

# Visualising the Ends of Growth: Insurgent Universality, Solidarity and Worlds-to-Come

TJ Demos, Angela YT Chan

TJ Demos: So thank you so much to Canan Batur and Theo Reeves-Everson. It's great to be back at least virtually at Nottingham Contemporary. Thanks also to Angela Chan for moderating this session. It's really great to reconnect with Angela.

So I'm just going to share my screen now, and my presentation has two parts to it. One is more of a formal response to the prompt of the symposium; *After Growth: A Symposium on Post-Capitalist Imaginaries*, and then I'm going to offer somewhat informal thoughts that connect to the first part in terms of the kinds of art practices that I've been thinking about recently, and how I think they connect to discourse around growth and political ecology. And hopefully that will make sense, and then I look forward to the conversation and the Q&A afterwards where we can pick apart some of the some of the stuff that comes up.

Alright, so this is the first part where I want to respond to some of the material that the symposium puts on the table, which I think is really important and crucial to deal with right now. So it's crucial to think beyond growth, especially where growth is understood as part of capital's fundamental law of motion; meaning producing evermore value, but devaluing those who produce it, including nature and labour, which has served up both incredible social violence and disaster over decades and centuries. On the most fundamental levels capitalism, we know, is unsustainable, and as countless critics say; capitalism can't solve the problems of capitalism in the interests of capitalism. So how to imagine growth beyond capital? This question has a different emphasis than imagining a time after growth or speculating on the possibility of life after growth, which I think is ultimately not possible, at least not in all ways since life *is* growth after all. I'm glad to hear some of the discussion at Nottingham Contemporary has already made this point clear, and I'm sorry for missing it owing to the time difference, but it bears emphasizing so as to avoid, ultimately, depoliticising simplistic understandings about degrowth. Critics of degrowth such as Robert Pollin make this point clearly, as well as argue that degrowth as a climate stabilisation plan, is ultimately inadequate to decarbonise the global economy by 2050. What's really required is a jobs and justice program for system-wide decarbonisation, or what's called a Green New Deal in the US, that would help avoid the otherwise likely major economic downturn resulting from reaching net zero emissions in three decades; a downturn magnitudes greater than anything historically experienced and inadvertently fuelling the flames of reactionaries who, partly responding to existing precarity, are already expanding ecofascist alternatives of authoritarianism and ethnonationalism. Others such as Mark Burton, and Peter Somerville in the pages of *New Left*

Review, add that we must degrow the unnecessary and wasteful and grow the positive and just, doing so by delinking growth from decarbonisation across all sectors of consumption and production as we transition to new technologies and renewable energy sources, which they argue could only really be carried out as part of a worker-led, socialist worldbuilding project dedicated to the needs of all rather than the greed of the few. Not that they see any global movement in this direction happening anytime soon. But their scepticism toward meaningful transformation occurring within current capitalist economies is, for me, a deal breaker with Pollin's plan, which is basically a recipe for green capitalism structurally continuous with colonial conquest that threatens to extend forms of extractivism in the demand for renewable energy infrastructure. In this sense, I would add that we have to be clear about the historical ends of growth; recognizing how growth has entailed socio-environmental violence in its deep historical intertwinement with racial and colonial capitalism. Opposing these ends of growth is the necessary goal of a decolonial anti-racist socialism, which actually requires at the same time growth in the name of equity, justice and freedom, including for instance, the growth of affordable housing, decarbonized energy grids, free education, free health care, reforestation, multispecies flourishing. The most pressing question then is how we can collectively break from the current functioning of local and global governance that generally serves and guarantees the interests of capital in the ruling class. No techno-solutionism such as geoengineering, particularly solar radiation management, offers any acceptable way forward, either in the practice of decarbonisation, or according to the imperatives of social justice, rather, fundamental political transformation is the only option with something like an indigenous decolonial and anti-imperialist Red Deal, linked to a radical anti-capitalist Green New

Deal, offering the best steps forward. The cards are, however, stacked against us, given rampant militarization, entrenched corporate globalization, algorithmic governance, endless consumerous distraction, and reactionary social formations; a kind of continuation of all this we're seeing right now in the context of Russia's invasion of the Ukraine. So if art has any role to play, in the imagining of worlds beyond capitalist growth, then its ambitions must expand beyond the captured realms of institutional enclosure, where speculation becomes marketed as depoliticised liberal freedom and luxury consumer goods. Any radical position articulated in a work of art must connect with movement-building beyond ruling class institutions. Thinking growth beyond capitalism, in other words, entails not only a radical artistic imagination, in conceptualizing radical futures, but also doing the actual work now of labour organizing and social movement empowerment in abolishing the growth-obsessed capitalist economy, including the dominant art systems economy, and participating everywhere in the building of multiracial working-class solidarity with an eco-socialist horizon.

