8

Epistemic and Environmental Violence in Latin American Environmental Decolonial Thought

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Engaging Environmental Violence

This chapter illustrates how environmental violence has deep roots in the way human–nature relations have been conceptualized, and how it can also be considered a form of epistemological violence. The conflict analyzed in Latin American Decolonial Environmental Thought (LDET) (coloniality, power-knowledge inequalities, extractivism, racism, the internal geopolitics of Latin American countries) explicitly shows that violence has been associated with the purpose of changing the ecology of the territories and the way people appropriate biodiversity. The corollary of the perspective presented in this chapter is that overcoming environmental violence implies promoting ontological diversity against the homogenization of culture, knowledge, production practices, and land management. The chapter discusses four specific proposals for overcoming environmental violence: social reappropriation of nature, re-enchantment of the world, EcoSimia, and peace as restitution of the collective functions of territory. The chapter argues that environmental violence indicators should not reinforce dualisms between society and nature or treat nature as an exploitable object. Latin American Decolonial Environmental Thought identifies additional indicators of environmental violence, such as the deterioration of environmental diversity and the loss of biosphere negentropic capacity. The chapter also shows that LDET emphasizes eco-territorial-ontological diversity and the potential for environmental peace. In contrast to conflict studies that view nature as a resource that motivates violence, LDET recognizes nature as a non-human participant in social controversies about peace and advocates for a more-than-human and cosmopolitical perspective. For this reason, it is argued that the future of peace research should take seriously the notion that nature is the ultimate political alliance in the construction of peace as eco-ethnic-territorial movements have long understood.

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8.1 Introduction

From the LDET literature, environmental violence can be defined as the deterritorialization of life expressed as the acceleration of the entropic dynamics of the biosphere, the loss of cultural (ontological) diversity of the world, and the transformation of nature into an external and commodifiable thing. The colonization of all daily life spheres and relations with nature by economic rationality is one of the most direct sources of the deterritorialization of life [1–3].

This chapter presents the content of environmental violence as the deterritorialization of life. It begins by exposing the notion of environmental conflict and violence in LDET. It then shows four knowledge-power strategies that illustrate four emphases among decolonial thought and, at the same time, the critical dimensions to understand environmental violence sources. These emphases and dimensions are: (a) the social reappropriation of nature that emphasizes the politics of cultural difference; (b) the re-enchantment of the world, which emphasizes the politics of affect; (c) EcoSimia, a concept which emphasizes the difference-diversity of forms of production; and (d) peace as a restitution of the collective functions of territory, which emphasizes territorial difference. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the implications of LDET to understand environmental violence by arguing that the ultimate political ally to stopping violence is nature.

Amid the diversity of approaches used to study environmental conflicts, discussing LDET's environmental violence concept is relevant for several reasons. First, it articulates various political lessons and theories coming from Marxist political ecology, ecofeminism, post-developmentalism, indigenism, and theories about the biosphere dynamic [4]. Second, it is a thought that supports, and is in permanent dialogue with, the ethnic-territorial social movements that stood up against environmental violence.[1] Third, this approach has a productive tension with the region's progressist governments because, at the same time, they consider them as allies; but they also criticize them for not completely escaping extractivism and the Western matrix of values [5–8].

8.2 Latin American Decolonial Environmental Thought

Latin American Decolonial Environmental Thought has been forged in the context of the identity and ethnic-territorial rights struggles of peasants, black communities, and indigenous peoples against extractivism, displacement, land usurpation, and their culture's effacement [5, 9, 10]. At the same time, it gathers a

[1] The Ecosocial Pact platform of Sur https://pactoecosocialdelsur.com/ is one of the strategies established by decolonial environmental thought to strengthen the dialogue between ethnic-territorial social movements and intellectuals of this current of thought.

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series of intellectual traditions, among which political ecology [11, 12], ecofeminism [13], decolonial thought, and a series of theories on the complexity of the biosphere and thermodynamic processes stand out [14]. What distinguishes this thought is its understanding that environmental conflicts, biosphere degradation, and violence are closely interrelated with the suppression of cultural diversity. According to this perspective, the environmental crisis and violence are the product of both the spatial logics of capitalist accumulation (geoeconomics of capitalism) and a long history of devaluation-suppression of ecological management forms and non-Western world understandings (or the geopolitics of knowledge and coloniality of power).

The binarisms between body and mind, nature and culture, together with the construction of hierarchies of moral and aesthetic legitimacy based on narratives of race and otherization of the non-European, are some of the fundamental mechanisms with which violence and the coloniality of power operate [1, 15]. From this perspective, violence is always epistemic violence (as opposed to what other perspectives on violence?) and overcoming it implies building emancipation and epistemic justice strategies [16–18]. Boaventura de Souza Santos, in *Epistemologies of the South: justice against epistemicide* [19], states that epistemic violence is based on five modes of invisibilization: (a) consider a specific social group as ignorant; (b) consider a life form as residual or backward; (c) classify it as inferior; (d) devalue the relevance of a group or way of life as local or particular; and (e) consider that something has no value because it is unproductive.

Epistemic violence, argues de Souza Santos, is a waste of the experience and knowledge of many peoples of the Earth but, above all, it is the source of concrete material violence that continues to occur today. Latin American Decolonial Environmental Thought has shown that the territorialization of spiritual, political, economic, and social European institutions in what is now called America has been carried out through physical violence. One theme that has attracted the attention of decolonial scholars to explore physical violence and epistemic violence relationships is that of state formation [20–25]. These works allow us to see how decolonial thought interprets violence, epistemicide, and environmental conflict relationships.

