

## Extended abstracts (in the order of presentation)

### 1) She Gives Birth to You, She Will Eat You: A Pre-Columbian Aztec Perspective on Nature

Jesper Nielsen, KU

In just five minutes – how to make a point for you all to take home? Well, it is worth a try.

My field is the Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures of Mexico, Guatemala and Belize – to the north of South America and Pachamama – and I am working with the rich iconography, writing systems, religion, and mythology of the region. We know of several female goddesses in Mesoamerican religious traditions – but the one I will focus on here, Tlaltecuhltli, the Aztec earth goddess is fascinating in many respects, and we know quite a bit about her. For one, the earth god is ambiguous genderwise, and although predominantly represented as a female, Tlaltecuhltli literally means “earth lord” and is occasionally depicted as male (indicated fx by wearing a loincloth and not a skirt). Tlaltecuhltli carries a diverse range of multifaceted meanings, and is intimately associated with life as well as death. As such, the bi-gendered deity is as complex as life itself, and a characteristic Mesoamerican expression of a dualism, based not on oppositional conflict, but on complementary inter-dependence. The earth god, as the prime impersonation of the natural environment, contained enormous powers, encompassing both female and male qualities and energies, life and growth as well as destruction and death.

Before I move on – counting my minutes – it is important, especially in a context where we turn our attention to alternative ways of engaging with nature and its resources, to be careful not to be caught in, or reproduce, stereotypes about how indigenous peoples and cultures relate to the land. Or, at least, be aware and acknowledge that there were/are multiple ways of maintaining a religious relationship to the surrounding natural environment and its resources, while at the same time controlling it, cultivating it and at times exploiting and over-exploiting it. Keeping our focus on the Aztec, we know that forces of nature played a central role in their religion and mythology. Thus, many gods were personified natural forces, heavenly bodies or geographic features (wind, rain, the Sun, Venus, mountains and caves). The landscape was animate, it had agency and could be affected, negotiated with. This, however, does not mean that the Aztec – and their predecessors - did not exploit and overexploit the natural resources. Thus, we must imagine a rather pragmatic relationship with the natural powers; after all, the life and well-being of your children and growing family surpasses any spiritual connection to the environment - of course. In human, urban societies and cities with as many as 150.000 inhabitants, harmful imbalances are bound to occur, the “sacred” connection to the land gradually changing as more and more people are distanced from work in the fields, coupled with a constant pressure for higher yields, tribute and taxes. In other words, let us not romanticize or “ecologize” indigenous civilizations. They were, in many respects, on the same trajectory as (all) other urbanized and stratified complex societies based on intensive agriculture. That being said, we also know that in Aztec worldview, a core value was to strive towards self-control, balance and equilibrium, to stay on the middle path and avoid excess – to keep the checks and balances in your personal life and in cosmos, which leads us back to the complementary dualism of Tlaltecuhltli.

So who was the Aztec earth goddess? What did she look like and what did she represent? As said, her name was Tlaltecuhltli – “earth lord” - suggesting a male identity, yet when we look at iconographic and sculptural representations, it is clear that she was primarily a woman. Her squatting position is indicating birth giving or labour and she clearly has breasts. She is the giver and sustainer of life – as is indeed the soil, and from many Mesoamerican traditions, we know that the earth was thought of as female. Caves were seen as the dark, humid openings into her body, leading to her womb – they were places associated with birth and the origin of the first humans. However, take a closer look at her: She has claws/jaws rather than human fingers and nails, she has additional skeletal heads at her elbow and knee joints, and a stream of blood runs from half-skeletal mouth – which sometimes has a large obsidian knife replacing a tongue, she will slice anything up. In other representations, she is shown with insects and reptiles crawling in her hair – as is her untidy hair was wild grass or the intertwined rotting vegetation of a compost pile. In surviving books, we see her reduced to a set of wide-open jaws, consuming the sun, or receiving blood offerings – and tellingly, in one case, consuming a dead individual wrapped up as a mortuary bundle. She is ready to devour you as well - and you will be swallowed and end up in the interior of the earth. However, this underworld – Mictlan, “Place of the Dead”, is not a fiery hell ruled by an equivalent to Satan. We should probably think of it as a dark, moist place of decomposition - and of transformation - from death to life. This becomes clear when looking at yet another image, showing a maize plant growing out of the open jaws of Tlaltecuhltli: The jaws of death are also the jaws of birth and life. There is even

an Aztec expression for death – playfully referencing the sexual aspect of the goddess: “To have a relationship with Tlaltecuhli”.

One creation myth relates how, in the deep primordial past, two other gods rent Tlaltecuhli asunder in order to create the world from her body parts: “of her body they formed the surface of the earth and of her hair “trees and flowers and grasses, of her skin ... flowers, of her eyes wells and fountains and little caverns, of her nose valleys and mountains. And this goddess cried many times in the night desiring the hearts of men to eat. And she would not be quiet just with ... fruit unless it was sprinkled with the blood of men”. For sure, Mother earth, Nature, is of an ambiguous nature. She has certain demands, and knows her worth ...

So, what would be the main take-away perspectives from this brief presentation? Did ancient Mesoamericans think of the “rights of nature”? I am not sure; at least I do not think they would have thought about them as we do today. Pre-Columbian societies depended on a stable relationship with a highly ambiguous and dangerous natural environment – that gave and took on a daily basis. It was fundamental to and supported human existence, while causing death simultaneously. Mesoamericans faced natural forces that were formidable: It brought them volcanic eruptions, droughts, hail storms, earthquakes and floods – sickness and death, but it also secured them a wealth of vegetables, fruits, insects, fish, birds and mammals to eat – it provided the means for continued life.

Encompassing all this was Tlaltecuhli – she who will give you life, and eventually herself be nourished by your blood or your decomposing body.

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## 2) Relinking as world-making

Julia Suárez-Krabbe, RUC

Our current civilization causes breakdowns in the ecosystems and produces deadly effects, including epidemics like AIDS, Ebola and SARS. This insight on “the ecology of disease” (Robbins 2012), resonates at least superficially with that, which the Mamos (the spiritual authorities of the four peoples that inhabit Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia: Kankuamo, Arhuaco, Kogi and Wiwa) and many peoples throughout the world assert with them: culture, religion, economy and ecology are interlinked because all Earth-beings are interlinked. The knowledge of the Mamos emerges in close interaction, communication and collaboration with Mother World. From this knowledge, human rights violations, climate change, illness, wars, earthquakes, and so on happen because of the imbalance that stems from some human beings’ unwillingness, reluctance or inability to relate and re-link with each other and with all other Earth-beings, that is, with the Mother. This disequilibrium affects all spheres of life, from the micro and intimate, to the macro structural and macrocosmic.