Okay, that's my position statement in relationship to growth, and the proposal of envisioning post-capitalist imaginaries. Now I'd like to just go through a few examples of the kind of work that I'm looking at, which deals with I think these questions in a variety of different ways, in terms of practices of Indigenous and Afrofuturism. So this is Thirza Jean Cuthand's piece *Reclamation* from 2018, and it's a short video that imagines life beyond settler colonialism when in the near future, according to the videos' narrative, settlers have left Earth basically, and gone to Mars to colonize the red planet and leaving a broken Earth, suffering from all manner of environmental destruction behind to Indigenous survivors, and you can find this on YouTube. It's a really, I think, powerful and compelling

piece that shows the world destroying conditions of capitalist, colonialist growth economy and what it's done to forms of multispecies extinction, environmental destruction, and all manner of social violence. There's shots in the video of, for instance, extraction sites like the tar sands in Canada, plastic pollution, and other forms of deforestation and environmental destruction; in other words shows us what we many of us already know who are paying attention to ongoing environmental disaster, but it adds on to that the horizon of the post-colonial future in the time to come defined by an altogether different economy of world caretaking and in many ways, a radical degrowth form of community. This is just a short clip of a couple of the speakers as they're interviewed as if we're seeing, as if we're moving through, a portal to the future and hearing what life is like in this time to come.

They're basically talking about how their work of worldbuilding in the aftermath of colonial capitalist violence in its 500 year project of climate emergency effectively, and in that sense we can talk about in relationship to the project, degrowth as being a matter of simultaneously degrowing the violence, the destructive, the senseless, and growing forms of emancipatory practices, caretaking, relationality within the more-than-human realm, and forms of essential social reproduction as a kind of a form of life that is beyond colonial capitalism, extractivism, and also heteropatriarchy. They talk about a lot about how settler colonialism is not simply a matter of practicing environmental violence, but also social violence in terms of the way it regiments interhuman relationships and imposes forms of patriarchy, sexism, heteronormativity, on a variety of different communities. So degrowth is the simultaneity of degrowing and growing. Degrowth is decolonization. Degrowth is multispecies flourishing. So, the video project opens up I think, for me, at least this is what I'm trying to

argue within this book project that I'm working on that's dedicated to this topic of radical futurisms that dedicates, it cultivates, a radical imagination beyond the oppression of the present and this notion that we're caught within an economic, social and political regime that it's impossible to escape from or even imagine beyond. So, this is doing some of the crucial work of cultivating a radical imagination, where the future constitutes a rupture from the domination of capitalist realism and the present.

Another example of this kind of work that I'm looking at, is Black Quantum Futurism. They're an African American collective, based in Philadelphia in the States, where they're drawing on Afrodiasporic cosmologies and theoretical formulations going back to, for instance, the Dogon in Mali which have a really complex and rich mythological, cosmological conception, all the way to current versions of quantum field theory and ways of thinking about critiques of linear temporality or chronologies that bear within themselves a kind of ideological form of historiography insofar as they support a notion of inevitability, as if the present is the necessary culmination of the past. So Black Quantum Futurism is trying to in their work, in a variety of different kinds of practices from publications and books to videos, to experimental music, including one of the co-founders Camae Awewa who's also known as Moor Mother, they're committed to developing a chronopolitics to think beyond this kind of destructive, linear temporality of inevitability that Walter Benjamin for instance, once thought of in relationship to a kind of fascist historiography, and others like Robin DG Kelley more recently in relation to the Black radical tradition, have mobilized Benjamin's conceptions of developing an emergency temporality that can serve our own political interests in all sorts of ways that resonate with the larger Black Lives Matter movement and international anti-racist

struggles.

