



Governing the Planetary? Democratic Innovations in Latin America

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INTRODUCTION

While calls for the democratisation of climate governance have remained constant for several decades, analytical perspectives around its implications have shifted in recent years. The concept of the Anthropocene describes a range of approaches that account for the destructive force of humanity at large and the changes it has brought onto the planet due to the intrinsic relationship between humans, nature, and other non-human animals and elements (e.g. Chandler et al. 2021, 3; see also Chapters 2, 14, and 15). The concept foregrounds the “central role of [hu]mankind in geology and ecology” (Crutzen and Stoermer 2021, 20) that “fundamentally remakes the relationship between humanity and nature” (Kaltmeier et al. 2024, 15).

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Scholars from across the world have increasingly problematised and sought to pluralise the idea of the Anthropocene as *our planetary condition*, making it a site of contestation and regional adaptation rather than a ready-made lens to be applied homogeneously (Svampa 2022; Kaltmeier et al. 2024). The concept is increasingly brought in conversation with other critical approaches towards colonial histories, neoliberalism, and developmentalism (see Demos 2017; McEwan 2021). We use the term “planetary condition” (see Hanusch et al. forthcoming) to refer to the material, environmental, and entangled consequences of specific trajectories of exploitation and resistance, to avoid the homogenising implication that “humanity writ large” is equally responsible for, and affected by, the Anthropocene (Davis et al. 2019, 2). The climate crises the Anthropocene names are inextricable from socioeconomic and geopolitical trajectories—and demand complex, inclusive, both local and global responses.

Is the Anthropocene an appropriate approach to analyse planetary governance? And how can we govern planetary crises democratically?

Proponents of participatory and deliberative democracy offer a transformative response to these questions. “Democratic innovations” (Smith 2009), or inclusive, dialogic, and reflexive forms of citizen engagement are put forward as essential to recognise and anticipate ecological impacts, learn from socio-ecological systems, reflect on core values, and transform practices accordingly (e.g. Chilvers and Kearnes 2020). Citizen participation and deliberation challenges technocratic and extractivist governance models to instead foreground pluralistic understandings of nature, territory, and community, and should thus allow for more democratic governance of the complex entanglements of the planetary condition.

Latin America offers a particularly compelling context to examine such democratic innovations from a historically and politically anchored perspective. The region has been considered a “laboratory of citizen participation and democratic innovation” (Pogrebinschi and Ross 2019, 389) and draws on much longer and broader traditions of engagement and self-governance. These practices range from participatory planning and community consultations around resource extraction (Walter and Urkidi 2016), to community-based environmental governance (Barkin and Lemus 2016), and, more recently, deliberative forums such as climate assemblies (Ribeiro et al. 2025) that engage publics in discussions around sustainability transitions.

In this review chapter, we examine democratic innovations for climate governance with a ‘post-Anthropogenic’ lens of the planetary condition. In the following section, we discuss how reflections around the Anthropocene resulted in calls for new forms of environmental and planetary governance, making space for democratic innovations. We then zoom in the Latin American context to examine what that governance may look like in practice. We account for three forms of citizen engagement: intermediation, deliberation, and mobilisation. Each fulfils different functions in governing the planetary. First, innovations can manage and negotiate conditions for life. Second, innovations can seek the consent of affected communities for the continuation of the planetary condition. Third, innovations may seek to counter its causes or effects. We discuss to what extent each of these democratic innovations achieve a more democratic governance of the planetary condition with case examples.

We find that shortcomings and limitations in the potential of democratic innovations for planetary governance are better explained by different analytical lenses that challenge implicit presuppositions in the idea of the Anthropocene, and that are historically anchored and account for the realities of the majority world. The idea of the Plantationocene (Haraway 2015), for instance, foregrounds colonial and extractive histories that constrain political action, rather than attributing environmental crises and geological changes to an undifferentiated “humanity.” Latin American nation-states are embedded in long-standing exploitation, racialised labour, and extractivism (see also Chapter 12), which shape both the design of democratic innovations and their capacity to intervene in the very crises they are meant to govern.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS AND THE PLANETARY CONDITION