Relinking is a notion-practice that Mamo Saúl Martínez, my dear friend, mentor and guide, gave me about 12 years ago. Then, he told me that sometimes anthropologists or other people visiting asked if he was religious, and that to this question his answer was always yes. Not in the way that they would understand the word, but rather in its etymological sense: as re-ligare (Latin), re-linking. Addressing on the fact that I, as a Colombian-Danish light-skinned mestiza have always felt my roots to be in Colombia, and not so much Denmark, Mamo Saúl emphasized that it is important that I relink in/to Denmark too, inasmuch my roots lie here as much as they lie in Colombia, and because the Mother is also this territory. So relinking became my homework, one that I have been devoted to since.

In lectures, I often emphasize that the very structures that we inhabit, as students and professors in a Danish university, require of us specific ways of thinking, acting, and engaging which build upon, and perpetuate, the oppression of others, and the extractivism of materials and knowledges. It is quite telling that today, there are more constructions like buildings, roads, airports and other dead products than there is living biomass on Earth. Such constructions and products weigh around 1,1 teraton while the living biomass weighs 1 teraton. We humans make just 0.01% of this single teraton of living biomass (Andersen 2020), and the number is even smaller if we take into account that only a small fraction of humanity is responsible for the production, construction, use and consumption of most of the dead mass. This small fraction of human beings have made these constructions and products by systematically exposing other people - and other living beings- to a premature death during the course of the last 500 years. This is why some indigenous peoples in Colombia talk about ‘the death project’. Organizaciones Indígenas de Colombia (OIC) describe it as follows:

From our origin we are peoples of life. We were born with all living beings. Our Gods taught us to live together in the territory in order to defend the equilibrium and harmony. We are ancestral and originary peoples. The

conquerors brought with them their death project to these lands. They came with the urge to steal the wealth and to exploit us in order to accumulate. The death project is the disease of egoism that turns into hatred, war, lies, propaganda, confusion, corruption and bad governments (OIC 2004, my translation from Spanish<sup>1</sup>).

As Silvia Federici has pointed out, in the capitalist system, “life is subordinated to the production of profit” and this demands “the accumulation of labor-power”, that is, the accumulation of people that work for the system’s sustenance. Such accumulation of labor-power “can only be achieved with the maximum violence so that, in Maria Mies’ words, violence itself becomes the most productive force” (Federici 2004, 16). Federici shows how the witch-hunts were pivotal “to transform life into the capacity to work as ‘dead labor’”, placing torture and death “at the service of ‘life’ or, better, at the service of the production of labor-power” (Ibid). In the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe, “It was not the workers—male or female—who were liberated by land privatization. What was “liberated” was capital, as the land was “free” to function as a means of accumulation and exploitation, rather than as a means of subsistence” (Ibid, 75). In other words, it detached our European ancestors, and with them also us, from the land and from each other. Indeed, privatization needs the individual, the ego. And the ego cannot exist in magic.

As Jane Anna Gordon reminds us (2020), what the euro-modern language has called magic, is the knowledge-practices of peoples inferiorized such as witches, shamans, Mamos, healers, Taitas, abuelos and abuelas. Such knowledge-practices include human beings, but human beings are not at the center. We are part-of knowing-doing. They do not collapse the whole to the self either. Rather, magic expands relationality. In magic, a degree of inexplicable remains, as does a degree of secrecy, for all that is sacred cannot be known, told, nor reduced to the level of reality in which things can be explained. In many communities the wise people, healers or sages are those among them who have accepted and received special guidance to engage in the knowledge-practices that emerge in relationships with other-than- and more-than-human beings.<sup>2</sup> This does not make the shaman, or the magician, the one ruler above others; they are, instead, teachers who guide others – to the extent that we choose to engage in such processes of knowing and relating. Neither does this mean that white people do not have the magic. Indeed, according to the Mamos, we all have the ability to relink but, as Saúl Martínez says, we have been taught to use only five of our senses, and to use those in ways framed from within the death project. The other senses, however, are still there but, like unused limbs, they are weakened. Importantly, then, all children, even those born and raised in the West, have ‘the magic’, but it is disciplined and educated out of us: we have to greater or lesser extents been socialized to perpetuate the death project, to carry on the disease of egoism.

To realize this is a necessary step for change: to relink to the world as part of its processes of becoming whereby a new civilization can emerge. The ‘magic’ that was taken out of our bodies and practices of relating to one another during the witch hunt (Federici), consists in the world-making (Lugones) that takes place in relinking.

Notes based on:

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Suárez-Krabbe, J (2022): Relinking as healing. On crisis, whiteness and the existential dimensions of decolonization, *Globalizations*, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2021.2025293

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### **3) The future between dystopia and utopia between destruction or the good life. Reflections on Levinas, Bloch, Peirce... and sumak kawsay**

Jan Gustafsson, KU

Humans and other species have two fundamental ways to deal with future: fear and hope. Fear of danger and destruction, hope for continuity and, even better, improvement. Fear is mostly about good or acceptable things that might disappear, while hope is about something good to come.

The principle of fear relates to dystopia, either as a horrible phantasy or as a scientific, rational calculation, while hope relates to utopia.

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<sup>1</sup> “Desde nuestro origen somos pueblos de la vida. Nacimos con todos los seres vivos. Nuestros Dioses nos enseñaron a convivir en el territorio para defender el equilibrio y la armonía. Somos pueblos ancestrales y originarios. Los conquistadores trajeron a estas tierras su proyecto de muerte. Vinieron con afán de robarse la riqueza y explotarnos para acumular. El Proyecto de Muerte es la enfermedad del egoísmo que se vuelve odio, guerra, mentiras, propaganda, confusión, corrupción y malos gobiernos.”

<sup>2</sup> Largely paraphrase of Gordon’s talk (2020).

For obvious reasons, discourse on climate change and environment tends toward fear and dystopia: if we do not change our way of living, disaster will come, and, it will come, to some point anyway (as it is already here). This is, of course, a perfectly rational of objective truth.

It shares, thus, with most political, scientific and other discourses on the present and future – including the ones that imagine no other way than capitalism's continuity and constant growth – the fundamental dimension of fear. Fear of pandemia, fear of war, fear of migration, fear of nature and what it might do in revenge, for of the Other, the enemy, the other human but also other otherness, such as "nature", disaster, illness.