The general line of reasoning is as follows: Within states, in their colonial, republican, or global phase, there have been multiple territorialities in dispute. These have been featured mainly by European anthropocentric territoriality and the biocentric territorialities incarnated in the indigenous or communities contesting the European rationality [22, 26]. The history of the territorialities in dispute is the constant expansion of modern European institutions over the other territorialities present within the states through strategies of homogenization (of the forms of land ownership, language, memory, spirituality, forms of production, customs,

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bodies, social rituals, ways of understanding nature, among many others) differentially successful and with various loads of physical violence [27, 28]. Every state's formation moment in America has implemented various forms of physical violence: territorial usurpation, population concentration, massacre, slavery, imperial ecology, whiteness, segregation, persecution, and extractivism accompanied by paramilitary and military violence. This process of territorialization of the state has been commanded by white and/or Eurocentric elites, fundamentally urban, who have not understood, nor valued, the biocentric territorialities and the ecological-cultural diversity of the territories they govern [20, 29]. They have seen the non-European Others present in the state's territory as the "nation's setback" [23, 30]. The state's territorialization has always been contested by groups that see their ways of life threatened and that search to defend or restitute their traditional knowledge, production forms, and biocultural heritage [31–33]. In reaction, the elites have seen subalternized groups' resistance as a threat to recreating the European institutions in America and, therefore, have turned their resistance into security problems that should be solved through force (military interventions, relocations, segregation, considering them an internal enemy) or by excluding them from "national history" [12, 34–36]. The institutionalization of these narratives has meant the suppression of multiple local models of nature (cultural imaginaries and forms of management of specific ecological systems) and the establishment of a nature's predatory rationality in which it is an external thing that functions mainly as a resources storage, as a waste dump, as an obstacle for salvation, civilization, progress, development, democratization and/or globalization, depending on the ruling narrative [8, 37, 38].

Based on this argument, the environmental crisis is interpreted as the Western thought crisis that, by nature's oblivion, has converted it into a variable for capital valorization at the expense of social equality and environmental protection. Thus, environmental violence materializes as the deterritorialization of life: loss of ecological and cultural diversity; acceleration of entropic forces by the colonization of capitalist economic rationality; and loss of sense of ecological interdependence in everyday life [2, 3].

For LDET, environmental violence is not overcome through technical measures aimed at greening the capitalist economy or development, as the narrative of sustainable development defends. The LDET also criticizes the simplistic reading of the second contradiction of capital in which the environmental crisis is addressed as the product of a general and abstract capitalist accumulation logic in which epistemic violence or coloniality are excluded from power relations [9]. Overcoming environmental violence is an epistemic and political struggle consisting of thought decolonization through two parallel actions. First, recognizing and valuing the diversity of world perspectives (ontological diversity) to moving from epistemic

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violence to the ecology of knowledge. The second is exploring nature's scientific paradigms, environmentalists' social imaginaries, and collective projects capable of deconstructing unsustainable modern rationality and mobilizing social action for the construction of a sustainable future [9, 37].

The call for knowledge decolonization has deep historical roots in critical thinking. We can mention four major precursor influences shaping this political-epistemic agenda. The first precursors are a series of political thinkers from the Global South, like José Martí [39], José Carlos Mariátegui [40], Franz Fanon [41], Paulo Freire [42], and Aimé Césaire (1955) [43] who, from the Marxist economic analysis, revealed the relationship between racism, knowledge hierarchies, and imperialism.

The second precursor influence is the set of works that has covered "local knowledge," [44] "popular knowledge," "people's science," participatory action research [45], "native sciences" [46], and "indigenous knowledge systems" [47, 48] unknown and denied by scientific institutions. These works denounced, not only the domination or subordination, but also vindicated the existence, value, and legitimacy of other knowledge systems in which nature was not deemed an exploitable resource.

The third influence is decolonial thought, a poststructuralist-inspired approach, which, since the late 1990s, began to speak specifically of the need to deconstruct modern truth regimes and introduced the term "coloniality of knowledge" [49–51]. By introducing arguments from European poststructuralist thought, the decolonial works have studied how Eurocentric ideas – from Greek philosophy to modern science – were introduced into native peoples' life worlds through conquest, colonization, and globalization, invading their cosmogonies, imaginaries, and cultural practices. They have shown how Europe turned its local narratives into universal narratives, how Eurocentric sciences contributed to the indigenous territories' seizure, how poverty was racialized, and how development discourses and practices have been constructed [52].

Regarding the deconstruction of modern narratives about nature, Augusto Angel Maya's work is pioneering. From his work comes the idea that the environmental crisis is a civilizational crisis. He analyzed, in various books, the cultural myths that generated nature and culture separation and its transformation into something as a simple quantifiable and disposable natural resource in the Western thought [2, 15, 53]. In his *Web of Life* [54], published before Fritjof Capra's *The Web of Life*, Augusto Angel showed that life, in its very fabric, is complex and invites us to look back to ancient, traditional forms of conceiving and inhabiting the world.

The fourth influence that feeds the LDET are the works addressing life's biological-ecological-thermodynamic complexity and the interdependence-unity-continuity between nature and humans. Latin American Decolonial Environmental

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Thought dialogue with eco-philosophical concepts developed by researchers of the dynamics of nature. Among these concepts are biosphere [55], entropy [56–58], the ecology of the mind [59], life as negative entropy or negentropy [60], Gaia Theory [61], the order out of chaos [62], the physical chemistry of biological organization [63], bioeconomy [64], deep ecology [65, 66], the web of life [67], complex thinking [68], life as the movement of matter toward the adjacent possible [69], and autopoiesis [70], among others. All these concepts advocate a non-linear and complex understanding of ecological systems and the thermodynamics of nature. These concepts are incorporated to maintain a critical realistic view of nature, that is, a perspective in which nature not only appears as something socially represented but also has thermodynamic operating laws. The political consequences of these ideas, according to LDET, is that they allow an interdisciplinary and transrational approach to solving environmental problems and to understand socio-environmental systems' complexity without turning nature into an object to be dominated and fragmented [9].

The diversity of influences mentioned above shows that the purpose of overcoming environmental violence is an epistemological and political labor. It cannot be reduced to greening the social order but has to do with building cultural and economic alternative rationalities. We have chosen some knowledge-power strategies that exhibit particular emphasis and, simultaneously, critical dimensions to understand the sources and the solutions to environmental violence. Those strategies are the social reappropriation of nature that emphasizes the politics of cultural difference; the re-enchantment of the world, which emphasizes the politics of affect; EcoSimia, which emphasizes the difference-diversity of forms of production; and, finally, peace as restitution of the collective functions of territory, which emphasizes territorial difference. In the following section, a description is laid out for the theoretical foundations of every strategy.

8.3 The Social Reappropriation of Nature to Enact the Negentropic Power of Life

The concept of social reappropriation of nature has been employed by Enrique Leff, one of the most influential scholars of LDET, to designate the political-epistemological project of territorializing environmental rationality. The social reappropriation of nature seeks to fulfill two objectives: first, to recover the sense of interdependence erased by economic rationality and centuries of philosophies that have forgotten nature; and second, to enact the negentropic power of life.

