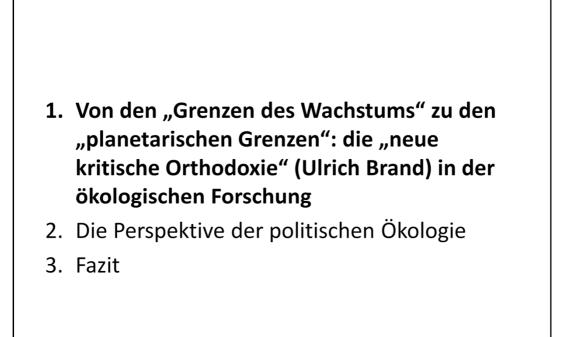


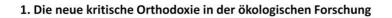
# Frage:

- Welche konkurrierenden Vorstellungen der ökologischen Krise gibt es?
- Was sind ihre politischen Implikationen?

# Vorgehen

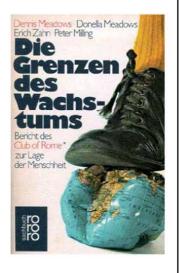
- Von den "Grenzen des Wachstums" zu den "planetarischen Grenzen": die "neue kritische Orthodoxie" (Ulrich Brand) in der ökologischen Forschung
- 2. Die Perspektive der politischen Ökologie
- 3. Fazit





# Die Grenzen-Debatte der **1960er** und **1970er Jahre**:

- Garret Hardin (1968): The tragedy of the commons
- Paul R. Ehrlich/Anne Ehrlich (1968): The population bomb
- Dennis Meadows et al. (1972): The limits to growth



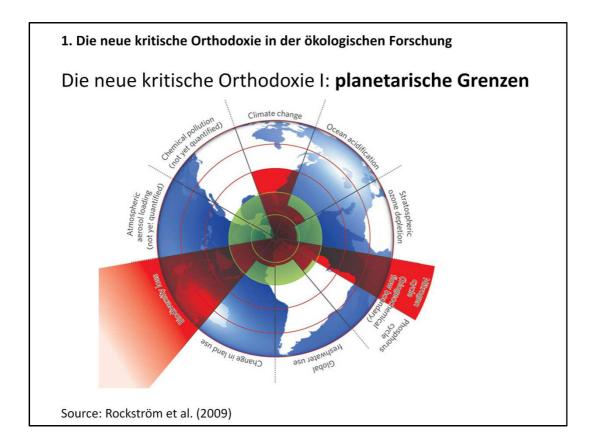
1. Die neue kritische Orthodoxie in der ökologischen Forschung

**Gemeinsamer Nenner** der Debatte der 1960er and 1970er Jahre:

- Fokus auf Ressourcen
- Neo-Malthusianismus

Historischer Hintergrund:

- Wachsendes Umweltbewusstsein im globalen Norden
- Entwicklungsansprüche des globalen Südens
- Ölpreisschocks



### Planetary boundaries:

- " a synthesis framework intended to capture nine and possibly non-linear earth system processes that manifest themselves at the planetary level" (Galaz 2015: 3)
- "these nine processes regulate the function of the earth system so as to maintain it in a state that has allowed human settlements and cultures to flourish" (ibd.)
- Problem: Humanity "is undermining the planetary life-support systems on which it depends" (Lövbrand et al. 2015: 211), i.e. it is leaving the "safe operating space".

Question: What does this graph not tell?

#### The nitrogen cycle

Nitrogen is used for agricultural purposes: Through the Haber-Bosch process atmospheric nytrogen is converted into a fertilizer. As such it has contributed significantly to increasing agricultural productivity. However, less than half of the nitrogen is absorbed by the crop plant. The rest

- either leaches into water bodies where it causes eutriphication
- or is emitted to the atmosphere where it reacts with other gases: Together with oxygen, it forms the greenhouse gas and ozon depleting substance nitrous oxide. (http://www.unep.org/maweb/documents/document.281.aspx.pdf, p. 340)

"The atmospheric concentration of N2O has been rising by roughly 0.8 parts per trillion per year (0.25%) during the industrial era, largely through this mechanism." (ibd.)



