

Afterword: *Pacem per Maribus—The Ocean As Boundary Object*

The realisation that our world is finite—as communicated by the much debated notion of “the Anthropocene”—shifts our/ humanities relational position within that finite space. And this change of our own position in the ongoing processes of environmental change and socio-political and economic transformation allows us to see, study and understand this planet, *our* planet, differently—maybe better—than ever before. It is a shift in perspective that moves the connections and interdependencies of social, ecological, economic and political systems into the focus of our attention; it allows for, and demands at the same time, an epistemological shift. Instead of focusing on the distinguishing characteristics of, for instance, terrestrial and marine systems or “Tamil”, “Sinhalese” or “Muslim” identity narratives, the flows, run-offs, connections and socio-spatial entanglements between the “opposing types” move into the focus. Binaries are dissolved by studying the in-betweens.

Within academia and disciplines such as human geography, anthropology, knowledge sociology, global history and of course area studies, we have—in the past years—witnessed the explicit turn towards the study of “flows”; the multidimensionality of space; different types of social, geographic, cognitive mobilities and immobilities; and interdependencies and global to translocal figurations. The once so popular binaries in explaining the world have been (at least temporarily) put aside or denounced as being of heuristic but of less empirical value.

Parallel to these developments in academia, towards the crossing of boundaries and the study of hybrids, we witness in the sphere of international cooperation, development and climate action the increased merging of development and environmental topics and discourses. Poverty alleviation, environmental standard settings for production processes or the creation of nature conservation areas are no longer separately discussed—one in the sphere of development cooperation and international aid from North to South and the other in the sphere of environmental protection and climate action. But instead, the spheres of policy discourses and policy-making with regard to development and social inequality have merged with those regarding environmental protection. They are *jointly* considered nowadays as topics of *global* concern and relevant in all societies and countries, no matter where

they are located on this planet. It is a development in policy discourse and action that is exemplified by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the UNFCCC climate action discussions and the Paris agreement.

The narratives in this book depict the ocean as boundary object, demanding and in consequence enabling cooperation in heavily contested processes of group identity formation as well as conflict-cooperation distinctions found in fishing communities in the militarised zones of Sri Lanka. The ocean and its (common pool) resources allow for the finding of ways to overcome some of the hardened, partly militarised boundaries drawn. In the interest of livelihood provision and eventually also peace-building, some socio-ethnic boundaries are weakened, while others—in the interest of maintaining group identity-based forms of social organisation—strengthened.

In a time in which humanity has only just begun to figure out avenues for fulfilling its responsibilities in the Anthropocene, the book therefore offers, *first*, an intricate contribution to a marine humanities' perspective on conflict-resolution and peace-building. *Second*, the book houses a political call that, in the current times of the renewed uprise of authoritarian regimes and exclusive "securitization"—rather than inclusive peace—discourses all over the globe cannot be stated often enough: It is the call for not only "Pacem in Maribus", peace in the ocean, as advocated by Elisabeth Mann-Borgese and the Club of Rome as early as the 1970s but, in addition, for "Pacem per Maribus", and thus "peace through the ocean", and via socially, economically and ecologically meaning *just* governance of its resources, spaces and functions to the earth system.

With these words, I would like to congratulate Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa as well as all readers, to this excellent book!

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