Leff criticizes Western philosophy for leaving the environmental question out of the central philosophical questions (what are the human, being, truth, justice

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questions) [14]. The Western ontological regime has evaded thinking humans within nature, preventing the creation of an ethic that considers biosphere care and the entropic degradation of the planet [3]. Thus, simultaneously deconstructing what has been thought and not thought in Western philosophy, he proposes building an environmental rationality with two fundamental pillars. On the one hand, by incorporating entropy and negentropy biosphere thermodynamic-ecological imperatives in economics and recognizing that symbolic-cultural conditions mark human–nature assemblages, on the other [9].

Leff argues that the capitalist economy ignores the biosphere's thermodynamic laws. On the one hand, it accelerates the entropic death of the planet through the Earth's constant, increasingly hasty and expansive exploitation based on the illusory belief in unlimited economic growth. Neglecting the law of entropy in the economic process, Leff argues, inevitably leads to an environmental crisis under capitalism [9]. On the other hand, the capitalist economy, which constantly creates commodities at the expense of biodiversity, does not enact the biosphere negentropy law because its basic principle is to sustain profit and not the sustainability of life. The negentropy law explains why there are complex matter organizations. It operates as a negation of entropy; it is the thermodynamic force that has enriched life, generating the diversity of forms of matter in nature. If negentropy were not an active principle of the biosphere, there would be no more life on planet Earth [3].

Leff argues that negentropy has radical implications for ecological economics and political ecology because it is the bioeconomy foundation and permits value modes of production that enhance biosphere negentropic dynamics. The negentropy principle allows political ecology – focused on socio-environmental conflicts and the unequal distribution of ecological costs generated by nature's destructive appropriation to substantiate an ontology of life, emancipate communities' biocultural heritage, and construct new territories of life. Negentropy allows us to conceptualize environmental violence as destroying the biosphere's negentropic power capacity. In contrast, reconciliation with nature will increase the sense of interdependence and engage the negentropic power of life [14].

As for the human–nature assemblages, the second element of environmental rationality, Leff begins by stating that modes of production potentiating life and the planet's biosphere co-exist with other precipitating and accelerating entropic forces [3]. The argument replicates the biocentric and anthropocentric territorialities conflict ideas. He asserts, at the same time, that nature has laws; it is also symbolically appropriate. The expansion of techno-economic rationality has reduced symbolic-cultural diversity and nature's meanings horizon. Therefore, the work of building an environmental rationality from a decolonial perspective is to make visible other social imaginaries outside Western thought

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to understand alternative forms in which the living conditions have been internalized and instituted in order to learn biocultural sustainability practices [9]. Leff notes the ethnic-territorial social movements that, in their emancipatory struggles for their "traditional" knowledge and territorial rights, have become defenders of the planet's life and ontological refuges before prevailing economic rationality. What these social movements do, implies Leff, is enact the biosphere negentropic power.

Far from proposing cultural relativism in which every culture is different and should be tolerated, the social reappropriation of nature and environmental rationality is a project that calls for an inter-rational dialogue based on the biosphere eco-biological-thermodynamics (entropy and negentropy) laws respect. These laws must be the foundation for a new economy. The recognition of environmental social imaginaries, on its side, should be the ground for the encounter of different ways of thinking, imagining, feeling, meaning, and giving value to the things

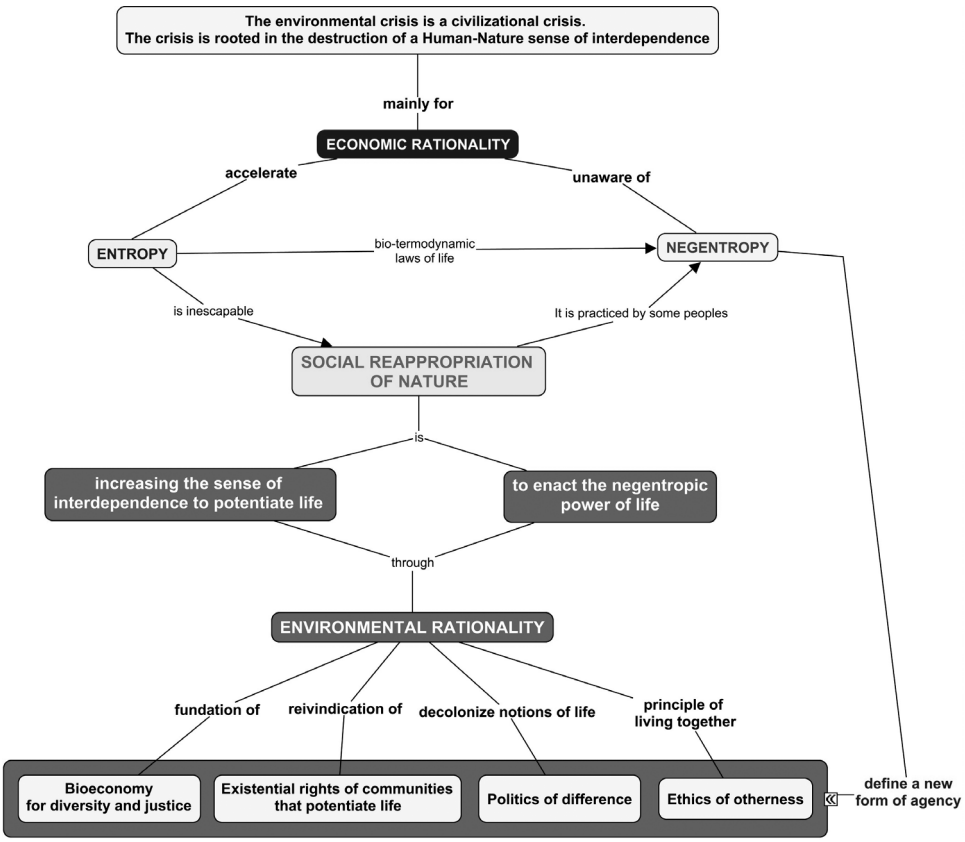

Figure 8.1 The social reappropriation of nature. Enrique Leff
Source: Own elaboration.

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of the world. Leff insists on ontological plurality as a condition for overcoming environmental violence. He calls this inter-rational exchange the "knowledges dialogue." It is a new political space to create a destiny of nature and humanity grounded in new meanings, "new possible truths," to break the idea of the End of History with liberalism and the unlimited growth belief. This understanding of the world should drive the construction of a new economic paradigm based on eco-technological-cultural productivity and legitimate the emergence of new collective rights: the common rights to the common goods of humanity [14].

