, given its figural
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26 function as the masses in Hobbes's work: Behemoth is the plural of the Aramaic *behema*, the
27
28 ‘ordinary’ cattle or beast (Springborg 2010:301).
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35 Hobbes' inspiration for Behemoth is said to be Job 40:15 – “Behold now the
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37 Behemoth that I have made with you; he eats grass like cattle” – but its object is not in fact
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39 clear, since this passage stands as “one of the most extreme *non sequiturs* in literature”
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41 (Wolfers 1990:477). Schmitt, however, absolved himself of the responsibility for thinking it
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43 through in any detail (Mastnak 2010): in the epic clash of the Leviathan and Behemoth,
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45 Schmitt says (2008a:8-9), “Jewish-cabbalistic interpretations” staged “world history . . . as a
46
47 battle among heathens.” But Behemoth is more complex, as is its climate-politics avatar.
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49 For while it symbolizes the masses which might stand against Leviathan, revolution is no
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51 straightforward historical mechanism. Napoleon is as much a product of the French
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53 revolution as the *sans-culottes*.
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3 Behemoth provides at least two possible mass-based responses to Leviathan: the
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5 reactionary populism and the revolutionary anti-state democracy. In its reactionary form—
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7 where populism rallies to capital (as represented by the upper-right corner)—climate
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9 Behemoth stands in its most stark Schmittian opposition to climate Leviathan's planetary
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11 sovereignty. It is almost not hard to find evidence of this reactionary tendency today.
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13 Consider the persistence of a more-or-less conspiracist climate denialism in mainstream
14
15 political discourse, especially in the US. The louder, millenarian variety of this formation—
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17 perhaps best exemplified in the billionaire-backed, revivalist celebration of apocalyptic
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19 ignorance on the part of Sarah Palin and Rick Santorum—provides an easy target, but it's
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21 very ideological structure renders it impervious to reason. Indeed, that is the point. The
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23 disproportionate influence of this proudly unreasonable minority, agitated by the ill-gotten
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25 riches of a handful, will persist.
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32 The political force of reactionary climate Behemoth, however, remains unclear, for it
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34 substitutes free-market, nationalist and evangelical rhetoric for explanation. Its properly
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36 political dynamics are obscured by an inability (and unwillingness) to try and make some
37
38 sense of itself. Behemoth's reactionary dynamics are perhaps better understood via its milder
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40 manifestations, in which it accepts the fact of climate change, but posits it as a 'natural'
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42 process—i.e. beyond our control, either because of human or non-human nature—rendering
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44 policy fixes futile. We see this represented by figures like Bjorn Lomborg, who acknowledge
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46 but radically depoliticize climate change, and more generally in the chorus of ridicule aimed
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48 at 'alarmists' who call for reorganizing political-economic life to address environmental
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50 change. While the millenarian variation on this theme is the fearless closure of debate via the
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52 affirmation that if the world is coming to an end it must be God's will, Lomborg, though less
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3 self-obsessed and spiritual, condemns the regulatory hubris of climate science no less
4 vigorously. To put it in our terms, Behemoth hates Mao for its faith in secular revolution,
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6 Leviathan for its liberal pretension to rational world government, and both for their
7
8 willingness to sacrifice liberty for lower carbon emissions.
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13 Yet there is a key distinction in the fear behind this hatred. For while Santorum *et al.*
14
15 rage against Leviathan's anticipated assault in the name of the unfettered capitalist state,
16
17 Lomberg *et al.* dismiss it in the name of the unfettered capitalist market. In other words,
18
19 reactionary climate Behemoth finds itself on two not-necessarily-commensurable
20
21 principles. While it is true that Tea Party climate denialism is often couched in 'free market'
22
23 terms, these are in no way founded in classical liberal arguments for the efficient
24
25 maximization of capital formation under *laissez-faire*, but rather in a libertarian stand-off
26
27 over individual freedom. Indeed, Santorum-Palin style anti-environmentalism proffers itself
28
29 as advocating authentic community in the face by liberal compromise-democracy and
30
31 secularism. This stance is practically inseparable today from the foil of climate Leviathan.¹⁰
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34 In the US its signature affiliations – nationalism, guns, and cheap domestic oil – are
35
36 ideological reflections of reactionary Behemoth's essence. That essence is an opportunistic
37
38 blend of faiths: in the justice of God and the efficiency of the market.
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44 Regardless of who inhabits the White House, the US state could yet become
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46 Leviathan's torso. To date, however, the US remains the absent center of a new planetary
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48 sovereign, held back by this Behemoth-in-reaction.¹¹ To the extent that US hegemony will
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50 continue to require affordable fossil fuels, the emergence of Leviathan poses threat enough to
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52 feed Behemoth and thus to check Leviathan's planetary potential—for now.
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II.4. *Climate X*

