



les **ateliers**
de la **pensée**

ADLP #4

**Bond cosmologies
and forms of life**

March 23-24-25-26, 2022

Dakar, Senegal

The social, economic and environmental unbinding is one of the major challenges of the contemporary world. An instrumental relationship with nature inherited from the mechanistic cosmology of Western modernity has led us to overexploit the resources of the biotope and to jeopardize the conditions of reproduction of life on earth. This habiter colonial -colonial dwelling- (Malcolm Ferdinand) has violently enslaved the earth, exploited the humans and non-humans who populate it, for the benefit of a capitalist economic rationale and of a minority of the planet's inhabitants.

It is rooted in a **representation of our humanity's centrality in the realm of the living**, in a cosmology of separateness and in the transformation of the rest of the living into objects subjected by an instrumental reason to our exclusive purposes. Numerous environmental studies, by taking up the main categories of the western mechanistic cosmology, continue to conceive the issues it raises in terms of dichotomy, and in a framework in which nature is a detached and subaltern object.

Addressing the ecological challenges set by our techno-scientific civilization **requires us to rethink the cosmologies and cosmovisions underlying and structuring our relationship to the living, our place** within this order, the **relationships we have with its different modalities**, as well as the **languages** that give meaning to the bonds we keep with it. **It leads us to formulate ontologies of bonding and cosmologies that produce forms of life preserving the equilibrium of the living, the quality of social cooperation and the bonds that enrich it.** It is a question of rethinking the philosophical foundations of our relationship to the living by redesigning relational ontologies.



How can we **set up new relationships with the earth, the living, the non-humans**, the more than human ?

How to **produce economic forms that meet the communities' needs while preserving life** ?

How to speak of human/non-human ecological assemblages beyond the language of nature/culture, the Anthropocene and conceptual categories born from Western colonial scientific genealogies ?

How can we re-articulate, repair, and heal the social, political, and with the all-living bonds that are seriously damaged by a negative economy of the bond?

In Africa, Latin America, Amazonia, Oceania and premodern Europe, human groups have inherited **cosmologies and cosmovisions that established relationships between humans and non-humans based on the unity of the living**. These cosmologies draw a continuum between the beings and do not make a clear distinction between humans, plants and animals. There is no clear separation between nature and culture. Moreover, **reflexive consciousness, intentionality, sociality, and affective life are not peculiar to Man. The collectives of human, animal, and vegetal beings share the attributes of mortality, social life, reciprocity and knowledge**. The interactions with the different communities of living beings are certainly conceived in terms of utility and necessity, but also of affinity, cooperation, and interdependence. **Due to the living world' s capacity for metamorphosis, the boundaries between groups of beings are porous, as are their ontological categorizations.**



In the Yanomami cosmology. Animality and its discontinuities emerge from an original humanity that has merged both orders' attributes. Thus, humans do not come from a previous animality of which they would constitute the climax, and of which they would be condemned to become masters and possessors (Bruce Albert, Davi Kopenawa). This is the opposite of modern and Western Naturalist evolutionism. Humans humbly constitute only one of the many existing peoples who inhabit the vast world of the earth-forest and form each other's cosmopolitan and interlocutory landscape. In these cosmologies, **there is no denial of co-humanity**. The hierarchies of the living postulated by Western Mechanist cosmology are overturned and thus imply other relationalities. **These cosmologies posit a continuity bond between individual and social bodies and ecosystems, which implies that damage to the environment affects social bonds and vice versa**. The issues of the social, political, and environmental bond therefore call to be considered together; and these cosmologies are important imaginary, symbolic, and political resources that allow us to think a new relational ontology.

This edition (4) of the Dakar Ateliers de la pensée is interested in how these cosmologies of the bond induce different relationships to the earth, to territories, to the living in general, to resources, to economic production, to ecology, to the social and political bond, to language and can produce a new ecology of bonds.

These workshops will focus on all these questions, grouped under the following topics:

The community of the living's languages / Alternative ways of dwelling on Earth and of relating to non-humans (more than human) / Economy of the living / Production of commons.



Axis 1 : the community of the living's languages

In Western ecology, nature is treated as an object to be protected. The attribution of legal rights to nature is already being experimented in Ecuador, Bolivia, Australia and India. This raises the question of who is entitled to speak on its behalf to defend it from the assaults it undergoes at the hands of techno-industrial capitalism? How to represent the non-human while avoiding anthropocentrism? How can we avoid thinking of nature as subaltern? This axis raises the question of languages and modes of representation beyond human testimony and human languages. **What languages for a community of the living?** How can we learn to listen to that which does not speak, but which signifies? How can we rethink the nature, humanity and animality categories and get out of an anthropocentric language? Nature is not just a passive receptor of tracks; it can speak and represent itself (Sheila Sheikh). It has the capacity to write itself. Through an active presence, it is expressive (by leaving tracks) and speaks a different language from that of humans. Plants for example communicate through bioacoustics and bio-semantics.

Axis 2 : Alternative ways of dwelling on Earth and of relating to non-humans (more than human)

These forms have existed in pre-capitalist societies and persist in spaces not yet totally subjected to the extractivist economy. Marronnage is one such example. It cannot be reduced to the mere fact of slaves fleeing the plantation - it is a way of enacting a different relationship to the Earth and to non-humans. The Quilombo and the Zomia are places of experimentation of these ways of dwelling on the Earth. What can we learn from these experiences and their viability?



Axis 3 : Economy of the living

We are currently engaged in an economy which, to produce consumer goods, exhausts the planet's bio-capacity, overexploits its resources and hinders its regenerative capacity. It is an economy of short-termism, of immoderation, of generalized precarity and of suffocation. Rethinking its structural foundations, its functioning modes and its goals is vital for the survival of our societies. It will be a question of thinking of economic models that do not carbonize the living, that meet the needs of communities and that positively impact the social, political, and environmental spheres. How can we think of a symbiotic economy (Isabelle Delannoy) and an economy of the living (Felwine Sarr)?

Axis 4 : Production of commons

This axis will address the question of the making of commons. In an era characterized by an ecological crisis and a deepening of economic and social disparities on a global scale, the need to produce commons and to preserve non-rival and non-exclusive spaces, ensuring the greatest number of people the right to use and access to common resources is imperative. Biodiversity, water, air, geostationary orbits, fishing docks, are all commons whose management rules must be co-defined by the stakeholders. The common must be constituted and a major issue is that of its manufacture and management. The commons, before being a matter of discourse, are first and foremost social practices of doing things in common. Each time a community decides to manage a collective resource with an emphasis on equitable access, sustainability, and inclusiveness, a common emerges. It will also be a question of thinking about the places of politics, cities, inhabited spaces, as places where sociality, bonds, convivium and the commons are produced.



Felwine Sarr , Achille Mbembé.

Contact Production & Communication

Bénédicte Samson

lesateliersdelapensee@gmail.com