According to Enrique Leff, the knowledge dialogue is not just a principle of democratic inclusion added to the established social order, but it creates a politics of difference. The modern narrative, according to which Europe's local social and environmental imaginaries are global values (Development, Progress, Democracy, Freedom, Modernization) has meant exercising multiple forms of violence, including environmental violence. The search to territorialize universal projects has not served to create a sense of interdependence; instead, it has created economic, political, and racial hierarchies. The politics of difference, Leff explains, is the recognition of diversity in the ways of being (inspired mainly by [71]) and the Right to differ over futures established as desirable (inspired by [72]). Confronted with the idea of establishing a future marked by the domination of technology and the globalization of the market, the politics of difference underlines the otherness ethics, the rights to the existence of different values and meanings assigned to nature [3, 9].

8.4 The Re-enchantment of Nature. Environmental Affect for Environmental Reconciliation

The re-enchantment of nature is an expression used by the philosopher Patricia Noguera. She proposes to expand the idea of environmental rationality, claiming that sensibility and feelings about the Earth's life degradation are necessary conditions to overcome environmental violence and promote ecological reconciliation. She shares the environmental decolonial proposal of deconstructing Western social imaginaries about nature. She considers that understanding the biosphere's thermodynamic complexity (entropy and negentropy forces) is fundamental to cultural change and claims that civilizational change begins by poetizing the relationship with nature and environmentalizing everyday language [37]. Her proposal against environmental violence is to put in dialogue the phenomenology and existentialism with the indigenous nature's ontologies. In this sense, the world's re-enchantment is an affective turn in environmental decolonial thought. She introduces the term *methodaesthesis* (the paths of feeling) to describe its perspective of environmental sensibility [73].

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She argues that methodaesthesis contests the way sciences have spoken about nature. Modern scientific knowledge was framed, she asserts, in the belief that a subject (I think) observes the object (measurable thing) through mathematical operations such as induction, deduction, demonstration, and/or quantification. Thus, the value of knowledge in modernity is defined by the mathematization and suppression of feeling. The truth was reduced to this subject-object mathematical operation, and reality became the "objective," leaving out other dimensions that compose existing and existential bodies, such as dreams, imagination, sensitivity, or feelings.

The affective turn proposed by methodaesthesis strongly emphasizes the body as a symbolic-biotic assemblage. Environmental sensibility cannot be posed with the idea of an abstract body thinking the world, but in the idea of a living body, that feels and dwells in the world. Relying on the existentialism and phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, Noguera argues that experiences are only possible thanks to a symbolic-biotic body with intentionality constituted in his/her life-world. What allows things to be constituted as they are – the horizons of meaning – is an assembly between the symbolic-biotic body present in a world-of-life. The world, in its diversity, is lived as diverse, thanks to senses, the sentient body, and intentionality put into sensitivity ([74], p. 38).

Methodaesthesis, inspired by Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenology, considers that the horizons of meaning are not formed in a life-world devoid of feeling or by an abstract mind that only thinks in "logical" or "rational" terms. The life-world is not only biotic and has become symbolic since the word, the imagination, began to inhabit the planet. However, in the horizons of meaning built by the West, inhabiting the world has become the act of using it, exploiting it, a process that cannot be understood without how the sense of interdependence has been destroyed [37].

Environmental sensibility then postulates the need to change individualistic, utilitarian, and anthropocentric ethics for an Earth's ethics, consisting of not abusing vital natural systems and extending rights to organisms and the environment. The Earth's ethics translated into several operations of resignification of our relationship with the environment; among them are [74]:

- Use alternative metaphors and images to talk about the environment. Instead of images of nature as a machine and as fierce competition, Noguera proposes using images and expressions such as magma [75], rhizome [76], autopoiesis [70], Gaia [61], and solidarity [67] that allow us to see the Earth as an interdependent and living entity, as a home shared by many life forms and processes of life, and multiple manifestations of complexity-chaos-order.
- To environmentalize everyday language to create senses of interdependence and solidarity. Against language that speaks of competition, the imposition of the

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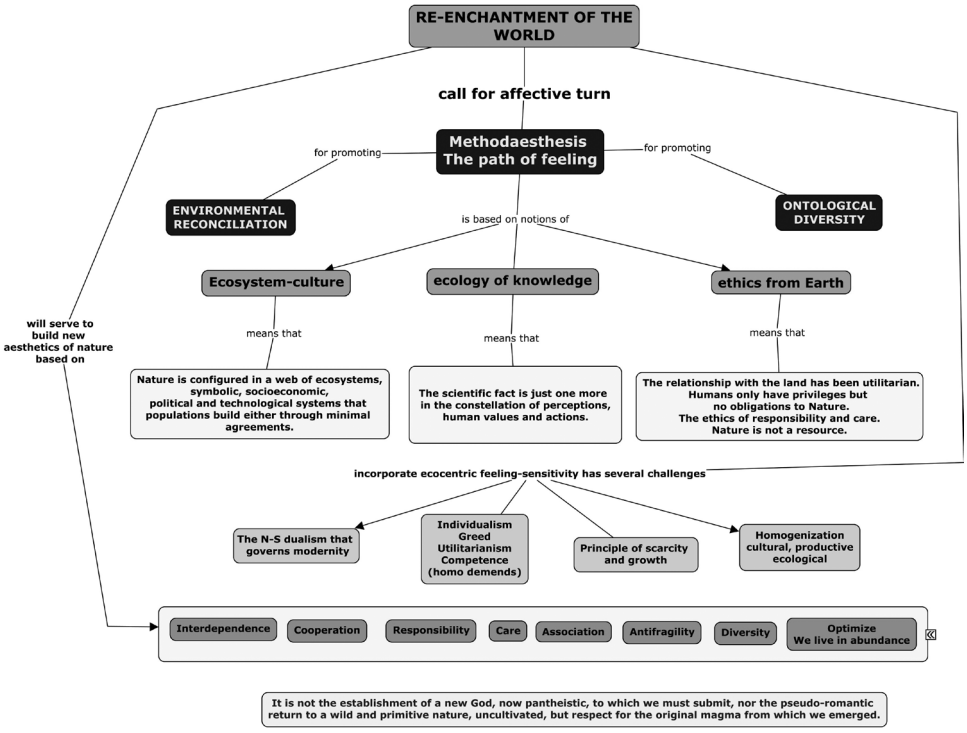

Figure 8.2 Re-enchantment of the World. Patricia Noguera.
Source: Own elaboration.

strongest, or the existence of national and regional borders, the Earth's ethics require a language underlining that solidarity, cooperation, and interdependence also organize life. Our speech acts, and research must gradually change the meaning of the terms we use. Noguera argues that it is necessary to change, through educational processes, the terms that have a strong anti-environmental semantic load preventing knowledge environmentalization; one of these terms is "resource," as mere objects made available to us and with only an economic value.

