

More-than-Human Cosmopolitics Shela Sheikh

Published in:

Maria Hlavajova and Wietske Maas, eds., *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living, Tentative and Urgent* (Utrecht and Cambridge, MA: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst; MIT Press, 2019), pp. 125–40
<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/propositions-non-fascist-living>

Summary:

Artists, theorists, activists, and scholars propose concrete forms of non-fascist living as the rise of contemporary fascisms threatens the foundations of common life.

Propositions for Non-Fascist Living begins from the urgent need to model a world decidedly void of fascisms during a time when the rise of contemporary fascisms threatens the very foundations of a possibility for common life. Borrowing from Michel Foucault's notion of “non-fascist living” as an “art of living counter to all forms of fascism,” including that “in us all... the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us,” the book addresses the practice of *living* rather than the mere object of life.

Artists, theorists, activists, and scholars offer texts and visual essays that engage varied perspectives on practicing life and articulate methods that support multiplicity and difference rather than vaunting power and hierarchy. Architectural theorist Eyal Weizman, for example, describes an “unlikely common” in gathering evidence against false narratives; art historian and critic Sven Lütticken develops a non-fascist proposition drawn from the intersection of art, technology, and law; philosopher Rosi Braidotti explores an ethics of affirmation and the practices of dying.

Propositions for Non-Fascist Living is the first in a BASICS series of readers from BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht, engaging some of the most urgent problems of our time through theoretically informed and politically driven artistic research and practice.

Contributors include:

Rosi Braidotti, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Jota Mombaça, and Thiago de Paula Souza, Forensic Architecture, Marina Gržinić, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, Patricia Kaersenhout and Lukáš Likavčan, Sven Lütticken, Jumana Manna, Dan McQuillan, Shela Sheikh, Eyal Weizman, Mick Wilson

What forms of sociality can foster resistance to the rise of authoritarian governments across the globe? In a 2017 article, artist Jonas Staal evokes the growing, global network of far-right regimes under which we were then beginning to live: “[F]rom Trump in the United States to ... ultranationalists and fascists rising throughout Europe to Erdoğan in Turkey, and from Putin in Russia to Modi in India.” For Staal, “this ultranationalist and patriarchal new world order aims to impose lines of division intended to defeat emancipatory politics indefinitely.” In response, Staal explores the notion of “assemblism”—or, more specifically, “a *practice* of performative assembly ... that links the domains of art, theater, performance, activism, and politics”—as a means of “[building] an effective resistance mobilized by a new collectivity.” Assemblism, for Staal, might provide the grounds for “a new Us with the potential to shatter the Us/Them divide that has brought the new authoritarian world order into being.”¹

Departing from Staal’s conception of “assemblism” and reformulating these questions through “more-than-human cosmopolitics,” I focus specifically on the fascist creep that is taking place, more or less conspicuously, in the context of environmental politics. In Europe, for instance, xenophobia goes hand in hand with the resurgence of eco-fascism and eco-nationalism—at its worst, a “blood and soil” version of environmentalism premised upon a reactionary form of “belonging” (a nativist sentiment that links nation and nature, local ecology and ethnicity) and the hostility directed towards human “aliens” (both citizens and non-citizens), as well as “non-native” species of plants and vegetation.² What is vital here are the exclusions in public (nationalist) imaginaries, state-led and nongovernmental policies, and, importantly, environmental activism. In short, whichever term we choose to use (“assemblism,” “cosmopolitics,” and so on), it is imperative to rethink who gets to be included in the “us.” In Europe alone, public protests against governments’ lack of (meaningful) action in the face of climate change have escalated, as witnessed with Extinction Rebellion in the UK, for instance. But despite their numerous achievements, such gatherings—like the *gilets jaunes* movement taking place across France since 2018 and earlier public mobilizations around the 2015 COP 21 climate change conference in Paris—have received criticism for “whitewashing” the climate justice movement and silencing the voices of racialized peoples, who are disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental toxicity and cannot so easily risk police arrest.³ What merits

¹ Jonas Staal, “Assemblism,” *e-flux Journal*, no. 80 (March 2017), online at: <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/80/100465/assemblism/>. Staal’s text was the starting point for my contribution to the “non-human assemblies” panel of the performative conference *Propositions #2: Assemblism* (BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht, November 2017), part of *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living*, developed following a 2017 collaboration between BAK and Studio Jonas Staal’s campaign *New Unions* (2016–ongoing).