What are some of the things that people are struggling against? Well, today, one of the biggest risks or threats is a kind of technolibertarianism, wherein increasingly we're dealing with technical systems, including on social media algorithms of recommendation, that attempt to transform the near future into a source of predictability, that can also be a form of investment and profiteering. This is maybe best exemplified in the emergence of billionaires like Elon Musk, who are transitioning to a renewable energy economy, and in that sense, might fall into some of the modelling of degrowth and growth of a Green New Deal, at least within the conditions of neoliberalism, but however exemplify that the dangers of new resource economies, even when they're centred around renewables, which can bring ever new forms of neo-colonialism. For instance, when Musk supported the 2019 coup in Bolivia, in part so that he could benefit with his Tesla Corporation in terms of gaining access to lithium mines in Bolivia, he sent out this famous this infamous quote on Twitter that "We will coup whoever we want! Deal with it." This was reversed in October of 2020 and the elections that brought MAS the Movement for Socialism back into power in Bolivia. So, these conditions between neo-extractivism and the Global South, technolibertarian interests in supporting anti-democratic politics which would enable these kinds of extractive regimes to take place, and social movement struggles that are often Indigenous-led to stop extractive violence and to participate in a wider movement building project toward a non-extractive socialism. Even though Evo Morales has lots of contradictions within the Bolivian context, this is really an important site of ongoing struggle today. So Black Quantum Futurism is participating in this, particularly in the US, in relationship to contesting the terms of racial capitalism and the kind of technodeterminism that secures the

ongoing participation of certain people within the future but excludes others. So, we can talk about a politics of defuturing that is part of a long history of exterminism or genocide, the afterlives of slavery within the States but also internationally, especially within the Americas. So, this has led to projects like Alisha Wormsley declaring that there are black people in the future as a simple kind of demand that's been placed on billboards in the States, including in Detroit like you see here, where the struggle in this case is over time, who gets to participate in the future, who gets to secure an ongoing flourishing existence as we move through the present? Is it just people like Elon Musk who can declare the rights to reproduction in a chronopolitical sense, or is that itself necessarily a site of struggle against the conditions of extractive and racialized capitalism? This is ongoing in terms of struggles over history, and heritage; whether monuments do the ideological work of continuing the conditions of white supremacy, in the States that would be a matter of confederalism, ethnonationalism and with these kinds of monuments dedicated to the Civil War South and the Confederacy being gradually dismantled, challenged, transgressed against by all manner of racial justice protesters, including the scenes like this in 2020, where you have these ballet dancers dancing, performing on the pedestal of this monumental statue to the Confederate General Robert E. Lee, which has subsequently been dismantled, but only after substantial social movement struggle.

So, this movement toward radical futurisms is occurring all over and in an international way, in terms of artistic practices within the visual arts, within filmmaking, literature, multimedia expressions of world building and futurisms, in all sorts of ways. So, this is really, I think, an important symptom of our present when there's at the same time so much negativity, fatalism, debilitation when it comes to thinking about anything that concerns a political future, where

it's hard to mobilize any positive energy or hopefulness in terms of what's to come or any such world that is to come, when we're gripped by all these multiple emergencies and catastrophes of the present, whether it's climate breakdown, or militarism, or this, the new renewed threat of nuclear catastrophe, multi species extinction, and so on, right? It's kind of like an intensification of what people like Bifo and Mark Fisher have called 'the slow cancellation of the future', pointing to what Fredric Jameson called decades ago the impossibility of thinking beyond the conditions of capitalism today. So it's such that it's more difficult; it's easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism.