- Care and responsibility as the intentionality that guides the connection with nature. From the images and expressions mentioned above, it is clear that Earth's ethics consist of taking charge of life fabric care, not abusing natural systems and acting-thinking-feeling interdependence with nature. Care is associated with affection, awareness, delicacy, caution, and a respectful relationship with nature. Care is linked to the responsibility of humankind with life [67, 77]. Care and responsibility to Earth entail defending biodiversity as a condition under life resilience, flexibility, and antifragility lies. Homogenization is creating a chain (a sequence of equal things) and resilience, flexibility, and antifragility consist of creating a rhizome network of various interdependent elements.

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8.5 EcoSimia: The Revitalization of Life-Place against the EcoNOmia

EcoSimia is a term that can be divided into "Eco," from the ancient Greek root, Oikos, that serves as the prefix of eco for ecology and economics; "Sí" that in Spanish means yes; and "Mía" in Spanish means mine. EcoSimia can be translated in three ways: "Yes, it is my ecology," "Yes, this way of producing is mine," or "The Ecosystem is My Responsibility." EcoSimia mentions the existence of local production networks under ecological production premises, which simultaneously offers a diagnosis of what the capitalist economy has meant for many communities: uprooting and loss of autonomy. This term circulates essentially among indigenous communities in Ecuador, Bolivia, and Colombia and has been widely described by the philosopher Olver Quijano in *EcoSimías: Visions and practices of economic/cultural difference in contexts of multiplicity* [78]. EcoSimia is political intervention in everyday language to foster a sense of interdependence.

Although colonization, the formation of mono-national states, and globalization have been a project to homogenize the forms of production, the planet is still multicultural/pluri-economic/biodiverse. This diversity is explained by the profound territorial rootedness of the peoples to their life-places, states Olver Quijano. The rootedness has allowed resisting the expansion of Western culture that, explains Quijano, is a local cosmology, morality, and epistemology converted into a global design. The European liberal economy as a science and institutionalized practice around the globe is the most evident manifestation of how a local (European) narrative and practice became almost universal, defining, channeling, disciplining, and modeling the world(s) under the exercise of a kind of economic fundamentalism [78].

This fundamentalism has resulted in the ignorance of other economic/cultural differences, accusing them of being backward, unproductive, and disintegrated because they are local. Quijano asserts that the loss of productive diversity is also the sacrifice of the world's socio/cultural, existential, and ecological diversity and implies the annihilation of epistemological/cognitive diversity. Therefore, together with the epistemicide named by other decolonial authors, Quijano mentions the economicide, the sacrifices of other forms of economic organization, and the resulting waste of economic/socio/cultural experience. Economicide is strongly associated with environmental violence because the imposition of the capitalist mode of production and the commodification of nature is based on violent intervention such as forced displacement to take over land, relocation of communities; and persecution of resistant communities [78].

EcoSimia is a term that plays a fundamental role in promoting territorial rootedness and the responsibility to care for and harmonize nature. It is a term entangled with other discursive formations that aim to strengthen territorial roots and care for nature used for the indigenous communities. Quijano synthesizes these two terms

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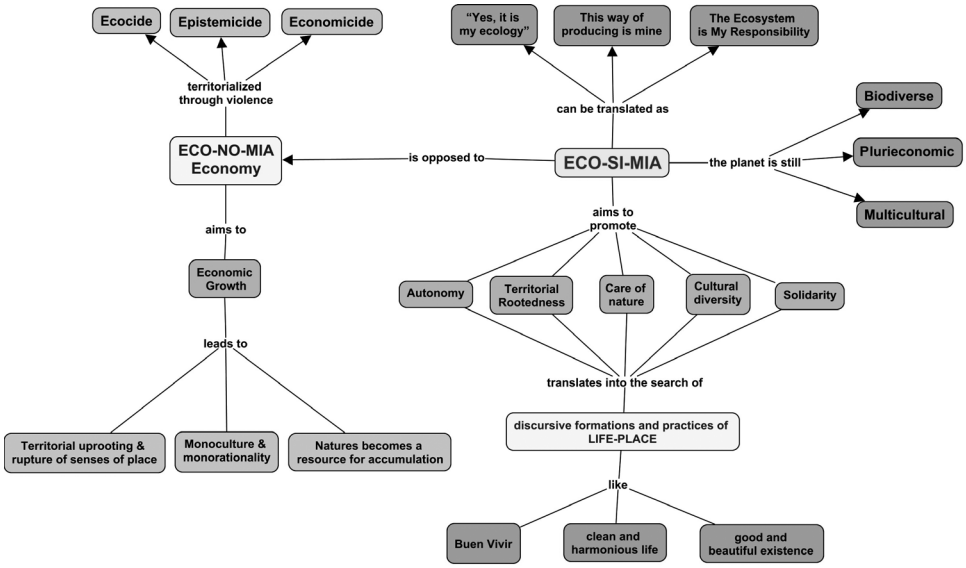

Figure 8.3 EcoSImia vs EcoNomia. Olver Quijano.
Source: Own elaboration

(territorial roots and care of nature) in the expression "life-place practice." He declares that the eco-political horizon of EcoSimia is to potentiate life-place [78].

One example of discursive formations and life-place practices are "Buen Vivir," which is part of the millenary heritage of the Andean indigenous communities and corresponds to the Sumak Kawsay or Allí Kawsay, in Kichua; the Suma Qamaña in Aymara, and the Ñande Reko in Guaraní. Expressions that, with subtle linguistic differences, mean "clean and harmonious life," "good and beautiful existence" [79].

These discursive formations and life-place practices like Buen Vivir, states Quijano quoting Escobar [2009: 28], questions the development based on growth and material progress as guiding goals; assumes that there is no state of "underdevelopment" to be overcome, nor one of "development" to be attained, for it refers to another philosophy of life; allows us to begin by changing anthropocentrism for biocentrism; allows us to image a "new development ethic" that subordinates economic objectives to ecological criteria, human dignity, and well-being; and recognizes cultural and gender differences.