² See Out of the Woods, “Lies of the land: Against and beyond Paul Kingsnorth’s *völkisch* environmentalism,” Libcom.org, 31 March 2017, online at: <https://libcom.org/blog/lies-land-against-beyond-paul-kingsnorth's-völkisch-environmentalism-31032017>; Matthew Phelan, “The Menace of Eco-Fascism,” *New York Review of Books Daily*, 22 October 2018, online at: <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/10/22/the-menace-of-eco-fascism/>; and Jason Wilson, “Eco-fascism is undergoing a revival in the fetid culture of the extreme right,” *Guardian*, 19 March 2019, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2019/mar/20/eco-fascism-is-undergoing-a-revival-in-the-fetid-culture-of-the-extreme-right>.

³ For a critique of London’s 2015 climate march, see Alexandra Wanjuki Kelbert and Joshua Virasami, “Darkening the White Heart of the Climate Movement,” *New Internationalists*, 1 December 2015, online at: <https://newint.org/blog/guests/2015/12/01/darkening-the-white-heart-of-the-climate-movement>. Regarding the UK’s Extinction Rebellion, see Wretched of the Earth, “An Open Letter to Extinction Rebellion,” *Common Dreams*, 4 May 2019, online at: <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2019/05/04/open-letter-extinction-rebellion>; and Leah Cowan, “Are Extinction Rebellion whitewashing climate justice?,” *Gal-Dem*, 18 April 2019, online at: <http://gal-dem.com/extinction-rebellion-risk-trampling-climate-justice-movement/>.

emphasis here is that the formation of assemblies and communities entails not only blind spots but also exclusions in terms of who is invited to join the conversation or has their presence registered.

In reference to these environmental protests, critics have pointed to exclusions that run along lines of race and class. But exclusions also function in regard to forms of life beyond the human.⁴ My interest lies in the more-than-human forms of sociality between humans and non-humans, and the political agencies that might arise through such relations. (Although, as posthumanist, postcolonial, and critical race scholars have taught us, as well as those deprived of so-called human rights, the definition of “human” is, of course, up for grabs).⁵ How might such more-than-human assemblies function as proposals for non-fascist living? I will be developing this through the notion of “cosmopolitics” set out notably by philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers. By discussing two artistic projects and their propositional aspects, a further question arises: How can artistic practices help us to imagine such forms of sociality and composition and to build a non-fascist, more-than-human cosmopolitical world, rather than simply representing it?⁶ How might artists become actively involved in cosmopolitical tensions, and how might they catalyze discussions leading to spaces not only of action but also of alternative forms of assemblism?⁷

Here, I turn to two artistic projects. The first, *Landscape as Evidence: Artist as Witness*, is a staged hearing that took place at the Constitutional Club of India, New Delhi, on 7 April 2017. The hearing involved theater director and lighting designer Zuleikha Chaudhari and Khoj International Artists’ Association, New Delhi, as petitioners opposing an interstate river-linking project (involving a series of dams) that had recently been cleared under the Indian Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952. The hearing created a forum for lawyers Anand Grover and Norma Alvares and artists Navjot Altaf, Ravi Agarwal, and Sheba Chhachhi to present their cases regarding the detriments of the project for public interest. British barrister Polly Higgins’ proposal to include “ecocide” (the destruction of the natural environment) as an international crime served as “a provocation to think about the intersection of art, law, and the environment in the context of the Indian subcontinent.”⁸

Throughout the hearing, the petitioners detailed the displacement of communities (particularly indigenous) that the project would entail, as well as the damage that it would cause to livelihoods. Running throughout was a discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of development, depending on whose interpretation is taken into account and what conception of “value” is to be employed. For instance, it was lamented that studies carried out by so-called experts from

⁴ For an examination of processes of exclusion, objectification, and silencing in terms of both race and the non-human, see Shela Sheikh, “The Future of the Witness: Nature, Race and More-than-Human Environmental Publics,” *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, vol. 44, no. 1 (2018), pp. 145–162.

