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Beyond Modernity: Alternative Incursions into the Anthropocene

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Introdução e Agradecimentos

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Em junho de 2021, em plena pandemia de COVID-19, e durante dois dias, o projeto “TROPO: Ontologias do Antropoceno em Portugal – movimentos sociais, políticas públicas e tecnologias emergentes”, do Centro de Estudos Sociais da Universidade de Coimbra (CES-UC), organizou uma conferência internacional em formato online intitulada *Beyond Modernity: Alternative Incursions into the Anthropocene*. Partindo da controvérsia emergência do “Antropoceno” e do contexto de caos climático e ecológico, o *leitmotiv* desta Conferência incitava académico/as, ativistas e artistas a questionarem as narrativas hegemónicas em torno da crise climática, propondo, em contraponto, alternativas ontológicas, epistémicas, materiais, que rompessem com o paradigma ontológico moderno e as suas políticas capitalistas, extrativistas, imperialistas, coloniais, patriarcais e especistas.

Desta chamada para artigos, sessenta *papers* foram submetidos; todos eles suscitavam – a partir das mais variadas disciplinas das ciências sociais, humanas e políticas – uma reflexão sobre os limites da modernidade antropocêntrica e como a expansão do capitalismo neoliberal, extrativista e tecno-científico *depende da* destruição socioecológica. Durante dois dias, as vinte propostas escolhidas entraram em diálogo entre si, numa conversa que se quis sempre trans-disciplinar. Todas elas, ao rejeitarem as “monoculturas da mente”, nos termos de Vandana Shiva, obrigaram-nos a expandir as nossas capacidades de imaginação *para além da modernidade*.

A Conferência foi dividida em quatro painéis – cada um deles pode ser entendido enquanto uma forma de desembalar as várias contradições, paradoxos e tensões associadas à narrativa hegemónica do Antropoceno. O primeiro painel, intitulado “Thinking Differently: Alternative Ontologies and the Anthropocene”, introduziu o lema da Conferência, mergulhando nas ontologias contra-hegemónicas, pluriversas, decoloniais e na forma como elas nos permitem olhar para o Antropoceno através de lentes alternativas. Reconhecendo o papel que a arte pode desempenhar na promoção de cenários futuros, e a importância das dimensões estéticas e a sua relação com a ética, política e ontologia, organizámos um segundo painel intitulado “Thinking through the Sensible: Enacting the Anthropocene through the Arts”. O terceiro painel, intitulado “Beyond Human Exceptionalism: Rights of Nature and More-than-Human Agency”, focou-se na crítica ao antropocentrismo, doutrina

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basilar do paradigma moderno que, historicamente, legitimou a exploração da Natureza. Neste painel, ao contrário do tradicional antropocentrismo que caracteriza as discussões acadêmicas, o debate girou em torno da agência mais-que-humana e dos Direitos da Natureza. Por fim, o quarto painel, chamado “Resisting the Anthropocene: Socioecological Conflicts and Territorial Struggles”, apresentou diferentes estudos de caso de espaços-tempos em resistência, luta, e transformação. Para além destes vinte intervenientes, tivemos o privilégio de escutar quatro keynote speakers – Andrew Pickering, Stefania Barca, Gerald T. Aiken, e Miriam Lang –, que muito enriqueceram toda a discussão, trazendo diferentes perspectivas para *dar sentido* ao nosso (caótico) *zeitgeist*.

Neste Número Especial, reunimos os textos submetidos por alguns dos participantes da Conferência. São nove textos que navegam entre as mais variadas disciplinas sociais, mas com um rumo comum: a rejeição do modelo “one-world world”, e a tentativa, ainda que exploratória, de ir *além da modernidade*, tropeçando por mundos-por-vir, mundos-em-devir.

No primeiro texto, Camillo Castillo convida-nos a abraçarmos ontologias alternativas às da modernidade antropocêntrica, extrativista e capitalista. Para tal, e como urge Haraway, instiga-nos a que contemos *outras* histórias. Stephanie Sacco aceita este repto, e, com a sua micro-etnografia, embarcamos numa viagem narrada a partir das histórias de vida de mulheres que passaram por uma transformação ecológica profunda, rompendo com os cânones da modernidade. Nestes dois primeiros textos, Camillo e Stephanie contam-nos essas *outras* histórias, as histórias das excluídas, das silenciadas e das invisibilizadas. Invisibilidades essas que são igualmente resgatadas por Maria Aparecida Mendes e por Carla Ladeira Pimentel Águas, que nos incitam a escutar e a dialogar com os povos subalternizados pela colonização e subjugados pelo imperialismo capitalista. Assim, levam-nos até geografias – territoriais, ancestrais, emocionais – onde a dicotomia entre ser humano e natureza nunca existiu. É o caso dos quilombos brasileiros, nomeadamente do quilombo de Conceição das Crioulas, onde a água é entendida como um bem sagrado – e não como mercadoria –, que garante a manutenção da Vida, que se encontra atualmente ameaçada. Por isso, no artigo seguinte, Jorge Moreira propõe que adotemos uma ética ecocêntrica, centrada na ‘Teia da Vida’. Esta Teia, composta por redes de seres interdependentes, inter-relacionados, entrelaçados, num *continuum* entre humanos e não-humanos, sugere, pois, que a proteção da Natureza seja equiparada à nossa própria proteção. Pensar as redes sociais como integrantes da Teia da Vida, enquanto rede de actantes que liga todos os seres vivos, permite-nos entrelaçar todas as formas de vida – humana, e não-humana – com os fenómenos sociais. Madalena Peres, no artigo seguinte, explora a forma como, na experiência jurídica concreta da Constituição equatoriana, essas preocupações ecocêntricas foram parcialmente traduzidas na sua matriz legal, que vem abrindo portas – epistemológicas e políticas – a um direito onde direitos humanos coexistem, de forma simbiótica, com os direitos da natureza. Embora não constituindo (ainda) uma ruptura epistémico-legal, o reconhecimento dos direitos da natureza pela Constituição do Equador foi já um primeiro passo rumo à valorização de ontologias e epistemologias tradicionais, de matriz indígena. Seguindo essa linha de pensamento, Carlota Houart, no artigo seguinte, argumenta que estas cosmologias, ontologias e epistemologias indígenas nos ajudam a compreender ecossistemas inteiros como entidades vivas, conscientes, parentes, ou até mesmo como *polis*. No seu artigo, Carlota atravessa a linha abissal que separa (e silencia) estas onto-epistemologias ancestrais das modernas, convidando-nos a encarar as florestas e os rios como comunidades políticas. Estas assemblagens multiespécies são igualmente resgatadas por Cristina Brito, no texto seguinte, no qual argumenta em favor das Humanidades do Oceano, para que este seja entendido como um corredor-conector, um lugar-lar, uma rede mais-que-humana. Deste modo, Brito propõe, à semelhança do/as outro/as autore/as que compõem este número, que a natureza e os seres não-humanos sejam reconhecidos como agentes das narrativas históricas. Por fim, neste Número Especial, James Andrew Whitaker e Mariana Garrido levam-nos até à América do Sul, à Guiana e à Colômbia, respetivamente. James A. Whitaker, na senda do perspectivismo ameríndio e das ontologias pluriversas, leva-nos até à vila de Surama, onde o povo Makushi tem, ironicamente, (re)interpretado e (re)criado a crise climática em função de experiências capitalistas de ecoturismo, guiadas pelo paradigma do desenvolvimento e do progresso. Também na Colômbia – o país que mais tempo sucessivo esteve em guerra civil –, as populações indígenas resistem a esta ideia de “progresso” e, desde o Acordo de Paz em 2016,

vêm tentando construir, juntamente com os defensores ambientais, uma *paz integral*. Esta paz integral, baseada em tradições e cosmovisões indígenas, fornece as ferramentas para uma reconciliação com as redes multiespécies que compõem a *Madre Tierra*.

Todos estes textos partem da mesma linha de partida: o caos climático e ecológico em que nos encontramos – fruto de um brutal desdobramento entre seres humanos e natureza não-humana, acentuado e acelerado pelo capitalismo extrativista. Desde esse ponto de partida, esta compilação de textos é um passo rumo a um mundo regenerativo, saudável e sustentável. Embora cientes de que a meta poderá nunca ser alcançada, todos os autores e autoras buscam cultivar sementes de esperança. Num mundo marcado por crises sucessivas e simultâneas, ultrapassar, transgredir, atravessar a linha abissal rumo a outros saberes, práticas, experiências é reconhecer, de antemão, que outros mundos são possíveis, urgentes, e estão já, inclusive, em construção.

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

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In June 2021, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project "TROPO: Ontologies of the Anthropocene in Portugal - social movements, public policies and emerging technologies" of the Social Studies Centre of the University of Coimbra (CES-UC) has organized an international conference entitled *Beyond Modernity: Alternative Incursions into the Anthropocene*. Lasting for two days and in an online format, this Conference's starting point was the controversial emergence of the "Anthropocene" and the current context of ecological and climate chaos. The conference's *leitmotif* was to incite scholars, activists and artists worldwide to question the hegemonic narratives around the climate crisis, proposing, in counterpoint, ontological, epistemic and material alternatives able to challenge the modern ontological paradigm and its capitalist, extractivist, imperialist, colonial, patriarchal and speciesist policies.

Following our call for papers, sixty papers were submitted; all of them raised - from the most varied disciplines of the social sciences, humanities and politics - a reflection on the limits of anthropocentric modernity and how the expansion of neoliberal, extractivist and techno-scientific capitalism depends on socio-ecological destruction. For two days, the twenty chosen proposals entered into dialogue with each other, in a intentionally trans-disciplinary conversation. All of them, by rejecting the "monocultures of the mind", in Vandana Shiva's terms, forced us to expand our capacities of imagination *beyond modernity*.

The conference was divided into four panels - each of them can be understood as a way of unpacking the various contradictions, paradoxes and tensions associated with the hegemonic narrative of the Anthropocene. The first panel, entitled "Thinking Differently: Alternative Ontologies and the Anthropocene", introduced the Conference's motto by delving into counter-hegemonic, pluriversal, decolonial ontologies and how they allow us to look at the Anthropocene through alternative lenses. Recognising the role that art can play in fostering future scenarios, and the importance of aesthetic dimensions and their relationship with ethics, politics and ontology, we organised a second panel entitled "Thinking through

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the Sensible: Enacting the Anthropocene through the Arts". The third panel, entitled "Beyond Human Exceptionalism: Rights of Nature and More-than-Human Agency", focused on the critique of anthropocentrism, the founding doctrine of the modern paradigm that has historically legitimised the exploitation of Nature. In this panel, contrary to the traditional anthropocentrism that characterises academic discussions, the debate revolved around More-than-Human Agency and the Rights of Nature. Finally, the fourth panel, called "Resisting the Anthropocene: Socioecological Conflicts and Territorial Struggles", presented different case studies of geographies in resistance, struggle and transformation. Besides these twenty speakers, we had the privilege of learning with four keynote speakers - Andrew Pickering, Stefania Barca, Gerald T. Aiken, and Miriam Lang -, who greatly enriched the whole discussion, bringing different perspectives to make sense of our (chaotic) zeitgeist.

In this Special Issue of CES Contexto, we gather the texts submitted by some of the Conference participants. This issue is composed of nine texts that navigate between the most varied social disciplines, sharing a common thread: the rejection of the "one-world world" model, and the attempt, albeit exploratory, to *go beyond modernity*, stumbling through worlds-to-be and worlds-in-the-making.

In the first text, Camillo Castillo invites us to embrace alternative ontologies to those of anthropocentric, extractivist and capitalist modernity. To do so, and as Haraway urges, he invites us to tell other stories. Stephanie Sacco accepts this challenge and, with her micro-ethnography, we embark on a journey narrated from the perspective of life stories of two women who have undergone a profound ecological transformation, breaking with the canons of modernity. In these first two texts, Camillo and Stephanie tell us these other stories, the stories of the excluded, the silenced and the invisibilised. Maria Aparecida Mendes and Carla Ladeira Pimentel Águas, who incite us to listen and dialogue with the people subalternized by colonization and subjugated by capitalist imperialism, also rescue these invisibilities. They take us to territorial, ancestral, emotional geographies where the dichotomy between human and nature has never existed. It is the case, for example, of the Brazilian quilombos, namely the quilombo of Conceição das Crioulas, where water is understood as a sacred good - and not as merchandise - that guarantees the maintenance of Life, which is currently under great threat. For this reason, in the following article, Jorge Moreira proposes that we adopt an eco-centric ethic, centred on the "Web of Life". The Web of Life is the infinite multitude of networks of interdependent, interrelated, intertwined beings, in a *continuum* between humans and non-humans. An eco-centric ethical paradigm, thus, suggests that the protection of Nature should be equated to our own protection. Thinking of social networks as part of the Web of Life, as a network of actors that connect all living beings, allows us to intertwine all forms of life - human and non-human - with social phenomena. In the following article, Madalena Peres explores how, in the concrete legal experience of the Ecuadorian Constitution, these eco-centric concerns have been partially translated into its legal matrix, which has been opening epistemological and political doors to a law doctrine where human rights can coexist, in a symbiotic way, with the rights of nature. Although this does not (yet) constitute an epistemic-legal rupture, the recognition of the rights of nature by the Ecuadorian Constitution is already a first step towards the valorisation of traditional ontologies and epistemologies, of indigenous matrix. Following this line of thought, Carlota Houart, in the next article, argues that these indigenous cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies help us understanding entire ecosystems as living and conscious entities, as kin, or even as polis. In her article, Carlota crosses the abyssal line that separates (and silences) these ancestral onto-epistemologies from modern ones, inviting us to view forests and rivers as political communities. These multi-species assemblages are also rescued by Cristina Brito, in her text, in which she argues in favour of the Humanities for the Ocean, so that this blue immensity

starts being understood as a connecting-corridor, a home, a more-than-human network. Brito proposes, like the other authors of this Special Issue, that nature and non-human beings be recognised as agents of historical narratives. Finally, James Andrew Whitaker and Mariana Garrido take us to South America, to Guyana and Colombia, respectively. James A. Whitaker, in the wake of Amerindian perspectivism and pluriversal ontologies, takes us to the village of Surama, where the Makushi people have, ironically, (re)interpreted and (re)created the climate crisis in light of capitalist experiences such as ecotourism, which is guided by the paradigm of development and progress. In Colombia - the country that has experience the longest civil war ever - indigenous populations resist the modern idea of "progress" and, since the Peace Agreement in 2016, have been trying to build, together with environmental defenders, *paz integral*. *Paz integral*, which is based on indigenous traditions and cosmovisions, may provide the tools for reconciliation with the multi-species networks and assemblages that make up the whole *Madre Tierra*.

All these texts take the same departing point: the climatic and ecological chaos in which we find ourselves – which is the fruit of a brutal breakdown between human beings and non-human nature, accentuated and accelerated by extractivist capitalism. From that starting point, this compilation of texts is a step towards a regenerative, healthy and sustainable world. Although aware that this goal may never be reached, all the authors seek to cultivate seeds of hope. In a world marked by successive and simultaneous crises, *going beyond*, transgressing, crossing the abyssal lines, rescuing other knowledges, practices and experiences is recognising that other worlds are not only possible, but are already on the making.

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Opening space for alternative ontologies of the Anthropocene: the struggle campesinos in the high Andean páramos

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Abstract: During times when conservation is urgent because of the planetary consequences of human action, which some have called the “Anthropocene”, it is also necessary to open space for alternative ontologies that engage and intervene the current environmental problems beyond the hegemonic western ontology of “Anthropocene” accounts. As part of an ethnographic work with campesinos, activists and scientists in Colombia, I analyze how conservation policies and multiple ontologies meet in the Anthropocene. I engage in discussions on STS and the Anthropocene interested in how ontology and multiplicity can be a source to push the boundaries of modern politics (De la Cadena & Blaser, 2018) and the coloniality of reality (Burman, 2017), in order to envision alternatives and ways of living in the new climatic regime of the Anthropocene (Latour, 2017), especially from the experiences of those who have managed to resist and survive ‘apocalyptic’ events (Whyte, 2017) like campesinos in the colombian high Andean páramos.

Keywords: Anthropocene, ontology, conservation, páramos, campesinos

Introduction

Páramos are among the most important ecosystems of the northern Andes in South America. The provision of water for millions of people there depends on these unique high mountain ecosystems, which in turn are also the refuge for a rich biodiversity. During the last decade, the Colombian government tried to regulate the conservation of páramos through a cartography made with a Geographic Information System (GIS), so it would be easier to define where these ecosystems were located in order to protect them. But things have been far from being easy. First, restrictions to human activities would be imposed over those people living within the demarcated areas, and second, the very idea of demarcating the ecosystems and limit human action was based on an Anthropocene-like account that directed how conservation should be made: by taking out humans of precious landscapes and deciding before-hand what was the most convenient way to protect the environment. In other words, by tracing and purifying a boundary between culture and nature (Descola, 2013; Latour, 1993).

That’s the story usually told by environmental authorities, urban activists and supported, of course, by powerful accounts of nature provided by science. That one is surely an effective way of telling the environment, to talk about our role within it, our responsibilities and

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desired course of actions to promote environmental action. But we are not obliged to follow unrestrictedly this version. We can always think with others and tell stories with others and that's something that matters, especially when dealing with the ancient topic of the 'end of the world'. That's how Danowski and Viveiros de Castro (2016) invite us to think through the Anthropocene, the story of a particular end, probably the end of the modern and western world.

So, I'd like to start from that idea, where the Anthropocene makes us reflect about what happens when a society faces an 'apocalyptic' event, because it can be surprising that although many have disappeared, there are some that have managed to thrive. This is the case of campesinos communities from the Sumapaz region in Colombia, who found in these remote mountains a safe place after fleeing from political violence in the country during the 19th and 20th centuries. In this time, campesino communities have inhabited the mountain and cultivated more-than-human environments with plants, animals, objects and other beings in the high Andean páramos. The need to protect these ecosystems is uncontroversial, but the attempts to do it have been conflictive with campesino communities that were excluded from the process and imposed a conservation ontology incompatible with their worlds. As part of an ethnographic work that explores the environmental conflict cause by the conservation of páramos policy, in the following pages I critically engage with the Anthropocene literature and reflect about the importance of opening alternative ontologies cultivated by people like the campesinos from Sumapaz to expand the possibilities of environmental change.

The ontology of the Anthropocene

In an epoch of serious environmental distress, pressing issues such as greenhouse emissions, extinctions, oceans acidification and climate change, are among the main concerns of activists, scientists, scholars, social movements and a disparate array of people concerned for the ecological condition of the planet. As the unquestionable cause of such a disaster, 'human action' has been traditionally the main reason to explain and find a way-out of this worrisome situation. It seems that the amount to which these claims are out of dispute is only paralleled to the shortcomings and pitfalls caused in occasions when actions are taken to reverse the whole issue. And this is mainly because usually there is not a serious scrutiny of what it means in practice that the ecological impact of humans is endangering the whole planet.

A language of that kind is familiar to anyone involved with biodiversity and ecosystems conservation, whose starring actors are species, including of course humans, and ecosystems in a seemingly ubiquitous landscape marked by destruction amidst latent threats of risk. The most obvious answer within that scenario is to put limits, perhaps boundaries or some stop to 'human action'. The picture is clear: humans are destroying the environment; the solution is straightforward: we need to repaint the picture without any human in the landscape. Simple as that were the reasons conveyed recently in Colombia to conserve the Andean páramos through their demarcation in a map. This map would make legible the boundaries where 'human action', this time qualified as 'agriculture, mining and livestock', would be excluded as activities with an impact enough to hinder the sustainability of these ecosystems. Then comes the question, how come that picture where an all-encompassing entity such as 'humans' and their action are the common backdrop to understand environmental problems and orient conservation policies nowadays?

The task of figuring out how that picture was somehow possible is at the heart around discussions of the Anthropocene: a word as young as the new century we are living, but carefully imbued with geological 'deep time' to grant it the scope to talk about the centuries

to come and the centuries before us (Zalasiewicz et al., 2011). Born in the inner circles of geosciences and environmental sciences discussions, where probably Páramos have never been mentioned, the kind of discussions taking place there are central when engaging with the urgency to protect ecosystems. It has enabled a conversation about *ecology at a planetary scale, although not certainly a planetary conversation*.

Despite the limited reach and diversity of its audiences and voices, the concept has succeeded at setting the frame for problematizing current ecological issues. For such an achievement it was precise not only to highlight the unprecedented environmental destruction of nowadays, but also to equal humans with the impact of ‘nature forces’ in the scale, intensity, and traces of their consequences. Thus, the Anthropocene indicates the current epoch, where the planet has entered once humans are themselves a geological force able to leave their impact and traces over the Earth for a long time, even altering its own dynamics (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). Although not yet inscribed in the official records of geological time, the concept has served to examine in a broad sense the transformation of the Earth’s surface environments by human activity (Zalasiewicz et al., 2011).

Besides introducing a concept that is highly influential in how many environmental fora understand current ecological problems, the Anthropocene advocates have also successfully stressed the pressing urgency of both the ecological degradation of our times and the imperative to reverse it. (Biermann & Lövbrand, 2019; Galaz, 2019). Its plasticity has helped to include issues that go beyond climate change, like, for example, ocean acidification, species extinction and others. That’s perhaps the reason why the Anthropocene has been widely embraced within the sciences: it has allowed scientists to urge for political actions that encompass a wide range of environmental phenomena caused by human activity that transforms the planet as a whole (Barry & Maslin, 2016). In short, for scientists working in the Anthropocene as Zalasiewicz and his colleagues (Zalasiewicz et al., 2011) this phenomenon poses the most urgent scientific, political and social question of our age. Notions like ‘tipping points’ and ‘planetary boundaries’ emerged as part of this way of problematizing environmental issues (Lenton et al., 2008; Rockström et al., 2009) establishing thresholds that should not be surpassed in order to guarantee the environmental conditions of a planet that is on the edge of being able to host humanity.