We might think, however, of the possibility of accepting also utopia, hope and imagination in the environmental discourse, not as a vane illusion, but as a vehicle of change. To hope for something sometimes contributes more efficiently to change than fear.

Fear and dystopia in the "real" or non-fictional world are mostly related to the known and its possible consequences and changes for worse, while utopia requires the imagination of something new or different, it requires alterity. Utopia is not simply improvement of life and its conditions, it is a radical change, which can be of socio-economic structures and/or other kind and which will imply, almost by force, a fundamental change in human mentality, either as a consequence (as in Marxist-Leninist theory) or as a cause of change and, of course, as both. Utopia does not correspond to one model or social theory, but very often it implies social justice and equality between humans, peace, good and stable living conditions (but seldom constant growth and improvement), harmony, not only among humans, but also in relation to other creatures, life and "nature" as such.

It should be stressed that utopia is not a non-theoretical or naïve counter discourse, it is solidly grounded in different philosophical currents and has its own various theoretical traditions.

Examples are the utopian socialists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as Fourier, Owens, Morris, of some currents of Marxism (including Marx), American transcendentalism, also of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to mention e.g. Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Longfellow and Whitman, historical and current ecofeminism, 20<sup>th</sup> century Latin American utopianisms as well as, of course, the socio-literary utopias of various centuries, including More's *Utopia* from 1516 that gave the tradition a name.

Among all these and other traditions, we might point at some basic distinctions: one, between utopias that do not include extrahuman relations (with "nature") and those which do. Another distinction is between geographical and temporal utopias, i.e. utopianisms that locate the good world in another, often imagined or mythical, place and those which see utopia as possibility of future or, as a past which can be recuperated. More's *Utopia* is located in another place, corresponding to the word's etymology (or part of it), while the tendency of later centuries is to see utopia as a possibility and hope for the future, as in the utopian currents mentioned above. Hope is, at this respect, not a simple question of faith or naïve belief, but closely related to critical analysis of the present state of things and, of the possibilities of future, but with a fundamental dimension of imagination – imagining what could make the world a better place – not always accepted within economic, sociological and other discourses of social sciences.

Hope might seem irrelevant for scientific discourse and even for academia, it is, however, a simple question of how we deal with future. Hope, according to Ernst Bloch, one of the main European thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and one of the most important philosophers of utopianism, sees hope as that which is "still not", that "yet to come", in individual and collective thinking of future with desire for a better world. Hope is not mere daydreaming (although it is also that), it is the potentiality of what is, that which is latent in the *here and now*, in the spatiotemporal presence, that which can be fulfilled in the becoming.

Utopia implies *alterity*: another world or, at least, another way of world. It also implies, especially according to (French-Lithuanian-Jewish) philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in his reading of Bloch, the Other, the face of the Other (a fundamental concept in Levinas), the Other as an ontological and ethical demand, as a priority over the self: "thou shall not kill", the Other is our demand.

Utopia is not only nor mostly, says Levinas, about creating the good life and a good world for me or us, but for the Other, for those whose poverty and misery is intolerable, not only for themselves, but to me and to us.

Love is, thus, a paramount principle in this relation between otherness and utopia. In Levinas' work, this idea mostly comes to expression as love to the other human, agape, but does not exclude love as an all-encompassing principle, as love to all life and existence.

This principle (which, by the way, is also sustained by the Latin American revolutionary Ernesto Ché Guevara), we also find in one of the most important (US) American thinkers, Charles Sanders Peirce, mostly known for his triadic and dynamic (and extremely complex) conceptions of semiotics. In an article published in 1893, titled "Evolutionary Love", Peirce enters in a polemic with Darwinian evolutionary theory, which he relates closely to rational-liberal (especially economic) thinking based on the idea of man and, by extension, all species (sic) as self-loving individuals, a philosophy he identifies as the "Gospel of Greed". As an alternative, Peirce proposes *agape*, the principle of love, which in this sense becomes something different and more than an ethical demand, which, as pointed out, is Levinas' fundamental idea. It becomes a principle that includes all of "nature", meaning "nature" in this context all there is, at least our planet and what it contains. It is not limited to (and does not exclude) humans, it is a universal principle that becomes a demand for humans to accept being part of, and not separated from, "nature". This, for Peirce, means not simply that "man" is part of "nature", but that love-agape is an all-encompassing principle, which is not dependent on (and does not exclude) God or other religious thought.

Now, combining hope, otherness, and love as agape and a universal evolutionary principle leads us to the possibility of thinking utopia not only in human and societal terms, but in terms of relations between the human and the other than human. Utopia represents the potential of a future of harmony and love-based (or ethically based) reciprocity among all, meaning all people and all there is. Ecological thinking (Morton 2010) is utopian, and utopian thinking is, or should be, ecological.

We should bear in mind at least two further basic aspects of utopia: one, that utopia is not about a specific goal to be reached, it is about the conquests on the way toward its horizon. Utopia is not an end, it is a way to be walked, again and again. In various utopian or para-utopian political philosophies, such as Marxism, utopia is an end goal, a specific state of things that is perfect or close to perfect. But this leads, eventually, to the opposite of utopia, which is not necessarily dystopia, but the exclusion of utopia as what it is and should be: a force for change. Abensour's distinction between "eternal" and "persistent" utopia is useful here. The eternal utopia is that which states utopia as an end that, once reached, stops further utopia as, represented by communism or "end of history". The persistent utopia is that which acknowledges utopia as a constant and recurrent dynamic for improving things.

The second aspect is that utopia actually is and has been one of history's major dynamical principles. Christianity, or workers', feminist and environmental movements, to name just a few (Western) examples have all relation to, or origin in, utopianism.

The way of thinking of human and non-human relations and existence discussed above, leads us to look for similar conceptions in non-Western thought and tradition. Some currents of Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) thinking in Latin America (and other regions of the world) is one case. In Latin America, the most well-known of these currents are related to the Andean conceptions of Sumak Kawsay, as it is often expressed in Quechua (Suma Qamaña in Aymara), in Spanish frequently termed "buen vivir" o "vivir bien", meaning "good life" or "living well". Sumak Kawsay is a way of thinking and conceiving the existent, including humans. It is a kind of theory (although not to some Western economists and other scientists), it is also a conception of the way of living of Andean and other Indigenous communities. First of all, it is a reaction against, and, a counter position to Western main stream thinking and economic principles, especially to ideas of "development" and "growth". Sumak Kawsay is balance and continuity; it is reproduction of nature and its elements, humans included, but not exploitation.