### Anthropocene

• "The Anthropocene implies that the human imprint on the global environment is now so large that the Earth has entered a new geological epoch [...]. Humanity itself has become a global geophysical force" (Steffen et al. 2011)

 $\rightarrow$  Man has altered natural systems "to the extent that they cannot be considered 'natural' anymore." (Lövbrand et al. 2015: 212)

- Anthropogenic climate change
- Land transformations and biodiversity loss through forestry and agriculture
- Regulation and damming of rivers
- Transformation of landscapes through mining activities ( $\rightarrow$  Ruhr Area)
- Spatial imprint of megacities
- Beginning with the rise of the industrial society from ca. 1800 onwards.
   "Great acceleration" in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century → "second stage of the Anthropocene" (Steffen et al. 2011, see also the graphs in ibd.):
  - Rapid population growth
  - Even faster growth of global economy and material consumption
- Anthropocene not yet officially acknowledged as a new geological epoch, following the Holocene that started at the end of the last ice age 12.0000 years ago. However, a respective working group of geologists has recently, at the International Geological Congress in Kapstadt in August 2016, voted to do so and to date the beginning of the Anthropocene at the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before becoming official however, the recommendation of the working group has to be agreed on by higher-ranking scientific bodies.

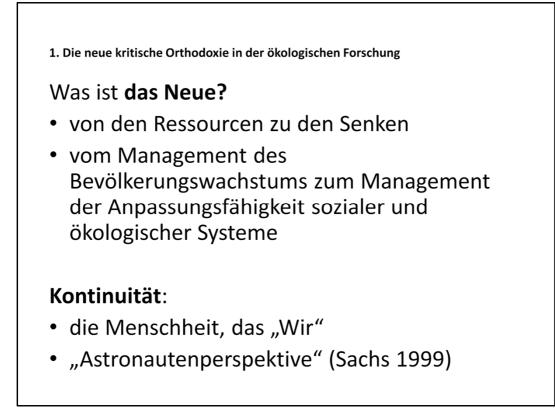


**Resilience** is about the adaptation to "external shocks" instead of a fundamental transformation of crisis-generating internal structures.

### Areas of activity:

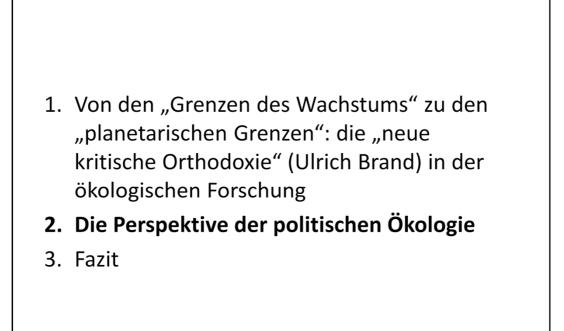
- Rural development
- Urban development
- Infrastructure provision
- ...

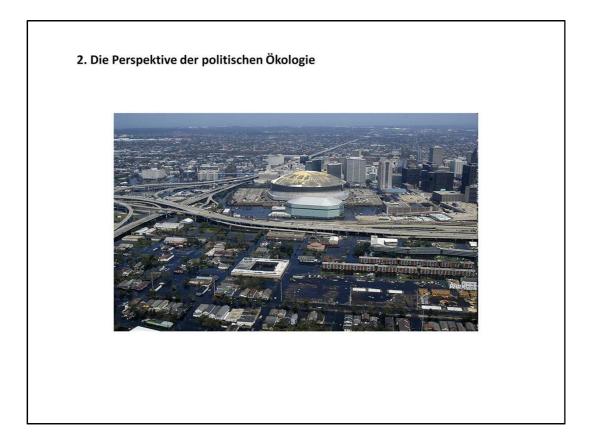


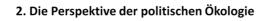


**From resources to sinks**: Even before all resources will be exploited, the capacity of sinks to absorb emissions will be overstretched.

**Highly influential debate** driven by influential environmental scientists in so-called highprofile journals like *Nature*  $\rightarrow$  therefore "new orthodoxy".







Geschichte der politischen Ökologie:

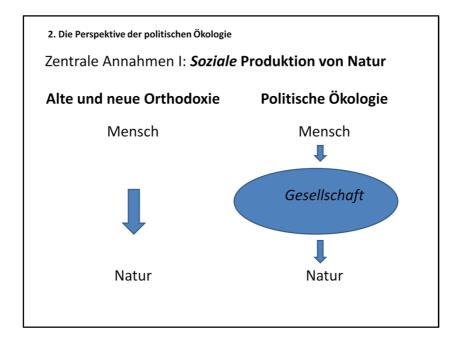
Reaktion auf die Vorherrschaft neo-Malthusianischer Konzepte ("alte Orthodoxie") in den 1970er Jahren