These accounts are mainly informed by Earth System Science (ESS), which enacts the Earth as a system that can be visualized, explained and managed at a macroscopic level (Lorimer, 2016). It has been mainly influenced by the Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock & Margulis, 1974) that attends to the mutual coevolution of life and environments. The Anthropocene is an extension of both Earth system science and the Gaia hypothesis, with the focus on humanity as the main force that change the biotic and abiotic environment of the planet Earth (Barry & Maslin, 2016). It’s not a coincidence then, that the Anthropocene has circulated through the same networks of Earth system science where it has found associations with emerging platforms and programs for global environmental research and governance (Lorimer, 2016) or as topic of debate within the International Commission on Stratigraphy, the organization responsible for identifying geological epochs (Castree, 2014).

The formidable achievement of geosciences and Earth System Science has been this way of problematizing ecological issues at a planetary level. By incorporating earlier ideas that for centuries have alerted about the “Anthropozoic” impact on the planet and being part of global agendas of environmental research and governance such as the “Future Earth Program” launched at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, the Anthropocene became a buzzword that have gone beyond the scientific networks. Nevertheless, the concept does not have the same pervasiveness in places other than North America and Western Europe, where it originated. As Donna Haraway (2016) argues, the term seems to be more

meaningful and usable for intellectuals in wealthy classes and regions, especially because it is not an idiomatic term for land, care and the claims for environmental justice in many places around the world (Caney, 2014). This is also highlighted by indigenous scholars for whom the Anthropocene makes difficult other discourses to circulate, which is evident when the institutions where it comes from are majorly Eurocentric, heteropatriarchal and white (Todd, 2016).

The same Haraway (2016) suggests other nomenclature. For her, the Chthulucene is more appropriate to emphasize the necessity to cultivate the multispecies response-ability to make each other capable to act in new ways as the means of ecological reparation. Others like Moore (2015) have proposed the Capitalocene, or the ‘capital era’ that, starting from the late fifteenth century and accelerated by the predominance of endless accumulation of capital, has changed radically the ways of organizing nature, which main results are the current ecological crisis. These critical stances towards the Anthropocene are usually directed at the homogenization of humans that erases differences in the histories of responsibilities and inequalities of the current environmental issues (Malm & Hornborg, 2014). Perhaps one of the most provocative critics has been Swyngedouw (2019), who prefers to talk about the ‘Anthropo(Obs)cene’, to alert about the depoliticization of ecology through an eco-modernist vision that brings together science, geo-engineering and big capital to save the Earth while keeping human civilization more or less as we know it for a bit longer.

Beyond the modernist ontology of the Anthropocene

The proliferation of alternative nomenclatures makes evident a profound issue within traditional Anthropocene accounts: their reductive concept of humans and society as a single force or a subsystem of the big Earth system. It is a shame how contradictory it is, given the importance that the Anthropocene ascribes to the human dimensions of environmental change (Castree, 2014; Lövbrand et al., 2015). That is why a more prominent place for social sciences is necessary in Anthropocene discussions, where the “social” also participates in the production of nature and the environment (Palsson et al., 2012). Assumptions of the “social” and the “human” shape the kind of solutions to the planetary ecological conditions problematized by those involved researching the Anthropocene, so it is clear that we can do it better. Instead of choosing a different nomenclature, I think that keeping the word is also a way to stay with the trouble (Latour, 2017, p. 121). So, the challenge is to turn the Anthropocene into a compelling story of social and environmental change, where the social sciences can play an important role revisiting the assumptions of how we make sense and respond to a changing environment that has become a matter of concern (Lövbrand et al., 2015).

Despite the importance of the alternative nomenclatures to raise overseen issues, I do not think the importance of the Anthropocene lies exclusively on its use as a concept to inform ecological problems. Rather, as others have indicated (Barry & Maslin, 2016; Chakrabarty, 2009; Lewis & Maslin, 2015; Swanson, 2016) the Anthropocene serves as an opportunity to think critically and constructively through the conversations that it enables, like for example the political stakes at play when talking about time, history and environmental change (Galaz, 2019; Swanson, 2016). For that reason, I prefer to understand the Anthropocene as an emergent and contingent interface that makes it possible to think and talk about environmental issues with a variety of people: scientists, artists, scholars, activists and so on. The topic is too important just to leave it alone to a few geoscientists. Here, I follow Noel Castree (Castree, 2014) for whom, in order to open up the dominant ‘managerial’ social science that typically informs the “human dimensions” of the Anthropocene, the humanities

and social science should find forms of engagement that might alter those important conversations happening outside of our disciplines.

However, as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2017) has pointed out very well, debates regarding climate change and the Anthropocene still remain linked to the experiences, values and desires of the developed world. After all, scientists and intellectuals that problematized the Anthropocene come from the same nations that in first place contributed to cause the issue. This unequally distributed discussion of the topic has invisibilized the histories of peoples in the Americas for whom the Anthropocene resonates with their past of displacement, survival, resistance and destruction of their worlds by the European colonization (Danowski & Viveiros De Castro, 2016; Whyte, 2017). These are experiences that could multiply and expand the collective understandings of the disasters and temporalities of the Anthropocene, enriching our environmental discourses by taking into account the human and nonhuman assemblages that shape the present (Davis & Todd, 2017). The urgencies posed by the Anthropocene should be analyzed as a form of problematizing the environment that has strong political assumptions and effects. However, except for a few notable exceptions found in works already mentioned and others that deal critically with the Anthropocene (Andersson, 2020; Hamilton, 2017; Tsing et al., 2017; Yussuf, 2018), it remains still relevant to ask and explore empirically questions that can foster and open up the practices and reflections usually associated with the Anthropocene.

Opening space for alternative ontologies of the Anthropocene

During the recent armed conflict in Colombia, no more than 30 years ago, campesinos from Sumapaz experienced something that their grandfathers also witnessed more than 60 years ago, it was the violence between the Colombian government and the guerillas, but also the displacement of campesino families descending from the mountain. As Gabriel, one campesino friend told me: “it was a very hard situation, you didn’t know what to do, we’ve never faced that before, families were carrying their clothes, food, animals, everything, the first ones came early in the morning and by the time the sun went down, they didn’t stop coming”. For Rosa, another campesino friend, these kinds of stories were not new: “Our bed-time stories were not snow white, Hansel and Gretel or Little Red Riding Hood, instead our mother would tell us her story of she hiding in the bushes or the rocks when one government plane was bombing the region” she would tell me one day while we were planting trees in her farm.

These are not stories of mass extinctions, ocean acidification, or sea ice melting. But I think they offer a small window, an opportunity at least, to start thinking and engaging differently with the Anthropocene. That would require taking these kinds of stories seriously, to interfere with any attempt to singularize the Anthropocene and open other possibilities to think the “end of world”, so to speak. If the Anthropocene keeps its “one-world world” (Law, 2015) ontology, or if we think environmental problems and conservation exclusively in these terms, then we will miss the opportunity to learn from other’s experiences dealing with their own ends of the world. Until today, campesinos in the high Andean páramos don’t know what will happen with them once the conservation of the páramos is enforced, but surely, we don’t yet know how much they know about dealing not only with violence, but with starting over and over again, with producing more-than-human worlds where each small action is in constant relation with animals, water, soil, tools, and more to create new worlds from ashes.

As others have suggested, the Anthropocene is a good opportunity to start questioning the practices that produce the one world world, or the world where there is only space for one world (De la Cadena & Blaser, 2018a; Law, 2015; Verran, 2014). In that sense, thinking

through alternative ontologies and their world-making practices could allow different engagements with the Anthropocene, while simultaneously interfering not only with its traditional meaning, but also the forms to intervene and engage with it and, why not, altering important conversations occurring outside of the social sciences and humanities.

In my case, which is still in progress, it has required taking seriously those usually excluded stories as it happens with campesinos in the conservation of the high Andean mountains in Colombia. Here the Anthropocene is not destiny, but an opportunity to work through the encounter of heterogeneous worlds, that is a political ontology, towards environmental change beyond the modernist one-world world ontology. That means taking seriously situated encounters with conservation and those involved in its practice so the Anthropocene can be turned into a reflection of how we engage with ecological issues nowadays, and hopefully to do it otherwise. This makes central the question of how critically approach the Anthropocene attending the multiplicity, hybridity, and diversity of the lived experiences of people amidst the current ecological conditions (De la Cadena & Blaser, 2018b; Latour, 2018). How can the case of páramos conservation in Colombia facilitate such an analysis? I think that by offering the opportunity to study in practice how environmental problems take form, why some forms of intervention are privileged in conservation and how the experiences of communities that have already faced an “apocalyptic event” can multiply our possibilities to engage with environments. Neglecting that kind of questions will just keep rolling the iteration of a provincial take on the environment and nature that reduces the possibilities to envision alternatives and means of ecological reparation (Gibson-Graham, 2011).

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Ecological Life Transitions: finding refuges in our damaged world

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Abstract: In a global scenario of catastrophes, this paper explores life narratives of people who are living alternative lifestyles as a tentative effort to advance through the times of the Anthropocene-Capitalocene. The paper results from the field research conducted between 2019 and 2020 and emphasised stories of people who went through ecological life transitions: a process in which an ecological worldview stands as the primary lens for understanding one's own being and its relationship to the world. This paper was presented at the online conference "Beyond Modernity: Alternative Incursions into the Anthropocene" in June 15 - 16, 2021, organized by TROPO and funded by FEDER through the COMPETE 2020 and by Portuguese funds through the FCT.

Keywords: Ecological Anthropology, Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Ecological Transition

Introduction

I started my field research in October 2019, when a colleague introduced me to Tainah, one of my main research partners. She is a white woman, in her early thirties, mother of a two-year-old child, living with her partner in a container house in the woods of Coqueirinho - a beautiful beach 40 minutes away from João Pessoa, the capital of the state of Paraíba, in the Northeast of Brazil. She moved out of São Paulo about 6 years earlier, with her partner, and now the father of her child, looking to live a simple life, bonding with nature.

From October 2019 to December 2020, I heard more than 40 stories of people who had gone through life transitions similar to Tainah. Their transitions are part of an increasing movement of middle-class educated people moving from metropolitan areas into the countryside attempting to produce new alternatives to their life and relations with the environment. Based on the research, I assume this movement is part of a reflexive experience of living in a damaged world, as Anna Tsing (2017) put it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed what climate change and the collapse of biodiversity have been announcing for decades: the world as we know it is in ruins, and we need to find possible ways to inhabit it. As Donna Haraway (2016) says, it matters what stories tell stories, and in that sense, it urges us to live and tell stories of alternatives to the Anthropocene and the catastrophes we are experiencing. Authors such as Donna Haraway herself and Anna Tsing, in their analysis of our contemporary situation, urge us to produce a new way of living in between the ruins. Given the nature of socio-political and economic processes shaping this scenario, changes need to be made both in the structural perspective and on the ground. However, in addition to the macro analysis and in accordance with the idea that the stories we tell matter, this paper focuses on other sorts of material. Based on

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stories like Tainah's presented earlier, the paper explores some small-scale strategies created by Brazilian middle-class groups who moved from metropolitan cities into the countryside, producing what I call "ecological life transitions" (Sacco, 2021).

The findings showed that these people, who were born and/or grew up in large urban centres, have gone through ecological life transitions that have influenced their entire lifestyles including their spiritual beliefs, health practices, food consumption, and the construction of their homes. I classify these transitions as processes in which an ecological worldview stands as the primary lens for understanding one's own being and its relationship to the world.

These alternative life narratives indicate that ecological life transitions are continuous, and always carry previous elements of the perception of life and of the person prior to the transitional process. As in a spiral, a new lifestyle takes shape as dualities such as mind/body and nature/culture collapse; as concepts such as health, spirituality, and ecology merge; as the impermanence of things and life as an eternal becoming is understood; as the autonomy of living and the perception of time changes.

This way of living and understanding the world is not the only alternative story with regard to the Anthropocene: they are influenced by people who have been fighting against the catastrophes of our times for centuries, such as indigenous and black rural communities. Together they can increase the quorum of those who care for our planet Earth with all its critters and landscapes. But with the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic, there seems to be an increase of people moving out of big urban centres in a similar process as the transitions of my research partners. Can they be classified as ecological transitions that can help us overcome the Anthropocene as soon as possible? This paper will explore the problems of the Anthropocene, classify what I have been calling ecological life transitions, and reflect on this question.

The problems of the Anthropocene and the narratives to come out of it

The term Anthropocene entered public debate in 2000. The ecologist Eugene Stoermer forged it in the 1980s, and the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen spread it twenty years later (Haraway, 2016: 44). It indicates the geological era when the action of the human species changed the physical structure of our planet Earth. It is a powerful concept, but many authors from Social Sciences use it with caution – the focus on the myth of *Anthropos* places a bad actor in the lead role, which is the entire human species. Since then, other terms have emerged from this debate, such as the Capitalocene (Moore *et al.*, 2016), which indicates an alternative time frame to this era of catastrophes we are living in: the emergence of capitalism as our world-ecology since the XVI century.

Another way of understanding the drastic mutations of our times is with what Isabelle Stengers (2015) called the intrusion of Gaia. Gaia is the name that biochemist James Lovelock gave to the Earth that is alive, a system that acts as a unique being, as opposed to the static setting in which humans perform their lives. Gaia's intrusion happens when she starts to act and affects us directly: the temperature rises, polar ice caps melt, sea levels rise, and populations are forced to seek refuge. Her intrusion responds to the action of humans and is political. She is impossible to be disregarded (although some climate deniers insist on believing they live in the Holocene). Donna Haraway points out that Gaia's intrusion is an event that undoes our cartesian way of thinking, and that the story that modernity has told us – that of humans being "on the land" or in "nature," or that puts human actions in one box and everything else in another – no longer makes sense (Haraway, 2016: 40). One can no longer separate physical geography from human geography (Latour, 2018). And now we must deal

with the consequences of living the narrative of the Anthropocene-Capitalocene and find ways to move out of it as soon as possible. Debora Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro remind us that for Isabelle Stengers, Gaia is not a saviour, who comes to generate unity, but rather to cause unease, a feeling that drives us to "live with and fight against" the Anthropocene, and develop new stories to survive on our planet (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 145).

In a similar manner, Donna Haraway defends that it matters what stories we tell. That is why she proposes the story of the *Chthlucene*, a work of fiction to imagine an alternative *cene*, one that would allow us to respond to all crises and mutations we are experiencing with response-ability – that is, with responsibility and ability to respond. She is not imagining a miracle that would “fix” things, and save us from despair, but a possibility of ongoingness, or of “staying with the trouble”, of living and dying well, with the company of all critters surrounding us (Haraway, 2016: 71). In her *Chthlucene*, she thinks of Humankind as hummus, in a compost pile where bacteria, fungus, plants, and animals work together to be transformed into fertile land. Thinking like this challenges the idea of the modern man, who is self-centred and obsessed with having control of everything, maximizing and accelerating innovation for constant growth. In her story, humans as hummus are playing supporting roles, and are not the protagonists.

This paper is about life narratives of people who are trying to tell themselves other stories for their own lives and for our planet. Of people who drastically changed their way of acting and understanding the world, that have been through what I have called *ecological life transitions*. Those people were born and/or raised in metropolises such as São Paulo in Brazil, where most activities are submissive to the market, and where the logic of control stifles the impetus of citizen initiatives (Lefebvre, 1974). For different reasons they shifted their way of perceiving life and started living more as hummus, as Donna Haraway would say – collaborating and not controlling the critters and landscapes around them. Part of this shift includes the process of moving out of big urban centres, changes in consumption and food habits, spiritual awakening, and building other temporalities for themselves.

The *ecological life transitions* represent one of many different alternative stories. Many traditional, indigenous, and black rural communities have been fighting to maintain their ways of living for centuries and represent an inspiration for ecological transitions. Alone, none of those stories would accelerate the end of the Anthropocene-Capitalocene, but together they present themselves as possible ways of living and dealing with the trouble (Haraway, 2016) we have caused on our planet.

The ecological life transitions

In my master's in Anthropology at Universidade Federal da Paraíba- UFPB about the ecological life transitions, I chose to work deeply on a micro-sociological level with two life narratives: Tanah's, who I have briefly introduced, and Mariliz, or Mari, as she asks to be called. I have also implicated myself in a similar transitional process, living with them and following their diet, health, and spiritual guidance. I'll share a bit of Mariliz's narrative and lifestyle to illustrate what I call ecological life transitions.

Mari was born in Curitiba, Brazil, and is a white woman from the south of Brazil. She studied to be a pharmacist but never worked as one. She travelled around Brazil and Latin America for 8 years, financing her lifestyle in multiple ways: selling art craft, working in bars or hostels, and juggling at traffic lights. She met Olivier, her Swiss partner, in Trinidad and Tobago, after getting a ride on his sailboat off the island. In 2014, they decided to build a

home together and, at least temporarily, stop travelling to live in a black rural community in the north of Chapada Diamantina, in Bahia, Northeastern Brazil.

Mari and Olivier are the only outsiders of the community where they live, and she says that their relationship with the neighbours is not pasteurized. Pasteurization is a process invented by humans to control possible bacteria pathogens in perishable foods like milk, for example. I see the principle of avoiding pasteurization in many aspects of her life philosophy, and not only with her relationship with the community. By choosing not to pasteurize life, Mari – as well as my other research partners in different degrees – leaves aside the obsession of human control, or the idea that humans are superior to other beings that inhabit the planet, and therefore can control them. By non-pasteurizing life, they come close to Donna Haraway's (2016) idea of humanity as hummus, in a compost pile, acting in cooperation with the beings around them to transform organic matter into fertile soil.

Mariliz prefers to live with what is alive in her surroundings, instead of finding ways to make life safer, or more comfortable. She has great friends in the community and also has conflicts with them at the same time. She does her best to have her body implicated directly in the daily processes of her life: she has no gas stove and cooks all of her meals on wood. She cuts the wood with manual instruments, such as a saw or an axe. She plants most of what she eats or buys from neighbours. She hardly eats anything that is out of epoch. She treats herself exclusively with natural medicine. She prefers to walk 30km a day rather than taking a bus. Her electricity comes from a single solar panel that charges a few light bulbs they use at night.

Her lifestyle indicates that she has integrated the ecological shifts that I have perceived in the other stories of *ecological life transitions*, that I have encountered in my fieldwork. In different scales or depth, all the people going through this kind of transition experienced (1) the understanding of the impermanence of things; (2) the collapsing of dualities such as mind/body and nature/culture; (3) a constant search of autonomy; (4) a personal time ecology that integrates different temporalities; and finally, (5) a never-ending process of constant change, that looks like a spiral, because the transition is not linear or definitive, and is full of contradictions and turning back to their former way of understanding life.

Understanding the impermanence of things is seeing that life happens when different critters and landscapes meet. Mariliz and other research partners understand that most of the time things do not go as planned because they depend on the encounters of different beings - and not only at their will. In Mari's trajectory, as well as for many other people in transition, the traveller lifestyle, with no plans or fixed residence, appears as the lifestyle of impermanence. By accepting it, one accepts life as becoming, which happens in encounters with landscapes and human and non-human beings that cross one's path.

Dualities such as mind/body and nature/culture collapse when practices of knowledge related to spirituality, health, and ecology are central and inseparable in one's lifestyle. In the narratives I listened to, these concepts are inextricably linked. The spiritual dimension is central in Mari and Tainah's trajectory. Through different paths, both seek inspiration in distinct techniques, beliefs, and traditions, form their toolboxes of study and spiritual understanding. These practices are directly associated with health practices of self-care. Ecology is associated with spirituality and health because of the ontological dignity given to all beings in this transition. The forest, the field, the trees, the food, the animals, the stones, the landscape as a whole, gain the status of life that deserves to be respected and is also a spiritual being.

These enchanted lenses of understanding and living in the world builds the idea of double cultivation, which is the cultivation of the self and of the environment, which appears with the concern for the survival of the planet and in the daily choices of food, of care with

discarded materials, and with the choice of materials to build their houses. Although Mari's way of living this double cultivation is radical, in the sense that her way of doing it means abdicating infrastructures that are essential for many people – including for her neighbours in the community she lives in. Other research partners, such as Tainah, collapse dualities on another scale. Giving ontological dignity to all critters with whom they relate doesn't implicate such abdications and yet represents acting on an ecological point of view. Tainah has a car, electricity, and a gas stove, and yet her lifestyle is an ecological transition. It is at the junction of spirituality, health, and ecology that the dualities of nature/culture and body/mind collapse, and that can happen in multiple ways.

Building an autonomous lifestyle is also a central piece in this transition. Autonomy appeared in my ethnographic study as the direct implication of the body in carrying out daily life-sustaining activities. In Mari's narrative, her autonomy standards are high: the implication of her body in the search for autonomy is radical since there is a refusal of some facilitators, such as gas, a stove, telephone, electricity, bicycles or cars, and industrialized foods. Planting, harvesting, preparing food on her wooden stove, building her own house, drinking rainwater – are all examples of how my interlocutors' bodies are involved with few intermediaries in the daily processes of maintaining the basic needs of being.

All of those trends exposed so far lead to a unique experience of time. My research partners have built their own temporal ecologies (Grossin, 1996) according to the daily activities of their lifestyle, which on different levels are not pasteurized but are autonomous. In the case of Mari, her daily rhythm is usually marked by the preparation of meals and the work on the land. These different temporalities of the kitchen and agriculture mix with the timings of the community and also with the time of the modern clock, which is also part of her temporal ecology.