The concept of the Anthropocene names an established field that seeks to make sense of the current planetary moment (see Crutzen and Stoermer 2021), and while recent scholarship rejects the idea that it constitutes a new geological epoch for the planet (see Witze 2024), the concept has paved the way to think about planetary politics against the current levels of pollution, extraction, and complex ecological crises. The Anthropocene emphasises that interconnected crises resulting from human action demand not only technical solutions but an “alignment of preferences and identities,” from “individuals to the global,” towards

coordinated planetary responsibility (Franchini and Viola 2022, 13). In many ways, this concept captured the need for cooperative and inclusive governance, and centred the shared planetary condition, echoing critiques of the ontological separation between humans and the environment that underpins Western Modernity (Kaltmeier et al. 2024, 18; see also Chapters 7, 14, and 15) and the centrality of the Anthropogenic condition within colonial exploitation (Lemos Menezes and de Souza 2023, 6, 12). At its periphery, the Anthropocene thus insinuates that the socio-economic ramifications of late capitalist modes of production and extractivist practices are “fundamentally at odds with the geo-physical rhythms on which they depend” (Ejsing et al. 2025, 65).

For participatory and deliberative democrats, since the Anthropocene represents “an emerging epoch of human-induced instability in the Earth system [...] all politics should be first and foremost a politics of the Anthropocene” (Dryzek and Pickering 2018, v). They call for epistemological and political transformations in global governance systems and linear policy interventions which are necessarily “disrupted” by increasing complexity, uncertainty, and systemic interdependence (Chandler et al. 2021, 265; see also Chapter 2). Given the intrinsically planetary nature of environmental phenomena, its governance requires accounting for ambiguity, fostering resilience, and facilitating collaborative problem-solving across actors, scales, and knowledge systems.

Democratic innovations are proposed to facilitate transformative governance by actively and directly involving communities and nature in the decisions that affect their existence, lives, and livelihoods (see also Chapter 20). If habitability is the precondition and telos of the planetary (Hanusch et al. forthcoming, 41), then inhabitants must have a say in how it is pursued. Through different forms of collaborative decision-making, consultation, and deliberation, democratic innovations promise to “reconcile” governance (de Castro et al. 2019, 7–8) with historically side-lined voices and experiences, acknowledging difference, and reimagining collective action in a manner more responsive to those affected (Dryzek and Pickering 2018, 127). The argument for more engagement is to course-correct liberal-representative governance models and instead foreground pluralistic understandings of agency and political action (Ribeiro et al. 2025, 2).

The pursuit towards a more inclusive and participatory governance of the planetary condition follows, historically, the political leadership

of Indigenous movements to transform democratic and judicial institutions at the national and transnational levels. In Latin America and the Caribbean, their demands eventually led to constitutional reforms incorporating the rights of nature, the land, and *buen vivir*. In Andean countries, for instance, transformative reforms nominally embraced the ontologies rooted in Indigenous worldviews as part of a left-leaning, plurinational “constituent” moment—recognising the interconnectedness of humans and nature and foregrounding relational ethics over utilitarian logics (see Van Norren 2025). The Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 was the first in the world to enshrine the “rights of nature” to “exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles” (Article 72). This constitutional shift was deeply influenced by the Quechua concept of *sumak kawsay* (“good living”) within a framework of interculturality, respect for diversity, and harmony with nature (Article 275). Bolivia followed suit with its 2009 Constitution and subsequent Law of the Rights of Mother Earth, embedding *suma qamaña* (also “good living”) as a guiding principle for governance and development (see Gudynas 2011). These constitutional frameworks challenge dominant Western ontologies by recognising the interconnectedness of humans and their environment, and by foregrounding relational ethics over utilitarian logics. Yet, in practice, legal acknowledgements and discursive recognition have often fallen short, for instance, while simultaneously allowing for extractive projects to continue resource exploitation without the consent of the community or recognition of their autonomy and sovereignty.