Well, with these practices, there's an entire growing movement of creative practitioners who are thinking about radical alternatives to the present, and they're building on recent histories. For instance, the history of Afrofuturism as it's been historicized and dramatized in a project like Black Audio Film Collective's *Last Angel of History* from the 90s. This of course, Afrofuturism, going back to the 60s and 70s, particularly within African American musical traditions from Sun Ra to George Clinton to Lee Scratch Perry in the Jamaican context, we know this is also an international movement within Afrodiasporic cultures. In other words, to resist the ongoing exterminist politics of defuturing and to make a claim on who gets to survive, who gets to live into the future, this is an Afrofuturist politics or chronopolitics. Black Quantum Futurism is also continuing this tradition. What's really interesting about them is this isn't just simply a matter of a radical, speculative aesthetic. They're also working on the ground in Philadelphia in relationship to housing rights. So, when they talk about Black Space Agency, this is not simply an attempt to highlight Black claims on new sources of technology, including those associated with space travel, but also the

space agency that is a politics on the ground operating against, for instance gentrification, against housing injustice, against the correlation of race and toxicity within many American cities, in terms of an urbanism of climate injustice, or environmental injustice. Then they do these projects where formally, as you see in a work like this, let me just give it give it a second to play.

Formally, you have these articulations of a kind of aesthetic exploration of chronopolitical emancipation, so that the past is something that's simultaneously remembered in terms of human rights and anti-racist struggles that are collective and that go back decades, and even centuries, but also an attempt to create and foster a source of manoeuvrability in terms of political agency, in terms of the present and their future. So, this is really crucial in terms of a methodology of radical futurisms that any futurism that we can think of needs to, in fact *must*, be based within histories of struggle, or else we're dealing with the kind of emptying out of the radical dimensions of futurism for instance, according to modes of technolibertarianism and reactionary exterminist futurisms. So Black Quantum Futurism, they explore this not only in artistic projects, but also in on the ground laboratories of community futurisms, for instance, in Philadelphia, as I've mentioned, where these kinds of more speculative and artistic ways of imagining radical futures come together with actual on the ground, juridical, political, and community-based grassroots projects dedicated to anti-gentrification struggles and anti-racist housing conditions within Philadelphia and more within the States. This one project brings out this juxtaposition really, I think, compellingly where they cite a quote of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1966, who in the midst of you know, the Cold War competition to reach the moon between the US and the Soviet Union, he said there's a striking absurdity in committing billions to reach the moon, where

no people live, while densely populated slums are allocated minuscule appropriations. It's an amazing and poignant quote that is extremely prescient as well today when we're seeing this billionaire space race of people trying to reach Mars or build space colonies while at the same time today still, there are densely populated slums allocated minuscule appropriations. You could think also back to Gil Scott Heron's *Whitey on the Moon*, in terms of how the racialization of resources and economic inequality was something that really marked space travel as it was imagined, according to state resource allocations back in the 60s and 70s. So degrowth as housing justice, degrowth as abolition, targeting police and state and military violence, but more the abolition of not only the techniques of the securitization of capitalist interests, but also the abolition of capitalism itself, degrowth as racial justice, these are the politics of growth as they emerge, I think, in relationship to Black Quantum Futurism.

I want to talk about one last project, which is the Otolith Group, the London based collective, who've done this film *Infinity Minus Infinity* in 2019. Maybe some of you have seen it, where it's a feature length film, that provides a kind of multiscalar genealogy of the racial capitalist scene over 500 years of extractivism, slavery and its afterlives, Indigenous colonization and genocide. Where something that they're showing, I think, really importantly, crucially, according to a climate justice position, according to a speculative political ecology, is how it's absolutely necessary to connect the kinds of abstract statistics of climate transformation to forms of social violence and racialized inequality; and you see that just in this still image where they're superimposing a familiar graph of CO2 concentration in the atmosphere over the last two decades, over a picture of sea ice on which you have this multi-

headed speaker that figures prominently in the video, who's talking about the history of what's called the Racial Capitalisocene, which is a term people like Françoise Vergès and others have used in terms of providing an alternative to the Anthropocene, which for many is a geological word that is all too abstract and universalizing in terms of generalizing the conditions of causality that produced anthropogenic climate change and ignoring the differentiated impacts that result with climate breakdown. So, the Racial Capitalisocene gets this better, and it's more accurate and provides political traction in terms of identifying the causality of climate breakdown and a long history of racialized capitalism or colonial and racial capitalism, and points to the differentiated impacts that this brings. So, this is something that the Otolith Group is focusing on, simultaneously, about a politics of growth that is about colonial and capitalist spoils, basically, that have sacrificed not only geographies, but also peoples.

The invasion of Europeans in the Americas resulted in a massive genocide of the indigenous population, leading to a decline from 54 million people to approximately 6 million. This led to a massive reduction in farming and the regeneration forests and carbon uptake, leading to an observed decline in Antarctic ice cores and CO2 in the atmosphere.