8.6 Peace as the Restitution of the Collective Functions of the Territory

The concept of peace as the restitution of the collective functions of the territory is a conception of peace coined by the Afro-Colombian National Peace Council [80]. It was elaborated in a context of high environmental violence on

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the Colombian pacific cost. Since the 2017, this peace concept has become a guide for the study of peace practices-epistemologies in eco-ethnic-territorial movements like the Campesino Association of the Cimitarra River Valley, the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca, and the Process of Black Communities in Colombia, and the Mapuche people in Walmapu and the Patagonian region divided between Argentina and Chile. They can be defined as eco-ethnic-territorial social movements because rootedness in their territory, the care of ecosystem networks, and the purpose of defending their ethnic identity are the cornerstones in their political projects and repertoire of actions. Since the detailed presentation of each mentioned social movement exceeds the scope of this chapter, the concept of peace that we have synthesized from comparing their peace actions-concepts is the following:[2]

> peace is a political process that consists of (re)appropriating a geographical space to carry out an economic-cultural project of dignity and ecological sustainability that permits the protection of individual and community life against violence and war. The search for peace is territorial and ecological because the purpose of confronting violence is translated into the goal that the territory – the materially and symbolically appropriated space of life – fulfills the collective functions that it has lost because of the armed conflict. [81]

When eco-ethnic-territorial social movements refer to the restoration of the territory's collective functions, they affirm that the territory should be a space for sustainable production to affirm identity, rootedness, mobility, encounter, food and community sovereignty, enjoyment, and spirituality. Environmental violence (lack of access to land, mass murder, ecological devastation, forced displacement, extractivism, the militarization of life, and the lack of cultural recognition) is the primary source of the destruction of the territory's collective functions.

In order to rebuild the collective functions of the territory and hinder environmental violence, the communities mobilize two interconnected resources that can be described as the moral imagination and the geographical imagination. In turn, the materialization of these resources drives the building of a territorial project. We describe these three elements: moral imagination, geographical imagination, and territorial project.

The moral imagination[3] comprises conceptions and practices related to what gives harmony to the body-community-territory relationship; what makes the unity of the

[2] For a more detailed exposition, see Territorial peace: Connecting moral and geographical imaginations [80] www.instituto-capaz.org/documento-de-trabajo-capaz-paz-territorial-conectando-imaginacion-moral-e-imaginacion-geografica/

[3] The syntagma was coined for John Paul Lederach and has a strong methodological influence on my research. Nevertheless, the concept of Moral Imagination that emerged from working with the mentioned eco-ethnic-territorial social movements is partially different from that proposed by Lederach. He defines moral imagination as "the ability to imagine something, rooted in the challenges of the real world, but at the same time capable of giving birth to what does not yet exist." He finds that the moral imagination requires four

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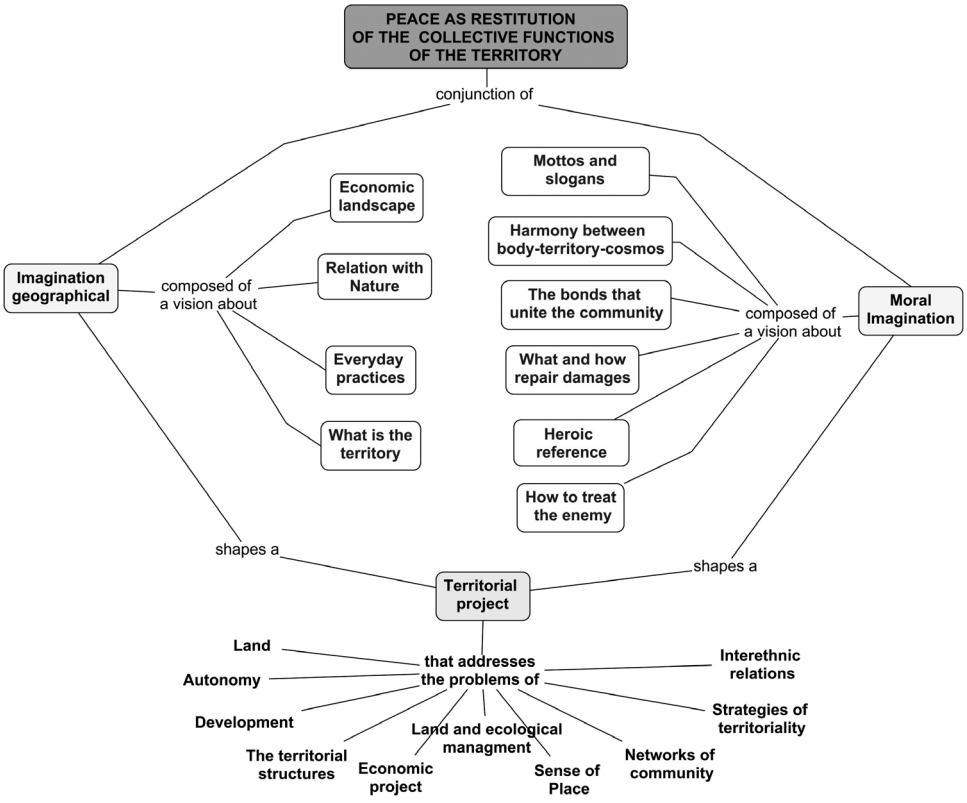

Figure 8.4 Peace as restitution of the collective functions of the territory. Luis Peña.
Source: Own elaboration

community possible, what needs to be repaired and how to repair it; how to deal with the enemy; and what are the heroic referents of the community's political process and how the communities narrate their strengths. These elements are not the same as those proposed by Lederach in *The Moral Imagination* [82]. The issue of what harmonizes body-territory-nature relations is essential in the moral imagination among eco-ethnic-territorial social movements because much of their rootedness and environmental practices are grounded in how they understand this relationship. The body-territory-nature relations harmonization, that we can call energetic peace by following Dietrich's terminology [83], marks the notions of justice, security, reparation, and recognition among eco-ethnic-territorial social movements.

inseparable dimensions: (a) the ability to forge a web of relationships that includes enemies; (b) the ability to nurture a curiosity that encompasses complexity without resorting to dualistic polarities; (c) a firm belief in the potential of the community and the constant search for the creative act; and (c) and the acceptance of the risk inherent in taking steps towards the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the all-too-known landscape of violence [82].