Since the late twentieth century, democratic innovations have been used increasingly to enable dialogue and joint decision-making among communities, institutions, stakeholders, and their conflicting interests in response to environmental challenges in the region. At the same time, climate governance is highly contested by affected indigenous and traditional communities, social movements, public agencies, and to an extent also the private sector (de Castro et al. 2019). Participatory processes enabling greater inclusion and recognition cannot indeed be separated from communities’ concomitant demands for land demarcation, collective ownership of the soil and sub-soil, and the calls for the implementation, abolition, or institutionalisation of consultative, participatory, and deliberative praxis (Morán 2025). The ambiguity of existing evidence invites us to delve deeper into how the planetary condition has been governed in practice beyond the inclusion-centred frameworks of the Anthropocene, and better understanding habitability in the planetary condition.

GOVERNING THE PLANETARY IN LATIN AMERICA

Democratic innovations are introduced in climate governance to bring together diverse perspectives and incorporate local and ancestral knowledge systems and lived experience (e.g. Burgos-Ayala et al. 2020, 294). Latin America offers a well-documented variety of democratic innovations, ranging from one-off instances of collaborative planning or co-design to more structured consultations and institutions (Pogrebinschi and Ross 2019). Yet these are often analysed focusing on their policy area or institutional design (e.g. Falletti and Riofrancos 2018), or through their function within the policy cycle, where participants can influence agenda setting, decision making, implementation, or monitoring (see Pogrebinschi and Ross 2025). However, different forms of citizen engagement respond to political problems as they emerge, and environmental conflict is often both historically anchored and juncture driven (Ejsing et al. 2025, 68).

We therefore propose a different approach. We tackle the question of how to govern the planetary condition democratically by reviewing existing evidence on three types of democratic innovations in Latin America: (1) collaborative governance, (2) institutionalised dialogue, and (3) community-led organising. Each type comprises political participation as intermediation, deliberation, or contestation. We examine how each type has taken root in the region as enactment of planetary governance, rather than in their usual definition as policy correctives or institutional supplements. In the following sections, we show that democratic innovations in climate governance can pursue three distinct political goals: managing life under the planetary condition, seeking consent for its continuation, or actively working to counter it (Table 21.1).

Managing Life Under the Planetary Condition

Collaborative governance processes aim to bring together different groups and stakeholders to directly tackle environmental and climate issues. These processes can include socio-environmental monitoring committees, collaborative planning, and observatories of mining conflicts and extractive industries. In practice, they may take the form of community councils, conservation planning, and Indigenous management of protected national areas. These bodies represent intermediary forms

Table 21.1 Types, forms, and goals of democratic innovations in climate governance

<i>Type</i>	<i>Form of participation</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Case example</i>
Collaborative governance	Intermediation	Develop policies and responses	Participatory planning
Institutionalised dialogue	Deliberation	Seeking input and consent from affected communities	Free prior and informed consent (FPIC)
Community-led organising	Contestation	Countering extractivism, pollution, and environmental impacts	Popular assemblies

Source Own elaboration

of governance that negotiate decision-making between communities, governments, and other stakeholders.

Collaborative governance has been widely used in Latin America to plan, manage, and monitor environmental matters, including biosphere reserves, forests, coastal areas, biodiversity or natural reserves, and fresh-water systems (Delgado-Serrano et al. 2017). It creates horizontal and vertical coordination among communities, civil society organisations, international funders, and governments, with the goal of protecting certain territories, enhancing the use of resources, and addressing local demands (Sattler et al. 2016). By bringing together individuals representing different stakeholder groups—communities, governments, and private actors—they create space for accounting and managing planetary realities. They have been often implemented as a result of the historical and purposeful absence of basic services in areas of limited statehood, or resulted from participatory governance promotion by the development sector and international organisations (Ruiz-Mallén et al. 2015).

One example of collaborative governance of natural resources are so-called Water Boards. Research on community water management documents long-standing, resilient OCSAs (span. *Organizaciones Comunitarias de Servicios de Agua*) across the region that emerged as a form of service delivery and resource governance in contexts of limited government presence or lack of infrastructure (see Pogrebinschi and

Ross 2019, 398). In these areas, everyday citizens develop the infrastructure to access water sources, purify them, and distribute them to their communities, often resisting privatisation and advocating for autonomy despite lack of technical support. Another form of collaborative governance is community management of natural areas, meaning the collective planning, use, conservation, and monitoring of ecosystems—such as forests, wetlands, coastal zones, and biodiversity reserves—by local, Indigenous, or traditional communities. Communities are active stewards of their environments, balancing ecological sustainability with cultural uses and economic needs. For instance, Mexico has historically held one of the world's most extensive systems of community forest management, with over 2300 groups managing forests for timber, conservation, and ecotourism (see Bray et al. 2006). In the Colombian Amazon, Indigenous and *campesino* communities manage biosphere reserves and freshwater systems, integrating ancestral knowledge through participatory governance (Delgado-Serrano et al. 2017).