There is, however, another Behemoth haunting the world, one related to that spectre Marx and Engels hailed in 1847. Insofar as Behemoth is always not-Leviathan, it of course contains within itself more than one possibility. Certainly, part of what Hobbes and Schmitt feared was that “the quintessential nature of the state of nature, or the behemoth, is none other than civil war, which can only be prevented by the overarching might of the state, or leviathan” (Schmitt 2008a:21; Kraynak 1982). Yet this is not what we face today in the formations we are calling climate Behemoth. Instead, we confront something closer to a revolutionary people that, *in extremis*, can realize itself one of two ways. The first is the nightmare outcome of reaction like that described above, the terrifying potential realized in the Nazi state described by Franz Neumann as early as 1942 in his *Behemoth: The Structure and Function of National Socialism*. The second Behemoth is also prefigured somewhat disdainfully by Hobbes: it is the “democratical gentlemen” of Parliament (Hobbes 1969:26), “intent on the dismemberment of sovereign power” (Springborg 2010: 307). Hobbes’ cynicism regarding these “gentlemen” might well have been justified, but the biblical Behemoth with which he troped them is a figure of justice.¹²

As none of the previous trajectories contain the possibility of a just climate revolution, we are searching for a hand-hold of non-reactionary opposition to climate Leviathan. Faced with the challenge, most of the left seems understandably awestruck; building climate Leviathan seems to have come to stand as the most ‘practical’ response, though many recognize the unlikelihood of its achieving an effective hegemony soon. The strength of Leviathan today stems from the fact that it enjoys, among liberals, hegemony as a conception of the world’s future. The vast popular mobilization around Copenhagen, at least