Sumak Kawsay is one version of such currents. Another one, from Colombia, is termed "vivir sabroso", and it implies similar visions of the "good life" of justice and happiness, a life for humans that is part of, and in balance with, nature. This principle is, as the above-mentioned Andean ideas, both a theory, a guide and an interpretation of a people's way of living. It is of Afro-Colombian origin and influenced by the (Bantu) African principles of *ubuntu* and *muntu*, being ubuntu a principle for humanity and inter- and extra-human relations: reciprocity as an ontological and ethical fundament and muntu, (in this respect) a theory of universal interconnectedness.

All this, does not represent an attempt to create a new system of all-inclusive thinking or a specific political alternative based on utopianism, but rather a suggestion of ways "other" of thinking that we might include in humanities' approaches to conceptions of the human and the other than human, the more than human, suggesting an intimate relation between utopianism as the hope and struggle for another and better world and a conception of humanity as an equal part of (and not superior to) the other or more than human, often termed "nature".

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#### 4) The sound of ecofeminism

Silvia Escobar, UMA Málaga

Music has been and continues to be the most vivid and relevant expression of culture throughout history. It is a characteristic expressive component of all populations, as there is no inhabited place in the world without musical manifestations. Moreover, it is one of the best cultural indicators, as it collects traditions, novelties, etc., and tells the stories of the past, exposes the present reality and glimpses the experiences of the future. Musical expressions are closely linked and connected to the socio-cultural values of a given environment at a given time (Nettl, 1978). It could be said that art helps to understand and highlight the social demands and issues that are current in today's society. In this sense, through music it is possible to make visible the experiences, political struggles and difficulties that, on many occasions, are alien or masked in our societies.

Likewise, feminism also actively participates in popular culture and, therefore, in musical expressions. In this respect, women singers who express feminist messages through their lyrics transcend and reformulate the ordinary by pushing the ways in which identities are identified with difference (Rivera-Velázquez, 2008). In other words, many female songwriters or rappers value and empower vulnerable groups such as poor women, women of colour, urban women and women with non-normative sexuality. This form of feminism in music can be understood as a "socio-cultural, intellectual and political movement" where women find, in culture, a privileged place for political participation, collective mobilisation, raising awareness of social issues and dismantling systems of exploitation (Durham, 2007). Among all the movements within feminism, this academic work will highlight the link between ecofeminism and musical productions created by women. The following is a brief contextualisation of the term ecofeminism and its fundamental pillars.

There are numerous definitions of ecofeminism, so the term is usually used in the plural to reflect the diversity of meanings. Therefore, in order not to go into each of the definitions and the criticisms they contain, we will highlight the key points that most of the formulations have in common. Firstly, all ecofeminisms state that "the subordination of women to men and the exploitation of Nature are two sides of the same coin" (Herrero, 2015). In this line, a nature/culture dichotomy has been created which has led to the rejection of the natural and the exclusion of women. Secondly, the need to incorporate a gender perspective into the ecological crisis in order to try to curb it (Fernández Guerrero, 2010). Thirdly, the critique of the Western scientific and technological "development" model, which leads to the destruction of nature and the deterioration of the environment (Fernández Guerrero, 2010). And finally, ecofeminism aims to re-establish contact and connection with the "living world" and to create new links centred on cooperation (Fernández Guerrero, 2010).

Many of the lyrics that highlight ecofeminism criticise capitalism, machismo and racism, highlighting the value of women's ancestral knowledge. Furthermore, the link between the exploitation of the land and the oppression of women is shown. As Ortiz Fernández (2014) puts it, "women's bodies and invaded territories have something in common, both are violated and stripped of all their energy" (p. 14). In other words, there is an analogy between the female body and usurped, devastated and ecologically abused territories. In this line, many of the songs denounce the abuse, harassment and murders that women suffer on a daily basis in some Latin American countries (this point will be developed further in the exhibition). Specifically, a relationship will be established between ecofeminism and some of the musical productions of the artists Rebeca Lane (Guatemalan rapper), Miss Bolivia (Argentinian composer), Paloma del Cerro (Argentinian composer) and Perotá Chingó (Argentinian independent band).

Additionally, one of the objectives of this academic work is to highlight the role of women as active and relevant participants in subcultures and popular music, as they are still insufficient (Downes, 2012). For this reason, I consider it important to continue contributing to this field of study.

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#### 5) Environmental Populism in Latin America. Rights for the Nature and/or for the People?

Óscar García Agustín, AAU

The term 'environmental populism' (or 'green populism') has recently gained popularity, mainly in the academic debate. On the one hand, it has been used to refer to how far-right parties in Europe have moved away from climate denial to a nationalist and conservative agenda on 'true ecology' by adopting a conservationist position towards 'nature heritage', defending the rights of agriculture and hunters. The 'environmentalist turn' of far-right populism placed the authentic people in the countryside, incarnating the ahistorical values of the heartland. On

the other hand, it has been utilized to depict the activist movement, associated to movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion and the figure of Greta Thunberg. In this case, populism would contribute to mobilize people against governments and economic actors that do not acknowledge the emergency to act now to reverse the effects of climate change.

In the case of Latin America, there are some conditions that makes it particularly interesting in terms of thinking about environmental populism: the emergence of populism in the decades of 2000-2010 and the declared intention of some countries (specially, Bolivia and Ecuador) to carry out a new approach to the nature and climate, opposed to neoliberalism and colonialism. Furthermore, these experiences were made by populism in power, and not only by parties in opposition or grassroots movements.

When the progressive governments reached power in many countries in South America, the so-called Pink Tide, a group of them were considered 'populist' as a more radical and 'dangerous' version of the left. In this context, the political theorist Ernesto Laclau wrote the book *On Populist Reason* (2005) which considers populism as a political logic and a rupture against the instituted (neoliberal) order. Contrary to pejorative uses of the concept 'populism', Laclau offers a framework to understand the antagonism between the people and the elite as a condition to strengthen democracy. Populism consists of unifying a diversity of demands (i.e., the 'logic of equivalence') around the leader (i.e., acting as 'empty signifier'). The convergence of a plurality of actors, including the indigenous people, and demands, including socioenvironmental ones, in a populist project implies both identification between the people and the leader, and their opposition towards the 'enemy' that is contrary to the interests of the people and favors the self-interest of the elite. Laclau's framework presents an approach that challenges the dominant and negative visions of populism (as Chantal Mouffe did later but applied to the European case) aimed to account for the populist governments in Latin America.