Last, but certainly not least, these transitions are metaphorically presented as spirals. They are a continuous movement that is constantly opening up, and spinning around in a close circle. It is in the turns of the image of the spiral that elements from their lives from before the transition appear since they are fundamental in the construction of these people's subjectivities. This is why I chose the word transition to explain this process of change that my research partners go through. Transition indicates a movement from one place to another. A movement in which elements of both places appear. Mari's conflicts with the community and the workload she has to maintain daily, as well as some of her ideals of autonomy, make her rethink her lifestyle constantly. She is always planning her next big trip to get some time away from her daily life. The transitions are never complete or coherent, but are constant, in movement, with moments of turning back and facing elements of their previous beliefs.

Covid-19 pandemic: a turning point for future transitions

In all narratives of *ecological life transitions* that I heard, there was a clear moment that operated as a trigger in their life stories and motivated the start of the practical transition. A moment that Karina Kuschnir calls turning points: a decisive moment that marks the shift of mindset and the beginning of change when life narratives are told (Kuschnir, 2001: 149). One of my research partners told me her process began when a cyclist suffered a brutal accident on Paulista Avenue in São Paulo. The arm of the cyclist had been severed, and the driver who caused the accident did not provide any help and threw the severed arm into a stream. Another person said that her trigger was in a theatre class when the teacher explained labour exploitation and the concept of added value. Mari's turning point was her participation in the student movement while she was at university. Those turning points indicate when the transitions begin.

Being at Mariliz's house in March 2020, when the COVID-19 quarantine started in Brazil, it was hard not to compare her lifestyle with the life of friends and family who were living in big urban centres, such as São Paulo. Each time I walked over to the mango tree where I could find a bit of internet connection, I couldn't stop thinking that she was much safer inside her refuge of autonomy than my friends and family in the city. And I was not the only one with that thought. A few months into the pandemic, stories of people moving out of big urban centres and transitioning to other lifestyles started to emerge around my networks and on the news.

One example is an article from the Spanish newspaper *El País*, in February 2021, called *The Urgent Utopia of Going Back to the Countryside*. It tells the story of different families from Madrid who left their homes in the city after the rigid lockdown in Spain, in July 2020. Families who moved to small towns in the countryside looking to benefit their mental health, especially for the children who suffered from isolation in the small apartments in Madrid. Another example is a TV show aired on Globo, the biggest Brazilian broadcast, in March 2021. It showcases the stories of families who "left the big city for the countryside", driven by the pandemic, were told. They visited a woman who moved to a family property in the countryside and sold vegetables and fruit produced by her neighbours in Rio de Janeiro, a lawyer from Sergipe who is investing in medium-scale conventional agricultural production, and a stock exchange operator who moved to a country house since his work is now remote.

Both are examples of many articles that came out on the news in Brazil and around the world regarding this pandemic trend that may or may not become a demographic change in the future. What they point out is that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a turning point for people – mainly the ones who have resources, as both examples indicate – to move out of the city and transition to a new lifestyle.

I come back to Donna Haraway and her idea of telling other stories, such as those of humans as hummus to overcome the Anthropocene-Capitalocene to question both ecological life transitions that I have classified earlier in this article and the new wave of transitions that are emerging as a consequence of the pandemic.

When talking about the new transitioners, some of the questions that emerge are: how are those people arriving in these new communities? How do they relate to their new neighbours – human and non-humans? Are they drastically changing their ways of understanding what life is, how the world operates and how they act on it? Can we tell if they are going through the ecological life transitions with some of the five trends I have indicated earlier, implied in their lifestyles? Those are questions for future research, but they are important to calibrate the perception and analyse this growing movement and its consequences.

As for my research partners who went or are going through ecological life transitions, building autonomy, their own life ecologies, understanding life as impermanent and in constant movement and collapsing dualities, they are full of contradictions and troubles that they try to live with. Their stories are complex – as the metaphor of the figure of the spiral points out – and individual. They are close to the idea of living as hummus, transforming themselves, their relations with the landscape, and the kind of life that emerges from that. But could we say that this individual effort of change can possibly work as an accelerator of the process of passing the Anthropocene-Capitalocene? Most probably, the answer to that question is negative. But with all of the incoherence, challenges, and beauty, they are living a different story. As an alternative to the story of the Anthropocene-Capitalocene, they are proposing other possibilities of living in our damaged world. And they are not the only ones doing so. Overcoming these catastrophic times is a cosmopolitical movement, in the sense that it needs many different alternatives and possible stories from people who are close to the land and to our planet, Earth.

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Para além do Antropoceno: sabedorias ancestrais sobre a água do quilombo de Conceição das Crioulas, sertão de Pernambuco, Brasil

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Resumo: Atravessamos um período de transição paradigmática (Santos, 2006) ligado à crise da hegemonia ocidental. Dentre os desafios atuais, o impacto das forças antrópicas conduz ao termo Antropoceno para designar uma era geológica caracterizada pelas perturbações decorrentes da ação humana. Outros termos denominam esta nova era, como Capitaloceno – que assinala a forma capitalista de organização do ambiente (Moore, 2016). Perante a encruzilhada ambiental e civilizatória, o conceito de epistemologias do Sul (Santos & Meneses, 2009) denuncia a supressão de saberes gerada pela epistemologia dominante. Desde este prisma, exploramos os saberes sobre a água contrastantes com a ideia de água-mercadoria do Capitaloceno: discutimos a visão sobre a água do quilombo de Conceição das Crioulas (Pernambuco-Brasil), uma área de longas estiagens associada à ausência de políticas públicas, onde a população desenvolveu habilidades para entender as linguagens da natureza.

Palavras-chave: Água, Capitaloceno, quilombo, epistemologias do Sul, meio ambiente

Introdução

Atravessamos um período de transição paradigmática que, segundo Boaventura Santos (2009a), testemunha a crise da hegemonia sociocultural da modernidade ocidental. Dentre as crises que nos desafiam (éticas, políticas, sanitárias etc.), o impacto das forças antrópicas sobre a moldagem do sistema Terra tem levado cientistas a usarem o termo Antropoceno para designarem uma era geológica caracterizada por perturbações decorrentes da ação humana na atmosfera, solos e oceanos. Outros nomes buscam caracterizar esta nova era, como Capitaloceno – que assinala a forma capitalista de organização do meio ambiente (Moore, 2016).

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Perante esta encruzilhada ambiental e civilizatória, o conceito de epistemologias do Sul (Santos & Meneses, 2009) denuncia a supressão de saberes desencadeada pela epistemologia dominante. Desde esta perspectiva, propomos explorar os conhecimentos sobre a água contrastantes com a acepção de “água-mercadoria” concebida pelo Capitaloceno: a partir de uma abordagem qualitativa, refletimos acerca da percepção sobre a água – seus significados, usos, estratégias de gestão e conservação – do quilombo de Conceição das Crioulas, situado em Salgueiro, Sertão pernambucano, Brasil.

Como sertanejo de baixo poder aquisitivo, o povo quilombola de Conceição das Crioulas enfrenta o desafio de viver no clima semiárido, em uma área de longas estiagens associada à ausência de políticas públicas, onde a população desenvolveu habilidades para entender as linguagens da natureza, constituindo uma sabedoria ancestral. Ali, a água tem um valor imensurável: a chegada da chuva transforma, em poucos dias, a mata cinzenta em arvoredo de verde irreconhecível; ela alegra o cotidiano, alimenta a esperança de se conseguir uma boa colheita, matar a sede da população e dos animais. Também potencializa os encontros em mutirões para cuidar dos roçados, para lavar roupas ou venerar a água nos pequenos açudes, barreiros. Com base no marco teórico das epistemologias do Sul, a presente proposta visa explorar esses saberes ligados aos olhos d’água, aos caldeirões⁴, à água de cisterna e das torneiras da comunidade, em contraposição à visão de mercado característica do Antropoceno.

Segundo Marques (2018), logo no início do século XXI, mais da metade da água doce acessível já tinha sido utilizada pelo ser humano. Além disso, segundo o autor, em 2000, pelo menos 50% da superfície terrestre não coberta de gelo já havia sido transformada pela ação antrópica, e a extensão de terras ocupadas pela agricultura chegou a dobrar no último século, em detrimento das florestas. As inquietações sobre o futuro tornam-se ainda mais desafiadoras se considerarmos que o processo de desertificação deverá expulsar 135 milhões de pessoas de suas terras, ao passo que 1,8 bilhões de pessoas irão enfrentar escassez em 2025 (Marengo, 2008).

Este caminho de crise e colapso reflete uma forma de estruturação do mundo derivada da matriz colonial, que moldou através dos tempos as relações de poder, as hierarquias epistêmicas e a formação dos imaginários. E é nesse sentido que se revela a urgência de escuta e diálogo com os povos subalternizados pela colonização, tal como apontam as epistemologias do Sul. O Brasil, em sua diversidade, é um país que conta com inúmeras matrizes epistêmicas que diferem das epistemologias hegemônicas, e que se concentram nas periferias, nas comunidades tradicionais, junto aos povos indígenas. Esses espaços de construção de saberes, comumente invisibilizados e tão desafiados pelo avanço das forças do capital e do fascismo social (Santos *et al.*, 2019), são imprescindíveis para a reflexão sobre o Capitaloceno, na medida em que não são pautados pela dicotomia entre ser humano e natureza.

Um desses espaços é o quilombo. Termo aplicado historicamente para caracterizar locais criminalizados no contexto escravista brasileiro, caracteriza na atualidade grupos sociais de negros e negras que compartilham relações sociais tipificadas a partir do uso coletivo da terra, das relações de reciprocidade, laços de parentesco e práticas culturais (Bandeira e Sodré, 1993). Segundo a Associação Brasileira de Antropologia,

Contemporaneamente, [...] o termo quilombo não se refere a resíduos ou resquícios arqueológicos de ocupação temporal ou de comprovação biológica. Também não se trata de grupos isolados ou de uma população estritamente homogênea. Da mesma forma, nem sempre foram constituídos a partir de

⁴ Depressão de baixo relevo nos lajedos rochosos.

movimentos insurrecionais ou rebelados mas, sobretudo, consistem em grupos que desenvolveram práticas cotidianas de resistência na manutenção e reprodução de seus modos de vida característicos e na consolidação de um território próprio (ABA, apud O'Dwyer, 2002: 18-19).

Portanto, é a partir de um quilombo que lançaremos o nosso olhar acerca dos diferentes significados atribuídos à água, enquanto mote para refletirmos sobre os desafios impostos pelo Capitaloceno e as potencialidades das epistemologias não-hegemônicas. Começaremos por explorar o conceito de Antropoceno e abordagens afins, para a seguir discutir o conceito de epistemologias do Sul. Mais adiante, após uma breve descrição contextual e metodológica, adentraremos em Conceição das Crioulas e nas suas relações com a água.

O Antropoceno

Conforme descrito por Luiz Marques (2018), o conceito de Antropoceno é uma noção pluriatorial que emergiu entre os anos 1980-90, tendo sido efetivamente proposta em 2000 por Crutzen e Stoermer. Os autores aumentaram que, dentre as forças biofísicas que moldam o sistema Terra, a ação antrópica vem prevalecendo sobre os fatores não humanos:

Considerando esses e muitos outros impactos importantes e ainda crescentes das atividades humanas na Terra e na atmosfera, e em todas as escalas, inclusive globais, parece-nos mais do que apropriado enfatizar o papel central da humanidade na geologia e ecologia, propondo o uso do termo 'antropoceno' para a época geológica atual (Crutzen e Stoermer, 2000: 17)⁵.

Latour (2017) observa que o rótulo “Antropoceno” segue sendo um campo de disputas. De fato, o próprio marco inicial da nova era encontra diferentes versões; Crutzen e Stoermer, por exemplo, localizam o nascimento do Antropoceno por volta do final do século XVIII, no âmbito da Revolução Industrial. Moore, por sua vez, considera que “as origens das crises inseparáveis, mas distintas, de acumulação de capital e estabilidade biosférica de hoje são encontradas em uma série de transformações de paisagem, classes, territórios e técnicas que surgiram nos três séculos após 1450” (2016: 7). Outros autores preferem situar o início do Antropoceno a partir da década de 50-60 do século XX.

Outra fonte de dissensos refere-se à própria denominação da era geológica. “Capitaloceno” (Moore, 2016), “Plutoceno” (Solón, 2019), “Chthuluceno” (Haraway, 2015) são alguns dos nomes atribuídos ao período, reivindicando maior complexidade à ideia generalizante de ação “humana”. É nesse sentido, por exemplo, que Moore delimita especificamente a forma capitalista de organização do ambiente, o Capitaloceno:

O capitalismo é um sistema que faz com que a natureza – a natureza humana também! – trabalhe de graça ou a um custo muito baixo. A ‘lei’ do valor do capitalismo – como e o que ele prioriza na teia da vida – sempre foi uma lei da Natureza Barata (sim, absurdo! Pois a natureza nunca é barata). O processo estranho e dinâmico de colocar a natureza para trabalhar de forma barata tem sido a base para as realizações da modernidade, sua fome e capacidade de extrair as ‘quatro pechinchas’: comida, energia, matérias-primas e vida humana. Essas capacidades agora estão se esgotando (Moore, 2016: 11).

Citando McBrien, Moore (2016) aponta que a “acumulação por extinção” foi fundamental para o capitalismo desde o seu início. O primeiro, portanto, equipara o Capitaloceno a uma ideia de Necroceno – na medida em que a acumulação de capital equivale à acumulação de extinção potencial, que experimentou uma monumental ampliação nas últimas décadas.

⁵ Esta e as demais traduções livres são de nossa autoria

O que estas e outras definições buscam descrever, portanto, é um contexto de profunda crise, alavancada por uma lógica de funcionamento do sistema que precisa de uma acumulação crescente e infinita de valores, causando desequilíbrios e extinções em massa já comparáveis às cinco grandes extinções anteriores: “Os paleontólogos do futuro, se algum futuro ainda nos resta, notarão o súbito desaparecimento dos registros fósseis de um número incalculável de espécies” (Marques, 2018: 473).

Ao alertar que “a beira da extinção não é apenas uma metáfora”, Haraway (2015: 161), por sua vez, considera que apenas um intenso compromisso colaborativo poderá oferecer respostas a esse dilema. Para tanto, a segmentação humano/natureza deve ser superada, rumo a “ricas associações multiespécies que incluam pessoas” (Ibidem: 160). Essa possibilidade nos conduz ao diálogo com culturas que não são regidas pela ideia abstrata de superioridade humana, negando portanto a redução da natureza a um recurso a ser controlado e consumido. Esse caminho nos remete à discussão sobre as epistemologias do Sul como imperativa para a superação do paradigma antropocêntrico e suas perturbadoras consequências.

As epistemologias do Sul se referem a um conjunto de intervenções epistemológicas que denunciam a supressão de saberes desencadeada pela epistemologia dominante. “A compreensão do mundo excede largamente a compreensão ocidental do mundo”, avisa Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009a: 43). Segundo ele, o “Sul” deve ser entendido como um campo de desafios epistêmicos, atentos aos impactos causados pelo capitalismo, na sua relação colonial com o mundo. A expansão europeia e seus desdobramentos históricos geraram a invisibilização de saberes dos povos conquistados, levando ao que Santos (2006) denomina como “desperdício de experiências”.

Sobre a relação entre o paradigma epistêmico moderno ocidental e a crise ambiental, Boaventura Santos indaga: se é certo que sem o que designamos por natureza não poderemos sobreviver, como explicar “que o mais ambicioso projecto, posto em marcha nos últimos quatrocentos anos, para controlar a natureza e a colocar ao serviço do homem, tenha resultado no mais trágico descontrolo e na ameaça, cada vez mais iminente, à sobrevivência da humanidade?” (2009b: 456).

Esse paradoxo tem suas origens na antiga separação entre ser humano e natureza. Buscando na Antiguidade as origens da dualidade, Marques (2018) argumenta que surge na Grécia uma forma de tensão entre duas ideias de natureza – o prometeísmo e o orfismo. A primeira, simbolizada pela figura de Prometeu, representa o ardil que furta os segredos da natureza aos deuses, a fim de melhorar a vida dos humanos. Ao roubar o fogo e presentear-lo à humanidade, a atitude prometeica sugere o controle e conquista daquilo que a cerca. Esta imagem difere da atitude de Orfeu, cuja relação com a natureza pode ser entendida como poética e filosófica. Enfim, citando Christian Godin, Marques caracteriza duas atitudes antinômicas que o ser humano pode adotar em relação à natureza: a de fusão ou de conquista. No decorrer da história, a atitude prometeica foi reduzindo a natureza a objeto, “até estranhá-la completamente na Idade Moderna ao convertê-la em quantidade (Marques, 2018: 476).

A abstração humano/natureza ou natureza/sociedade conforma-se historicamente a uma série aparentemente interminável de exclusões humanas: “Essas exclusões correspondem a uma longa história de subordinação de mulheres, populações coloniais e povos não brancos – os humanos raramente são aceitos como membros da ‘sociedade civilizada’ de Adam Smith” (Moore, 2016: 2). Por isso, as discussões sobre a crise ambiental e a busca de saídas para as perturbações geradas para todas as formas de vida no Antropoceno devem passar pela escuta dos saberes silenciados pelo processo colonial, tal como preconizam as epistemologias do Sul. Segundo o intelectual indígena brasileiro Ailton Krenak,

O que aprendi ao longo dessas décadas é que todos precisam despertar, porque, se durante um tempo éramos nós, os povos indígenas, que estávamos ameaçados de ruptura ou da extinção dos sentidos das

nossas vidas, hoje estamos todos diante da iminência de a Terra não suportar a nossa demanda (Krenak, 2019, p. 22-23).

É nesse sentido que avançamos rumo à discussão sobre os saberes e percepções sobre a água a partir de uma comunidade quilombola brasileira, como uma contribuição para pensarmos sobre outras possíveis respostas – menos fracas, mais convincentes – às perguntas fortes (Santos, 2009b) que desafiam a nossa era.

Aguas e saberes em conceição das crioulas

O quilombo de Conceição das Crioulas localiza-se no II Distrito Salgueiro, Sertão Central pernambucano, bioma Caatinga. Faz parte da Bacia Hidrográfica do Rio São Francisco. Segundo a oralidade, o território quilombola tem origem no final do século XVIII, a partir da chegada de um grupo de seis mulheres negras à região, sendo que o seu registro oficial é de 1802. As narrativas evidenciam o protagonismo das mulheres desde sua fundação e, dentre elas, destacam-se: Francisca Presidente; Francisca Macário; Romana; Germana, Mendencha Ferreira e Francisca Ferreira – sendo esta última apontada como a responsável pela doação de uma parte do território para a construção da capela de Nossa Senhora da Conceição. A tonalidade da pele das mulheres, somada à imagem da santa trazida por Francisco José, único homem mencionado nos relatos da história oral, deram origem ao nome do quilombo: Conceição das Crioulas.

A economia baseia-se na produção agrícola diversificada de baixo impacto em pequenos roçados, quintais produtivos, criação de caprinos, suínos, galinhas, extrativismo sustentável, em especial a coleta dos frutos do umbuzeiro (*Spondias tuberosa*) para alimentação humana, animal e venda dos excedentes. A responsabilidade de cuidar da saúde da população crioula recai sobre a própria comunidade. Os saberes ancestrais sempre foram compartilhados por meio da oralidade, de uma geração para outra. As políticas públicas governamentais no território sempre foram incipientes, mas se, por um lado, o Estado tentava invisibilizar os/as quilombolas para seguir negando acesso às políticas públicas, por outro havia a natureza como grande aliada, oferecendo os elementos fundamentais para a manutenção da vida no território. Observamos que o mergulho aqui proposto para a análise das relações e significados atribuídos à água no quilombo lança mão de uma abordagem qualitativa, tendo a narrativa autobiográfica como estratégia metodológica. Vale observar que, em termos gerais, a narrativa não é um mero “recontar de eventos”: na esteira de Labov, Paiva (2008) analisa que esta está conectada à organização da experiência humana – o que inclui, evidentemente, o campo epistêmico.

No que se refere às percepções sobre a água em Conceição das Crioulas, o período chuvoso no Sertão pernambucano ocorre geralmente entre janeiro e março. Entretanto, entre 2011 e 2018 choveu muito pouco e o calor provocou a morte de árvores, comprometeu a agricultura e a criação de animais. Vale observar que os instrumentos normativos que regulam o uso das águas no território brasileiro, em grande medida, favorecem a apropriação dos recursos hídricos para fins comerciais: o agronegócio, a mineração, industrialização, geração de energia e a urbanização são demandantes de grande quantidade de água. O seu mau uso – que inclui a utilização de produtos químicos e derramamento de esgoto doméstico e industrial – provoca a escassez, mesmo onde há água em abundância.

No que se refere ao Sertão nordestino, corresponde à área mais impactada pela escassez de água no Brasil. A ausência de medidas de convivência com a seca no semiárido brasileiro

inspirou obras tais como *Vidas Secas*, de Graciliano Ramos (2015 [1938]) e os poemas da obra *Morte e Vida Severina*, de João Cabral de Melo Neto (2010 [1955]). Mas quem cantou muito bem a vida do sertanejo foi o mestre Luiz Gonzaga⁶.

Em Conceição das Crioulas, a água é um bem sagrado que garante a manutenção da vida. Quando a chuva cai, a terra “bebe” parte da água para guardar no subsolo, e com raridade reaparece na superfície, transformada em “olho d’água”. Nesses locais, a população da comunidade faz perfurações, denominadas “cacimbas”. Outra parte da água das chuvas hidrata e facilita a ingestão de nutrientes pelas plantas, que são fontes de alimentos humano e animal; uma terceira parte desce pelas inclinações para os reservatórios naturais, denominados “caldeirões de pedras”. A intervenção humana no processo de represamento das águas no território se dá através da perfuração de poços/cacimbas, aprofundamento dos reservatórios naturais, construção de açudes e barragens e, mas recentemente, de cisternas de placas – e, por último, da adutora do rio São Francisco.