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3 in the global North, is evidence of how many millions cling to it, knowing all the while that it
4 will almost certainly fail (for an articulate and admirably ‘realist’ example, see Parenti 2011).
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8 As Jameson famously said, “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the
9
10 end of capitalism” (2003:76). Certainly the end of capitalism cannot come via acts of
11
12 imagination alone—but neither can it emerge without them. The first task is thus to produce
13
14 an effective conception of such a world. For want of a name, we call it ‘climate X’.¹³
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18 What constitutes climate X? Let us begin by defining it formulaically: climate X is a
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20 world which has defeated the emerging climate Leviathan and its compulsion for planetary
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22 sovereignty, while also transcending capitalism. In other words, we argue that only in a
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24 world that is no longer organized by the value form, and only where sovereignty has become
25
26 so deformed that the political can no longer be organized by the sovereign exception, is it
27
28 possible to imagine a just response to climate change.
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32 A tall order, to be sure. But this formula allows us a vantage from which to identify
33
34 and measure progress. No longer celebrated: UNFCCC negotiations on REDD+; climate
35
36 finance; and the elite politics of ‘sustainable’ capitalism. Rather: organizing for a rapid
37
38 reduction of carbon emissions by collective boycott and strike. Utopianism? Not
39
40 necessarily. Consider again the struggles for climate justice coalescing all over the world,
41
42 and especially amongst some of the world’s most marginal social groups, vociferously
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44 opposing the UNFCCC conception of climate politics because they see it as capital’s talent
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46 show, and—with respect to its capacity to reduce carbon emissions—a meaningless liberal
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48 piety. These movements, more or less quixotic, are nonetheless the seeds of climate X, proof
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50 that it is indeed germinating (Bond 2010b).
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3 What are the conditions to building this movement? Describing the outcome of the
4 radical developments before us, or at least the possibilities for which we must aim, is a
5 starting point. Minqi Li (2009:1058), for example, proposes ecological resurgence via
6 communist revolution in these terms:
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13 Hopefully, people throughout the world will engage in a transparent, rational and
14 democratic debate which is open not only to economic and political leaders and
15 expert intellectuals, but also to the broad masses of workers and peasants. Through
16 such a global collective debate, a democratic consensus could emerge that would
17 decide on a path of global social transformation that would in turn lead to climate
18 stabilization ... This may sound too idealistic. But can we really count on the world's
19 existing elites to accomplish climate stabilization while meeting the world
20 population's basic needs? Ultimately, climate stabilization can only be achieved if
21 the great majority of the world's population ... understand the implications, relate
22 these implications to their own lives, and actively ... participate in the global effort of
23 stabilization.
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29 Yet it is easier to accept the possibilities inherent in this vision, to recognize in them the
30 seeds of what is necessary, than it is to figure out how we create the conditions in which they
31 can become what they must be: for all intents and purposes, a world revolution which rejects
32 both capital and the sovereign exclusion. In other words, although time is clearly short, the
33 challenge is substantially one of cultivation, of working the material and ideological ground