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For example, among Nasa indigenous in Colombia, the production practices aim to harmonize and revitalize nature by observing the nature mandates and the Origin Law to reconcile the life-cosmos-human unity. Harmonizing is living by respecting that mandate, while revitalization is living by taking care of nature's mandate: protecting water and covering (wrapping up) the mountains. In Nasa language, cultivate, care, and cover or wrap with a blanket use the same term [84].

The Moral Imagination is expressed in a series of slogans and mottos that synthesize dreams, a vision of what constitutes conflict and violence, and provides the foundation for repairing the damage they caused. These slogans are axioms that have a performative character because, by representing reality in a particular way, they motivate the actions and sustain the mobilization to rebuild the collective functions of the territory. The slogans are actional and philosophical manifestos to build peace. In Table 8.1 are some slogans of the ethic-territorial social movements.

All these slogans express a deep philosophical construction, activated and renewed in the realization of the political project of the communities; they show an identity construction beyond victimization. In effect, the slogans assert an economic-ecological-cultural project and inform the principles of action to build it.

Table 8.1 *Slogans of the ethic-territorial social movements*

The indigenous Nasa (people from water)	From the Mapuches
– Peace is the cultural revitalization and the harmonization of life. – By recovering the land, we recover everything. – We do not struggle only for a piece of land. We are struggling to protect the Earth. – The land, for who takes care of it. – Thinking, looking, and living from the heart of the Earth. – To resist is to deglobalize the stomach. – To cultivate is weaving pieces of mountains with plants. – To cultivate is to recreate the garden of the ancestors. – Weaving life in peace is not taking more than necessary and giving thanks.	– Peace is the desirable relationship with all living things. – We give us our proper order by hearing the language of the Earth. – Our first political alliance is with nature. – We are defending paradise. – The territory is the place where we dream. – Territorial autonomy is practiced, not just asked for. – We are re–emerging. – We are disentangling the story. – Little by little, we are being. – Let's be one again. – Good nutrition is freedom and revolution. – For land. Against capital. MAP. – We could not expel them, but they could not conquer us. – No means no.

Source: Own elaboration

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The second resource that ethic-territorial social movements mobilize to promote a territory's collective functions restitution is the geographical imagination.[4] It is characterized by a series of actions intended to transform the social space and ecological relations created by environmental violence, that in practical terms, translates into four questions-actions [94]:

1. What should the economic landscape look like? A common demand among ethnic-territorial organizations is to restore a diverse and heterogeneous landscape that extractivism, monoculture, extensive cattle ranching, and megaprojects have destroyed. For the social movements, the capital landscape is the expression of the violent imposition of a monoculture. Monoculture (mono-plantations) is monoculture, declares the Nasa community in Colombia. To name the impacts caused by extensive cattle ranching, forestry, and mining, the Mapuche use the term Az ngelay to communicate the idea of acting against the Az Mapu mandate. It is also associated with a situation in which there is no beauty and there is no order in the landscape [95]. The Nasa community asserts that their mission is to rebuild the ancestors' garden and weave the Earth, expressed in the idea that their economic activities seek to protect the Earth by tucking it with a diverse garden of plants, animals, and people.
2. What should be the relationship of the community with the non-human world? This question of the geographical imagination among the ethnic-territorial organizations refers to one of the most important axes of action and conceptualization. It has to do with a series of questions with regard to naming the non-human (nature? resources? forces? family?). How to interact with plants, animals, rivers, lakes, seas, forests, and mountains? How much to take from them? The way the communities solve these questions expresses how all present things in the world are classified, including people (morphological similarity, analogies, testable features, properties, uses, contiguity) [96] and how to connect with them (protection, use, and reciprocity). In indigenous communities' worldviews notions of the biosphere unity, the vitality of non-human things in the cosmos, or the codependency between the actions of the human and the

[4] Regarding the term geographic imagination in the social sciences, we find several uses that coincide in some aspects seen in the peace practices of the communities. This notion has been used to highlight peoples' and social groups' awareness of the importance of place, space, landscape, and nature in their practices and behaviors [85]. It has also been understood as the shared vision of landscape, environment, and social history that provides people or cultural groups with a shared sense of territory and a place in the world [86]. It has been considered that the geographical imagination is in no way a specific way of seeing the world from geography as a science, but several authors have described it as a persistent and universal feature of humanity that emerges from existential connection and the appropriation of places, landscapes, and nature [87–92]. Harvey, for example, spoke of geographic imagination as a habit of mind that allows the individual or groups to recognize the role of space and place in their own biographies, relate to spaces, and recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the physical forms and understandings of space, judging the relevance of events elsewhere, creating and using space creatively, and appreciating the meaning of spatial forms created by others [93].

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non-human prevail. Those notions define their political projects [97, 98]. For the Nasa in Colombia and the Mapuche in Argentina and Chile, humans are members of a cosmic-geological-biological family [99–101]; its inseparability defines the life plan and the correct way of acting before all life forms. Among them, a person's role is to promote the best coexistence and reconciliation between all the family members forming the world – Itxofill Mongen.

3. Within the geographic imagination, ethnic-social organizations pose the question of what should be the rhythms and forms of daily appropriation of space and time. For them, overcoming environmental violence and promoting the idea that territory fulfills collective functions implies recovering the traditional rhythms that defined their place-time experience. Through time-place practices restitution, they aim to reconcile the quotidian with the purpose of cultural revitalization and harmonization with non-humans. In practical terms, it translates into how to organize daily activities for social rituals. Against the atomized time of mechanical activities for the other's benefit (owner of a plantation, a mining company, a factory) proposed by the capitalist economy, the communities oppose the idea of activities with duration, with meaning for the community, and to revitalize nature. Indigenous daily life is full of rituals (getting up to greet the sun, being thankful for its presence, cooking, eating and undertaking activities together) that have the sense of creating health and well-being and social-ecological links [97, 100, 102].
4. Within eco-ethnic-territorial movements' geographical imagination, the territory's concept is essential to constructing peace. It is mentioned as delimited-appropriated-political space, interacting with the state's jurisdictional order, and a symbolic life space in which the community's practices and identity are grounded. As a political space, the eco-ethnic-territorial movements construct a narrative about what territory the community has used and appropriated and for what purpose. This territorial narrative is full of mentions of places with specific meaning, borders, landmarks, spatial classification, and distribution of activities. This narrative derives mostly from contesting existing state political borders. The Mapuche organizations question, for example, the borders imposed violently by Chile and Argentina over their original Wallmapu territory ([104] Schiaffini, 2019; Waks, 2018; Zapata, 2015). The indigenous and the Afro-Colombian social movements contest the political jurisdictional order by demanding autonomy and respect for ancestral territories.