Despite widespread application of community environmental management, structural barriers prevent effective community engagement. Such barriers include centralised decision-making processes, insufficient political support, and the absence of viable economic alternatives for communities living in or near protected areas. In Colombia, local actors were excluded from key decisions about land use and conservation priorities despite formal recognition of community roles in managing protected areas; national government agencies often retained control and final decision-making power (Sattler et al. 2016). In other cases, incentives for participation are weak or poorly designed. For instance, while ecotourism and community-based conservation projects are often cited as promising development strategies, they are rarely scaled or sustained in ways that empower local actors (Maldonado Ibarra et al. 2020). Barriers can also respond to the differentiated impact of climate crises. Community-led Water Boards in El Salvador, which primarily function despite and in the absence of the State in rural areas of the country, face the increased bureaucratisation and privatisation of water management amid droughts (see Vichez 2021).

Successful collaborative governance to ensure habitability depends on integrating local knowledge and navigating trade-offs between conservation and development. However, fragmentation and lack of integration between the remit given to collaborative governance bodies and larger political and economic decision-making infrastructures undermine both

conservation and habitability objectives, and the political legitimacy and efficacy of community management. This is further illustrated in the striking disconnect between policy rhetoric and actual implementation around epistemic diversity and the incorporation of Indigenous and local knowledge in climate governance. Drawing on a comprehensive review of 2212 documented projects, Burgos-Ayala et al. (2020) reveal: about 1% of analysed projects effectively involved Indigenous People as primary decision-makers.

An outlier case in terms of anchoring Indigenous and local knowledge in planetary governance towards habitability is participatory land-use planning. One example are “Life Plans” (span. *Planes de Vida*) developed in Colombian localities. Life Plans are community-driven frameworks that articulate long-term visions for territorial management, grounded in Indigenous ontologies, priorities, and governance structures. They serve not only as planning instruments but also as expressions of autonomy and resistance to externally imposed development models (Burgos-Ayala et al. 2020), although they are limited to the scale and jurisdictional constraints of local action.

Seeking Consent of Affected Communities

Public institutions may reach out to communities to find out their positions about an environmental issue or a planned intervention (e.g. a new extractive industry or infrastructure project) and invite them to provide their own proposals on how best to plan and respond. Typical cases of these forms of institutionalised dialogue are citizens’ legislative initiatives, local consultations, and other engagement mechanisms mandated by Environmental Impact Assessment regulation.

One of the most widespread examples of these institutions is Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), an internationally mandated legal instrument that seeks the consent of Indigenous and traditional communities for projects that may affect their territories, resources, and livelihoods. In Latin America, FPIC procedures were incorporated following the ILO Convention 169 as a critical legal and ethical standard in environmental governance, and are often applied in the context of extractive industries, infrastructure development, and conservation initiatives that affect Indigenous and traditional communities. Decades of struggles for FPIC’s ratification and implementation (Flemmer and Schilling-Vacaflor 2016)

have allowed for extensive research and evidence on its institutionalisation, use, and impacts. Evidence suggests FPIC has constituted a means for communities to exert some control on the grounding of extractive projects (Shenk 2022), and even weak engagement processes associated with FPIC such as the public hearings mandated by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) have enabled “unanticipated, though restricted, influence” in the governance of extractivism (Jaskoski 2024, 283).