*Infinity Minus Infinity*, Otolith Group

So, the film is talking about how the beginnings of the earliest moments of the Anthropocene are coincident with the conquest of the Americas, which was an incredibly violent

period around the time of 1492 and 1610, when there were some 15 million Indigenous people who died during this time, owing to colonial conquest and the spread of disease, forced labour, outright murder, militarized domination, and that led to a regrowth of the forests because those lands that were once cultivated, no longer had people to manage them. This was really the origins then, not simply of the Anthropocene, but of the Racial Capitalisocene and the Otolith Group explores this history in ways that connect also to the present in terms of Brexit politics, the kinds of xenophobia and racism that circulate including this Friday Fact that the Treasury put out in 2018, about the end of slavery and how this was paid for through British citizens going back to 1833. So, this was a kind of celebration about how the cost of slavery was finally paid off in 2018 and then everyone who has paid taxes recently, can be proud that they have contributed to the end of slavery. What the Otolith Group is getting at in bringing this up is really the incredible hypocrisy of this kind of claim when what really the British citizenry ended up participating in is the financialization of the debt of slave owners rather than the burden and costs of slavery itself. So, between 1833 and 2018, it was the cost of paying off the slave owners for their property that was repaid over that time. So this is one small element of *Infinity Minus Infinity* which deals with how the voraciousness of racialized capitalism sacrifices bodies at the same time as it defines kind of world-shifting climate breakdown. They bring us into a conversation with the work of Denise Ferreira da Silva, and how valuation is conducted within the European Enlightenment around race. That's a really fascinating essay, they bring this up and this leads to these formulations, these math themes, that the collective uses in relationship to thinking about Blackness today in contradistinction to the way Blackness has been evaluated within the scenes of racial capitalism during slavery and its financialized aftermath

and ultimately the film, really complicated, but the I think the ultimate proposal is to provide an aesthetic experimentation in what the transvaluation of Blackness would look like beyond the conditions of racism as it's been historically defined.

Again, this connects to thinking about growth and degrowth not in abstract terms of atmospheric carbon but rather growth and degrowth in terms of questions of biopolitics, of racialized populations, of genocide, and the growth of some at the cost and expense of others, which is crucial to think about, also in relationship to wider questions of growth as they're happening today within environmental politics, so that we don't get caught within a narrow definition of what environment is, but we think of degrowth also in terms of an anti-racist politics, as an anti-capitalist framework, as a matter of also multiracial solidarity. These I think are crucial terms. If we're to imagine and work toward realizing any kind of post-capitalist radical future, then we have to think about this kind of political ecology of growth and degrowth. I think I'll stop with this last slide, just to emphasize that this can't just be something that takes place within you know, increasingly it seems rarefied commercialized artistic institutions, but has to connect to movement building politics, labour organizing, and forms of politics that are occurring within everyday life, locally and in all scales regionally and globally, in terms of participating in the building of a new world. So I think all of these artistic practices that I've mentioned, Thirza Jean Cuthand, Black Quantum Futurism, the Otolith Group, all of them connect in a variety of ways, some directly some more indirectly, to this kind of organizational modelling of political transformation. So just to conclude, we need we need both radical imaginations, as well as we need to commit to doing the work of organizing to bring these possibilities into being despite all indications that we're moving actually in the

opposite direction. I'll stop there. Thank you so much.

Angela YT Chan: Thank you, TJ. I'm sure everyone, just like me, are just absorbing all of the case studies that you've brought to us today, and they're really rich. There's also a lot of material, a lot of themes that are running through them and hopefully in the next half hour or so, we can start to tease out some of these questions that are floating around in our minds as well. It's with I guess, happiness that I am sharing this space with you because I guess your work and your research has been probably one of the earliest, most long lasting impacts on the way that I research and think about environmental politics in contemporary visual cultures. So, it's great to you know, throughout the years, to kind of connect with you are certain points, but this is the first time that we've really had a chance to chat like this, and I have so many questions, so many things I want to speak together with you. And one of the first things that I actually want to bring up is you talked a lot about the methodologies towards radical futurisms. And specifically, I'm quite interested in the way that you're talking about documentary as a technology form for entering this type of radical imagination, and also beginning the work that is necessary in terms of social climate, radical racial justice, organizing, and so specifically, I quote you that 'documentary provides a technology for opening portals into futures alternative to the now', and I guess this might come across as slightly contradictory, a bit counterintuitive because when we think about documenting something, it's almost as if we're witnessing, we're observing, the subject is already out there for us to take a snapshot of, and so there's something to kind of tease out in terms of speculative documentary. And the way that I interpret it is that with all of the projects that you've shown us today, there's a lot of it that is,