Os caldeirões têm tamanhos variados, sendo que as águas neles acumuladas são utilizadas para o consumo humano e animal. Logo nas primeiras chuvas, essas águas são usadas para cozinhar, mas também para lavar roupas e utensílios. A água que serve para beber não deve ser utilizada para outros fins, visto que se trata de um recurso limitado – mas, no período chuvoso, esse uso acontece sem sentimento de culpa. Importante notar que, ao perceberem a aproximação das chuvas, as famílias se organizam em mutirão para fazerem a limpeza dos reservatórios e depois cobri-los com estacas de madeira e lajotas de pedra, para receberem a tão esperada água boa. Essa também é uma forma de diminuir os efeitos da evaporação, impedir que as folhas caiam em excesso e comprometam a qualidade da água, além de prevenir que os animais ali se afoguem acidentalmente.

Até a década de 1980, para atender a demanda nos períodos de estiagem, as famílias tinham como alternativa a perfuração de poços ou cacimbas. Para saberem onde encontrar a água no subsolo com sabor adequado para o consumo humano, as famílias se orientavam pela linguagem da natureza: as/os mestres dos saberes locais observavam pequenas áreas verdes em meio aos vegetais acinzentados pela falta das chuvas e, nesses locais, havia a possibilidade de se encontrar água. Então, organizada em mutirão, a população perfurava as cacimbas. Geralmente, essas fontes se situam a cerca de 3 km das residências e têm profundidades variadas.

Durante o dia, a alta temperatura acelera a evaporação e, além disso, a movimentação das famílias em busca de água é maior. Por isso, as cacimbas secam muito rápido. Portanto, muitos preferem organizar-se em grupos, geralmente formados por mulheres que residem próximas umas das outras, para buscar água à noite – quando esta é mais abundante. Quanto maior o tempo de estiagem, maior a quantidade de pessoas em volta das cacimbas: enquanto uma ou duas mulheres descem as escadas com a lata, com capacidade para 18 litros, e com uma cuia de cabaça⁷ para pegar a água que nasce das paredes da cacimba, outras pessoas permanecem ao redor do local.

Na década de 1950, as autoridades já utilizavam recursos públicos para a construção de açudes para garantir a produção agrícola irrigada. Porém, os locais destinados a esses empreendimentos eram justamente aqueles de que os fazendeiros haviam se apossado, a exemplo do açude próximo à Vila Centro, em Conceição das Crioulas. Segundo a oralidade, o reservatório foi concluído em 1960, época em que o município tinha como prefeito o

⁶ Luiz Gonzaga do Nascimento foi um cantor e compositor pernambucano, conhecido como o “rei do Baião”. É considerado uma das figuras mais importantes e criativas da música popular brasileira.

⁷ Utensílio doméstico bastante usado na região.

Audízio Rocha Sampaio. Nesse local, a parte em que a água estava represada servia ao fazendeiro, mas a parte posterior o servia igualmente – pois, com o auxílio de um cifão, ele tirava a quantidade de água que desejasse.

Para a população quilombola, as cacimbas continuaram sendo a principal alternativa de convivência com o semiárido. Na década de 1990, em especial no período em que a professora Creuza Pereira do Nascimento foi a prefeita do município de Salgueiro, foram construídas pequenas barragens em áreas comuns do território, viabilizando essa forma de reservar as águas.

A década de 1980 foi marcada por secas prolongadas, tempo de fome e sede que Josué de Castro (1984) comparou à fome na Idade Média europeia. Nesse período, começou a destacar-se no Sertão o abastecimento de água potável através de carros-pipa. Segundo Neto (2020), essa política pública foi iniciada na década de 1960. Mais uma vez, porém, essa ação governamental se materializou como um instrumento de manipulação e compra de votos diante da penúria causada pela sede.

Por muito tempo, portanto, a água foi transportada dentro do território quilombola através dos meios criados por sua própria população. Quem tinha certo poder aquisitivo comprava um jumento e nele eram colocadas duas “acoretas” atadas em uma cangalha sobre as costas. Esses utensílios eram confeccionados com madeira ou pneus velhos de caminhão. Quem não dispunha de condições para adquirir um animal, usava o próprio corpo para transportar a água. As mulheres costumavam carregar água nas latas de flande ou de zinco, ou em cabaças grandes. Geralmente, as vasílias tinham capacidade para vinte litros de água e eram apoiada na cabeça sobre um pano enrolado. Como essa era uma prática cotidiana, as mulheres desenvolviam habilidades para andar dois, três, até quatro quilômetros com a lata cheia de água solta na cabeça. Em algumas situações, além da lata na cabeça, uma criança era também levada ao colo.

Os homens se ocupavam menos dessa tarefa mas, quando era necessário, eles andavam com duas latas – cada uma com uma madeira presa na parte superior, com uma corda atada a uma estaca, também de madeira, sobre o ombro. Desse modo, o peso ficava dividido em partes iguais – como se fosse uma balança antiga – para não derramar a água durante a viagem. Esse modelo era chamado de “galão d'água”.

A participação de lideranças do quilombo de Conceição das Crioulas na comissão organizadora do Programa 1 Milhão de Cisternas, implementado a partir de 2003, representa uma das experiências mais exitosas relacionadas à água potável em benefício do povo quilombola. As cisternas viabilizam o direito de acesso à água como bem natural sagrado, disponível a poucos metros das residências, durante um longo período. As famílias são orientadas pelo Programa sobre o tempo certo de guardá-la e sobre as melhores formas de utilização, para que a água não falte na estiagem. Essa alternativa proporciona mais tempo para as famílias quilombolas se dedicarem a outras atividades, a exemplo dos estudos, da participação em ações formativas, articulações e lutas por outros direitos que são violados pelos governantes.

A água simboliza a vida em todos os aspectos. Seja na cacimba, no calderão, no açude, ela representa o lugar de compartilhar saberes, as histórias dos antepassados, as alegrias, tristezas, os acolhimentos e aconselhamentos; também é um espaço para se aprender sobre a relação que devemos ter com os elementos da natureza. Portanto, no quilombo de Conceição das Crioulas, a água está longe de ser um bem do mercado. Como diz Elionice Sacramento Maré (2019), a água é vida e tem que ser tratada com todo respeito que merece.

Considerações finais

A água, tornada *commodity*, é hoje objeto de disputa. Sua conquista e transformação em produto de mercado é um ponto fulcral para a acumulação de capital, tornando-se uma discussão central dentro do conjunto de dilemas que desafiam o projeto civilizatório da modernidade ocidental. Como sabemos, sua escassez coloca em xeque a existência física dos povos, sendo portanto fundamental para pensarmos nas dores e desdobramentos da colonização, conforme ilustra a metáfora do Sul (Santos, 2009a). Nesse sentido, o direito negado se reflete diretamente nos corpos – na sede, nas longas caminhadas, no peso sobre a cabeça ou sobre os ombros.

O exemplo de Conceição das Crioulas, quilombo situado em uma região semiárida, nos ensina sobre esse sofrimento, mas também traz outras lições. Uma delas é a importância do protagonismo local nas discussões sobre a implementação de políticas públicas, como no caso do Programa 1 Milhão de Cisternas. A fala ativa dos membros da comunidade durante os processos decisórios viabilizou o acesso a uma política pública que fora insistentemente negada no decorrer da sua trajetória.

Mas as lições de Conceição das Crioulas também se estendem pelos campos epistêmico e simbólico. O próprio sentido da palavra “água” ganha outras conotações: ao invés de ser um recurso a ser usado – sem afetos e sem história – como aquele que sai das torneiras das cidades, ali é um elemento sagrado, festejado, territorializado. Essa percepção da água rompe com a visão dicotômica entre o humano e a natureza, através do sentido de pertencimento. Ao invés de consumo e controle, o encontro festivo da população com as primeiras chuvas é atravessado pelo respeito e pelo diálogo com as linguagens naturais.

O estabelecimento deste diálogo, inclusive, desdobra-se em uma série de saberes relacionados à água e ao enfrentamento de sua escassez. Além disso, o ritmo das águas também marca o fluxo da organização social, através dos mutirões e outros regimes solidários em torno de propósitos comuns. Vale observar, nesse contexto, o papel decisivo das mulheres para o abastecimento e enfrentamento da escassez. Este é um exemplo, enfim, de epistemologias do Sul a ser reverberado neste momento histórico que nos desafia a enfrentar a aridez do Capitaloceno.

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Pensar a Humanidade e as Redes através da Teia da Vida

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Resumo: A comunidade científica aponta-nos cenários apocalípticos de caos climático e ecológico. Um futuro cada vez mais presente, que emerge de uma força transformadora antropogénica de larga escala. Este trabalho, apresentado na International Conference Beyond Modernity: Alternative Incursions into the Anthropocene do Centro de Estudos Sociais da Universidade de Coimbra, em 2021, aborda uma nova forma de pensar as redes sociais, ampliando a dimensão reticular da vida social, integrando-a numa rede maior, a teia da vida, que liga todas as formas de vida e entrelaça todos os fenómenos naturais.

Palavras-chave: Teia da Vida, Redes Sociais, Teoria Ator-Rede, Entre-ser, Ecocentrismo, Sustentabilidade

Introdução

“O homem não teceu a teia da vida, é um mero fio dessa teia. Aquilo que fizer à teia, fá-lo-á a si próprio”
(Atribuída ao Chefe Seattle, 1855 apud Gore, 1993, p. 268).

No dia 24 de dezembro de 1968, durante a missão Apollo 8 à Lua, o astronauta Bill Anders tirou uma fotografia na órbita Lunar (1968) (figura 1), que ficou para a história do Ambiente como uma das fotografias mais influentes de sempre. Nela, vê-se em primeiro plano a superfície da Lua e, ao fundo, perante a imensidão do espaço, surge a Terra numa posição análoga ao nascimento do Sol visto da Terra.

A divulgação desta imagem catalisou sentimentos e consciências profundas sobre o nosso planeta e o nosso lugar nele. Foi preciso sair do nosso mundo para perceber que a Terra é uma unidade sem fronteiras. Na foto, não conseguimos distinguir homens ou mulheres, brancos ou de outra cor, humanos ou tigres, golfinhos ou guarda-rios, rosas ou carvalhos, bactérias ou líquenes, rios ou montanhas, cidades ou glaciares. Nessa imagem, contemplamos a Terra, bela, onde a teia da vida se expressa numa unidade composta por milhões de formas e consciências entrelaçadas e inter-relacionadas umas com as outras. Essa imagem consolidou a percepção de que essa vida, que inclui os seres humanos, poderia encontrar-se ameaçada pela crise ecológica. Pouco tempo depois, em 1972, James Lovelock apresentou a Teoria de Gaia, em que o planeta Terra, ao contrário de outros planetas que ele observou, se comportava como um organismo vivo. A Terra passou a ser vista como um mundo composto por várias entidades vivas, mas percebemos que Ela responde às nossas ações de modo ativo e imprevisível (Latour, 2017), especialmente quando a transformação ambiental é

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temporalmente e espacialmente tão abrupta que os normais mecanismos de autorregulação, que permitem a sustentação da vida na Terra, não conseguem desempenhar adequadamente o seu papel (Lovelock, 2007).



Figura 1 - Earthrise, NASA

Nos tempos que correm, assistimos a mudanças antropogênicas sem precedentes no clima e na biodiversidade, que ameaçam cada vez mais a Natureza, as vidas humanas, os meios de subsistência e o bem-estar em todo o mundo (IPBES, 2021). A perda de biodiversidade e as alterações climáticas reforçam-se mutuamente e são impulsionadas pelas atividades económicas, pressão demográfica, questões relacionadas com a tecnologia e a governança, e motivos socioculturais, como valores, normas, crenças e educação (ibid).

Um futuro global sustentável para os humanos e a Natureza requer ‘mudanças transformadoras’ com ações rápidas e de longo alcance (IPBES & IPCC, 2021). Um dos problemas identificados, responsável pela resistência às necessárias ‘mudanças transformadoras’, é o papel dos valores, que inclui princípios, preferências e virtudes sobre os relacionamentos que envolvem a Natureza (Moisander, 2007). Nesse sentido, o IPBES &

IPCC referem a necessidade profunda de alterar coletivamente os valores individuais e partilhados em relação à Natureza (IPBES, 2021).

E porque os seres humanos não são os únicos atores importantes na Terra (Haraway, 2016), propomos um paradigma ecocêntrico, de uma humanidade centrada na ‘teia da vida’ (Moore, 2016) – “uma ideia antiga, que tem sido usada (...) para transmitir o (...) sentido de entrelaçamento e interdependência de todos os fenômenos” (Capra, 1996b, pp. 34–35)⁹ e de toda a vida, colocando fim às dicotomias da racionalidade moderna, como Homem¹⁰ *versus* Natureza (Santos, 2006; Varandas, 2009), passando a existir um *continuum*, onde a proteção da Natureza é apreendida como a nossa própria proteção (Naess, 2005, p. 527). Uma realidade viva e dinâmica, tornada invisível pela hegemonia do pensamento contemporâneo (Feyerabend, 1977; Santos, 2006), onde se inserem os sistemas sociais, económicos e políticos e não ao contrário. O ecocentrismo¹¹, para além de incorporar muito do que a ciência contemporânea descobriu sobre a vida e o universo, promove uma consciência ecológica, uma ética centrada na teia da vida, que reaproxima o ser humano da Natureza. Segundo Taylor et al., este modelo pode levar a planos mais eficazes na conservação da biodiversidade (2020), sendo, por esse motivo, o devir de um novo paradigma pós-moderno de oposição e não-especista, onde valores e direitos da Natureza se encontram naturalmente consagrados. Por conseguinte, este modelo traz a esperança de um futuro, tanto para a Humanidade, como para muitas das espécies nossas companheiras na odisséia da vida na Terra. Reconectar-se com a teia da vida significa construir, nutrir e educar comunidades sustentáveis (Capra, 1996a), para satisfazer as nossas aspirações e necessidades atuais, assegurando o mesmo para as gerações futuras. A tão almejada sustentabilidade, necessária para combater a perda da biodiversidade e as alterações climáticas, está intrinsecamente relacionada com a nossa relação com a teia da vida. Nesse sentido, propomos uma nova forma de pensar as redes sociais, ampliando a dimensão reticular da vida social, integrando-a na teia da vida.

As redes sociais

A ideia de ‘rede’ define o mundo contemporâneo (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003) e encontra-se em todo o lado - na sociedade civil e no Estado, no território e serviços, nas organizações empresariais e mercados, nas universidades e investigação (Portugal, 2007). É utilizada em campos tão díspares como a física, a biologia, a linguística, a sociologia ou a psicoterapia (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003; Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Traz uma nova perspetiva de olhar o mundo, muito em comum com mudanças revolucionárias, ao enfatizar os padrões de relacionamento e como estes afetam o comportamento das entidades, sejam elas estrelas, palavras, genes, átomos, pessoas, organizações ou nações (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Nas redes sociais, a ideia chave também se encontra centrada nas relações específicas entre os indivíduos, em vez das suas forças internas, como personalidade, ou das diferenças categóricas, como raça e género (Hogan, 2009). Nesse sentido, é uma nova forma de olhar o social, acrescentando a maneira como “a sociedade emerge do indivíduo e o indivíduo

⁹ Tradução livre do autor. No original *an ancient idea, which has been used (...) to convey [a] (...)sense of interwovenness and interdependence of all phenomena* (Capra, 1996b, pp. 34–35).

¹⁰ Neste caso, a utilização do termo ‘Homem’ e não do ‘ser humano’, deve-se às suas dimensões andro, antro e todo o universo de domínio que isso representa.

¹¹ Ecocentrismo – corrente holística da Ética Ambiental que atribui valor intrínseco e direitos da Natureza, nomeadamente a partes ou à totalidade de rios, montanhas, florestas, corais, biomas ou o até o planeta Terra, face à perceção da inter-relação e interdependência profunda que existe em todos os componentes que formam os ecossistemas.

emerge da sociedade”¹² (Simmel, 1922, p. 163). As redes sociais são modos pelas quais os indivíduos negociam tanto oportunidades quanto restrições, demonstrando, assim, que não são casos independentes, mas atores estruturados (Hogan, 2009). Assim, uma rede social é um grupo de indivíduos ou entidades que colaboram e/ou competem entre si (Furht, 2010; Zhang, 2010). Pode ser apresentado por um grafo, onde cada participante é chamado de ator e exibido como um nó. As relações valorizadas entre os atores são representadas como laços entre os nós correspondentes. Os atores podem ser pessoas, organizações, grupos ou outros actantes (atores humanos e não-humanos), qualquer conjunto de entidades relacionadas. A abordagem de redes permite aos investigadores capturarem as interações de qualquer unidade individual dentro de um campo maior de atividade ao qual a unidade pertence (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003).

As redes sociais (*social networks*) têm obtido um especial destaque devido ao uso, disponibilidade, diversidade e generalização das tecnologias de informação, que proporcionaram um rápido e eficaz crescimento das redes sociais de plataforma digital (*social media*) (Can & Alatas, 2017; Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Mas as redes sociais não são um fenómeno assim tão novo. A história das redes perde-se no tempo, provavelmente até antes do *Homo (sapiens) sapiens* ter surgido. Dentro de uma perspetiva ampla, a sua origem deve ser considerada quando a vida social se manifestou na escala evolutiva. Isto é, quando indivíduos de uma determinada espécie ancestral começaram a estabelecer relações entre si e formaram comunidades. No caso dos primatas não-humanos, existe uma sociabilidade multinível, baseada em laços fortes e fracos, não muito diferentes daqueles encontrados nas redes sociais humanas (Dunbar, 2018). Para além desse facto, a família ocupa um papel especial nas redes, tanto para primatas não-humanos (Easton & Waldron, 2020), como para humanos (Portugal, 2011). Por conseguinte, as redes sociais são tão ou mais antigas quanto a própria Humanidade. No entanto, a comunicação é um elemento preponderante, nomeadamente no que se refere à longevidade e proximidade emocional das redes (Oswald & Clark, 2003; Roberts & Dunbar, 2011), e nesse sentido, eleva o patamar, a partir do qual se estabelece a linguagem como forma de comunicação. Não é por acaso que as redes sociais de plataforma digital estão a ter um enorme sucesso, devido ao desenvolvimento extraordinário das comunicações (Portugal, 2007). Contudo, não chega existir comunicação para se estabelecer um laço entre dois indivíduos. É necessária manutenção relacional ativa (Dindia & Canary, 1993).

Como conceito académico, também não é fácil saber a sua génese. A história começa há mais de um século, com Georg Simmel (1858 - 1918), que foi o primeiro a apresentar uma perspetiva consistente de redes, argumentando que a vida, especialmente nas cidades, era uma forma fluida de redes (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Porém, na Sociologia, atribui-se uma origem com sentido simples e metafórico nos anos 30 do século passado, mas que logo se desenvolveu, tornando-se central na teoria sociológica, passando posteriormente a constituir-se como domínio específico do conhecimento (Portugal, 2007). O desenvolvimento da análise das redes sociais, que estuda os padrões mais amplos construídos por pessoas e organizações, e como esses padrões se encaixam na sociedade (Rainie & Wellman, 2012), teve três influências principais e paralelas. Começou a dar os primeiros passos na década de 1930, primeiro com a análise sociométrica, onde se utilizou métodos da teoria dos grafos. Depois, as redes sociais foram operacionalizadas com abordagens matemáticas. Posteriormente, foram utilizadas por antropólogos de Manchester para analisar a estrutura das

¹² Tradução livre do autor. No original *society arises from the individual and that the individual arises out of association* (Simmel, 1922, p. 163).

relações comunitárias em aldeias (Fredericks & Durland, 2007). Todas estas diferentes abordagens foram reunidas em Harvard, nos anos 60 e 70, onde foi desenvolvida a análise contemporânea de redes sociais (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003), que

trouxe novos princípios analíticos, novas linguagens e novos dados para a teoria sociológica, permitindo analisar a estrutura social a partir de uma perspetiva relacional e (re)colocando no centro do questionamento o elemento básico da sociologia: a interação social (Portugal, 2007).

A Teia da Vida

Assim como nas redes sociais, a abordagem das redes na pesquisa ecológica enfatiza o padrão das interações entre indivíduos (através da maneira como as espécies se encontram ligadas e organizadas dentro da rede), em vez dos nós da rede (centrada na identidades das espécies que compõem a comunidade). Isto deu origem ao modelo da teia da vida, enriquecido com ferramentas de análise e conceitos provenientes da física e da sociologia, que retrata a interdependência global entre as espécies e complementa as teorias sobre a biodiversidade (Bascompte, 2009). Contudo, Capra tem uma abordagem mais ampla da teia da vida, pelo menos a três níveis. O primeiro centra-se na vida e faz alusão a redes dentro de redes – “Todos os sistemas vivos são redes de componentes menores, e a teia da vida como um todo é uma estrutura de várias camadas de sistemas vivos acolhidos dentro de outros sistemas vivos”¹³ (Capra, 1996b, p. 204). O segundo nível incorpora elementos não vida na teia, mas que se relacionam com esta – “Uma característica chave de Gaia é o complexo entrelaçamento de sistemas vivos e não vivos dentro de uma única teia”¹⁴ (Capra, 1996b, pp. 209–210). O último nível abrange toda a estrutura natural e seus fenómenos – “O universo material é visto como uma rede dinâmica de eventos inter-relacionados. Nenhuma das propriedades específicas desta rede é fundamental; todas decorrem das propriedades das outras partes”¹⁵ (Capra, 1996b, p. 39). Neste sentido, a teia da vida confunde-se com a própria Natureza – uma rede ecocentrada. Capra não deixa dúvidas quando diz que “A natureza é vista como uma rede interconectada de relacionamentos”¹⁶ (Capra, 1996b, p. 40).