⁵ For a working definition of the “more-than-human,” see Anna Tsing, “More-than-Human Sociality: A Call for Critical Description,” in *Anthropology and Nature*, Kirsten Hastrup, ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 27–42. Regarding race, the human, and human rights, see Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblies, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁶ Here I am rephrasing some questions regarding aesthetic practice raised in Ursula Biemann, “The Cosmo-Political Forest: A Theoretical and Aesthetic Discussion of the Video Forest Law,” *GeoHumanities*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2015), p. 10.

⁷ Here I echo questions posed in Khoj International Artists’ Association, *Landscape as Evidence: Artist as Witness*, 7 April 2017, online at: <http://khojworkshop.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Final-Brochure.pdf>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

academic fields were based on criteria of cost-benefit, with no accounting for the trauma that would be caused to the inhabitants of the area in question, and that the project would cause irreversible damage to cultural heritage. Importantly for the context of the more-than-human, the testimonies also evoked the legal rights of nature and detailed indigenous peoples' relations or cohabitation with nature, and the destruction of habitat not simply for humans but also for animals (for instance, tigers), as well as the loss of thousands of species of flora and fauna. Moreover, unlike conventional legal forums, the hearing provided a platform for the contribution of artist-petitioners, who spoke of artists' capacities, through their use of different media and their experiential and impressionistic approach, to see not just the obvious but also the invisible sites of trauma and the slow, often undetectable environmental violence. The figure of the artist was discussed not as necessarily providing straightforward solutions, but as allowing for a slowing-down of analysis in order to seek alternative strategies.

Regarding the legal rights of nature, the Indian context received global attention when, in March 2017, a court ruling granted the Ganges and Yamuna river system legal personhood after a campaign to stop its ongoing pollution.⁹ The judges cited the declaration of the Whanganui River in New Zealand as a living entity with full legal rights. The argument used in India, however, was one of guardianship. As the rights of nature had been argued for in the staged hearing through human testimony, the ruling treated the river system as a minor that would be protected by local government posts in the state of Uttarakhand, which acted *in loco parentis*.¹⁰ The second work to which I turn takes us further in terms of conceiving of a more-than-human cosmopolitical proposal, insofar as nature is imagined not only as a rights-bearing subject, but also a potential political subject—as a “citizen” of a “cosmopoliteia.”¹¹

Forest Law (2014) is a multimedia installation by architect Paulo Tavares and artist, writer, and video-essayist Ursula Biemann, based on long-term research into the Ecuadorian Amazon as a site of conflict between the Kichwa people of the Sarayaku and the oil industry.¹² The installation and the two-channel video-essay therein offer a retelling of how the Kichwa turned to courts of law—for instance the Inter-American Court of Human Rights—to make claims for the protection of the environment they inhabit. The landmark case, *Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku v. Ecuador*, in which the Sarayaku sued the state of Ecuador for facilitating oil extraction on their land, coincided with significant legal reforms in Ecuador, whereby a new constitution was signed in 2008 that introduced a series of Rights of Nature contending that ecosystems—the living forest, mountains, rivers, and seas—are legal subjects.¹³ As Biemann writes, “this cosmovision of interdependent cohabitation is deeply inscribed in the indigenous ethical and legal system in which the violation of natural communities equals the violation of human rights.”¹⁴ In Tavares and Biemann's words, disputes such as this over the forestlands of

⁹ Michael Safi and agencies, “Ganges and Yamuna rivers granted same legal rights as human beings,” *Guardian*, 21 March 2017, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/21/ganges-and-yamuna-rivers-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-beings>.

¹⁰ Alex Kirby, “Rivers gain legal protection from misuse,” *Climate News Network*, 21 March 2019, online at: <https://climatenewsnetwork.net/rivers-gain-legal-protection-from-misuse/>.