34 in which these movements can bloom as rapidly as possible. Cultivation here requires the
35 kind of radical struggle that proves history wrong. For if "climate stabilization can only be
36 achieved if the great majority of the world's population understand the implications, relate
37 these implications to their own lives, and actively and consciously participate in the global
38 effort of stabilization," as Li argues, it is not clear to us on which past we might draw to help
39 construct the means to render global participation possible.
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4 On this point it is worth remembering that when Schmitt posited the necessity of the
5 sovereign exception, he explicitly denied the possibility of global sovereignty, because, for
6 him, a state (or any properly political entity) is constituted in enmity (Schmitt 2007:26, 53-4).
7
8 We cannot all be friends. If so, we should expect that those who will suffer the greatest
9 consequences — the urban poor in Calcutta or Jakarta, peasant farmers across central Mexico
10 and the Sahel — will find ideological resources elsewhere. Principally through religion.
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15 We noted that numerous challenges to Leviathan in Asia stem from the existence of
16 numerous social groups at risk from climate change and other political-economic factors.
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18 Any attempt to anticipate the form these challenges will take must consider that, across much
19 of South and Asia today, the prevailing political opposition to Western liberalism takes shape
20 via political Islam in various forms. These movements coincide with what we have called
21 Behemoth, the right half of the four-square. *À propos* climate Leviathan, Behemoth may
22 represent reaction (upper-right) or revolution (bottom-right); Islamism may take either form.
23
24 Where Leviathan calls for planetary management, what we might call ‘climate al Qaeda’
25 represents an attack on the hubris of liberal attempts at planetary sovereignty, or more
26 positively, a defense of Creation. If this seems fanciful, it is worth reading Osama bin
27 Laden’s communiqué of 10 February 2010, outlining “the way to save the Earth.” This
28 memo eviscerates the hopelessly limited solutions proposed to address climate change,
29 noting that the “world has been kidnapped” by wealthy people and corporations “who are
30 steering it towards the abyss.” Bin Laden reasons that responsibility for the climate crisis is
31 held by the industrialized countries, especially the US. Surely he is correct; and the tactics he
32 suggests—beyond an appeal to live simply, he calls for boycotting oil companies and the US
33 dollar—are neither unprincipled or naïve.¹⁴ His critique of the West’s hypocritical attempt to
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3 maintain its capitalist dominance while taking responsibility for managing Creation offers a
4 powerful illustration of Behemoth attacking Leviathan, one that is likely to resound no less
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6 forcefully among poor Muslims across Asia after his assassination by US forces.
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10 Although the extent to which bin Laden's proposals question the hegemony of capital
11 is by no means clear, one might also read this text—and perhaps much of Islamism—as,
12 potentially, a version of X. Is Bin Laden's path ours? Certainly not. But how then is this
13 vision distinguishable from something in which the left may place our hopes? The answer is
14 found in his appeal for Islam's redemption of our "corrupted" hearts as a means to "save
15 Creation". This theological vision cannot but exclude large sectors of humanity: the non-
16 believers. And this will be true of all attempts to counter climate Leviathan in the name of
17 religion, from Santorum and the Tea Party to Hindu fundamentalism. The contrast with
18 religion provides an important way to conceptualize the challenge presented by climate
19 Leviathan, since X could be seen as an irreligious movement in place of a religious structure.
20 Climate X is worldly and structurally open: a movement of the community of the excluded
21 that affirms climate justice and popular freedoms against capital and planetary sovereignty.¹⁵
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41 III.