Nesse sentido, uma análise mais aprofundada das questões ambientais e das suas implicações mútuas com as sociedades necessita de uma abordagem crítica que nos permita enunciar os processos complexos, multidimensionais e interdependentes subjacentes. Não é possível ficar preso aos limites de uma sociologia clássica, onde se equacionam unicamente as interações entre seres humanos e esquecer a miríade de inter-relações destes com o mundo extra-humano, a rede de elementos vida [e não vida] que compõem os fenómenos socioecológicos (Aldeia & Alves, 2019). Inspirado em Rose et al. (2012), Aldeia & Alves (2019) refere que não será fácil colocar a Sociologia a ‘pensar através do Ambiente’, mas o sociólogo Jason Moore, apoiado no sentido do questionamento profundo de Donna Haraway (1988), propõe um novo pensamento sobre a humanidade centrado na ‘teia da vida’, ao apreender a organização humana ‘mais-como-humana’ e ‘menos-como-social’ (Moore, 2016). Impérios, mercados mundiais, e assim por diante, encontram-se dentro da teia da vida e vice-versa (ibid). O Ambiente e a Natureza deixam, assim, de ser tratados como entidades

¹³ Tradução livre do autor. No original *All living systems are networks of smaller components, and the web of life as a whole is a multi-layered structure of living systems nesting within other living systems* (Capra, 1996b, p. 204).

¹⁴ Tradução livre do autor. No original *A key characteristic of Gaia is the complex interweaving of living and nonliving systems within a single web* (Capra, 1996b, pp. 209–210).

¹⁵ Tradução livre do autor. No original *The material universe is seen as a dynamic web of interrelated events. None of the properties of any part of this web is fundamental; they all follow from the properties of the other parts* (Capra, 1996b, p. 39).

¹⁶ Tradução livre do autor. No original *Nature is seen as an interconnected web of relationships* (Capra, 1996b, p. 40).

meramente biogeofísicoquímicas, passando a integrar a vida geral no planeta. Os sistemas sociais, económicos e políticos integram a teia da vida, assim como as relações de poder que regem esses sistemas. Contra esta realidade encontra-se a conceptualização antropocêntrica cartesiana e utilitarista vigente da Natureza. A título de exemplo, um documento estratégico de educação ambiental, o ENEA 2020, diz o seguinte: “O capital natural incorpora todos os ativos naturais da Terra e todos os serviços dos ecossistemas que tornam possível a existência de vida humana” (APA, 2017, p. 23). Este documento é bem elucidativo da forma como o ‘sistema’ hegemónico olha para a Natureza, perdendo a qualidade de entidade viva, passando a ser um ‘capital’ que pode ser dividido e transacionado sem qualquer cuidado e no interesse exclusivo humano, ou melhor dizendo, de alguns humanos que dominam o sistema capitalista. Ora, estando as espécies ligadas numa rede ecológica, designada teia de vida, a conceptualização capitalista destes documentos orientadores das políticas de educação, além de se encontrar desconectada com a realidade mais profunda do mundo natural, detém especial impacto na formação dos indivíduos. Este facto é agravado porque vivemos num tipo de sociedade e racionalidade reticular (Parrochia, 2001, p.17 apud Portugal, 2007) e porque encerra um ciclo vicioso entre educação e sociedade, ambas desconetadas com a teia da vida. Por esse motivo, continuamos a formar quadros sem relacionamento ético alargado que contribuem para a degradação da Natureza (Moreira et al., 2020).

De forma complementar, o termo ‘degradação da Natureza’ tem uma relação particularmente violenta com a ‘teia da vida’. Um padrão implacável que Moore também atribui ao capitalismo, na medida que a violência é parte de um repertório maior de estratégias que ‘colocam a Natureza a funcionar’ (Moore, 2016). Daí o questionamento de “como a modernidade coloca a Natureza a funcionar? Como combinações específicas de atividades humanas e extra-humanas funcionam - ou limitam - a acumulação infinita de capital?”¹⁷ (Moore, 2016, p. 5). Estas questões apontam para um novo pensamento sobre a humanidade na teia da vida (ibid). Neste prisma, concordamos com Einstein quando diz que “um novo tipo de pensamento é essencial se a humanidade quiser sobreviver e se mover para níveis mais elevados [de consciência]”¹⁸ (Einstein, 1946, para. 1). Na altura, Einstein referiu-se ao potencial perigo que a bomba atómica trazia para a Humanidade, e acaba o artigo dizendo: “devemos perceber que não podemos fazer simultaneamente planos para a guerra e para a paz. Quando tivermos clareza de coração e mente – somente aí encontraremos a coragem para superar o medo que assombra o mundo.”¹⁹ (Einstein, 1946, paras. 35–36). Hoje, a ‘bomba’ e a ‘guerra’ são de natureza distinta, tendo como principais ameaças a crise ecológica e as alterações climáticas, ambas em consequência de uma Humanidade que se encontra em guerra contra a Natureza (UNEP, 2021), o que quer dizer que é uma guerra contra a própria rede de relações alargada à qual pertencemos, a teia da vida. Mas há ainda uma outra mensagem mais subtil de Einstein, que é a ligação entre a mente e o coração (a razão e a intuição/valores morais), como arte de superar o medo perante um mundo em perigo. E, embora na altura o contexto era social, pouco tempo depois Einstein desfez as dúvidas quanto à sua posição em relação à teia da vida. Numa carta de condolências a Norman Salit, (4 de março de 1950) publicada no ‘New York Post’, Einstein diz o seguinte:

¹⁷ Tradução livre do autor. No original *How does modernity put nature to work? How do specific combinations of human and extra-human activity work—or limit—the endless accumulation of capital?* (Moore, 2016, p. 5)

¹⁸ Tradução livre do autor. No original *a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move to higher levels* (Einstein, 1946, para. 1).

¹⁹ Tradução livre do autor. No original *we must realize we cannot simultaneously plan for war and peace. When we are clear in heart and mind – only then shall we find courage to surmount the fear which haunts the world* (Einstein, 1946, paras. 35–36).

Um ser humano é uma parte do todo, a que chamamos "Universo", uma parte limitada no tempo e no espaço. Ele experimenta-se a si próprio, aos seus pensamentos e sentimentos, como algo separado do resto - uma espécie de ilusão ótica da sua consciência. Esta ilusão é uma espécie de prisão para nós, restringindo-nos aos nossos desejos pessoais e ao afeto por algumas pessoas que nos são chegadas. A nossa tarefa é libertarmo-nos desta prisão, alargando o nosso círculo de compaixão até ao ponto de abraçar todas as criaturas vivas e toda a natureza na sua beleza”²⁰ (Einstein apud Sullivan, 1972, para. 1).

É neste sentido que surge a necessidade de (re)ligar a razão com a intuição/valores, no sentido de voltar a inserir as redes sociais na teia da vida e (re)conceitualizar políticas que estejam mais de acordo com essa realidade. Daqui surge o ecocentrismo, uma ética ambiental, científica e relacional de acordo com a sustentabilidade e a preservação da Natureza. Quando se pensam as relações Humanidade/Natureza e se incorpora a dimensão ecológica nas nossas vidas – sendo esta dimensão explanada na própria teia da vida e pelos direitos de todas as espécies –, a sustentabilidade acaba por ser fruto de um processo natural que surge na arte de viver corretamente, no sentido ético e espiritual (Shiva, 2002, pp. 51–52).

Uma forma de entender a teia da vida é através do conceito entre-ser²¹ de Thich Nhat Hanh. Diz o autor:

Se fores um poeta, verás claramente que há uma nuvem a flutuar nesta folha de papel. Sem uma nuvem, não haverá chuva; sem chuva, as árvores não podem crescer; e sem árvores, não podemos fazer papel. A nuvem é essencial para a existência do papel (...) Assim, podemos dizer que a nuvem e o papel entre-são. (...) Se olharmos mais profundamente ainda, vamos poder ver os raios do sol nela (...), o madeireiro que cortou a árvore (...), o seu pão de cada dia e, portanto, o trigo que se tornou o seu pão (...), o pai e a mãe do madeireiro também estão nela. Quando olhamos desta forma, vemos que sem todas essas coisas, esta folha de papel não poderia existir. Olhando ainda mais profundamente, podemos ver que também estamos nela. (...) A folha de papel faz parte da nossa percepção. A tua mente está aqui e a minha também. Então podemos dizer que tudo se encontra aqui nesta folha de papel. Não podemos apontar para nada que não esteja aqui – tempo, espaço, a terra, a chuva, os minerais no solo, o sol, a nuvem, o rio, o calor. Todas as coisas coexistem com esta folha de papel. (...) “Ser” é entre-ser. Não consegues ser unicamente tu, sozinho. Tens que entre-ser com todas as outras coisas. Esta folha de papel existe, porque tudo o resto existe²² (Nhat Hanh, 1988, pp. 3–5).

Este conceito entre-ser é ao mesmo tempo uma sociologia das associações de Latour, (2020) e uma ecologia de saberes de Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006). A primeira insere-se numa abordagem das redes através da Teoria Ator-Rede, que

²⁰ Tradução livre do autor. No original *A human being is a part of the whole, called by us 'Universe' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty* (Einstein apud Sullivan, 1972, para. 1).

²¹ Do original *interbeing*, também traduzido para português como *interser*. Optamos pela forma *entre-ser*, porque se encontra mais perto do conceito original.

²² Tradução livre do autor. No original *If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. (...) So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. (...) If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it (...) the logger who cut the tree (...) his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread (...), the logger's father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist. Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. (...) The sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You cannot point out one thing that is not here-time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. (...) "To be" is to interbe. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is* (Nhat Hanh, 1988, pp. 3–5).

também se distingue pela sua atribuição de agência a não humanos, incluindo animais, materiais, ideias e conceitos, reconhecendo a capacidade de qualquer entidade (ou actante) de se tornar indispensável para os seus relacionamentos com os outros e, por extensão, para a continuação da rede²³ (Dwiartama & Rosin, 2014).

A segunda faz coexistir diferentes saberes, alguns dos quais que sobreviveram ao epistemicídio, e na ideia de que todo o conhecimento é interconhecimento, reconhecimento e autoconhecimento (Santos, 2006). São nessas dimensões que o próprio Nhat Hanh se move, ao misturar razão (ciência ecológica e cognição) com a intuição (tradição budista, meditação, valores morais), um entrelaçamento transdisciplinar, que, segundo Panov (2013), pode ser definido como a consciência ecológica, e que tem na ética ambiental ecocêntrica a sua base filosófica. Este cruzamento entre razão e intuição/valores, que já vimos em Einstein, tem dado resultados bastante interessantes, especialmente no campo da ciência, dos quais a *wood wide web* é um bom exemplo e que também se encontra com a teia da vida. Ann Druyan, fascinada com esta descoberta, diz o seguinte:

Há uma outra forma de inteligência muito mais próxima de nós. Só há pouco tempo soubemos que existia. É de uma complexidade que está para lá da nossa imaginação mais delirante e foi construída por uma comunidade com uma população inconcebivelmente vasta. Ali, os raios de sol são filtrados pelas copas das bétulas, dos áceres, das noqueiras, dos abetos, dos pinheiros, dos carvalhos e dos choupos e o rico tapete de musgo e ramos estala debaixo dos nossos pés. (...) Uma rede global subterrânea, antiga, uma vasta rede neuronal que une toda a floresta, tornando-a um organismo dinâmico, interactivo, que comunica, actua e tem o poder de influenciar o que acontece acima do solo. (...) Uma rede oculta (...) através dela trocam-se alimentos, mensagens, mostra-se empatia entre espécimes e espécies, e mesmo entre diferentes reinos da vida (Druyan, 2020, pp. 216–218).

Druyan estava a referir-se à descoberta de Suzanne Simard, professora de ecologia florestal na University of British Columbia, que desvelou as redes simbióticas mutualistas que existem nas florestas. Este trabalho, que partiu da sua intuição e foi confirmado pelo trabalho científico que veio a desenvolver, imitam as nossas próprias redes neurais e sociais (Simard, 2021). As árvores de uma floresta formam um sistema conectado, relacionado e comunicante (Wohlleben, 2016). Debaixo do solo de uma floresta nativa biodiversa existe uma rede complexa de filamentos formada por fungos. São como cabos de fibra ótica numa rede cibernética, conhecida no meio académico como *wood wide web*²⁴. Através desta rede as plantas trocam informação, alimento e ajudam-se umas às outras. As árvores são os nós da rede, os laços são feitos através dos fungos. Uma rede que no seu conjunto demonstra inteligência, num mundo reticular onde a conexão se dá a nível radicular. A figura 2 mostra o desenho da rede *wood wide web* e a figura 3 expõe um grafo de um estudo concreto mapeado.

²³ Tradução livre do autor. No original *ANT is also distinguished by its attribution of agency to nonhumans, including animals, materials, ideas, and concepts, acknowledging the ability of any entity (or actant) to make itself indispensable to its relationships with others and, by extension, to the continuation of the network* (Dwiartama & Rosin, 2014).

²⁴ *wood wide web* - sigla inspirada na rede Internet – *world wide web* (www).

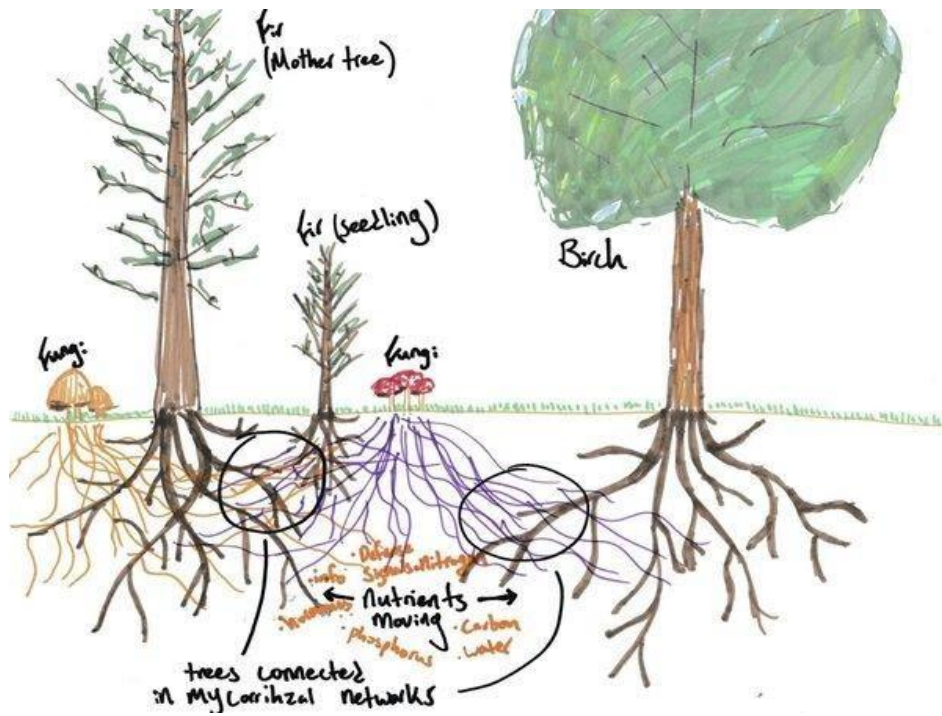


Figura 2 - Exemplo de um mapa de um sistema florestal. Retidado de Simard (2020)

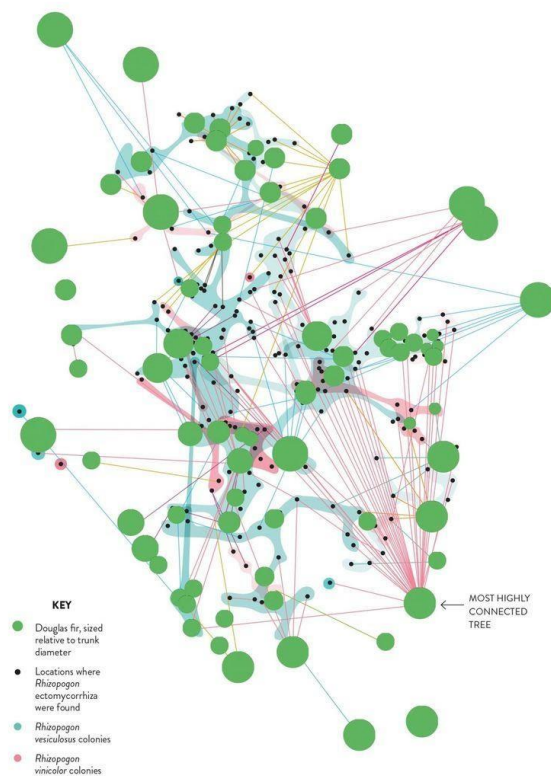


Figura 3 - Grafo da wood wide web, Fonte: New Zealand Geographic

A teia da vida é uma rede de actantes que liga todos os seres vivos. Como nas redes sociais entre humanos, na teia da vida cada ser vivo pode formar uma rede egocentrada (ver Portugal, 2007, 2011). No caso da *wood wide web*, existem ainda as árvores mães, normalmente as maiores e mais antigas, com maior conectividade micorrízica²⁵, e por isso formam grandes redes egocentradas. Não sendo necessariamente fêmeas, as árvores mães desempenham vários papéis ‘maternais’, como apoiar e nutrir árvores mais jovens e necessitadas. Para Wohlleben (2016), o apoio e a compensação que dão entre si (perante forças e fraquezas) através da rede faz lembrar um pouco o nosso sistema de segurança social. Tal como nas redes sociais, segundo Wohlleben, as árvores da floresta formam redes constituídas por laços familiares, de vizinhança e amizade (ibid.). Tanto na *wood wide web* como na teia da vida, há relações verticais e horizontais, mas também uma grande heterogeneidade. Na figura 4, encontra-se uma representação parcial de uma teia da vida, esquematizada numa simples ecologia florestal – uma rede entre diferentes espécies ligadas entre si e os elementos abióticos. Nesta figura consegue-se ver simultaneamente uma rede egocentrada – que parte de um indivíduo/espécie –, e uma rede ecocentrada – em que cada indivíduo/espécie tem um papel importante na rede.

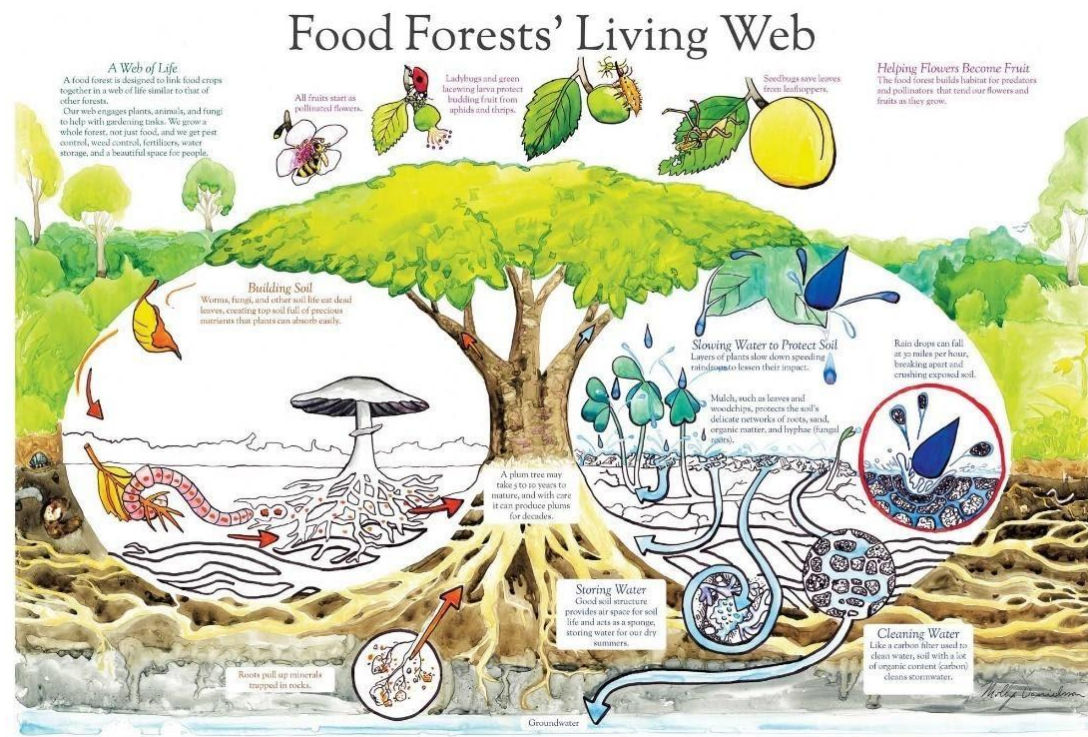


Figura 4 – Uma teia da vida. Arte de Molly Jean Winter

Uma teia da vida com uma organização diferente pode ser observada na árvore da vida, figura 5. Nesta rede, em que os nós são as diferentes espécies e os laços as ligações filogenéticas, conseguimos perceber toda a complexidade da rede e de redes entre redes. Trata-se de um grafo que parte de um ancestral comum e que liga toda a vida através de laços evolutivos. Também conseguimos perceber que o ser humano é uma espécie entre tantas

²⁵ Micorriza – é uma associação simbiótica mutualista entre as raízes das plantas e os fungos do solo.

outras. Pode-se dizer que a forma que a árvore da vida tem, representa uma rede muito heterogênea, egocentrada, através do seu ancestral comum.