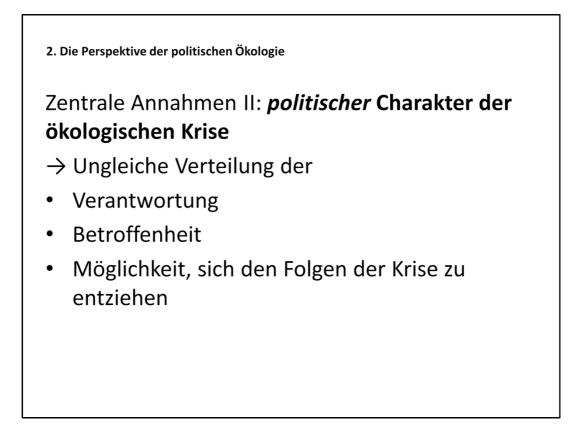
- Kritik der Grenzen-Debatte: Grenzen sind eher gesellschaftlich als natürlich
- Kritik des Fokus' auf dem Bevölkerungswachstum
- Heute: Kritik der neuen kritischen Orthodoxie

To give an **example** quoted in Robbins (2004): The decline in habitat and wildlife in Kenya traditionally was attributed to a growing population of impoverished people. However, this could not explain why in Tanzania, Kenya's neighbour state, the decline in habitat and wildlife was far less severe, although the conditions in Tanzania (population growth, rainfall and others) were very similar to those in Kenya. Political ecologists thus compared the two cases and pointed to the fact that Kenya in contrast to Tanzania pursued a policy of intensive agricultural production, orientated to globalized food markets, and that the environmental problems in question were much more due to this policy than to population growth.

So, as Robbins (2004: 4), concludes, "The wildlife crisis in East Africa is more political and economic than demographic".

"By highlighting political economic relations and systems, political ecologists opened the possibility of bringing into the analysis social relations that are not necessarily proximal to the ecological symptoms, a move that would distance them from conventions of human and cultural ecology that situated causes of and solutions to environmental crises in local-based problems such as poor land management, inappropriate technology, or overpopulation" (Paulson et al., Political Ecology, p. 206).





The environmental crisis is **not socially neutral**, we are not all in the same boat.

- Rather, the ones travel on a luxury liner, emit huge amounts of CO2 and protect themselves against the consequences of their own action,
- whereas the others travel in small boats, which indeed are climate-friendly, but on which they are unprotectedly exposed to the environmental troubles produced by the rich.

Thus,

- it is not simply the fact that humans overuse natural resources; neither is it the sheer number of humans who inhabit the earth which produces environmental problems; and it is also not that we are all in the same boat.
- Instead, it is the socially and geographically uneven distribution of the responsibility for, and the consequences of, the environmental degradation which should be tackled; and it is the social relations through which the access to, and the use of, resources and sinks is mediated that counts.

 $\rightarrow$  "There's no such thing as a natural desaster." (Smith 2006)

→ "One person's degradation is another's accumulation" (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987: 14)

→ "politics are inevitably ecological and […] ecology is inherently political" (Robbins 2004: xvi-xvii)

 $\rightarrow$  "a politicized environment"(Bryant/Bailey 1997)

→ "A single average US citizen emits more than 500 citizens of Ethiopia, Chad, Afghanistan, Mali, or Burundi; how much an average US millionaire emits — and how much more than an average US or Cambodian worker — remains to be counted. But a person's imprint on the atmosphere varies tremendously depending on where she is born. Humanity, as a result, is far too slender an abstraction to carry the burden of culpability." (Malm 2015)

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2. Die Perspektive der politischen Ökologie
Zentrale Annahmen III: Soziale Verhältnisse
sind entscheidend.
→ Die ökologische Krise ist vermittelt über
Klassenverhältnisse
Geschlechterverhältnisse
race
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Zentrale Annahmen IV: **Macht- und Herrschaftsverhältnisse** *materialisieren* sich **räumlich** (und werden gerade dadurch naturalisiert).

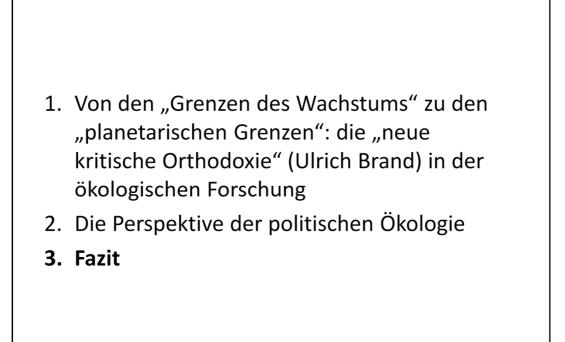


Räumliche Materialisierung von Macht und Herrschaft. Gezeigt wird, wie sich die von der exportorientierten Bewässerungslandwirtschaft geprägten regionalen Machtverhältnisse über Großprojekte wie Stauseen und Kanäle in den Raum einschreiben. Dadurch werden sozial-räumliche Ungleichheiten gleichsam in die "Natur der Dinge" verlagert, die gesellschaftlichen Machtverhältnisse werden naturalisiert und gerade dadurch auf Dauer gestellt.