¹¹ I take the term “cosmopolitical proposal” from Isabelle Stengers, “The Cosmopolitical Proposal,” in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), pp. 994–1003.

¹² The *Forest Law* video-installation was exhibited at BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht, in 2015 as part of the “Human-Inhuman-Posthuman” element of the “Future Vocabularies” program. See also Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares, *Forest Law/Selva Jurídica: On the Cosmopolitics of Amazonia* (East Lansing: Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, 2014).

¹³ Biemann and Tavares, *Forest Law*, p. 81.

¹⁴ Biemann, “The Cosmo-Political Forest,” p. 5.

Amazonia “are located within and beyond the region’s immediate geography. Deeply rooted in local histories of violence and dispossession as well as within a broader terrain of struggles, these conflicts reflect a global, universalist, cosmo-politics.”¹⁵

It is worth lingering a while on the term “cosmopolitics.” In the face of gathering eco-fascism and resurgent nationalism, an understandable reaction would be to turn to the promise offered by cosmopolitanism. For the Greeks (notably Diogenes of Sinope, 412/404–323 BC), the “cosmopolite” (*kosmos* “cosmos” and *polítēs* “citizen”) signified the (human) “citizen of the world.” After Kant’s *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* of 1795, cosmopolitanism took on a more political cast than its previous ethical inflection and was associated with anti-nationalism and pretensions towards an international legal order that would guarantee universal hospitality and, with this, the rights of all men and women as citizens of the world. The cosmopolitics I am referring to is, however, distinct from this. While, for many, cosmopolitanism must be understood as an open and mobile concept, for others the concepts of hospitality and inclusion upon which cosmopolitanism is premised are insufficient.¹⁶ With regard to the more-than-human, even when traditional frameworks of cosmopolitanism are opened up to include the environment, they tend to maintain the conventional (western, modern) binary of passive nature and dynamic culture that cosmopolitics—and indeed the two works under discussion here—attempts to unsettle.¹⁷ Confronting both the anthropocentrism and “peacefulness” of traditional conceptions of cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitics instead welcomes dissensus and disruption, highlighting other forms of knowledge beyond the human and, as in the two works discussed, calling for legal systems in which inalienable rights are granted not simply to humans but also to nature.

A common referent here is Stengers’s notion of cosmopolitics, first developed in 1996–1997.¹⁸ As anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena and aboriginal studies scholar Mario Blaser write, Stengers “originally proposed [the term] with the intent of opening modern politics to the possibility of divergence among collectives composed of humans and nonhumans that, following her (Greek-inspired) definition of politics, agreed to gather around a concern.”¹⁹ At issue here is how “cosmos” is understood: as philosopher Bruno Latour parses, rather than “culture, worldview, [or] any horizon wider than a nation-state,” as perceived or practiced by humans, the “cosmos” of Stengers’s cosmopolitics does not limit the number of entities on the negotiating table but rather embraces everything, “including all the vast numbers of nonhuman entities making humans act.”²⁰ For Latour, Stengers “reinvented the word [cosmopolitics] by representing it as a composite of the strongest meaning of *cosmos* and the strongest meaning of *politics*,” protecting each against the premature closure of the other. Cosmos, here, takes politics

¹⁵ Biemann and Tavares, *Forest Law*, p. 7.

¹⁶ See Maja and Reuben Fowkes, “Cosmopolitics” in *The Posthuman Glossary*, Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, eds. (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 92–94.

¹⁷ See Nigel Clark, “The Demon-Seed: Bioinvasion as the Unsettling of Environmental Cosmopolitanism,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 19, nos. 1–2 (2002), pp. 101–25.

¹⁸ See Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I & II*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010 and 2011). First published in French in seven volumes in 1996–1997, followed by a two-volume abridgement in 2003.

¹⁹ Mario Blaser and Marisol de la Cadena, “Introduction: Pluriverse: Proposals for a World of Many Worlds” in *A World of Many Worlds*, Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser, eds. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 12.