It must be added that the populist governments, such as the cases of Bolivia and Ecuador, claimed a harmonic coexistence between nature and the people. The idea of 'living well' combined indigenous cosmovision and the principles of socialism with the objective of developing an alternative to capitalist development. The 'living well' was included in the Constitution and defended as a major contribution of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian governments in several international fora. Even recently, the vice president of Bolivia, David Choquehancha, highlighted the necessity of shifting from the paradigm of the 'geopolitics of domination' to the 'geopolitics of the living well', as a form of decolonizing the control of knowledge and territory.

Drawing on this background, the objective of this presentation is to explore 'environmental populism' in Latin America in the way in which populism in power articulates the heterogeneity of 'the people', the nature and climate policies to follow, and the opposition to the elites. The contradictions caused by the maintenance of extractivist politics by the populist governments show the difficulties of developing a project that includes the diversity of socioenvironmental demands, of promoting an alternative climate policy from the Global South, and of overcoming the capitalist economic model. 'Environmental populism' entails the application of environmental policies within a political framework characterized by the divide between the people and the elite. But who is the people here and what are the environmental options and responses?

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## **6) Rights of Nature in Latin America: an overview of the constitutional and judicial adoption of rights of nature.**

Frida Isabel Hernandez-Pena. Birmingham City University

In the current context of environmental and biodiversity crises, an international movement that brings together academics, scientists, and NGOs has emerged to demand action to tackle the environmental challenges created by humans. Classical environmental law based on anthropocentric concepts such as 'green economies' is being challenged with a view to achieving a paradigm shift to eco-centred legal perspectives. Furthermore, traditional western concepts of environmental justice have failed to include the voices of historically marginalized groups, hindering the development of alternative epistemologies and ideas of justice. Thus, focusing on the rights of nature sets as an alternative to current environmental law, presenting an opportunity to address issues that arise when economic, human and environmental rights collide. The legal philosophy of rights of nature is rooted in the belief that nature has inherent value and should not be treated solely as a resource for human exploitation.

The idea of granting rights to natural objects is not new; it can be traced back to the 1970s when Professor Christopher Stone published his work *Should Trees Have Standing?* Which first explored the possibility of recognizing nature as a legal person and, therefore, able to enforce its rights in a court of law. Nonetheless, the discourse of the rights of nature has evolved into modern ideas of recognizing nature's intrinsic value, reflected

in the work of many scholars, practitioners and philosophers, such as Thomas Berry and Cullinan's proposal of earth jurisprudence. Rights of nature movements are constantly changing and have been included in environmental and planetary justice discourses that aim to decolonize law and practice to include marginalized actors that include natural objects such as forests, rivers and entire ecosystems.

This presentation will explore the history and current state of the rights of nature movement in Latin America, with a particular focus on Ecuador, Bolivia and Mexico. Since the inclusion of rights of nature in the constitutional text of Ecuador in 2008, rights of nature have entered international political discourse and have spread across the globe. Since the groundbreaking constitutional change in Ecuador, the attempt to articulate specific rights for nature became a feature of several Latin American constitutions. In the past fifteen years, countries such as Bolivia and Mexico have adapted their legal frameworks to create and give effect to new rights and processes for environmental protection in ways that have allowed the participation of marginalized actors. The rights of nature movement have resonated in other Latin American countries, such as Colombia, where there has been crucial judicial participation in recognition of nature as a subject of rights. There is still much work to be done. Many countries in the region continue to struggle with deforestation, water scarcity, and pollution. Thus, the importance of analyzing regional attempts to draft legislation and enforce rights of nature.

For a Rights of Nature Timeline and more related information see <https://celdf.org/rights-of-nature/timeline>

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## **7) When the forest and the rivers is home: Experiences from North Eastern Nicaragua**

Julie Wetterslev, KU and European University Institute, Florence

The so-called 'territorial turn' in international law has promoted collective land rights for indigenous peoples in human rights terms, to ensure the cultural survival of indigenous communities and protect nature against depredation. One of the key examples of this territorial turn is the Awas Tingni community in North Eastern Nicaragua, who were the first indigenous community to present and win a lands claim case before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In 2001, the Awas Tingni community received a collective title on 43,397 hectares of land as an indigenous territory after a protracted socio-legal struggle had brought the community leaders to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and resulted in a judgement in their favour. The international sentence was followed by an extensive legal reform to title all indigenous and afro-descendent territories on Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast. However, the legal mobilisation, judicialization and formalisation of indigenous collective property rights has not prevented dispossession, violence, and social fragmentation from proliferating in these indigenous territories.

Today on Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast, the Mayangna and the Miskitu are losing control of the forested areas they have traditionally inhabited. Despite the celebrated legal model of indigenous autonomy, the famous international human rights sentence in the matter, and an ample process of demarcation and titling of indigenous territories, the inhabitants of the region are experimenting an accelerated process of colonisation and deforestation.

Based on an ethnographic and collaborative study, in my doctoral thesis I examine the historical socio-legal process that led to the titling of the Awas Tingni territory, and I explore developments in the territory after the collective property title was awarded in 2008. I explain why and how informal land deals and deeds have



proliferated since the collective title was emitted. I discuss some factors and events that led to the current situation, and demonstrate how the community members relate in different ways to the territorial rights and to the many immigrants who recently arrived in their territories, in order to contribute to a more profound understanding of the current conflicts over the management of land and natural resources. The analysis is based on visits to and interviews with settler families in the Awás Tingni territory, as well as on reports and accounts from human rights organisations and on conversations and interviews with indigenous leaders, municipal and regional authorities and other actors in the North Caribbean region and elsewhere in Nicaragua between 2017 and 2021.

In the presentation at the Pachamama seminar, I will mainly delve into the ways that the Mayangna have spoken to me about the forest and the river, and I will describe how they attempt to instruct incoming settlers on protecting the riverside as a way of upholding their rules and legality. This way, I will open a debate about the shortcomings of property and human rights in a time of biological and climatic destruction, and exemplify the need to complement or replace such frameworks with non-anthropocentric notions of home, belonging, care and conviviality.