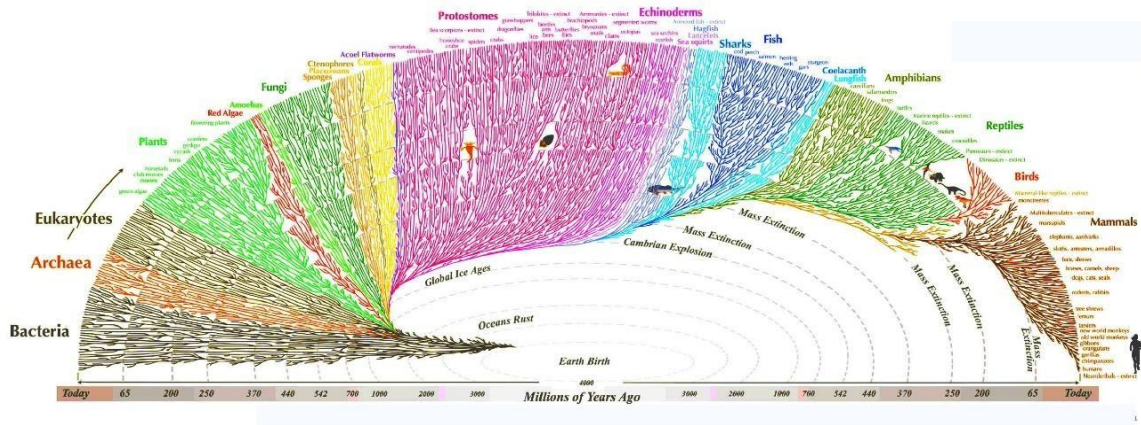


Figura 5 - Árvore Da Vida, adaptado de Leonard Eisenberg (Eisenberg, 2013)

Ann Druyan, na sequência da obra *Cosmos* de Carl Sagan, reflete num dos paradoxos da contemporaneidade - enquanto a Humanidade se vira para as estrelas procurando a vida inteligente lá fora, poderá estar a escapar-lhe muita da vida inteligente cá dentro (Druyan, 2020). Enquanto não formos capazes de reconhecer uma rede de vida inteligente e sensível que lhe chamamos teia da vida; enquanto não percebemos que estamos nessa rede, que interagimos com ela; enquanto não cuidarmos dela, não vamos conseguir desviarmo-nos de cenários catastrofistas que os modelos científicos sobre o clima e a biodiversidade traçam. É, portanto, urgente repensar a forma como olhamos para as redes sociais. Redes estas que estão inseridas na teia da vida. É necessário refletir um novo paradigma nas redes sociais, ampliando a dimensão reticular da vida social, integrando-a numa rede maior, a teia da vida, que liga todas as formas de vida e entrelaça todos os fenómenos naturais. Dessa forma será mais fácil incorporar um novo paradigma, com valores que considerem a biodiversidade, que o IPBES clama, para mudarmos o nosso rumo suicida. Valores ecocêntricos, capazes de cuidar e respeitar não só os seres humanos, mas também os outros nós que formam a teia da vida e que estão ligados a nós por laços indissociáveis. Embora o *Homo (sapiens) sapiens* tenha algumas singularidades que o distingue de outras espécies, a árvore da vida diz-nos que há um parentesco entre nós e as outras espécies. Já deveríamos ter incorporado a teia da vida na nossa rede efetiva de relações e considerá-la nos nossos valores. Assim, reafirmou Aldo Leopold:

Um século passou desde que Darwin nos deu os primeiros vislumbres acerca da origem das espécies. Sabemos agora o que era desconhecido de toda a caravana das gerações que nos antecedeu: que os homens são apenas companheiros de viagem das outras criaturas na odisséia da evolução. Este novo conhecimento deveria já ter-nos proporcionado um sentimento de parentesco com as criaturas nossas companheiras; um desejo de viver e deixar viver; um sentido de maravilhamento diante da magnitude e duração da aventura biótica. (Leopold, 2008, p. 112).

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Os direitos dos humanos e dos não humanos no Antropoceno: em torno de uma teoria legal não dualista

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Resumo: Este artigo pretende refletir sobre o trabalho, ainda em curso, centrado no estudo de caso do Sul Global: a Constituição do Equador que, ao questionar o excecionalismo humano e reconhecer a natureza como sujeito de direitos, se afirma como uma conceção alternativa e emancipatória para humanos e não humanos com potencial para se tornar uma lei à altura dos desafios do Antropoceno. Pretende-se refletir sobre a forma como os direitos humanos de matriz eurocêntrica se relacionam com linguagens e conhecimentos contra-hegemónicos, como é o caso dos direitos da natureza, cuja natureza híbrida põe em diálogo múltiplos e diferentes mundos. Na concretização de tal objetivo, abordar-se-á a dinâmica entre direitos da natureza e direitos humanos, e a influência das cosmovisões indígenas neste novo paradigma legal, recorrendo à análise das decisões dos tribunais e entrevistas a juristas, ativistas e académicos do Equador.

Palavras Chave: Antropoceno, direitos da natureza e direitos humanos

Introdução

O Antropoceno, enquanto conceito que designa a época do humano, reconhecendo a humanidade enquanto força geológica (Crutzen, 2006), não está limitado às questões geológicas, remetendo para tópicos como capitalismo, relações de poder e desigualdades inter e intra espécies (Carvalho; Ferreira & Matos, 2021; Chakrabarty, 2009; Latour, 2013 e 2017; Haraway, 2016; Hornborg, 2015; Moore, 2016; Tsing, 2015).

A inextricável realidade da natureza e sociedade humana força-nos a repensar a relação entre ciências naturais e ciências sociais, mas também a noção de história, modernidade e do humano (Latour, 1993, 2013 e 2017; Hornborg, 2015; Tsing, 2015).

O Antropoceno questiona a constituição e dualismos modernos e a ideia de separação entre humanos e não humanos, ao mesmo tempo que reclama uma redefinição ontológica do que é humano e aponta para o reconhecimento de uma nova ontologia legal, não dualista, que reflita esta complexidade (Calzadilla, 2015; Latour, 2013 e 2017; Greer, 2011 e 2015; Kotzé, 2015; Santos, 2010, 2007).

Ao questionar o excecionalismo humano e reconhecer a natureza como sujeito de direitos, a Constituição equatoriana contesta o cânone legal, afirmando uma conceção alternativa e emancipatória para humanos e não humanos (Santos, 2017).

Esta Constituição, embora inspirada por cosmovisões indígenas, está em consonância com a abordagem científica que postula a existência de um sistema terrestre e com o

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princípio central da ecologia profunda de que a natureza tem o direito de viver e florescer pelo seu valor intrínseco, e que o homem faz parte das diversas comunidades da vida na Terra, razão pela qual esta abordagem tem potencial para se tornar uma lei à altura dos desafios do Antropoceno.

O objetivo deste trabalho é refletir sobre a experiência jurídica do Equador, através das concepções das Epistemologias do Sul (Santos, 2010), e aferir a forma como outras linguagens da dignidade humana e não humana - os direitos da natureza- são compatíveis com a narrativa dos direitos humanos (Santos e Martins, 2019).

A propósito da necessidade de pensar as Epistemologias do Sul, o acadêmico equatoriano Edgar Isch diz que devem ser pensadas, não para as assumir como perfeitas, porque a ocidental também não foi perfeita, mas para ir melhorando a nossa compreensão do cosmos e da realidade partindo desse diálogo de culturas.

As Epistemologias do Sul confrontam a monocultura da ciência moderna através de uma das suas ferramentas que é a ecologia dos saberes:

Esta ecologia baseia-se no reconhecimento da pluralidade de saberes heterogêneos (um deles a ciência moderna) e nas interconexões sustentadas e dinâmicas entre eles sem comprometer a sua autonomia. A ecologia de saberes está fundamentada na ideia de que conhecimento é interconhecimento (Santos, 2007:11).

Tal permite-nos novos níveis de conhecimento de muitos aspetos (Isch, Edgar, 2021) e desconstruir a nossa visão do direito da versão dualista, especista e colonialista que caracteriza a modernidade.

Os direitos da natureza são um exemplo daquilo em que se pode traduzir esse diálogo de culturas, ao apelarem para uma visão relacional, não dualista e pluriontológica de entender a vida e as relações entre humanos e não humanos, gerando pluriversos legais que traduzem uma visão oposta à visão do mundo própria da euro-modernidade e que contrasta com o domínio da Razão Moderna. O pluriverso assenta na ideia de que a diversidade do mundo é infinita, que o mundo é feito de múltiplos mundos, múltiplas ontologias e experiências que não se identificam com a experiência eurocêntrica (Escobar, 2018; Salleh, A. 2020). Escobar refere que é preciso sair do espaço epistémico ocidental e engajar em conhecimentos, práticas e estratégias dos atores subalternos quando mobilizados para defesa dos seus mundos relacionais, para procurar respostas para os desafios atuais (Escobar, 2018). Daí que engajando no imperativo da hermenêutica de suspeita relativamente aos direitos humanos se pretenda explorar as possibilidades da sua resignificação e de acolher diferentes concepções de humano (Santos e Martins, 2019).

Metodologia

Este artigo explorará os resultados da análise de trinta decisões judiciais equatorianas relativas aos direitos da natureza, proferidas de 2008 (ano da consagração dos direitos da natureza) a maio de 2020, e de seis entrevistas semiestruturadas a ativistas, juristas e académicos equatorianos.

A metodologia qualitativa preside à análise dos dados empíricos feita com recurso à análise de conteúdo, já que o objetivo do trabalho é elaborar em torno das perspetivas pessoais ou de grupo.

A recolha da amostra das decisões judiciais teve como fonte a consulta de processos na página da web do Conselho da Magistratura do Equador e os dados recolhidos pelo Observatório Jurídico de Direitos da Natureza no Equador.

Os participantes foram identificados por meio de redes institucionais, trabalho desenvolvido na academia e ativismo, com o objetivo de alcançar aqueles que trabalham com direitos humanos e direitos da natureza.

Incursões na Jurisprudência equatoriana

Devido à dimensão do artigo, apenas se referirão, ainda que de forma resumida, os casos judiciais Waorani (Tribunal de Pastaza, P. n.º. 16171-2019-0000), Inconstitucionalidade da Lei da Mineração (Tribunal Constitucional, P. n.º 0008-09-IN Y 0011-09-IN) e Camaroneira na Reserva Cayapas-Esmeraldas (Tribunal Constitucional, P. n.º 166-15-SEP-CC) por serem particularmente úteis para refletir sobre o tema do artigo.

A partir da análise da jurisprudência relativa aos direitos da natureza no período mencionado, pode afirmar-se que, por vezes, os direitos humanos e os direitos da natureza estão em oposição quando os direitos humanos individualistas, como o direito à propriedade privada e os interesses de desenvolvimento e crescimento económico, estão em jogo. No entanto, essa dialética é de natureza complementar quando os direitos humanos coletivos são invocados, e muitas vezes os direitos humanos têm um papel instrumental na defesa dos direitos da natureza.

Em inúmeras decisões de tribunais equatorianos são invocados os direitos humanos consagrados em instrumentos internacionais e nacionais, como o direito a um ambiente saudável, direito à consulta prévia e direito de participação dos povos e direitos ao território em paralelo com os direitos da natureza.

O direito humano a um ambiente saudável foi aquele que com mais frequência foi utilizado quer a par com os direitos da natureza, quer por si só, para sustentar pedidos de intervenção judicial cuja finalidade era a proteção do ambiente/natureza.

Inconstitucionalidade da Lei da Mineração

Apesar da Constituição ter reconhecido os direitos da natureza em 2008, em janeiro de 2009, foi promulgada a Lei da Mineração, que consagrou a liberdade de prospeção mineira, e permitia a qualquer pessoa entrar no território das nacionalidades indígenas com o objetivo de ali realizar atividades de prospeção mineira.

A CONAIE (Confederação de Nacionalidades Indígenas do Equador) e o Presidente dos sistemas comunitários de água de Tarqui, Victoria del Portete, propuseram uma ação em tribunal contra o Estado suscitando, para além da violação dos direitos da natureza e direito à água (o direito à água para consumo humanos foi elevado a direito humano pela Constituição do Equador), a inconstitucionalidade da Lei da Mineração por violar o direito de consulta prévia pré-legislativa e o direito ao território (que é um direito coletivo dos povos indígenas e nacionalidades) porquanto as atividades mineiras concessionadas e a concessionar se situavam nos seus territórios.

Contestando tal pretensão, o Estado equatoriano invocou os direitos estatais de propriedade sobre os recursos não renováveis que se encontravam no subsolo (em contraposição aos direitos de propriedade dos indígenas sobre os seus territórios), na medida em que estavam em causa recursos estratégicos, e porque as atividades mineiras visavam satisfazer o interesse geral, nomeadamente das comunidades, povos e nacionalidades. O representante do Estado assinalou ainda que o direito de propriedade dos povos indígenas sobre os seus territórios tinha uma função social, razão pela qual deveria sofrer um limite que decorre do interesse geral e do bem comum, como o que decorre da atividade mineira. Aqui admite-se que o direito ao território deve ser limitado em função do bem comum, e noutras

situações o direito de propriedade privada, porque soberano e inviolável, justifica o sacrifício do bem comum.

A sentença proferida determinou a constitucionalidade condicionada de alguns artigos da Constituição, ou seja, sempre que o Estado pretendesse iniciar atividade mineira nos territórios das comunidades, povos e nacionalidades, deveria implementar o processo de consulta prévia.

A decisão relativa à constitucionalidade condicionada da Lei da Mineração e o uso dos direitos humanos coletivos dos povos indígenas teve o efeito positivo de limitar o âmbito de aplicação territorial da liberdade de prospeção e exploração mineira, por essa via se protegendo a natureza. Os direitos humanos coletivos foram o instrumento que sustentou a luta dos povos indígenas pelo reconhecimento das suas ontologias e visões do mundo e por essa via, num processo identificação, da natureza.

A Lei da Mineração é o exemplo de como se desvirtuou a Constituição em nome da prevalência dos interesses económicos do Estado e de alguns agentes económicos. Edgar Isch refere que no Equador há um ditado que diz “*una vez hecha la ley está hecha la trampa*” e que há sempre uma armadilha bem preparada para evitar que a vivência dos direitos humanos e dos direitos da natureza seja uma vivência real.

Apesar de na Constituição se ter estabelecido um *standard* muito alto para os direitos da natureza, alguma legislação posterior, de que a Lei da Mineração é um exemplo, fragilizou aqueles direitos, o que se poderá explicar pelo facto de os direitos da natureza colidirem com atividades como a indústria extrativa ou grandes obras de infraestruturas (Bermeo, Pedro, 2021; Martinez, Esperanza, 2021).

E por isso é que se desenvolveu uma lógica empresarial que tende a ridicularizar os direitos da natureza (Bonilla, Benito, 2021), com os agentes económicos a afirmar “*vejam, agora as alfaces têm direitos!*” ou a funcionalizar os direitos da natureza e encontrar-lhes uma vertente neoconservacionista e mercantilista, em que se paga pelo dano que produziu num lugar, que é área protegida, e depois se vai investir noutro lugar onde se paga de novo (Martinez, Esperanza, 2021).

Caso Waorani

No caso Waorani, os peticionários, representantes do povo Waorani, apresentaram uma ação de proteção pedindo a suspensão de várias concessões petrolíferas outorgadas no seu território, nas zonas ribeirinhas de rios Aguarico, Chingual e Cofanes. Alegaram a violação dos direitos da natureza, do direito à posse ancestral e direito ao território, e ainda deficiências na realização da consulta prévia e o não cumprimento das normas nacionais e internacionais relativas a considerações interculturais.

Neste caso, as normas relativas à consulta prévia foram implementadas sem observar os costumes dos povos Waorani e os princípios interculturais. Na alegada consulta prévia, não se teve em conta que os Waorani, povos de muito recente contato, na sua maioria não falam castelhano, que se regem por diferentes noções de tempo e espaço, e que os processos de deliberação não acontecem da mesma forma. A tomada de decisão no mundo Waorani é precedida de conversas nas famílias, enquanto cozinham, vão à caça, ou esperam a noite para ter um sonho, depois conversam sobre o sonho, e finalmente tomam decisões consensuais. Este processo é determinado por um calendário ligado à natureza ao invés do calendário gregoriano.

Acresce que à linguagem dos Waorani são estranhos os conceitos de “licitação” ou “blocos de exploração petrolífera”, palavras e categorias que estão fora do seu entendimento,

bem como os mapas do Estado equatoriano, já que para eles o mapa é vivo, tem informação, rios, animais, lugares sagrados e cemitérios tradicionais.

Neste caso, o direito humano de consulta prévia deveria ter sido convocado e implementado através da tradução intercultural e o diálogo com culturas e ontologias diferentes, que o tiraria do lugar e o resignificaria como instrumento emancipatório. Os direitos humanos poderão fazer parte da ecologia dos saberes afirmando outras narrativas da dignidade humana e não humana, daí a importância do diálogo intercultural e do recurso ao que Boaventura Sousa Santos designa por guião intercultural dos direitos humanos (Santos, 1999; Santos e Martins, 2019).

Cientes desta necessidade de diálogo intercultural, nas universidades equatorianas, já se faz formação de líderes indígenas para desempenharem a função de peritos defensores da natureza, projeto que envolveu uma negociação com o Conselho Superior da Magistratura Judicial Equatoriano, no sentido destes serem aceites pelas instâncias judiciais (Rodrigues, Adriana, 2021). Entende-se que, para fazer uma boa aplicação dos direitos da natureza, se deveriam formar equipas de xamãs ou elementos dos povos indígenas (líderes indígenas), biólogos que possam explicar o tema das relações entre os ecossistemas e das acumulações de desperdícios ou ainda próprio processo de sucessão biológica e regeneração natural da natureza, e de juristas (Martinez, Esperanza, 2021).

A ação de proteção foi aceite pelo juiz constitucional e em recurso foi declarada a violação dos direitos constitucionais de autodeterminação e de consulta prévia. Todos os direitos invocados pelos autores tiveram aqui um papel instrumental na medida em que foram uma via para a defesa dos direitos da natureza.

Importa referir que o Estado equatoriano condicionou a nacionalidade Waorani, que se encontrava na área abrangida pelo projeto de extração petrolífera, a aceitar o projeto em troca de serviços básicos como água potável, eletricidade, saúde, educação, bolsas de estudo, usando serviços da competência exclusiva do Estado para tentar persuadir os afetados a aceitar a extração de petróleo nos seus territórios.

Klever Calle, ativista equatoriano, menciona que há momentos em que há um falso dilema entre direitos humanos e direitos da natureza, nomeadamente quando as comunidades locais defendem os projetos mineiros nas suas terras, apenas porque precisam de emprego, saneamento, água potável e dos cuidados médicos que lhes são oferecidos em troca da aprovação desses projetos. Há uma série de direitos humanos que parecem posicionar-se em aparente contradição com os direitos da natureza. Quanto a este falso dilema, Klever Calle argumenta que a defesa dos ecossistemas está profundamente ligada à justiça social e que enquanto não houver justiça social vamos continuar a assistir a este conflito entre populações que exigem direitos humanos e outras que demandam direitos da natureza. A solução para estes conflitos tem que se encontrar nas estruturas sociais, económicas e políticas que geram essas iniquidades (Calle, Klever, 2021).

Caso Camaroneira na Reserva Cayapas- Esmeraldas

Se foi possível perceber a existência de uma dinâmica de colaboração entre direitos humanos e direitos da natureza com o fim de proteger o ambiente e natureza, situações houve em que as duas áreas surgiram em oposição.

Os direitos de propriedade são os que mais se destacaram nesta perspetiva, muito embora o direito ao trabalho, os direitos relativos à migração e à livre circulação também tenham assumido relevância.

No caso da Camaroneira na Reserva Cayapas – Esmeraldas, uma ação posta pelo Estado contra uma empresa/exploração de camarão, a controvérsia foi a afetação dos direitos da

natureza pela empresa que estava localizada numa reserva ecológica. O proprietário da camaroneira Marmeza invocou, para além do direito à propriedade, o direito ao trabalho e remuneração como justificação para a atividade económica aquícola que levava a cabo com prejuízo para os direitos da natureza, pretensão que foi aceite mas depois revertida em sede de recurso.

A influência das cosmovisões indígenas

Esperanza Martinez, jurista, bióloga e ativista, que teve um papel de relevo na construção da nova Constituição do Equador, mencionou que a ideia de que os direitos da natureza têm na sua génese as cosmovisões indígenas merece alguma reflexão, na medida em que, apesar do pensamento indígena ter tido enorme influência, não foi a única influência (Martinez, Esperanza, 2021).

Na verdade, os direitos da natureza não eram uma agenda própria do mundo indígena (Rodriguez, Adriana, 2021), resultam sim de uma reflexão e de uma participação mais híbrida, realizada pelo mundo mestiço. Há uma hibridização, pois estamos perante um diálogo entre o direito e pensamento indígena, que apesar de ter origem ancestral tem vigência atual, mas que choca, e se combina com as formas ocidentais de pensar e fazer a legislação (Isch, Edgar, 2021).

É ao mundo mestiço que interessa proteger o regime de conservação e de cuidado à natureza depois de ter verificado que o direito ambiental fracassou e que é necessário promover outra relação com a natureza.

A Constituição equatoriana resultou de um encontro de híbridos, mestiços e indígenas, pelo que é uma Constituição híbrida, com várias ontologias distintas (Rodriguez, Adriana, 2021) e em que houve uma apropriação pela visão ocidental do conceito de Pachamama. Os povos indígenas não têm palavra para natureza porque pura e simplesmente não se distinguem dela. A fratura entre natureza e cultura não é própria dos povos indígenas, resultou de um processo de colonização em que os colonizadores provocaram esta rutura ao impor um modo de pensamento alheio. Própria dos povos indígenas é a visão integradora, de complementaridade. A referência a Pachamama em lugar de natureza faz parte desta diferente maneira de ver a natureza, já que o conceito de natureza é também um conceito ocidental que separa os humanos da natureza e separa as competências de um e de outro (Martinez, Esperanza, 2021).