²⁰ Bruno Latour, “Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck,” *Common Knowledge*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Fall 2004), p. 454.

beyond an exclusive human club; politics resists the tendency of cosmos to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account.²¹

Although the term is not used in *Landscape as Evidence: Artist as Witness*, we can catch glimpses of the cosmopolitical proposal as the various witnesses called to the stand speak of the necessity to move beyond the perspective of mere humans and include those of “nature” (as that which has been excluded from human culture) in deliberations of “public interest.” In *Forest Law*, cosmopolitics is explicitly named as a “new constitutional space wherein both humans and nonhumans gather in a political assembly,” in this case, the living forests of Amazonia.²² In other words, this “forest court,” as a cosmopolitical space that is deeply rooted in histories of colonial violence, is exemplary for “[calling] for the constitution of a universalist, multi-species politics beyond the human.”²³ Here, in Amerindian thought, the space of the social, unlike in western cosmology, encompasses humans and nonhumans, peoples and nature.²⁴ Recalling the necessity to expand the “us” signaled above, we can turn to philosopher Déborah Danowski and anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who write that “what ‘we’ call the environment is for [Amerindians] a society of societies, an international arena, a *cosmopoliteia*”—one in which every “object” is a political subject.²⁵ For Tavares and Biemann,

such [a] conception of the forest as a *cosmopoliteia* implies that every being that inhabits the forest—trees, jaguars, peoples—are ... “citizens” within an expanded polity formed by complex material and symbolic ties between society and nature. The nature of nature is social, and hence the ways we imagine, relate to, and represent nature—whether in the forums of art or law—are fundamentally political. The forest is a polis: a political arena where both the concepts of human and rights are being defined.²⁶

As part of a broader resistance to the widening embrace of fascism across governments, public institutions, and civil society, protests against climate crisis and environmental violence continue to gather strength in Europe, and significant moves have been made to include ecocide in international law. In both cases, the form of “assemblism” continues to evolve, for instance, with the growth of people’s tribunals—notably the Monsanto Tribunal and People’s Assembly that took place in The Hague in 2016.²⁷ What such tribunals share with the artworks discussed are the elements of the speculative and propositional. As anthropologists Chowra Makaremi and Pardis Shafafi write: “In the case of tribunals and truth commissions run by prominent international law practitioners, yet without any institutional, state-sponsored mandate or enforcement capacity, people’s tribunals show how communities claim ownership of international law in situations that fall in the institutional gaps of legal mechanisms and/or into the blind spots of global power politics.” What is vital is that such assemblies “generate new narratives and forms of action, raising questions and highlighting tensions in the articulation between national, global, and transitional

²¹ Ibid.

²² Biemann and Tavares, *Forest Law*, p. 8.

²³ Paulo Tavares and Ursula Biemann, “The Forest Court,” in *Elements for a World: Wood–Law, Rights, Truth, Testimony*, Ashkan Sepahvan, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez and Nora Razian, eds. (Beirut: Surssock Museum, 2016), p. 25.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, trans. Rodrigo Nunes (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p. 69. (Italics mine.) Cited from the original Portuguese in Tavares and Biemann, “The Forest Court,” p. 25.

²⁶ Tavares and Biemann, “The Forest Court,” p. 25.

²⁷ See International Monsanto Tribunal, 2016-2017, online at: <http://www.monsanto-tribunal.org>.

levels.”²⁸ In a similar vein, these two artworks function at the level of what I have evoked above as “the cosmopolitical proposal.” Firstly, both works teach “us” (i.e., in Europe, working within the legacies of modernity’s carving out of the nature/culture divide and definitions of “the political”) that forms of life beyond the human hold political standing.²⁹ Secondly, these works echo thinkers such as Stengers, for whom, as Biemann writes, “this cosmos, this common world, is not already existing but *in need of being fabricated*.”³⁰