42 Faced with an overwhelming challenge to which we have as yet no coherent response — the
43 impossibility of which provides climate Leviathan with no small part of the legitimacy it
44 enjoys — it is worth remembering that the problems posed at present are not new, despite
45 their novel appearance via atmospheric chemistry and glacial melt-rates. The basic questions
46 which have tormented the left for centuries — the relations between sovereignty, democracy,
47 and liberty; the political possibilities of a mode of human life that produces not value, but
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3 wealth — are still the ones that matter. The defining characteristic of their present intensity
4 is that they have an ecological deadline. The urgency global warming imposes does not cut
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6 us off from the past, but only reignites it in the present.
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10 Consider the many lives of Hegel's analysis of sovereignty, which Schmitt (2008a:85,
11 100; 2008b:32) came to celebrate in light of the "failure" of Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Marx
12 struggled with the same material in the 1840s. Throughout his notes on Hegel's *Philosophy*
13 *of Right*, Marx subjects to tireless criticism the very feature of Hegel's state which arguably
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15 appealed to Schmitt—its "logical pantheistic mysticism" (Marx 1973:6):
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22 If Hegel had set out from real subjects as the bases of the state he would not have
23 found it necessary to transform the state in a mystical fashion into a subject. 'In its
24 truth, however,' says Hegel, 'subjectivity exists only as *subject*, personality only as
25 *person*.' This too is a piece of mystification. Subjectivity is a characteristic of the
26 subject, personality a characteristic of the person. Instead of conceiving them as
27 predicates of their subjects, Hegel gives the predicates an independent existence and
28 subsequently transforms them in a mystical fashion into their subjects (Marx 1973:23;
29 emphasis in original).
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33 Marx's critique of Hegel anticipates the essential problem we face with climate Leviathan,
34 which is nothing but a form of sovereignty in search of a subject. In both its capitalist and
35 non-capitalist forms, the mysticism of the would-be planetary sovereign resides in what Marx
36 calls "the actual regulation of the parts by the idea of the whole" (1973:24).
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43 The Idea of planetary governance that structures hegemonic responses to climate
44 change is unfolding like a caricature of Hegelian necessity. It represents the ultimate end of
45 sovereignty, the coming into being of sovereignty's global *telos*, the concept mystically
46 realizing itself. Planetary sovereignty stands as the natural completion of modernity. Just as
47 it did for Marx, sovereignty's relation to democracy remains troubled. For Hegel, democracy
48 and sovereignty are contradictory, antinomies even:
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3 But the usual sense in which the term ‘popular sovereignty’ has begun to be used in
4 recent times is to denote *the opposite of that sovereignty which exists in the monarch*.
5 In this oppositional sense, popular sovereignty is one of those confused thoughts
6 which are based on a *garbled* notion of the *people*. *Without* its monarch and that
7 *articulation* of the whole which is necessarily and immediately associated with
8 monarchy, *the people* is a formless mass (Hegel 1991:318-9).
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12 Marx, at least at this stage in his thinking, was outraged by Hegel’s dismissal of sovereign
13 democracy. Hegel, he wrote, thinks of the monarch as:
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17 political consciousness in the flesh; in consequence, therefore, all other people are
18 excluded from this sovereignty. . . . But if he is sovereign inasmuch as he represents
19 the unity of the nation, then he himself is only the representative, the symbol, of
20 national sovereignty. National sovereignty does not exist by virtue of him, but he on
21 the contrary exists by virtue of it (Marx 1973:26, 28).
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25 Here the young Marx’s “Rhenish liberalism” (Kouvelakis 2003: 235), while constraining his
26 efforts to break free of the state, did not prevent him from grasping what was at stake for
27 Hegel in this situation: i.e. that in the modern world, democracy can serve neither as a mode
28 of sovereignty, nor as a means thereto. It is, rather, its very *negation*.
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35 This is perhaps why Schmitt abandoned Hobbes for Hegel in the late 1930s. Hegel
36 posits sovereignty in the monarchical manner he does because for him, democracy, by
37 definition, cannot constitute sovereignty. For Hegel, the monarch or sovereign is “political
38 consciousness in the flesh” because the sovereign decision—i.e. the constitution of
39 sovereignty as such—defines the substance of the rational state, and thereby determines the
40 terrain of the political (1991:§§278-9). Likewise for Schmitt, for whom sovereignty is also
41 constituted in the act of decision. On these grounds, the political cannot pre-exist
42 sovereignty: a world without sovereignty is no world at all (Schmitt 2007:43-5; 2008b:45).
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54 These are not idle matters trawled from the past. On the contrary, they magnify
55 precisely what is at stake today in realizing climate X. For what Marx, among others,
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3 identified of the limits of this narrowly state-based concept of sovereignty is in fact cause for
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5 great hope: what is on offer is the (potential) of non-state sovereignty: in the juxtaposition of
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7 sovereignty of the people and monarchical sovereignty, “we are not discussing *one and the*
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9 *same sovereignty* with its existence in two spheres, but two *wholly opposed conceptions of*
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11 *sovereignty* One of the two must be false, even though an existing falsehood” (Marx
12
13 1973:86). Hegel and Schmitt are right—democracy undoes the very possibility of rule. For
14
15 them, of course, this is democracy’s great failure; for Marx, and for climate X, however, it is
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17 its great promise. If the coming climate transition is to be just there can be nothing left of
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19 sovereignty in the Hegelian-Schmittian sense. To put this otherwise, the X crosses over,
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21 cancels out, the mysticism of the Idea of planetary rule, a sovereignty in search of a global
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23 subject.
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29 We are not without resources with which to derail Leviathan’s mystical train and
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31 Behemoth’s reactionary general will. In his thesis X on history, Benjamin (1969:257)
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33 excoriates the Social Democrats with whom “the opponents of fascism have placed their
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35 hopes”:
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38 These observations are intended to disentangle the political worldlings from the
39
40 snares in which the traitors have entrapped them. Our consideration proceeds from
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42 the insight that the politicians’ stubborn faith in progress, their confidence in their
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44 ‘mass basis’, and, finally, their servile integration in an uncontrollable apparatus have
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46 been three aspects of the same thing. It seeks to convey an idea of the high price our
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48 accustomed thinking will have to pay for a conception of history that avoids any
49
50 complicity with the thinking to which these politicians continue to adhere.