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## 8) Forest protection. Driving evictions and fueling religious intolerance in Brazil

Marie Kolling, DIIS

A large pristine rainforest is located in the bustling city of Salvador, Brazil's fourth largest city with nearly three million inhabitants. The forest and public park is home of endangered species and unique biodiversity (IPE 2013), but since the 1970's informal settlements have been encroaching on the biome. Salvador experienced a large wave of migration during the 1970s and 1980s due to industrialization (Carvalho and Fernandes 2019:2) and between 1970 and 1991 Salvador's population doubled from one to two million inhabitants (Andrade and Brandão 2009:147). The São Bartolomeu Park was demarcated as an environmentally protected zone in 2001 and in the city's masterplan of 2008 (IPE 2013). To protect it and reverse the ongoing environmental degradation, a large-scale intervention was planned and implemented by state agencies. The two main agencies in charge carried out forced displacement of more than a thousand families living within the environmentally protected zone aiming to redeem the city's massive housing deficit by offering resettlement to state-built housing projects (Kolling 2019). The state-led interventions aimed to protect the forest while at the same time revitalizing it for the wider public (SEDUR and CONDER 2010). The park had been a popular leisure area for Sunday picnics in the past and it considered a heritage site. It has historical importance for Brazil's independence because defining battles were fought there and runaway slaves, *quilombolas*, resided there (IPE 2013). The park is also sacred for practitioners of the afro-Brazilian religions such as candomblé. For years a sign at the main entrance of the park promised state intervention: 'São Bartolomeu Park. Soon the largest heritage site of the *Subúrbio* will be yours.'

To this end, it was not only families who were evicted from the São Bartolomeu Park. As the park was fenced off and security started patrolling its borders, no commercial activities were allowed within the premises of the park and all vendors were evicted. For decades, *vendedores ambulantes* had made a living selling snacks and beverages for both local customers and outsiders to the community visiting the park and its waterfalls (Paulista 2013:166). In compensation, an open-air food court, *praça de alimentação*, was built across from the main entrance to the park years after their eviction. In 2014, vendors were offered a kiosk at the food court, but those who resumed their business at the food court experienced a dramatic drop in income compared to their earnings in the park. Some vendors got into debt, others started renting out their kiosk, and a couple of vendors sold their kiosks. Vendors blamed the state agencies for the eviction and for the loss of income, but there was also a rumour that *candomblé* was in fact to blame for their misfortune.

The land where the food court was build had previously been the site of a *terreiro*, temple, of the afro-Brazilian religion candomblé. There was a rumour among the vendors that the priest of the temple (*pai de santo*) had done a "*trabalho*"; he had cast a spell on the place so that business would be bad for seven years in revenge for the construction of the food court. Accusations of witchcraft in relation to misfortune were common and typically put forth by evangelical Christians. The part of the city where the São Bartolomeu Park is located has a particularly high concentration of *terreiros* in Salvador (Santos 2007). Candomblé originated in Bahia in the 1830s, and the first *terreiro*, *Casa Branca*, was founded in Salvador around the mid-1850s. The São Bartolomeu Park had at least three *terreiros* at the time of the urban renewal interventions, which were also demolished and 'resettled', and it contains numerous sites of worship for Afro-Brazilian religious communities. These sites were attempted renamed by Evangelical Christians such as the *Oxum* waterfall, that is the deity of the freshwater and love.

The antagonism towards candomblé in the wake of the unsuccessful food court is part of a larger pattern of Brazil's changing religious demography and growing religious intolerance in Brazil. Approximately 30 percent of the population today identify as evangelical Christians. Evangelical congregations commonly view Brazil's African heritage as backward and inferior, and which should not be cultivated and preserved, and tend to view afro-Brazilian deities as demons. Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern demonstrate in their book *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip* (2003) that throughout history witchcraft accusations involve gossip and rumour generated by people looking for explanations for misfortune. As was also the case with the candomblé priest, they found that the targets for the suspicion of causing misfortune are subjected to the mechanism of scapegoating (ibid). In this manner, the state preservation efforts were detrimental to people's lives and livelihoods, but it also sparked religious tensions targeting Candomblé. The case raises dilemmas of how to mediate poverty and environmental degradation and show how state interventions gave rise to fueling existing tensions not over concerns of the rights of nature but the rights of religious presence and practice.

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## 9) En Aarhus vivo, lloro y me enamoro, Aarhus es mi territorio | In Aarhus I live and cry and fall in love, Aarhus is my territorio

Diana González Martín, AU

In my oral presentation, I would like to pose the following question: how can we apprehend the notion of the *territorio* of Wayuu communities in Colombia and put it into practice right here where we live? I do not really have an answer to this question; instead, I aim to contribute to ideas of Buen Vivir, anti-capitalist and socio-ecological transition narratives proposed by Latin American activists and scholars as responses to Capitalocene and climate crisis (Rivera Garza 2022; Svampa 2018; Escobar 2015; Gudynas and Acosta 2011).

Since the enactment of the Victims Law for indigenous peoples (2011), territory in Colombia has had rights. However, the law, albeit extremely important after almost sixty years of armed conflict coupled with the plundering of land since colonisation, is limited in scope, as it does not cover all the reparation needs of these peoples.

One of the reasons for the government's difficulties in addressing all aspects of reparation is ontological. It is easier for the government to focus on environmental damage to the territory than on spiritual damage. The law includes 'spiritual healing in accordance with the cultural and ancestral traditions of each people, when in the opinion of the traditional authorities such healing is necessary' (art. 8, my translation). Thus, the law relegates this type of damage to the protective spirits of animals, plants and stones to the cultural sphere, i.e. as belonging to the worldviews of these peoples. The law does not assume, therefore, that the territory has its own voice, the intelligibility of which is understood by spiritual leaders. Spiritual healing thus falls entirely to these leaders (Ruiz Serna 2017: 105).

As Cristina Rivera Garza (2022), Daniel Ruiz Serna (2017) and Pablo Escobar (2008; 2015), among others, argue, recognising territory as a victim opens up possibilities for a change of ontological vision in which communities can contest the government's understanding of the rights of territory. For the Wayuu and other indigenous peoples, the territory is an important spiritual link with the ancestors, who are still present.

In contrast, the approach taken in the Final Report of the Truth Commission (CEV, 2022) differs from the Victims Law. The report follows a differentiating methodology regarding the memory of the armed conflict of indigenous peoples, which takes into account the colonial past and the climate issue, expressed primarily through territory. This report contains a section dedicated to the Wayuu people in which sounds such as 'Plastic in the desert', 'The sound of shepherding' and 'Songs of dawn' (<https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/cantos-del-amanecer>) are recorded. In my view, these recordings testify to a different ontology in which the song of a bird is as significant as a human testimony in collecting both the memory of the armed conflict and the consequences of extractivism in the territory.

The Wayuu people live in the peninsula of La Guajira, located in the northernmost part of Colombia and northwest Venezuela, on the Caribbean coast. Their mother tongue is Wayuunaiki, which has around 600.000 speakers. They are the largest indigenous population in Colombia. The majority live in 22 resguardos in the peninsula of La Guajira. Resguardos are land titles granted by the Spanish Crown in colonial times. The Wayuu people are organized in groups of ranchos, as they call their houses, whose inhabitants are united by kinship and common residence (Duque Cañas 2019).