In the case of *Landscape as Evidence*, theatricality and staging are employed as a means through which to consider how both law and theater (or performance) produce and reproduce reality and the construction of narratives. Here the staging is “an experiment, a leap of the imagination: the dismantling of an established status quo.”³¹ If the staged hearing performed a forum that has yet to be realized in the national and international courts—establishing an imagined forum-to-come precisely in the absence of a suitable existing institutional framework—*Forest Law* was produced against the backdrop of a legal case (*Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku v. Ecuador*) that coincided with the inclusion of the rights of nature into the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution. Which is not to say that sufficient legal, political, and ecological reforms have been realized; as Biemann writes, “Ecuador’s constitution recognizes nature as a juridical subject, but de facto, nature’s rights are respected and enforced only as far as they don’t stand in conflict with state economic interests. As it stands, for indigenous communities, the security offered by the national legal framework remains precarious.”³² What *Forest Law* achieves, through its form, is the inhabitation of a political cosmos that, following Stengers, “can only happen through a slow epistemology of perplexity, wondering, and vulnerability.” Both here and in the *Landscape as Evidence* performance, the proposition is one of decelerating and respecting those forms of life that are not usually endowed with political voice and that “do not function within the parameters of language, reason, and cost effective productivity.”³³ As Biemann writes:

open-plan fieldwork, travelling through the forest, engaging in conversations in semi-comprehensible translations, entering the thicket and digging in the earth to collect samples, all these are ways of slowing down the pace of knowing and instead [letting] the imponderables come forth and make themselves known to us in their multiple guise. It is a practice through which to form a different commons, a different cosmos.³⁴

Considering the role of artists in the context of performative practices of assemblism that contest increasingly fascistic modes of governance, Staal writes: “[E]mbedding our artistic practice within social movements, we can help formulate the new campaigns, the new symbols, and the popular poetry needed to bolster the emergence of a radical collective imaginary.” “We”—and, we can add, this “we” is never to be taken for granted—“can also begin to devise

²⁸ Chowra Makaremi and Pardis Shafafi, “Critical Masses: The ethnography of People’s Tribunals” (working title), *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, forthcoming (November 2019). (Italics mine.)

²⁹ “The watchword that every novice left-wing militant learns, according to which ‘everything is political,’ acquires in the Amerindian case a radical literality ... that not even the most enthusiastic activist in the streets of Copenhagen, Rio, or Madrid might be ready to admit.” Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, p. 69.

³⁰ Biemann, “The Cosmo-Political Forest,” p. 10. (Italics mine.)

³¹ Khoj, *Landscape as Evidence*.

³² “Thus, international lawyers recommend the application of a broad right-to-life concept, known as *vida digna*, which would situate such rulings more firmly in the regimes of international human rights.” Biemann, “The Cosmo-Political Forest,” p. 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

new infrastructures ... needed to establish the institutions that will make a new emancipatory governance a reality.”³⁵ Whereas for Staal and others these might take the form, for instance, of parallel parliaments, stateless embassies, and trans-democratic unions, in the above I have moved from the protests that take place on Europe’s streets to reconfigured legal spaces of environmental justice in formerly-colonized states, seeking to draw inspiration from the propositional nature of artist-activist interventions. By turning to these propositional legal spaces, we move from collectivities of plaintiffs or witness figures protesting in the urban public spaces (“to protest” originally implied “to make a solemn declaration”) to assemblies that include more-than-human actors and that are not premised upon the exclusionary rhetoric of “belonging” or “worth” common to (eco-)fascism and neoliberal governmentality.³⁶ Drawing upon and reconfiguring “assemblism” as “more-than-human cosmopolitics”—or, more specifically, as a “cosmopolitical proposal”—allows us to move beyond the limitations of cosmopolitanism as it is traditionally conceived and to locate propositions for non-fascist living outside of western binaries of nature/culture, active/passive, and so forth, opening up space for the traditionally marginalized “non-experts” to make both objections and proposals.³⁷

³⁵ Staal, “Assemblism.”

³⁶ Regarding “more-than-human” witnessing collectivities, see Sheikh, “The Future of the Witness.”

³⁷ Regarding “experts” as those with the means to object and to propose, see Stengers, “The Cosmopolitical Proposal,” p. 998.