there was a specific phrase in my mind, but that's just kind of lost me. What I want to say is that there's a way of counter narrativizing that is actually the portal itself. Sometimes if you think of a portal in a science-fictional term, you might just kind of dismiss it as something that is a door you walk through it, and you're there, there's no journeying which is the thing that actually is building up the infrastructures for radical organizing, committing to that, and being able to have the foundations for a new politics that is actually equitable. And so portals, speculative documentary. I wonder how you kind of think about these as counter-narratives to the hegemonic history books that you know, are a type of fiction in a way, perhaps these counter-narratives, these portals are highlighting that well, what's out there is already fiction, let's just document it. You know, speculative documentary is maybe the truest form of truth. So, if that is something that you have thought about.

TJ: Yeah, thanks. Angela. That's a really good question, and there's lots in it I think, there's lots of complexity and room for more thinking. Yeah, for me some of my past projects have engaged with documentary quite a bit. And, you know, thinking about documentary as a politics of truth, where we know by now that the documentary is not something that's simply factual, right? It always involves it, and even if you go back to the origins of documentary as a practice, as a term, it was always negotiating the seeming opposition between truth and fiction, between something that was self-evident or positivist and the fact that that self-evidence was always captioned or framed or rendered in particular perspective, so that we can't simply talk about the self-evident as factual but also as constructed, as contingent, as dependent on a particular narrative, or framing, or captioning. And so it's, you know, this doesn't mean that we're opening ourselves

up to kind of relativism, and nor does it mean we're abandoning truth. So, I think that this is the really important theoretical point about the politics of this kind of documentary as practice, and the challenge as well today to continue to think, with this kind of modelling of documentary, that it doesn't simply mean we're entering into a post-factual representational condition where we're dealing with, you know, fake news, we know where that goes. This is a kind of, it leads to a kind of quasi-fascist cynicism and manipulative instrumentalisation of historical experience. So, denying that, we can think, we can continue to think about politics, the politics of truth as something that always requires a form of struggle, is based within embodied historical experience, is a matter of argumentation, rhetoric and affect and lots of you know, artists are investigating this in all sorts of ways. So, it's not such a shift to think about documentary in the past and to recalibrate its temporality. So that kind of approach to the politics of documentary as a matter of not simply recovering a readymade meaning that is stranded within what's already been but actually, you know, bringing into being a truth that has yet to be, I think that like this, this temporal transformation, which is also something that's actually theorized and empirically investigated within quantum field theory. Like if, for instance, if you read the work of Karen Barad, they they're doing a lot with thinking about quantum field theory as troubling of chronological time, and the assumption within, say, Newtonian physics that you can only be in one place at one time, right? Quantum field theory is disrupting a lot of those assumptions in really fascinating ways, and a group like Black Quantum Futurism is really interested in this and mobilizing these possibilities for resituating past and present and future, reshuffling those cards in order to open up possibilities of future that are different from the present. . So that can begin at least within my argument with the reconceptualization of documentary, so it stresses the fictionalizing

worldbuilding possibilities of projecting onto the future in a way that can be prefigurative, that isn't simply about re-presenting something that already exists, so much as actually doing the work, even if on an aesthetic level to begin with, of bringing that truth into being. So, there's a generative and constructed element within that prefigurative act of thinking about documentary futurism or, you know, the aesthetic as a portal into a new world. It's not just about fabricating something that is imaginary but initiating a process of bringing it in to actual materialization, and that's part of the struggle, that's part of imagining the aesthetic as a site of struggle that actually can transform chronologies as we move from present to the world to come.