The democratic strength of FPIC has largely depended on prior and continued struggle of indigenous communities, and not on its ability to diffuse the conflicts that characterise the governance of extractivist projects. Falleti and Riofrancos’ (2018) comparative work on FPIC in Bolivia and Ecuador provides evidence of the positive effects of political contention between social movements and governments on the path towards creating a robust democratic institution, as well as the need to incorporate Indigenous movements already in the process of regulating and implementing FPIC. Innovative approaches to FPIC institutionalisation have emerged in countries like Costa Rica and Brazil through “consultation on the consultation” and the drafting of autonomous protocols, allowing each community to decide how the state should implement FPIC in their territory (Morán and Navas 2022).

Be that as it may, underlying barriers such as governments’ continued control of the subsoil and the prevalence of geopolitical and economic interests over community sovereignty have undermined this deliberative institution, ultimately rendering its implementation a means of continuing extractive projects even in countries where structural enablers like the constitutional recognition of Indigenous nations should have, in principle, led to more empowered processes (Svampa 2022; Radhuber and Radcliffe 2023). Notorious cases include Sarayaku, Ecuador (2012), where the Inter-American Court ruled that the government violated FPIC by authorising oil exploration on Indigenous land without consultation; and Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécore (TIPNIS), Bolivia (2011), where Indigenous protests halted a highway project through protected territory, exposing the gap between constitutional rights to FPIC and its actual practice. In Quimsacocha, Ecuador (2011), local communities held a referendum rejecting a Canadian mining project, though the government dismissed the result due to its lack of binding effects. In Brazil, the Belo Monte Dam (2011) proceeded despite widespread opposition and lack of proper deliberation with affected

Indigenous and riverine communities, becoming a symbol of FPIC violations.

Procedural concerns regarding political remit and actual implementation have been also extensively documented. In Peru, Flemmer and Schilling-Vacaflor (2016) record how consultations in the hydrocarbon sector were initiated after contracts had already been signed, reducing the process to a formality and excluding meaningful debate about whether extraction should occur at all. Similarly, in Bolivia, consultations around gas projects were framed as discussions about general development policy, rather than specific project impacts, effectively side-lining Indigenous concerns and foreclosing the possibility of refusal. Zaremborg and Torres Wong (2018) highlight cases in Mexico and Peru where prior consultation was used not to assess ecological risks or community consent, but to negotiate compensation packages after extractive ventures had already been approved, turning FPIC into a tool for legitimising state-corporate agendas rather than protecting Indigenous autonomy.

Both the implementation of FPIC and conflict around its failures highlight how state and corporate actors routinely marginalise local voices, making participatory governance both an environmental and a justice struggle in which, ultimately, the countering of the planetary condition depends on the ability of communities to decide on the implementation of another cycle of extractivism in their territories.

Countering the Planetary Condition

When governments and stakeholders neglect communities' interests of habitability and autonomy, they often turn to self-convened mobilisation and contentious politics. Popular assemblies, but also grassroots campaigns, community-led referenda, and "good faith" consultations are organised to resist extractivist projects, protect resources, and advance alternative visions of development. Affected groups thus seek to contest interventions that perpetuate or worsen the planetary condition.

Since colonial times, local communities across Latin America and the Caribbean have defended their territories, most recently against extractivist projects such as mining, oil drilling, and hydroelectric plants. Popular assemblies in particular represent a key contemporary strategy in areas targeted by industries and invasive infrastructure, because they allow communities to articulate collective grievances, deliberate strategies, and assert territorial autonomy in the face of state- and corporate-led

resource exploitation (Picq 2020). The genealogy of popular assemblies spans ancestral Indigenous governance systems, but also borrows from nineteenth-century assembly-based independence movements led by *criollo* elites.

Contemporary anti-extractivist action draws on these traditions, when local communities and climate activists convening popular assemblies (e.g. Favaro and Iourno 2013). These assemblies encompass citizen-led dialogue and decision-making based on collective values and the common good (Zegada 2011, 105), generating a “deliberative consensus” that public authorities are expected to abide by (Zegada 2011, 165). This was the case, for example, of the first self-convened environmental assemblies in Esquel and La Alumbreira, two communities in the Argentinean Andes. Local activists called public assemblies in 2002, kickstarting a wave of assemblies that followed along the Andes and Patagonia where mega-mining projects exploit oil, lithium, and other highly priced, highly contaminating minerals.

