

*Class Matters in the Plutocene*

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In this paper, we take a closer look at the ‘Anthropos’ (i.e. the humans) that have caused the processes and changes in the environments which have subsequently led to the ‘Anthropocene’.

The Anthropocene narrative is (still) predominantly presented as something that the entire human species, humanity as a whole, is responsible for. But what happens when one examines the differences and applies a class perspective to the analysis? Hence, we will refer to the era as the Plutocene, since the ecological destabilisation is effectively plutogenic (referring to plutocracy), namely mainly caused by high-income groups.

We argue that discussions on the Plutocene/Capitalocene/Technocene/Anthropocene will benefit from a context of socio-economic classes. To this end, we have identified four such classes globally, and through our research dialogues we have elaborated upon four separate future scenarios.

For the wealthiest over-consuming class of one billion human beings, a set of powerful degrowth interventions are urgently needed. This would include advances in taxation and prohibition of excesses. Similar, but less drastic degrowth interventions are required for the second billion belonging to the consuming class. Thirdly, the members of the sustainable class of three billion have their basic needs met in a way that fits within the carrying capacity of the Earth. For this class, steady-state principles should be applied. The struggling class includes the two billion poorest worldwide with empowerment as the transition path.

These are our starting points for imagining degrowth and post-capitalist futures. Such class-wise transitions can bring about possibilities for peaceful coexistence between both fellow humans and non- or more-than-human environments (nature).