Durch das "Lesen von Räumen" lassen sich soziale Ungleichheit und Machtverhältnisse aufspüren: "Bereits an der Gestaltung des Kanals der Integration, der mit Überwachungskameras ausgestattet ist und dessen steile Ufer einen seitlichen Zugang verhindern sollen [...], wird deutlich, dass es hierbei nicht um eine größtmögliche Verteilung von und den demokratischen Zugang zu Wasser, sondern vielmehr um die Konzentration und die Abfuhr von Wasser für spezifische Zwecke in bestimmte Regionen geht. [...] Während die 12 Mio. Menschen, die verstreut in der semiariden Region des Nordostens leben, als Hauptgründe für die Legitimation der Großprojekte dienen, wird das Wasser an ihnen vorbei in den Hafen von Pecém geleitet" (Schmitt 2013: 291, 294). Der "Kanal der Integration" wird zum Medium der Exklusion.

**Kritik** der politischen Ökologie an der neuen kritischen Orthodoxie, hier: dem Anthropozän-Diskurs:

"In short, the Anthropocene reveals the power of humans, but it conceals who and what is powerful and how that power is enacted" (Baskin, quoted in Lövbrand et al. 2015: 216)



## Vergleich des Naturverständnisses

Neue kritische Orthodoxie	Politische Ökologie
<ul> <li>Natur durch die Menschheit verändert → Menschheit als geologischer Faktor</li> <li>Gleichzeitig: Natur als externe Größe, die der Menschheit Grenzen setzt und Gegenstand von Umweltmanagement ist</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Natur ist sozial produziert → Die treibende Kraft ist nicht einfach "die Menschheit", entscheidend sind vielmehr die sozialen Verhältnisse, unter denen Menschen auf Natur einwirken</li> <li>Grenzen sind eher sozial als natürlich</li> </ul>

### Concept of nature

That nature can be both considered as human-shaped and external to humans in the new orthodoxy, has to do with the very concept of limits: They are understood as natural and not as social. Radicalising the "post-natural" ontology of the new orthodoxy thus would mean to develop an understanding of social limits.

## Vergleich des Krisenbegriffs

Neue kritische Orthodoxie	Politische Ökologie
<ul> <li>Krise als Übernutzung von</li></ul>	<ul> <li>Krise als ungleiche</li></ul>
Ressourcen und Senken	Naturaneignung / imperiale
durch die Menschheit <li>Dadurch (künftige)</li>	Lebensweise des globalen
Bedrohung der natürlichen	Nordens <li>Aktuelle, konkrete</li>
Prozesse, auf die	Beeinträchtigung der
menschliches Leben	Lebensbedingungen von
angewiesen ist	Menschen

Vergleich der politischen Implikationen

Neue kritische Orthodoxie	Politische Ökologie
<ul> <li>Global Governance, globales Ressourcenmanagement</li> <li>Dominanz von Expertenwissen</li> <li>Marktmechanismen und technische Innovationen (u.a. Geoengineering)</li> <li>"post-political ontology" (Swyngedouw 2010): apocalyptic thought – social and institutional status quo (Lövbrand et al. 2015)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Überwindung von sozialer und internationaler Ungleichheit als zentraler Ansatzpunkt</li> <li>Zurückdrängung der imperialen Lebensweise</li> <li>Demokratisierung der gesellschaftlichen Naturverhältnisse</li> <li>Pluralität von Wissensformen</li> </ul>

### **Concept of social action**

- New orthodoxy: People and political decision-makers have to be shaken by scientific evidence on limits and the catastrophic consequences of passing them, then they will act, i.e. change their attitudes and their behavior, or develop the right policies (although basically under the same social and institutional conditions which have caused the mess...).
- Political ecology: Concrete (local) social movements struggle for democracy and equality in society-nature relations, independently from whether any limits are reached. The key thus is not catastrophic scenarios but social inequality.

# Herausforderung:

Das "Wir" entzaubern:

- als Ursache der ökologischen Krise
- und als Akteure einer sozial-ökologischen Transformation

(Görg 2015)

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