Angela: Thanks, TJ. And yeah, what you just said really stood out for me in terms of not having these prefigured for us in a way that it's not re-presenting. It's made me think about research, research itself, what are we researching here, and it very much comes down to who's actually doing all of the RE-plus verbs. I guess a real world example of research being something that's hugely colonial and problematic is the case study that I was hearing about at COP 26 was that Harvard University are kind of embracing their campaigns to research and ways to further explore different types of solar engineering on Indigenous lands, particularly in the Sami regions in Sweden, and the Indigenous Sami people are campaigning saying that no our you know, your research is only going to devastate the local ecologies and have irreversible impacts to communities that are dependent on it. And so, the right to research in this sense, is something that is the rights to name who is disposable, and to name what kinds of methods can be, I guess masked by the Academy, as something perhaps noble perhaps, you know, for the greater good of humanity, but is it colonial to an extent? And

so, I think, no matter how many RE plus verbs we're going to go through in terms of the ways that we're thinking about reassessing all of the frameworks that we're going to be making radical futurisms sincerely, and for grounding communities who are already facing impasse it really is down to who's having the agency to do that in the first place. Which I guess brings me to want to ask you a bit more about the vulnerability towards being defutured, to have your future taken away from you, without any negotiation, and to have things just with a full stop, finished for you. In so much of storytelling, we take the final chapter and the final sentence as an ending, and in a lot of the work that I do with young people with youth groups, for example, through speculative fictioning and talking about intersectional politics, and climate change issues that saying, well, you finished reading this article or you finished, you know, reading the song lyrics of this of this rapper, do you agree with it? Do you see yourself represented in it? But how about we take away that full stop and we finish off that story ourselves? How about you rewrite that ending? And I guess a lot of it is thinking about how unfinished histories are, how unbegun histories are as well, and to think of a kind of after growth or, you know, a post-colony. You know, who's deciding that and who's, you know, suffering the impacts of that decision? So maybe I'd like to invite you to speak a bit more about that book ending and the danger of doing that, in terms of maybe kind of like, creating academic or curatorial terminologies. And I want to also reference Dr Max Liboiron in her book, which has fantastic footnotes, the most accessible footnotes I've ever experienced in an academic publication, the book being called *Pollution Is Colonialism*. And she talks about the importance, as someone who's Indigenous, to have allies who are standing with but standing over there and knowing where that line is to stand over. And so, yeah, I'd like to invite you to speak a bit about that solidarity building that is

understanding the unfinished and unbegun histories that we're inevitably swirling around in.

TJ: The question of agency is crucial, and it applies to the question, who has the right to produce the future? Who has the right to think about it and who has the space to do so? Certainly, you began your question with COP 26 and I think that that's the kind of book ending. COP 26 exemplifies the institutional power that determines who can propose what in terms of what kind of future we collectively imagine and it controls what kind of resources go into it. And I think this is the condition of you know, the institutional determination of ultimately capitalist realism, a term of Mark Fisher's but I think it you know, it's useful, it lives on in significance. Basically, the framework we're given that's reiterated at COP 26 forecloses certain narratives and certain alternative imaginings about what the future might be. Anything that is imagining that comes out of COP 26 and all the other UN climate summits, basically is thinking within the terms of a market-based economy. So, any climate solution has to be market based. It's a matter of cap and trade. It's a matter of, decarbonisation technologies. It's a matter of investment in renewables. It constitutes a massive, and maybe even one of the largest historical world financial transfers that we're looking at that's happening right now, in terms of shifting from a fossil fuel economy to renewable one, but without changing any of the kind of political and social forms of regimentation and inequality, economic, political, and social inequality that we're living with, and that that has just massive impacts in terms of limiting many of our imaginations to operating within those terms. Certainly, I think the university does that as well. All institutions that are defined by and funded by this situation that we're living within, of the dominant economics

of neoliberalism and capitalism more broadly is doing that. So to talk about alternative radical futures is really going against the grain of institutions, whether it's art institutions or educational ones, or transnational UN convened climate summits. So I think exercises in cultivating individual agency, in terms of thinking beyond the futures that are foreclosed by dominant institutions, and more broadly the dominant economy, are crucial but they're not enough. We need to go beyond the cultivation of individual agency. We need to think about collective formations, modes of solidarity.