51 Thesis X basically restates the more famous thesis IX (the “angel of history”) in an explicitly
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53 political form. The politics Benjamin impugns here — faith in progress; confidence in mass
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55 basis; servile integration into apparatus — are precisely those of our three opponents in the
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3 struggle ahead: Leviathan's ethos is the faith in progress; Mao's is confidence in the masses;
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5 Behemoth is the integration into the security apparatus of terror. Barring the realization of
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7 climate X, these are the three alternatives we face, none of which is willing to own up to "the
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9 high price our accustomed thinking will have to pay for a conception of history that avoids
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11 any complicity with the thinking to which ... politicians continue to adhere" (1969:257).
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15 Can we measure the costs of this complicity? Climate Leviathan is emerging and at
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17 war with climate Behemoth — not to mention political Islam — and a global war between
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19 Leviathan and Mao is hardly unimaginable. The terrifying ecologies and polities produced
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21 by these coming conflicts are the price we face for our progress. We were long ago warned
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23 against intervening in these wars and their terrible justice, when God taunted Job: "Just lay
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25 your hand on [Leviathan]; remember the battle, don't try again" (Job 41:8). Yet we must.
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Endnotes

¹ This also holds true if, alternatively, Hobbes was inspired by the reference to the covenant at Job 41:4.

² Many geographers have taken up Agamben's argument: see Long (2006); Coleman (2007); Belcher *et al.* (2008).

³ On historical imagination and climate change see Chakrabarty (2009).

⁵ Any nation in which the state owns more than fifty percent of industrial assets presents an unusual sort of capitalism (Arrighi 2007; Andreas 2008; Li 2008; 2009; World Bank 2010).

⁶ The UN Security Council is currently considering the establishment of an "environmental peacekeeping force," "green helmets" who will manage the coming climate-induced unrest (*Guardian* 20 July 2011). In the USA, the military arguably defines the cutting edge of climate adaptation. The US Navy has rolled out its "great green fleet", an environmentally-friendly arsenal powered entirely by biofuels (*Guardian* 20 April 2010; see also National Research Council 2011).

⁷ Consider China's recent voluntary "border tax adjustment" program, aimed at reducing exports of energy-intensive products (Wen 2010:143-6); in contrast, compare *Guardian* 19 May 2011.

⁸ Final Declaration of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, Cochabamba, Bolivia, 26 April 2010.

⁹ We recognize that ours is a too-concise summation of quite different Mao-influenced movements. See Vanaik (2008), Giri (2009), and Cumings (2000).

¹⁰ Campaigning in Ohio in February 2012, Rick Santorum said that President Obama's ideology rests upon "some phony ideal. Some phony theology. Not a theology based on the Bible. A different theology." Criticized for using coded language to suggest that Obama is, in fact, a Muslim, Santorum replied that he was criticizing Obama's support for what we call climate Leviathan: "when you have a worldview that elevates the Earth above man and says that we can't take those resources because we're going to harm the Earth, by things that frankly are just not scientifically proven, for example, the politicization of the whole global warming debate – this is all an attempt to ... centralize power and to give more power to the government. It's not questioning the president's beliefs in Christianity. I'm talking about the belief that man should be in charge of the Earth" (CBS news, February 19, 2012).

¹¹ Europe, e.g., is not only home to climate-capital but to a Behemoth whose commitment to international *laissez-faire*, tinged as it is with an imperial nostalgia, is smoother in presentation, but just as radically opposed to Leviathan.

¹² Cf. Psalm 73 and Job.

¹³ Our analysis of X is indebted to Karatani (2003:283-306; 2008). On the geographies of X, see Karatani and Wainwright (2012).

¹⁴ "[W]e should refuse to do business with the dollar and get rid of it as soon as possible. I know that this action has huge consequences and massive repercussions; but it is an important way to liberate humanity from enslavement and servitude to America and its corporations." Bin Laden adds for an imputed Western audience: "be earnest and take the initiative in boycotting them, in order to save yourselves, your wealth and your children from climate change and in order to live freely and honorably [instead of standing on] the steps of conferences and begging for your lives."