More extensive and deeper than ranch groupings is clan membership. The territory of a Wayuu clan is determined by the existence of the family cemetery through the maternal line; this is the reason why many Wayuu conceive of the cemetery as the deed of ownership, testified in the tomb of the ancestors, from whom they should not move away and with whom they maintain contact through dreams (Perwak 2016: 19). There are 28 Wayuu clans spread across La Guajira territory. Each clan shares a common name and is generally associated with an animal considered their common mythical ancestor (Delgado Rodríguez 2012).

For the Wayuu, *mma*, the 'earth', was fertilised by *juya*, the 'rain', which is masculine, and plants were born, then animals and then the Wayuu, heirs to this continuity of life (Delgado Rodríguez 2008). 'Mma, the earth is our great mother', according to the Wayuu activist and writer Vicenta María Siosi Pino, of the Apshana clan (2023). *Juya* is the mobile being who travels all over the territory and in this way visits his wives. *Mma* is the static being who patiently waits for her husband for copulation (Delgado Rodríguez 2008). The Wayuu understand marriages as a continuation of this mythical vision. Girls are taken away from the community when they have their first menstruation and locked up, sometimes for years. Marriages are arranged by the heads of the families and girls are often married off to elderly men. A dowry, which normally consist of goats, horses, mules or a pledge, is requested to the future husband in order to betroth the bride. This tradition is increasingly being criticised by Wayuu women writers as unfair to women (Siosi Pino 2023).

The Wayuu feed mainly on herding and fishing. The *Ranchería* river is the only river in Wayuu territory. La Guajira is a semi-desert area where water is scarce. The first cause of morbidity among Wayuu peoples is malnutrition and lack of clean drinking water. *Cerrejón*, located on La Guajira since 1985, is the world's largest open-pit coal mine. The mine's activity has provoked negative consequences for Wayuu's health and environment (Polo democrático 2012). The sale of Wayuu land by the government to increase the mine's activities aggravates the situation. The main cause of conflict in the Wayuu nation is land tenure (Siosi Pino 2023).

With the intention of stopping plans to move the *Ranchería* river 26 kilometres to feed *Cerrejón* coal mine, Vicenta María Siosi Pino sent a letter to then President Juan Manuel Santos in 2012. This letter shows a way of understanding the territory that I find inspiring for us to confront the Capitalocene and the climate crisis. You can find an English translation of the letter here: <https://waterandpeace.wordpress.com/2012/08/26/rancheria-river-issue-defendiendo-al-rio-rancheria>.

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## 10) Environmental conflicts around coal extraction in El Cesar, Colombia: from physical to symbolic violence

Xaquín S. Pérez-Sindin

Resources are being extracted from the planet three times faster than in 1970, even though the population has only doubled in that time (UN Global Resources Outlook 2019). Since 1970, extraction of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) has increased from 6bn tonnes to 15bn tonnes, metals have risen by 2.7% a year, other minerals (particularly sand and gravel for concrete) have surged nearly fivefold from 9bn to 44bn tonnes. COVID-19 pandemic has so far not disrupted these trends and in fact, the momentum of renewable energy production could exacerbate the demand of many metals. Sites of resources extraction are often located in less urban areas far away from the sites where most energy is consumed, turning the former into "sacrifice zones". Understanding how people and places near these sites respond and why they do or do not push back against global corporations is the focus of this article. Based on ethnographic techniques in the Caribbean Colombia and drawing from theories on power and knowledge, I explore complex processes and mechanism of domination and non-resistance to environmental degradation, as well as the role of violence in them. It is on these grounds where I foresee the connection with Pachamama, an "Earth Mother" type of goddess sacred by the Andean natives, who is always present and who has the creative ability to support life on earth. Extractivism can somehow be regarded as a Pachamama's counter-hegemony, always present and with the capacity to determine the life, beliefs and aspirations of the affected communities and people. Unrevealing those power mechanisms, I argue, could potentially help to activate environmental movements and the prospect for Pachamama.

I focus on Jagua de Ibirico, El Cesar, Colombia, and where the weight of mining on GDP reaches 90% in 2017. On May 19, 2002, paramilitaries from the Northern Bloc entered *El Prado*. They arrived at Plot 12 and took out Jesús Eliécer Flórez Romero and his three sons. The youngest was 16 years old. Her wife never saw them alive again and she couldn't find their bodies either. The plot happened to be located near one of the greatest concentrations of coal in Colombia. The country's main means of earning foreign currency was historically the sales of coffee. Yet, in recent decades, the share of mining in the GDP increased from 1.8% in 2000 to 5.4% in 2019, being crude oil and coal the two top export products. Only in 2019, 200 tonnes of coal were extracted in El Cesar (compared with annual 300 million tonnes of lignite extracted in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), corresponding to one-quarter of worldwide annual production in 1986) Such extractive activity left an enormous impact in the landscape, but also in the economy, local identity and memory.

PAX, a Netherland-based NGO engaged in the protection of civilians against acts of war, estimated - using data from Colombian National Police - that between 1996 and 2006, the so-called paramilitary group 'Juan Andrés Álvarez' Front, committed in this area at least 2,600 selective murders, murdered 500 people in massacres and made more than 240 people disappeared. The organization has also indicated that paramilitary violence caused more than 55,000 forced displacements. Some voices in the territory point to the mining companies themselves financing paramilitary to facilitate access to land, and in fact, NGOs & others sued the mining company in US courts. Despite the huge amounts of royalties entering the coffers of the affected municipalities, life does not seem to have improved significantly for many locals. The reduction of poverty in the coal mining regions stuck during the expansion period and The neighbors endured for years an enormous worsening of the environmental conditions.

A neighborhood uprising in 2007 represents a before and after in the way in which power and violence are manifested. On the one hand, the government carried out greater control over royalties. Improvements in education and health were evident and air quality is monitored through the installation of meters in different parts of the territory. On the other, the Companies launched their respective social responsibility programs, meaning a greater presence in the community lives, if not the center of it. Mining companies become present in almost all social and business initiatives in the so-called *Corredor Minero* often in the form of financing: incentive, advice, and financing of entrepreneurs and communities. Much of the social corporate responsibility program focuses on the corregimiento of Victoria de San Isidro (Victoria), located 5 km south of La Jagua town, and still within the same municipality. Victoria is not just any place. There was the scene of the most tragic episodes of the bloody period 1996-2006. Hence, the battle for the legitimacy of the territory and social control will also be played on the symbolic level.