Popular assemblies, like other forms of mobilisation and contestation, create space for dialogue among people “from all walks of life” who may have never engaged politically before, and were only mobilised due to an acute social, political, or economic problem. In the Argentinean cases, initially the demands advanced in the 2002 assemblies were aimed at securing financial compensation in the form of royalties that companies should pay over the extracted resources (see Svampa 2007). In the course of deliberations, however, those demands galvanised towards the complete rejection of new extractive infrastructure. The assemblies’ demographic composition enabled this transformation: they were “poli-class” spaces “made up of unemployed, professionals, students, Indigenous People, rural workers, peasants” (Favaro and Iourno 2013, 231). Former extractive industry workers, for instance, shared their experiences rotating through mining sites. Many moved between towns seeking job openings promised by new projects, only to find over and over again that the economic welfare promised by investors never actually materialised (Bottaro and Sola Alvarez 2008, 11). These testimonies were key for communities to grasp the reality and impacts of extractive industries.

In assemblies, conversations are not mediated by governments or private interests, which allows participants to bring to the table “different

protest and resistance methodologies that include pickets, *escraches*,¹ workshops” (Favaro and Iourno 2013, 232). The “multisectorial and multiclass” composition of the 2002 Argentinean assemblies determined their capacity to dispute the conditions for more sustainable development in their territories (Svampa 2007, 4) and to effectively force local governments’ hand towards consultative decision-making spaces instead of directly deciding over new extractive projects (Favaro and Iourno 2013, 231). In so doing, popular assemblies are expressions of “counter-hegemonic governance” (Veltmeyer and Ezquerro Cañete 2023); they challenge dominant extractive paradigms and denounce state inaction despite legal protections.

Moreover, popular assemblies are not necessarily static in their function, nor tied to short-lived mobilisation. They can develop and evolve in response to the political and ecological contours of each conflict (Smart Larrain 2019), as exemplified in two socio-environmental conflicts in Chile. In Caimanes, the El Mauro dam threatened water access and territorial integrity. Between 2014 and 2021, the local community led both popular assemblies and strategic litigation to sustain public mobilisation and media engagement. Their deep understanding of the hydrological characteristics of the region allowed them to challenge the technical claims of the mining company in court and in the public sphere. In turn, the *No Alto Maipo* movement began in 2007 to oppose a hydroelectric project in Cajón del Maipo, initially focusing on citizen monitoring and environmental impact assessments, but later evolved into a broader coalition involving climate NGOs, academics, and activists. Their approach shifted over time, moving from local ecological concerns to broader critiques of neoliberal water and energy policy, demonstrating a capacity to shift mobilisation towards different claims and publics.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND CHALLENGES TO THE ANTHROPOCENE FRAMEWORK

Examining democratic innovations in Latin America gives us privileged insight into alternative approaches to govern the planetary condition—but a closer look at their potential and practice reveals a nuanced picture, where political agency and mobilisation burgeon, but institutional impacts

¹ A form of demonstration that targets public figures or perpetrators.

are highly conditional. We have discussed the barriers that emerge for citizen and community engagement, the misuse and misalignment of state and non-state actors with those communities' political demands, and the limited capacity to effectively respond to habitability challenges that derive from global developments.

Different forms of citizen participation may help directly tackle socio-economic and political problems that derive from the Anthropocene, but this often means reckoning with power imbalances and their unequal costs for the habitability of planet earth. FPIC cases, for instance, illustrate how procedural manipulation and structural constraints can undermine the transformative potential of community consultation, reducing it to a technocratic exercise to ground extractivism rather than a genuine democratic safeguard. Popular assemblies, in turn, help identify larger extractive patterns, but struggle to locate an accountable counterpart that can intervene. Collaborative governance can support more responsive localised resource management but cannot touch the planetary causes of local problems. Democratic innovations, in this sense, become arenas where both the complicity and insufficiency of governance of the planetary condition are initially rendered visible, as well as the limits of the Anthropocene as a concept to name human-made climate change without its colonial and extractivist conditions.