As a symbolic and life space, territory is composed of physical biodiversity, a network of places for social and spiritual rituals, and a space from which cultural symbols come. The term territory is usually associated with life, with a home, a house, a protective home, and a home to be protected. It is also comprised of a spiritual, sacred, and energetic geography. The territory is a symbolic and life space bond philosophy (local ontology) and identity. The lonko (spiritual and political leader among Mapuche people) Mauro Millán explains:

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The territory is the backbone for the Mapuche and defines us as a nation. The territory and all its energy inspire the philosophical thought of our Mapuche people. Without the territory, they condemn us to disappear. It is not a physical disappearance but rather the withdrawal of our philosophical principles. Civilization has erased the diversity of ways of thinking. The world has lost its wealth of thought. The ideology of death has been imposed, where man is above nature. The territory is not a property. It is the possibility of a thought. ("Radio interview with [103]")

Finally, the definition of peace as the restitution of a territory's collective functions translates into a territorial project, that is, the purpose of materializing justice, life revitalization, and economic and cultural autonomy through the transformation of the existing territorial order. The territorial project politicizes the issues of land, autonomy, visions of development, the territorial form of the state, the economic project, planning, and spatial ordering, inter-ethnic relations, and organizational strategies to vindicate territorial demands. In Colombia, the peasant reserve zones, indigenous communities, and collective territories of the black communities are examples of these communities' territorial projects that seek to overcome environmental violence. In the case of Mapuche, there are multiple scales in the territorial project that range from actions aimed at staying in a territory, removing statues, revaluing specific places, and, of course, the recovery of productive lands through the reconstruction of some territorial-ecological-family institutions like the Lofche [104].

8.7 Conclusion: Nature Is the Ultimate Political Ally against Violence

We can draw four conclusions from what has been stated here.

First, overcoming environmental violence implies putting in place a series of policies of difference. We have shown that in Latin American Environmental Decolonial Thought, overcoming environmental violence is an epistemic and political struggle to potentiate the biosphere and the sense of interdependence. Preventing environmental violence involves promoting biodiversity and ontological diversity – the diversity of ways of understanding, feeling, and relating to nature – as a requirement to change economic production and power relations detrimental to life sustainability. We analyze four strategies of environmental knowledge-power in order to show that there are several dimensions in overcoming environmental violence: the social reappropriation of nature; the re-enchantment of the world; EcoSimia; and peace as restitution of the collective functions of territory. These showed us that environmental violence is expressed as political and cultural homogenization, as homogenization of the type of legitimate knowledge to talk about nature, as homogenization of production practices, and as territorial homogenization. The four knowledge-power strategies against homogenization are a series of interdependent (environmental) policies of difference:

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cultural difference, ontological difference, economic difference, and territorial difference.

Second, the (environmental) policies of difference show that we must address the environmental violence indicators issue. The indicators –mostly climate-centered – are relevant to show the effects of more profound problems of civilization. But they are not the definition of what environmental violence is. The discussion of the indicators is fundamental because they are what "makes us see" the problem, how to name it, and what kind of consequences we observe. Are pollution and its impact on human health [105], or the violence generated by the scarcity of "resources" or by the exploitation of them [106] sufficient to talk about and to see the environmental violence? From LDET, there are many other harms and indicators of environmental violence, such as the deterioration of environmental diversity, acceleration of entropy, biosphere negentropic capacity loss, and the deterritorialization of life. The LDET warns, also, that it is essential not to use terms, expressions, or measures that reinforce the dualisms between society and nature or to refer to nature as an exploitable object when we build indicators.

Third, while LEDT is a critical theory, it is not a pessimistic perspective in the sense that it insists on the existence of eco-territorial-ontological diversity. The authors we have reviewed show that there are still territories, capacities, production forms, and ways of understanding nature that have not been erased and that constitute a network of spaces of hope. Additionally, incorporating the idea that the thermodynamics of the planet are also driven by negentropic power and that there are peoples who potentiate negentropic power of the biosphere makes LEDT essentially a critical and optimistic thought that environmental peace is possible.

Fourth, in contrast to peace and conflict studies, in which nature is, above all, a resource that motivates violence [107], from the LEDT we see that nature is the ultimate political ally in preventing violence and building peace. In peace and conflict studies, the theme of political alliances that define armed confrontations or the search for peace and reconciliation is also recurrent. Peace is often defined as rebuilding the center of a social network broken by violence [82] or finding a resilient allied group capable of containing attacks against reconciliation [108]. The definition of these alliances, or the search for the network's center, only has as a reference to human political actors. However, LDET, which has studied ethnic-territorial movements, understands that at the center of the network of a destroyed social space there are also non-human participants: a river, a sacred space, and a specific ecosystem, for example. This is clearly expressed by the Mapuche poet Jorge Espindola, who maintains that the most important political alliance in the construction of peace is nature, that is, that in the Mapuche's struggle against extractivism

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and to promote territorial rootedness, the memory of biocultural practices and the responsibility to take care of nature is always present.

To understand the idea that the first political alliance is nature, it is not necessary to consider nature as a person or attribute subjectivity to nature's elements. Instead, it is about understanding that nature is an actant, a non-human participant in social controversies about peacebuilding. Bruno Latour [109–111], Isabelle Stengers [112], Graham Harman [113], and John Law [113] among other authors of Actor-Network Theory, Object-Oriented Ontology, and Critical Realism, have shown, that in social controversies, there are always objects or mega objects (plants, animals, ecosystems, gases, minerals, apparatus, the Earth), not as accessories, but as fundamental non-human participants without which political disputes would not exist. This perspective, largely unknown by LDET, implies, as Stenger says, the introduction of a new notion of cosmopolitics, not in the Kantian sense, but in the sense that in politics, there are, not only humans, but also actants (things, objects, mega objects) participating [114]. They participate because they are named, used, and defended by social actors. Thinking about environmental violence from a more-than-human and cosmopolitical perspective in terms of critical realist ontologies seems to be one of the issues that will have great relevance in the coming years, given the growing mix of peace and environmental action agendas, as the eco-ethnic-territorial movements have long demanded.

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