Liboiron I think is helping with that in some ways. I really like the formulation of pollution as colonialism because it helps look at environmental violence through a colonial framework, which is crucial, and that's something that I very much agree with. So you know, we can definitely stand with that project. In terms the standing over there I'm a little...I have questions about that. I have questions about the participation of that project within a kind of divisive identity politics, that leads to modes of kind of like essentialism of identity and separatism within different social formations, Indigenous, Muthi, otherwise, and I think this is something that is really extremely politically debilitating, even though it's understandable historically; why some would stress historical vulnerability and the violences that they and their communities have suffered over the years, and why it's certainly important to point out inequalities and privileges in terms of who can speak and who can't. But I think ultimately, the challenge is how to find not our politics in our identities, but our identities in our politics. This is a lesson for me, that you get in groups like the Combahee River collective, the African American Queer Revolutionary Formation, that that was in the States on the east coast in the 1970s, and there's lots of others but thinking about multiracial solidarity, how can we reconstitute that today, I think is absolutely crucial, and for that, I don't

think a formulation for the political horizon ultimately is stand with but over there. I think it's we have to stand together across all of our differences and somehow reconstitute the conditions of a kind of anti-racist anti-colonialist socialist project.

Angela: I absolutely agree with those points, but just to specify that Liboiron's I guess, reference to stand with but over there was to mean that, to ensure that there are enough safer spaces where people of shared demographics and identities can gather and organize, as well as those with the multiracial, multi class based and wider and so it's ensuring that there's a multiplicity of inclusive spaces that are available, and I think I have one more kind of explorative question to ask. And it kind of picks up on some of the science fiction, speculative fiction aspects that you've mentioned, as well, as part of the London Science Fiction research community that I co-direct with seven others. . Our last year's academic theme was activism and resistance and this year we're carrying on with extraction as our as our kind of main research beam. And we started our reading groups, monthly ones. We're actually watching *The Last Angel of History*, and I wanted to point out for December for our instalment we looked at *The 6th World*, which is a 15 minute short film, one that you probably know of by a Navajo director, Nanobah Becker. And this film is actually quite humorous in parts, and it talks about how the Navajo astronaut Tazbah Redhouse is a pilot on the first spaceship that's sent to colonize Mars and she's told by her people that this is the new imagined homeland and corn, continuing with the Indigenous tradition, is actually key to their survival and on board this spaceship there's this OmniCorp laboratory that has a white head scientist who argues with the general space director who wanted to bring on some Indigenous corn to give the commander Tazbah

to grow on Mars. And eventually they realize that the lab engineered corn is failing, it's rotting, and that the only way that they can survive is to try the Indigenous corn and eventually it works and they're able to sustain themselves on Mars. And maybe in this in a way this acts as a portal that we were talking about, the corn itself is a portal to continuing histories, but it's something that's not even a technology as such. It's the most organic thing that you can be holding and you know, embodying through ingestion and laying on the ground to grow. And I guess this ties into the way that we think about growth itself, what we allow to grow and what we get rid of, and the way that the scientist, the lead scientist, of this lab was adamant that other seeds that weren't GM couldn't come on board the ship was something that is you know, holding up a barrier holding up a whole border to a way of futuring. So maybe you have something to add about what gets chosen to grow. There are so many different types of speculative and science fictions that have long talked about environmental, racial, social injustices and I think that through fictioning, we can really bring about quite radical ways of self-reflection and organizing.

And I'd like to thank you, thank everyone, for joining us for the final session. And thank you again, TJ, for your early morning presentation and discussion with us. Thank you to the organizers for pairing us together to have this connection and sharing with you.

TJ: Thank you Angela, and thank you everyone. I've really enjoyed it, great questions, important to continue thinking about, so thank you again.

This keynote concluded *After Growth: A*

*Symposium on Post-Capitalist Imaginaries* at Nottingham Contemporary, 19-20 March 22. This event was a two-day programme taking place both online and in-person, assembling a diverse array of visions, organisations, and initiatives to speculate on the possibility of life after growth. *After Growth* was part of *Emergency&Emergence*, our multi-platform research programme that unearths transdisciplinary, sensorial and speculative practices of radical sensemaking and wayfinding via questions of repair, pedagogy, remediation and mutation.

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