No entanto, os direitos da natureza tomam do mundo indígena o conceito de Pachamama, um conceito espaço-temporal, espiritual e cósmico, mas tomam também do mundo ocidental o conceito de sujeito de direitos e alguns conceitos da ciência ocidental de como se explicam as relações da natureza, como ciclo vital, estrutura do ecossistema, biodiversidade, que são conceitos que não existem no mundo indígena (Martinez, Esperanza, 2021; Isch, Edgar, 2021).

O diálogo entre os direitos da natureza e os direitos humanos

Na Constituição do Equador, são reconhecidos os chamados direitos de terceira geração, como o direito a um “ambiente saudável”, e, simultaneamente, os direitos da natureza, que pressupõem o valor intrínseco da natureza, articulando uma abordagem antropocêntrica em que a natureza continua a ser vista como tendo valor instrumental, e uma abordagem não dualista em que se lhe atribui valor intrínseco.

A mesma abordagem é assumida em inúmeras decisões de tribunais equatorianos, como no caso das aqui mencionadas, em que são articulados direitos humanos consagrados em

instrumentos internacionais e nacionais, como o direito a um ambiente saudável, à autodeterminação, direito ao território e direito de consulta e participação dos povos indígenas, em paralelo com os direitos da natureza para defesa da integridade de rios, de fauna e flora e do equilíbrio dos ecossistemas.

Não obstante a natureza pioneira da Constituição do Equador, esta não evidencia um corte epistemológico com a Constituição moderna, no sentido que lhe é atribuído por Latour (Latour, 1993 e 2004), mas revela-se enquanto espaço dialético em que direitos humanos e direitos da natureza, em abstrato, assumem idêntica dignidade. O reconhecimento dos direitos da natureza não implicou um diferente enquadramento ou conteúdo dos direitos humanos, coexistindo estas duas diferentes abordagens.

Dito isto, como é que os direitos humanos e os direitos da natureza podem dialogar entre si? Será viável a solução aparentemente alcançada pelo Equador? Esperanza Martinez refere que a solução está no art. 10 da Constituição do Equador que dispõe que no Equador têm direitos as pessoas, as comunidades e a natureza. Isto significa que se há um dano na natureza devem proteger-se as pessoas, as comunidades e a natureza. A forma de articular os direitos da natureza e os direitos humanos é através do princípio da interdependência, porque, como dizem os povos ancestrais “os seres humanos são terra que caminha”, o nosso corpo e as nossas células são as mesmas da terra, “somos um holobionte que caminha pela terra” (Carvalho, 2014; Hanh, 1997; Martinez, Esperanza, 2021).

O direito à vida da natureza é complementar ao direito à vida dos seres humanos e vice-versa, há relações simbióticas entre todas as criaturas (Isch, Edgar, 2021; Rodriguez, Adriana, 2021; Calle, Klever, 2021). Daí que para Martinez o conceito de biocentrismo seja muito discutível porque dá lugar ao contrário de antropocentrismo. Por outro lado, Isch reconhece que o biocentrismo tem os seus limites, porque são os humanos que estão a dar direitos à natureza, e por isso estamos a fazê-lo do ponto de vista da visão humana, embora valorando melhor a vida (Isch, Edgar 2021). A reflexão profunda que se retira dos direitos da natureza prende-se com a questão da interdependência e interdisciplinaridade e do reconhecimento de que o exercício dos direitos da natureza tem que ser em complementaridade, interdependente e relacional com os seres humanos (Martinez, Esperanza, 2021). Os direitos da natureza devem vir completar os direitos humanos e tornar estes menos antropocêntricos, menos liberais (Rodriguez, Adriana, 2021), num esforço de resignificação dos mesmos.

Conclusões

A título de conclusões, necessariamente provisórias porque ainda está em curso a recolha de dados empíricos, podemos reforçar as ideias de que os direitos da natureza têm encontrado resistência nos direitos humanos de natureza individualista, de que o direito de propriedade privada é o melhor exemplo, e ainda, no modelo de desenvolvimento económico ocidental baseado no crescimento sem limites, nos interesses do Estado e dos agentes económicos ligados aos setores extractivista, da agroindústria ou mega infraestruturas. O défice de aplicação da justiça e o sistema de educação, que continua a reproduzir um pensamento Moderno e dualista, também têm um papel determinante.

Como não se deu a transição para um novo modelo de desenvolvimento, os juízes fazem uma ponderação de interesses em que por vezes ganham os direitos da natureza, outras vezes o interesse nacional do Estado (Rodriguez, Adriana, 2021).

A estas resistências acresce a falta de independência judicial, já que as empresas exercem processos enormes de influência através do aparelho de estado no sistema judicial, resultando no atraso dos processos e em impunidade (Martinez, Esperanza, 2021).

Por outro lado, a Constituição visa proteger uma natureza que não é nem a que se aprende na escola, nem aquela sobre a qual só têm conhecimento os cientistas (o sistema de ensino continua a reproduzir o modelo moderno e dualista), mas uma natureza onde se reconhece os saberes dos povos ancestrais e onde os humanos estão ancorados numa outra relação com a natureza.

Em suma, do reconhecimento dos direitos da natureza pela Constituição do Equador não resultou uma rutura epistemológica ou de paradigma jurídico, já que coexistem as duas abordagens da natureza, uma antropocêntrica e outra em que se lhe atribui valor intrínseco. Os direitos humanos e os direitos da natureza têm coexistido num esforço de harmonização e de reconhecimento da interdependência entre as duas áreas, da reinvenção cultural dos direitos humanos e da necessidade de estabelecer modelos de interpretação que incluam os saberes dos povos ancestrais. Reconhece-se que está em curso uma mudança não só no paradigma jurídico mas da sociedade em geral que reflete sobre uma nova relação com a natureza, bem como do mundo indígena que começou a fazer uso dos direitos da natureza.

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Forests and Rivers: Non-Anthropocentric Conceptions of Political Community

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Abstract: This paper results from an oral presentation at the international conference “Beyond Modernity: Alternative Incursions into the Anthropocene”, organised by António Carvalho and Mariana Riquito at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra on 15 and 16 June 2021. Here I engage in the theoretical and ontological exercise of looking at forests and rivers from the other side of the abyssal lines conceptualised by the Epistemologies of the South. In doing this, I argue that Indigenous cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies help us understand ecosystems such as forests and rivers as living, conscious entities; as kin; and as polis themselves. By looking at two case studies, I suggest that forests and rivers might be understood as multispecies political communities where humans are co-members, co-participants and co-creators along with a variety of other beings, profoundly shattering dominant anthropocentric conceptions of subjecthood, agency and voice within most modern Western narratives. Thus, understanding non-human nature from beyond the abyssal lines encourages the development of much more just, inclusive, and ecologically balanced responses to the global environmental crisis; and, perhaps, to the crisis of modernity itself.

Keywords: Abyssal Lines; Indigenous Ontologies; Non-Human Nature; Political Community

Introduction

It may be said that political communities have been fundamentally anthropocentric, and hence exclusive of other-than-human beings, ever since Aristotle first wrote that politics is inherently about speech (or the act of speaking) and that speech is an ability that only humans hold (Dobson, 2010). For Aristotle, the communication of judgements (distinctions between *right* and *wrong* or *just* and *unjust*) is what “makes a city – the *polis* itself” (Dobson, 2010: 753). It seems, then, that “the exclusion of the non-human from the political has deep roots in political thought dating back to classical times” (Burke and Fishel, 2020: 36).

For authors like Burke and Fishel, however, the global environmental crisis (seen as proof of the failure of organising human societies as if they are separate from and in control of the more-than-human world) “requires finding ways to ‘represent’, acknowledge, and include the non-human as a vital and living force in our politics in ways that cross borders, jurisdictions, and communities” (Burke and Fishel, 2020: 34). They claim that non-human beings are really “actants across all scales of politics” and that “this ought to be recognized with agency and representation within the polity” (ibid.). The challenge is therefore not only to confront the physical manifestations of this global crisis (e.g. climate change; sea-level

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rise; the sixth mass extinction), but to face their ultimate cause (the way *particular* human societies and their political, economic, and socio-cultural systems have been built according to Cartesian dualism); and to re-embed humanity in the greater web of life on Earth. It may be argued, in fact, that “the demand that the non-human must either speak our political language or remain mute was always cast in the wrong direction; it is we who must learn the Earth’s language and reimagine the polity in its idioms” (Burke and Fishel, 2020: 47). And yet a central question arises: who is this *we*?

Framing the discussion as if political communities were anthropocentric since their inception is – in a way – to already engage in an exercise of epistemological exclusion that renders invisible multiple other ways of understanding the world and organising human societies, which never perceived the latter as separate from nature, or the *polis* as including solely humans. This is a good example of how “modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking”, for it is premised on *one* dominant account of reality (Santos, 2016: 118). The hegemonic collective narratives about the world we live in are defined by invisible but extremely pervasive lines that describe reality as that which happens on *this* side of the line (i.e. Global North) and that erase or silence what happens on the *other* side of the line (i.e. Global South) (Santos, 2016). As Boaventura de Sousa Santos contends, these abyssal lines are so powerful that the other side of the line, the non-Western or “non-modern” world, along with its own counter-hegemonic narratives that challenge prevailing systems of oppression and exploitation, “vanishes as reality, becomes nonexistent, and is indeed produced as nonexistent” (Santos, 2016: 118). Nonexistence effectively means “not existing in any relevant or comprehensible way of being”, for they fall outside the accepted frameworks of Western modernity (ibid.).

Thus, cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies such as those shared by Indigenous peoples around the world – who, despite their immense cultural diversity, tend to draw on common principles of interdependence, relationality, reciprocity and respect between human beings and the more-than-human world (Stewart-Harawira, 2012) – are kept *beyond* the abyssal line of modern knowledge. They are most frequently labeled as superstition, unscientific, idolatrous beliefs (Santos, 2016). That is why it is crucial to specify who one is referring to when claiming that “it is we who must learn the Earth’s language”, when there are actually multiple (human) cultures and peoples throughout the world who may claim to understand it very well (Bird Rose, 2013). Indeed, according to the Epistemologies of the South, global social injustice (brought about by the interlinked effects of patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and anthropocentrism) also necessarily and simultaneously entails global *cognitive* injustice, or an epistemicide: the erasure of the pluriverse (Escobar, 2016); and, among others, of the different modes of relationship between human beings and the multispecies communities of which they are part (Van Dooren et al, 2016).

In fact, the metanarratives of Western modernity – or what Stefania Barca calls the master’s narrative of the Anthropocene (Barca, 2020) – tend to present “the world” as a *human* world, in the same way, that they speak of *humanity* as a homogeneous whole. Nonetheless, critical thinkers like Ailton Krenak claim that there is no *one* humanity, which is why Indigenous peoples’ struggles might be seen as “struggles for the survival of many worlds on one planet” (Inoue, 2018: 28). The world is, of course, far broader than the Western understanding of it, and therefore “the emancipatory transformations of our times may follow grammars and scripts other than those conceived by Western-centric critical theory (...)” (Santos, 2016: 237). I would argue that one extremely important dimension of these emancipatory transformations – especially in regard to the global environmental crisis – is that which concerns our understandings of (and, consequently, our modes of relationship with) non-human nature. Such a process demands we step over the abyssal line of modern

knowledge and learn from the *other* narratives: the invisible, silenced, excluded cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies that lie *beyond* the abyssal line.

What would it mean to engage in a form of postabyssal thinking about forests and rivers? To step over the line helps us learn from an ecology of knowledges; it involves “a radical break with modern Western ways of thinking and acting” because the present crisis will not be solved by the same thinking – and within the same systems – that created it in the first place (Santos, 2016: 134).

This paper rests on an understanding that “the traditional ontologies and epistemologies of the world’s Indigenous peoples have a vital contribution to make at this critical juncture in the evolution of humankind” (Stewart-Harawira, 2012: 78). That is, in great part, because “they exhibit a profound understanding of the deep interconnectedness of being” (ibid.). I hereby engage in the theoretical and ontological exercise of looking at forests and rivers (two essential elements of the Earth community) from *this* side of the line – through modern Western conceptions of them – and from the *other* side of the line – through non-Western, Indigenous conceptions. Two particular case studies are briefly analysed: the Living Forest Declaration written by the Kichwa people of Sarayaku, Ecuador; and the Whanganui river case in Aotearoa New Zealand. The reason why I engage in this exercise is to demonstrate how radically different narratives about nature (here zooming in on forests and rivers) exist; and how the matter of which narrative we choose deeply informs the kind of relationships we can develop with nature as a whole and with all its constituent beings and entities. I suggest that to understand them not from a mechanistic, reductionist, instrumentalist lens, but as political communities where humans constantly engage with, interact and communicate with a plurality of other beings – where humans are, indeed, co-members, co-participants, co-creators – can help us develop responses to the global environmental crisis which are much more just, inclusive, and ecologically balanced than the ones that can be devised from *this* side of the line.

Crossing the Abyssal Line

Forests as Political Communities

According to Cristina Yumie Aoki Inoue, a dominant vision of the forest has been emerging for the past few years, which “values it insofar as it serves an instrumental function, such as to store carbon or protect biodiversity” (Inoue, 2018: 36). Such a vision has, in reality, probably existed ever since a common perception of nature as a living organism was replaced by a conception of it as a lifeless machine; something which ecofeminist authors like Carolyn Merchant identify with 16th and 17th century Europe, with the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment period (Merchant, 1980).

Nowadays, under the context of climate change, the concept of carbon sink has become increasingly associated with forests, given the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It may even lead to a greater concern for their fate, but always under a specific lens. The use of official, institutional jargon (such as that promoted by entities like the UN) that perpetuates a technical and mechanistic language through terms like *carbon sequestration*; *investment in forestry*; *sustainable development*; etc. – effectively places the value of forests solely within the sphere of productive labour (the only kind of labour recognised by the capitalist world economy) and does not recognise the value of its *reproductive labour* (i.e. the creation and preservation of life) (Barca, 2020). Through this perspective, forests are usually understood either as natural resources; as places for humans

to collect food, medicine, timber, etc.; or for humans' (aesthetic) enjoyment and recreational use.

If we take off this lens and cross the abyssal line, however, the perception changes drastically. In 2018, the Kichwa people of Sarayaku, Ecuador wrote the Living Forest Declaration (*Kawsak Sacha*), demanding legal recognition of their territorial rights to the Amazon rainforest on which they have been living for thousands of years, in deep interrelationship with the forest and its beings. The Declaration states that:

Kawsak Sacha is a living being, with consciousness, constituted by all the beings of the Jungle, from the most infinitesimal to the greatest and supreme. It includes the beings of the animal, vegetable, mineral, spiritual and cosmic worlds, in intercommunication with human beings (...) In the waterfalls, lagoons, marshes, mountains, rivers, trees and other places of the territory, the Protective Beings of Kawsak Sacha live and they develop a life of their own, similar to that of human beings. The Kawsak Sacha transmits the knowledge to the yachak (wise elders) so that they can interact in the world of the Protective Beings of the jungle, in order to maintain the balance of the Pachamama, heal people and society. (...) (Kichwa Native People of Sarayaku, June 2018)

The Declaration tells us that the whole of the forest constitutes a living, conscious entity who is inhabited by a multiplicity of beings – only some of whom are human – permanently engaging with each other, namely through intercommunication. The conceptions of subjecthood, agency, voice, and participation in socio-ecological processes that are present here are profoundly different from those present on the other side of the line (which, in this case, is Western modernity, since we have just crossed the abyssal line). These conceptions are radically different because they consider a group of actors that is much broader than the human, and a set of relationships that do not rest on human supremacy over other-than-human beings. The Declaration – and the ontological relationships that it describes – is explicitly *non*-anthropocentric. The interspecies (or, indeed, interbeing) dialogue constantly taking place within *Kawsak Sacha* makes it possible to imagine a scenario where the interests and needs of non-human beings are taken into account, represented, and integrated in the *polis*. They are actually part of it.

This is not an isolated case. When writing about the Yanomami people of Brazil, Inoue notes that this forest-people's knowledge system identifies them as “one among many of the peoples and entities of the forest”, most of them other-than-human (Inoue, 2018: 26). Theoretically, then, “one can say that their worldview eschews anthropocentrism and recognizes the political significance of the diversity of the forest itself”, just like the Living Forest Declaration of the Kichwa people of Sarayaku does (ibid.). Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa claims that “The forest is alive (...) The white people may not hear it complain, yet it feels pain just like humans do. Its tall trees moan as they fall and it cries in pain when it is burned down” (Kopenawa and Albert, 2013: 382). Here, the forest is visibly understood as a sentient being (Inoue, 2018).

Ontologically, it is not a local “environment” to Indigenous peoples, but truly their world; their *polis*. In the words of José Gualinga, a leader of the Native People of Sarayaku: “The way of life based on symbiosis with these beings is a fundamental and concrete principle.” (Interview for Extinction Rebellion, 8 October 2020)³. Indeed: “The yachaks intertwine with these beings through visions, communicating and agreeing to maintain friendship and sustain the balance of abundance and fertility” (ibid.). This understanding of a permanent communion between human and other-than-human beings firmly rejects the nature/society dichotomy; just in the same way that, when referring to Yanomami ontology,

³ <https://writersrebel.com/voice-of-the-living-forest-interview-with-indigenous-resistance-leader-jose-gualinga/>

Inoue claims that “animals and other species are considered kinds of ‘folks’ and ‘peoples’, and like political entities, they live in their societies” (Inoue, 2018: 38). For forest-peoples like the Yanomami, these societies of beings are entangled in broader societies, in a way that the forest (or nature itself) can be understood as “a set of societies like an ‘international arena’ (...) Everything is literally political, as there is no absolute difference in status between society and environment” (ibid.).

So, in fact, the forest – in this case, *Kawsak Sacha*, as presented by the Kichwa people of Sarayaku – may be understood as a multispecies political community maintained by the relationships between all its constituent beings, its co-members, active co-participants and co-creators, human and otherwise. Stefania Barca also clearly explains this when she presents the counter-narrative of people like Ailton Krenak. Krenak’s contribution to the creation of “extractive reserves” in Brazil promoted the development of the principle of *florestania* (or *forestzanship*), which translates “the diversity principle into a concrete utopia, filling it with political meaning: that the forest and its peoples constitute a *polis*, a more-than-human community endowed with proper political subjectivity (...)” (Barca, 2020: 24). The idea that the forest and its multiple peoples constitute a *polis* is also visible in the *Kawsak Sacha* Declaration.

Rivers as Political Communities

For several generations, on *this* side of the abyssal line (i.e. Western modernity), the relationship between human beings and water has mostly been defined as a matter of “water resource management”, based on an understanding of freshwater “as a natural, asocial substance that can be objectively known and – in efforts to maximize its potential as a resource – controlled and regulated for human welfare” (Anderson et al, 2019: 2). Yet, “there are many examples of other ways of knowing or seeing rivers that are insightful for developing more sustainable and just interactions between societies and rivers” (ibid.). Note how this sentence, in itself, also perpetuates the nature/society dichotomy by speaking of just interactions “between societies and rivers”.

Referring directly to Indigenous peoples, Anderson and colleagues claim that different socio-environmental movements in the latest decades have tried to achieve greater protection for rivers based on recognition of them as living entities; which, within the modern system of law, may include recognising them as legal subjects. In the authors’ view, “granting legal personhood to rivers foregrounds reciprocal exchanges between people and rivers, emphasizing mutual responsibilities over narrow utilitarian definitions of human benefit from water and resource extraction” (Anderson et al, 2019: 15). Indeed, from *this* side of the abyssal line, rivers are most often understood as bodies of water crucial to the preservation of life on Earth for the hydrological role that they play; but their bodies are seen from an objectifying, mechanistic, reductionist perspective. Not as living, conscious, sentient bodies; but perhaps better described as a *reservoir* of water, which is a *substance* (not a being, as many Indigenous cultures understand it) that is essential for human life.

If we cross the abyssal line, however, we see rivers from an entirely different perspective. In 2017, the Whanganui river in Aotearoa New Zealand became the first body of water in the world to be officially recognised as a legal person. This unprecedented step in the history of modern law⁴ resulted from a tireless mobilisation (since 1873) by local Maori peoples to have their customary law (*tikanga*) recognised; and to have their rights to the river

⁴ Currently being developed in other countries of the world, like Colombia; see Macpherson, Ventura and Ospina, 2020

restored to them, after they were stripped of them through the colonial Treaty of Waitangi (Rodgers, 2017; Collins and Esterling, 2019). The Te Awa Tupua Act identifies *Te Awa Tupua* as “an indivisible and living whole, comprising the Whanganui River from the mountains to the sea, incorporating all its physical and metaphysical elements⁵”. This may remind us of *Kawsak Sacha*, the living entity comprising the forest and all the beings that inhabit it, according to Kichwa ontology.

After defining *Te Awa Tupua*, the Act describes the intrinsic values (*Tupua Te Kawa*) that represent its essence, including sentences like: “Te Awa Tupua is a spiritual and physical entity that supports and sustains both the life and natural resources within the Whanganui River and the health and well-being of the iwi, hapū, and other communities of the River”; or “Te Awa Tupua is a singular entity comprised of many elements and communities, working collaboratively for the common purpose of the health and well-being of Te Awa Tupua” (Te Awa Tupua Act, 2017). As one can see from these intrinsic values, the human inhabitants of the river system (the Whanganui iwi and hapū) form part of *Te Awa Tupua*, just as the non-human beings who also live in interdependence with the Whanganui. The deep interdependence between human and non-human life in Maori ontology is clearly translated by the phrase “Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au”, meaning “I am the River and the River is me” (ibid.). Besides, it should also be noted that the many elements and communities constituting *Te Awa Tupua* are “working collaboratively to ensure its health and well-being”. Is this not what makes a *polis*?