The article shows this and other examples of how power is exercised symbolically. The article departs from a critique to the dominant paradigm within the field of environmental conflicts, particularly political economy. The field is dominated by a vision of resistance as described by authors such as Rubin, i.e., a term reserved for visible and collective acts. Foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, sabotage and many other “weapons of the weak” are systematically omitted in the literature. Not mentioning the fact that many conflicts might not be merely a struggle over work, property rights and cash but also a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood. Hence, this study aims at broadening the understanding of environmental conflict and seeks knowledge about (non) social responses and domination through power theories.

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## 11) Limits to Participation: From comanagement (of Resources) towards (territorial) governance

Mattias Borg Rasmussen, KU

The multidimensional environmental crisis has become evident to most of us. It is of paramount importance to find solutions to this predicament. Studies have shown how territories under indigenous governance fare even better than many of the mainstream conservation measures. This raises questions as to *how* we might learn from indigenous ways of relating to land, and *why* it is so complicated to cater for this within the current models of conservation.

For more than a century, protected areas has been a favored model for the preservation of nature. However, conservation was conceived within the colonial matrix. The first areas of the USA were part and parcel of the settler colonial project, and contributed to the physical, epistemological and discursive erasure of indigenous groups. The experience of conservation was no less violent on other continents as it formed part of the colonial appropriation of territories and resources. Today, as Audra Simpson has suggested, colonialism survives in other forms. In conservation, different understandings of knowledge (and, in particular, the assumed superiority of Western, scientific knowledge) and political economies are amongst the factors that reproduce colonial relations within the conservation model.

This broader picture has its specific manifestation in Argentina. Before the so-called ‘Conquest of the Desert’ (1878-1885), the Patagonian territories were outside the control of the government in Buenos Aires. A violent military campaign decimated the indigenous Mapuche, Tehuelche and other groups. This made room for the advancement of the settler colonial project towards the south of the continent. Within a broader range of territorializing efforts, the system of protected areas became a key instrument to secure spatial control and enroll Patagonia into the narrative of the Argentine nation-state. This is a narrative edified upon European settlement and with little to no room for the presence of indigenous groups.

In 1999, Mapuche groups occupied the headquarters of the Lanín National Park to demand the creation of a comanagement office. This was the culmination of a lengthier process in this and the neighboring national park, Lanin, where Mapuche families and organizations in collaboration with parts of the personnel of the parks had been talking about creating a space for participation within the parks’ administrations. Faced with the imminent threat of eviction, the Mapuche decided that talks would not suffice.

After more than two decades in operation, comanagement of the protected areas seems to be reaching an impasse. The institutionalization of indigenous presence and participation within the administrative apparatus of the protected areas were certainly a success in some respects. First, the creation of comanagement contributed to stopping a process of evictions of families living within the protected areas, and conditioned the emergence

of further territorial claims within the park perimeters. Second, it created a space of constant presence in the administration that Mapuche families can access to process their claims and grievances. The trouble amidst these important achievements is, though, that comanagement functions within the logic of the park administrations. It is, after all, a bureaucratic space where participation encountered its limits.

It is within this specific context of the operations of the comanagement and broader claims to territorial sovereignty and cultural autonomy in Argentina that some have begun to talk about 'gobernanza', or governance. This is a move towards thinking of the relationship to the land, not in terms of Resources in the Western, Eurocentric way as they relate to a specific economic system, but in terms of their material and symbolic entanglements *in place*. This is not an easy process, and it reveals how deeply entrenched colonial relations are in the conservation models. To allow indigenous land relations to flourish requires an active undoing of the epistemes and economies that make up the conservation estate.

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## 12) Tree cosmology and the question of rights of nature

Stine Krøijer

Since the 1990s, I have worked on indigenous peoples collective human rights, especially with regard to territorial rights, self-determination, autonomy and resource rights in the Ecuadorian Amazon. When the question of 'the rights of nature' emerged in the constitutional process, leading to the Constitution of 2008, the NGO that I was working for at the time, supported the indigenous movement in putting forward their claims. The rights of nature was part of the ideas about *Sumak Kawsay* coming out of the Sarayacu Quichua community, which contemplated prominent indigenous leaders and members of Parliament, holding experience from international institutions. By way of various collaborations and alliance-making, the lived experiences and/or cosmology was translated into legal language. Later, I have conducted research on forest policy, tree cosmology and the question of the rights of nature in relation the Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) programmes implemented in Ecuador, and the problems arising at the intersection of ecological rights and indigenous human rights in context of implementation of this new set of ecosystem rights.

Concretely the research took place among the Siekopai indigenous people living in area that for decade has been object of intense oil exploitation and expansion of palm oil production, resulting in a reduced recognition of indigenous territories. The same areas, which later became the object of biodiversity conservation and implementation of SocioBosque, the Ecuadorian version of the REDD+ programmes aimed to incentivize forest conservation through payments for environmental services. In various ways, these processes entailed the limitation of indigenous rights to self-determination within their land among others through reduction of territories with collective land titles and through 30-year contracts sanctioning their use. In the face of a reduced and depleted territory, the Siekopai decided to clear-cut part of their forested territory to engage in commercial palm oil production as subcontractors to the neighbouring plantation company, *Palmeras del Ecuador*.

The recognition of rights of nature inserted itself in this space and entailed a renewed political struggle over rights. It implied a clash between ecological rights and indigenous people's rights to self-determination within their land, even though the rights of nature claimed to build on 'indigenous cosmology'. Yet the Siekopai hold different ideas about the rights of nature and experience "the Quichua notion codified in the constitution as a form of colonialism" overriding other understandings of the forest. To put it shortly, they understand the forest as a living being, which they themselves are part of (to use a modern notion of parts and wholes). Moreover, they see trees as persons; a form of animism known as perspectivism in the anthropology of lowland South America (see Eduardo Viveiros de Castro 1998). That trees are powerful beings do not preclude the possibility of ending their lives, i.e. felling them. In the wake of this, the Siekopai were accused of violating the rights of nature (Krøijer 2021).

My overall point is that in Ecuador, the implementation of the rights of nature entails many dilemmas, especially because the state is defined as the duty bearer, responsible for ensuring and enforcing the ecosystems' rights to flourish and persist over time, and because the rights of nature are selectively applied. Moreover, it creates concrete problems as to the societal agreement about what an ecosystem is and whether it includes the people that live in/with the forest. In short, in Ecuador the rights of nature has become a new field of contestation and conflict, but one that nonetheless offer an avenue for rethinking the relationship between nature and culture.

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