¹⁵ Žižek concludes his speech to Occupy Wall Street (2011) on a similar theme: "The conservative fundamentalists [...] have to be reminded of something. What is Christianity? It's the holy spirit. What is the holy spirit? It's an egalitarian community of believers who are linked by love for each other, and who only have their own freedom and responsibility to do it. In this sense, the holy spirit is here now [in the Occupy Wall Street protest camp]."

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For Review Only

FIGURES

Figure 1: Four potential social formations

	Planetary sovereignty	Anti-planetary sovereignty
Capitalist	Climate Leviathan	Climate Behemoth
Non-capitalist	Climate Mao	Climate X

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Figure 2: map of national CO₂ emissions per capita, 2010, displayed on (a) a conventional projection and (b) a cartogram distorted to show the number of people exposed to droughts, floods and extreme temperatures in 2000-2009 (using 2010 population data). Maps made by Kiln (2012). Data source for CO₂ emissions: Peters et al. (2012), updated in March 2010 by Glen Peters (for details, see Kiln 2012). Data for people at risk: the OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database: www.emdat.be, a project of the Université Catholique de Louvain and the World Bank.

CO₂ per person from energy and cement, 2010 (tonnes)

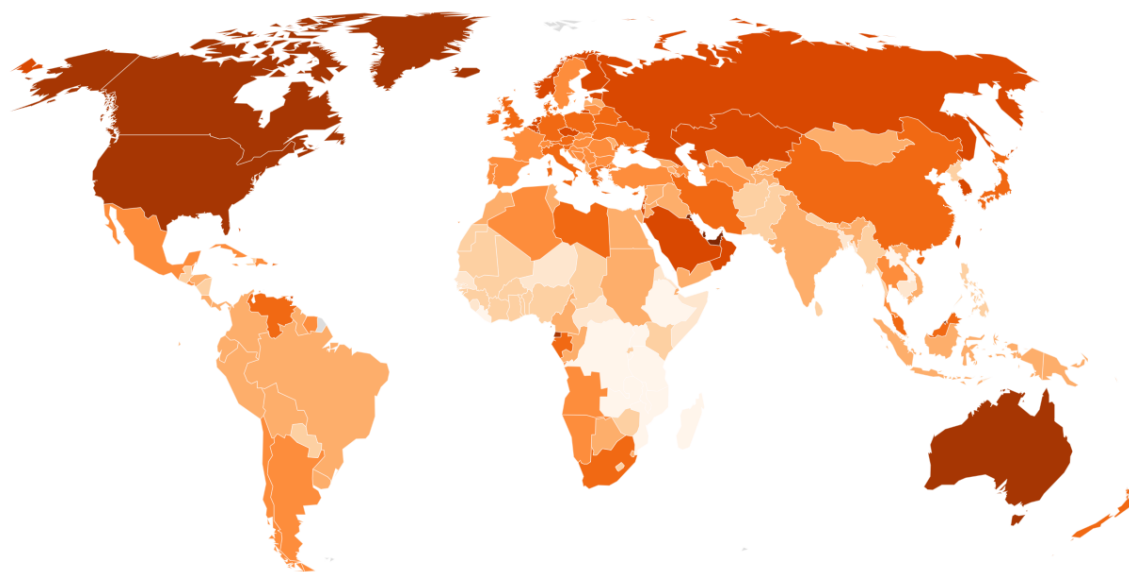
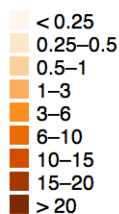


Figure 2(a)

CO2 per person from
energy and cement, 2010
(tonnes)

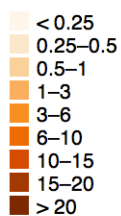


Figure 2(b)

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