Accounting for these sometimes ambiguous functions and effects of democratic innovations requires analytical frameworks that can foreground the constraints on citizen influence in climate governance by geopolitical, financial, and social dependencies that exceed localised decision-making processes. In the Latin American context, participatory processes frequently unfold within entrenched structures of extractivism and inequality. Governing the planetary condition, managing and accounting for today's social, economic, and colonial habitation of the earth (Kaltmeier et al. 2024, 21) signals the strategic need to operate ambivalently within existing governance frameworks—responding to resource scarcity through negotiations and solidarities while acknowledging the conditions that made such scarcity possible in the first place.

In that sense, an initial assessment on the challenges of governing the planetary condition in practice also sheds a light on the limits of analytically grounding it within Anthropogenic thought and the promise of the planetary turn. The Anthropocene indeed frames the current epoch

through irreversible changes and tipping points,² but these are attributed to ‘humanity’ as a whole to then require global and coordinated action. This can be seen as “an attempt to absolve the positionality of Western colonial knowledge and extraction practices, while simultaneously reinforcing and resettling them in a new territory—a Western frontier of pioneers armed with eco-optimism” (Yusoff 2018, 27). Approaching democratic innovations within the framework of the Anthropocene risks reproducing this flawed analytical basis (see also Chapter 12). Those tipping points materialise unevenly through concrete trajectories, actors, and interests, and that responses are highly conditioned by contextual needs (see also Chapters 22 and 24).

Instead, examining different forms of political participation for climate governance around the idea of the planetary condition foregrounds a historicised and relational point of view. It is insufficient to account for global paradigms of justice and decarbonisation and pursue explanations of whether they apply or not to the regional context without also accounting for histories of colonialism, resistance, extractivism, and socio-economic inequality (Kaltmeier et al. 2024, 22). Such histories result in distinctive forms of engagement and resistance in the governance of planetary life, and highly limited and conditional options for governments and stakeholders to operate.

The value of a historicised and politically grounded lens is exemplified through the alternative morphemes offered by critics of the Anthropocene. Concepts such as the Capitalocene, the Chthulucene, or the Plantationocene (Haraway 2015) foreground the ecological and socio-economic ramifications of late capitalism and the racialised, colonial, and extractive origins of our planetary condition, expanding and enriching our capacity to understand planetary habitability and the forms of political participation to ensure it. The Plantationocene, for example, names “the slave plantation system was the model and motor for the carbon-greedy machine-based factory system that is often cited as an inflection point for the Anthropocene” (Haraway 2015, 162). It brings into focus histories of plantation economies, forced labour, and racialised extraction as co-constitutive of both contemporary environmental crises and their proposed solutions.

² We thank John Dryzek for raising this.

In Latin America, as elsewhere, transformations linked to climate events and extractive industries cannot be understood without attention to colonial and capitalist histories that have structured vulnerability over time. Citizen engagement cannot be presented solely in terms of inclusive or responsive climate governance, but must be understood in relation to how communities navigate and contest these historically sedimented regimes of exploitation and expropriation, and what factual power actors—including governments—effectively hold to manage, consent, or counter the planetary condition.

CONCLUSIONS

Democratic innovations are inclusive forms of climate governance that seek to actively involve communities in the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. Reviewing these processes in Latin America—the region with perhaps the most institutionalised forms of climate governance, and certainly the best documented—we have shed a light on how communities can manage, consent, or counter the planetary condition, but also on how citizen participation alone cannot undo global and systemic trajectories of exploitation, extraction, and inequality. We found that democratic innovations do not necessarily constitute a more democratic response to the Anthropocene. These findings are not explained by these processes' shortcomings in political capacity, but rather by the concept's lack of clear historical and political anchoring.

More critical approaches that challenge the conceptual framework of the Anthropocene, such as the idea of the Plantationocene, can better shed a light on the colonial and extractive genesis of the planetary condition, contextualise its consequences, and help situate democratic innovations and other forms of political participation as counter-hegemonic struggles for justice, sovereignty, and habitability. Such critical approaches foreground not only the inclusion of individuals and communities historically marginalised in policy and politics, but also the limitations that those communities and institutions face in governing the planetary. These corrective interpretations can help shift our current understandings of inclusion and sustainability in climate governance to pluralise, historicise, and ground political and environmental trajectories behind the planetary condition.

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