In this case, the Whanganui river – although being geographically situated within the state of Aotearoa New Zealand – is now recognised, by law, as belonging not to the state, but to itself (which includes the local Maori tribes and the non-human beings who are all part of the entity *Te Awa Tupua*). The concept of ownership, here, is also completely different on both sides of the abyssal line. For the Maori, it is intimately linked to the concept of *kaitiakitanga*, which might be translated as guardianship or stewardship, where humans are understood to live symbiotically with the Earth and all living beings, and have innate responsibilities to care for all of them (Rodgers, 2017). The Te Awa Tupua Act names two official guardians of the Whanganui river (*Te Pou Tupua*), who are to be “the human face of Te Awa Tupua and act in the name of Te Awa Tupua” (Te Awa Tupua Act, 2017). One of their functions is precisely “to act and to speak for and on behalf of Te Awa Tupua”, with the ultimate purpose of assuring its health and well-being (ibid.).

Indeed, “the deep interconnectedness of being” (Stewart-Harawira, 2012: 78) of the Maori’s ontological relationship with the river is most obviously illustrated by the fact that it is actually based on genealogical ties. It views “nature as kin, rather than simply as a resource” (Magallanes, 2020: 2). As stated by Magallanes, “Indigenous traditional stories typically tell of how people today descended from, are part of and are genealogically related to the natural world” (Magallanes, 2020: 3). Non-human entities such as mountains and rivers and non-human beings such as animals and plants are often understood as ancestors. In the words of Turama Hawira of the Maori tribe Ngati Rangī, “we are defined by our ancestral mountain, our ancestral rivers and our ancestral land. (...) We do not separate our wellbeing from [their] wellbeing... Nor can we possess them. They do not belong to us – we belong to them” (ibid.). The concept of *whanaungatanga* – commonly translated as kinship – “does not refer only to family ties between living people, but rather to a much broader web of relationships between people (living and dead), land, water, flora and fauna, and the spiritual world of the *atua* (gods) – all bound together by *whakapapa* [genealogy]” (ibid.). Therefore,

⁵ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2017/0007/latest/whole.html>

“this explains why *iwi* [tribes] refer to mountains, rivers, and lakes in the same way as they refer to other humans, and why elders feel comfortable speaking directly to them...” (ibid.).

Regarding the Whanganui river specifically, “the river is seen as the ancestor of the Whanganui tribes” (Magallanes, 2020: 5). The kinship ties binding the local human peoples and the river together constitute sort of a family relationship, with “a set of reciprocal obligations” that are expressed through the concept of *kaitiakitanga*, as mentioned above (Magallanes, 2020: 3). The interconnectivity between river and peoples (human and otherwise) is also illustrated by how “the rivers flowing off the mountains are likened ‘to an umbilical cord connecting the tribe to the spiritual essence of their ancestors’ existence” (Magallanes, 2020: 4). In effect, “for Maori, rivers are considered *Papatuanuku*’s [the Earth Mother’s] arteries, each with their own *mauri* (spirit or life-force), which may be lessened if humans interfere with that flow.” (ibid.).

The health and well-being of both the human and non-human peoples living along with the Whanganui river are clearly seen as inseparable, as they are all co-constitutive of the broader physical and spiritual entity that is *Te Awa Tupua*. In that sense, I suggest that the Whanganui river might also be understood (like *Kawsak Sacha*) as a multispecies political community where both human and non-human beings are constantly engaging with each other as co-members, active co-participants and co-creators of their lifeworld, working together for the balance of the whole.

Conclusion

Stepping back to *this* side of the abyssal line (i.e. Western modernity) after this brief theoretical and ontological exercise, the world seems rather desolate; impersonal; lifeless even. It is the absolute reductionism, the mechanistic, instrumentalist perception of it that enables rising deforestation trends; the proliferation of dams and mega-dams, and the diversion and strict control and management of the world’s rivers; and that enables the sixth mass extinction event to continue stripping the Earth of its rich and bio/culturally diverse life. But this perspective, the one we have from *this* side of the abyssal line, is not the *only* reality there is. In the current context of global environmental crisis – when it has become undeniably clear that the effects of capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism and anthropocentrism as mutually reinforcing systems of oppression (Solón, 2018) lead to the devastation of this planet’s multiple life forms and lifeworlds – it is now more crucial than ever to step *over* the line and to engage with the counter-hegemonic, resistant ontologies (and consequent modes of relationship with the Earth and all its beings) that exist in the pluriverse.

Perhaps, as Makere Stewart-Harawira suggests, part of the solution to solving the crisis of modernity is to once again understand nature (in all its human and other-than-human dimensions) as sacred; an ontological stance that firmly rejects its objectification, commodification, oppression and exploitation (Stewart-Harawira, 2012). The task at hand, then, is to rescue the pluriverse from the hegemonic narratives that seek to continually describe it as a *universe*; as the living space of one *homogeneous* humanity; as a *human* world; according to the master’s narrative of the Anthropocene (Barca, 2020). After all, as Barca claims – inspired by Audre Lorde’s contention that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 1984) – “dismantling this master’s house to liberate humanity and the earth requires formidable new tools, both material and symbolic” (Barca, 2020: 2). I suggest that these tools can be inspired by non-Western and Indigenous counter-hegemonic narratives that present a fundamentally different understanding of nature and of humanity’s relationship with the more-than-human world.

Still, this *liberation of humanity and the earth* must never fall prey to any form of Western, white saviourism that engages in a sort of cultural, ontological extractivism in regard to Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. As Western (and white) researchers and academics, I believe we must always take the point of departure of being students and learners. Through active listening and intercultural translation (Santos, 2016b) we might learn from and with Indigenous cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies in order to help us transform our dominant, Western systems of oppression and exploitation. Yet, we must always do so, as much as possible, through non-extractive methodologies and modes of relationship (*ibid.*). To what extent this is possible remains, for the moment, an open question, one which would certainly benefit from a deeper and more extensive dialogue with those standing on the *other* side of the abyssal line.

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An early modern blue Anthropocene, or the historical entanglements between humans and nonhumans

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Abstract: At the Conference "Beyond Modernity: Alternative Incursions into the Anthropocene" I presented the idea of a premodern Anthropocene, ranging from the late 15th century onwards, and marked by the European expansions and the so-called first globalization. This was supported by the establishment of colonial territories, the development of imperial trading networks, and the exploitation of resources. Continued and large-scale extractions of sea resources, for instance, led to habitat degradation, long-term impacts and drove populations and species to the brink of extinction. Known as the Columbian Exchange or a Wet Globalization, it was a moment of geographic, environmental, and sociocultural disruption. Are part of this history the co-constructed narratives that must include the ocean as a corridor and a connector, as a place and a home, and as an entity, as well as by the entangled relationships of humans and nonhumans.

Keywords: Blue Humanities; People and other animals; Nonhuman agency; Ocean history; Early Modern Atlantic

Advocating for the Humanities for the Ocean in the Anthropocene

Human history [...] represents the accumulation and thickening of anthropogenic pressures as human populations expand in numbers and geographic range. Refusing monocultures requires that we entangle multiple historical Anthropocenes, intermingling scientific observations and cultural obsessions. [...] To construct a pluralized Anthropocene, multiple possible conceptions of this epoch must overlap, connect, and entangle in ways that may seem only partially legible. A posthuman network of human and nonhuman actors may be difficult to reconcile with human desires for racial, sexual, and class-based justice – but no one said the Anthropocene was going to be easy. The essential technology for engaging plurality, however, is one we already have: stories. (Steve Mentz, 2019)

We always find ourselves facing ourselves, as individuals, mirrored in the eyes of those others – men, women, birds, butterflies, fish, any small or large animal, tree leaves, water surfaces, waves, mists of forgotten environments. It is the mirror that shows us our appearance and of our family, of the landscapes behind us, but also the environmental contamination and destruction, the overexploitation of resources, the simplification of habitats and of natural systems, and very sharp ecological, social, and cultural discontinuities (Brito, 2021). This is our geography.

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The Anthropocene - a new geological age on planet Earth, coined by chemist Paul Crutzen and colleagues in 2000 - is also known as the epoch of humans, or *Sapiens*. It is one in which human actions have impacted and significantly changed and continue to change planet Earth; it is one in which the borders between the *anthropic* and the *biologic* dissolve or merge (e.g. Fuentes and Baynes-Rock, 2017), even when we do not realize it. In this sense, this time in which we move today is the time of humans, where all societies' activities temporarily or permanently affect the house we all inhabit and depend on. This is our chronology.

To address and conceptualize this age of the humans, we may follow the perspectives of Donna Haraway (2015) according to which the Anthropocene is much more like a border than a period. It signals drastic discontinuities, and what will come next is, without a doubt, vastly different from what existed previously. Or follow the idea of anthropologist Anna Tsing (2021), to whom we need to pluralize the Anthropocene, and treat it as patchy and heterogenous, with many temporalities and intersections, as entanglements and historical conjunctures that set off new possibilities of being – the Anthropocene detonations. There are several current discussions on this topic and different directions of thought⁷.

For Charles Mann (2011), following Alfred Crosby's theories, we might call it Homogenocene – an 'epoch in the history of life, brought into being by the abrupt creation of a world-spanning economic system'. For Donna Haraway (2015), we should even consider the possibility of defining our current era, not as the Anthropocene, nor the Capitalocene, as others, namely Moore (2016) put it, but rather as the *Chthulucene* – in which the common and joint actions and agencies of all who inhabit the Earth, people included, will allow the co-existence and flourishing of 'rich multispecies assemblages'. *Chthulucene* 'entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages – including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman' (Haraway, 2015). The Feral Atlas by Anna Tsing (2021) and colleagues invites us to think about and "to explore the ecological worlds created when nonhuman entities become tangled up with human infrastructure projects".

These very brief introductory words show us the Anthropocene as a geological age is under avid debate in different scientific fields (Castree, 2014; Lewis and Maslin, 2015), including within the Humanities (e.g. Rose et al., 2012; Kitch, 2017) - its beginning raging from the Neolithic Revolution or the 20th-century Great Acceleration. Here I present and discuss the idea of a premodern or an early modern Anthropocene, from the late 15th century onwards, marked by the European expansions and the so-called first globalization – with geopolitical, economic, cultural, and ecological processes involved. This is an essay based on my current research in early modern marine environmental history as well as in reflections about our current days and social and ecological issues.

Colleagues and I have been advocating for the Humanities for the Ocean, to acknowledge the ecological and material foundations of cultures and societies, its energy and food sources, forms of biological coexistence, and the interdependency of humankind and the non-human world. Maritime, environmental, art and science historians, (zoo)archaeologists, geographers, can address far distant or recent societal and environmental challenges from their own disciplinary grounds or through an interdisciplinary lens. Together, we can discuss the construction of knowledge, technology, and science; perceptions and representations of

⁷ See, as an example, 'Anthropocene Project' by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society: <https://www.carsoncenter.uni-muenchen.de/outreach/past-projects/anthropocene/index.html>

maritime communities and marine populations; convergent or divergent ways of exploitation of the ocean, transformation processes, uses and patterns of trade and consumption⁸.

We do so based on the principle that human beings are an integral element of aquatic and oceanic realities and contexts, now, in the future as they were in the past. Following Helen Rozwadowski's words, it is necessary to 'humanize' the ocean in order to save it, that is, it is mandatory to include Humanities and Arts in ocean science and literacy (Rozwadowski, 2020). Analysing trends at regional and global levels, will allow us to assess dynamics and impacts in marine ecosystems in the two millennia prior to industrialization and to set the boundaries of the Anthropocene earlier in the human chronology.

This interdisciplinary approach to the epistemology of an early modern and blue Anthropocene, as well as to the scientific problematics and methods to be employed, allows us to simultaneously address the past of aquatic animals' populations in their natural ecosystems and human historical and sociocultural contexts – as well as the interactions between humans and nonhumans. And it is exactly the entanglements established, and the consequences of these entanglements, that I am interested in deepening.

My work so far has been focusing on large aquatic fauna, especially manatees, the sea cows – but also whales, dolphins, sharks, sea turtles and other –, as they were hunted, consumed, conceptualized, and recorded by different human societies across the early colonial Americas and Africa. It presents a cross-cultural approach, supported on concepts and analytical methods from marine environmental history, the environmental humanities, or blue humanities, and animal studies. My research usually tackles more-than-human systems where ecologies, geographies, cosmogonies, and cultures are seen and perceived as an entangled web of interdependencies. The present essay is focusing not on that research itself - not the environments nor animals nor the peoples - but on entanglements and interconnectedness. As Carolyn Merchant puts it in her 2020 book *The Anthropocene & the Humanities*, “*we are all blips of life in a sea of eternity. We are all visitors in the earth*”.

We (all) live(d) in networks of interdependencies.

An Early Modern (and Blue) Globalization

Colón and his crew did not voyage alone. They were accompanied by a menagerie of insects, plants, mammals, and microorganisms [...] European expeditions brought cattle, sheep, and horses, along with crops like sugarcane (originally from New Guinea), wheat (from the Middle East), bananas (from Africa), and coffee (also from Africa) [...] (Charles C. Mann, 2011)

As we know, medieval and early modern societies were living in an organic world, as people depended on the natural world to survive - for food (self and to feed animals), for protection, and for keeping warm. All energy production (physical work) was by means of human or animal labor – exception to the use of water and wind as power sources. This was a ‘somatic society’ (Marks, 2015). Because of this total dependence of the natural resources, and when and where human societies numbers increased, came transformation of ecosystems and environments and, in many parts of the world, overexploitation of those resources – animals, forests, waters, and so on. From the moment Europeans travelled from Europe to other parts of the world and colonized other territories, the appropriation, change and impact on peoples and resources became of global magnitude – this is the First Globalization.

⁸ Much of it is the research agenda of and will be encompassed in the global and interdisciplinary ERC Synergy project 4-OCEANS: Human History of Marine Life (<https://www.tcd.ie/tceh/projects/4-oceans/>).

This new global way of living on Earth resulted from the encounter of people who did not know each other existed; people adapted to spaces and accustomed to very diverse ways of living, with structurally different structurally different cultural systems and worldviews, as well as very different immune very different immune systems and adaptations to climate and environments. With the contact, the encounter. From the moment the transatlantic trade routes were established, a network of exchanges and trade was definitively set up between Europe between Europe, Africa, and America. People, products, objects, animals, native plants, ideas and knowledge, began to flow in the various directions in which the maritime communication systems, according to the economic and geostrategic interests of Europeans, were established. Objects produced in Europe were transported to Africa and the Americas; enslaved Africans were taken to Europe, but mainly the Americas; tropical products, natural resources and indigenous people were appropriated and brought to Europe. With contact came confrontation. Likewise, other living, albeit silent, elements were transported between Europe and the Americas - microbes, bacteria, and viruses. Diseases to which Europeans were immune and which did them little harm, such as influenza and chickenpox, but also the lethal smallpox, measles, and malaria, were introduced by the newcomers to these territories. These diseases wiped out hundreds, thousands (millions?) of people from the local populations. In the opposite direction, contact with the Amerindians led to the introduction of syphilis in Europe. With contact, contagion (Brito, 2020).

The so-called First Globalization refers to the growing interdependence of the world's economies, their cultures, and populations, through contact and trade, knowledge and technology, investment flows, people, information, ecologies, through contact of the different geographic regions in the advent of European expansions and colonization. One that was constructed on the crests of the ocean waves and equally co-constructed by humans and other animals.

This [aquatic] Columbian Exchange (Crosby, 2003 [1972]; Cook, 2015)⁹ or Wet Globalization (Mentz, 2020) was a moment of geographic, environmental, and sociocultural disruption or dramatic transformation; or yet, following Anna Tsing, a spatial and temporal detonator. There is a world before, and a world after. And its history is constructed by the entangled relationships of humans and nonhumans, and by the co-constructed narratives that must include the ocean as a corridor and a connector, as a place and a home, and as an entity (Mentz, 2020). So, we can call it an 'early modern and blue globalization'.

These early modern processes were supported on the establishment of colonial territories, the development of imperial trading networks, and the exploitation of resources. Continued and large-scale extractions of sea resources, for instance, led to habitat degradation, long-term impacts and drove populations and species to the brink of extinction. Sharks, turtles, whales, sea cows, coral, pearls, ambergris, were appropriated, captured, and transformed into commodities shipped worldwide. They were exploited locally and regionally and included in transoceanic and global networks of trade and transfer. Moving from the local to the global, they allowed for the construction of an early modern exchange network of knowledge, techniques, ways of doing and ways of seeing the world. As John McNeill (2019) puts it, they were elements of ecological teleconnections – an ecological transformation that has an economic and social perspective and implies global impacts, transfers, or ecological disruptions at large distances of the globe. Animals as products and

⁹ The multiple connections between the Eastern and Western hemispheres established across the Atlantic (and then other oceanic basins) as a result of the early modern European expansions, and the commercial, cultural and biological exchanges that were immediately established and have remained so, are known as the 'Columbian Exchange'.

resources, and as symbols and knowledge, are seen as an object of inquiry but should also be stated as main actors in the centre of studies and stories.

Given the impact of human extractions and transformations – on the waters and on the land – on a global scale and given the number of early modern extinctions and extirpations, this moment needs to be taken into consideration while addressing the history or the onset of the Anthropocene. The European expansions from the 15th century onwards, which instituted global trade and the circulation of people, goods, and natural and ecological elements, should also be considered as preconditions for the Anthropocene.

At a time when natural and exact scientists are beginning to review the solid evidence for the multiple ecological interdependencies upon which humans, other animals, and the rest of the non-human world depend, we humanities scientists are faced with the challenge of doing the same. In this case, to try to understand the historical interconnections and connections, not only between different human societies, but also between societies and the rest of the natural world. We can, and should, do this starting from one of these historical 'triggers' - the so-called first globalization and an early modern Anthropocene.

Nonhumans as Agents of Historical Narratives

Being an environmental historian for the early modern period and usually studying extra-European spaces, environments and sociocultural contexts has allowed me to understand the past of human and nonhuman interactions, impacts on (mostly) marine ecosystems and value of other animals as co-constructors of common historical narratives. The impacts of these ecological exchanges were, at the time, devastating and irreversible, but are still little known and studied today. If the history of European maritime expansions and the 'first globalization' is usually conceptualized and taught from an economic, cultural, political, and military point of view, it is undoubtedly time to start understanding it from an ecological and environmental point of view as well. The human presence in certain regions of the planet, at certain times at certain times, and their movements, migrations and expansions sometimes have ecological causes, but more importantly, they always have ecological and biological consequences (Brito, 2020). So, nonhumans are fundamental agents of historical narratives, while not forgetting humans as relevant ecological actors. These integrated approaches have also pointed me into some recent reflections that emerged because of the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns - the cleavage felt between the natural and cultural world, the dichotomies we have constructed but need to reconsider or de-construct as they were in the past and are so today much more fluid and permeable than before believed.

In this age of people – the Anthropocene –, all human practices affect temporarily or definitively the home that we all live in and on which we depend. It is the moment to reaffirm that humans are not at the centre and, most of the time, not in control.

As I write these words, we have already lived through well more than a year in which daily human practices have been forced to slow down and stop by the action of a virus and its consequences on human survival. The Covid-19 pandemic has been, of course, a 'trigger' of events or a recent disruptive moment in this time of the Anthropocene – as so many before it, at least, for the past 500 years. It drastically altered human existence on the planet and led, in March 2020, to a moment lasting several months that many have called 'The Great Pause' or the 'Anthropause'. Total lockdown of many world's nations, people confined to their homes, cities left empty, animals returning and occupying urban spaces previously colonized only by humans, the non-human world trying to reclaim some of its once natural territory. Since then, the world remains locked in successive waves. The idea of going back to normal is increasingly questioned.

As a consequence, we are discussing a 'new normal' in different sectors of civil society and academia, including historical views and the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. But we need to do that in an interdisciplinary manner, by grounding it in the basic issue - the 'eco-cultural-system' that supports life and allows our survival as a species and the survival of all other species on Earth. At a time when scientists are beginning to review the solid evidence for the multiple ecological interdependencies between humans, other animals, and the rest of the non-human world, scholars from the Humanities can strongly contribute by disentangling the natural-cultural relationships and in its many interconnected perspectives in human history.

It is time to analyse, to think, to teach, and to act beyond our own frontiers and boundaries. It is time to get the word out, from our minds and closed circles of scholarship, well into the open. The Great Pause demands rethinking, reflection, and respect, and demands a recovery – of individual life, and life as an entity - supported on renewal and empathy.

In our domain of investigation, in recent years, there has been a historiographical transition that has been called 'Environmental Turn' or 'Oceanic Turn' (e.g. Deloughrey, 2017). These conceptual and methodological shifts consider that the study of different life forms and their natural habitats, and the development of a critical gaze towards the underwater world, allows reorienting historical knowledge and rethinking ecologies and imaginaries of the ocean in different geographies and chronologies (Bolster, 2006; Deloughrey, 2017). There has also been a historiographical turn towards 'Animal Studies' or 'Animal History', according to which it is possible to conceptualize and add layers of historicity to animals other than humans (e.g. Nance, 2015).

Considering that people have been using aquatic systems - inland, coastal, and ocean - for thousands of years, with strong impacts in the last few hundred years, and have been modifying these environments (Bolster, 2006), the human component is also essential to understanding the long-term dynamics and the ecologies of these ecosystems. We need to start considering the existence and influence of humans in the ecological systems and niches that coexist with other natural elements. And we need to reach out to natural scientists to include humans in their own questions. Likewise, it is essential to include nonhuman agents in the construction of historical narratives. Myself being as well an environmental humanities' scholar – or one that advocates for the Blue Humanities (Mentz, 2019) – I need to consider all nonhumans, other-than-human, or more-than-human elements, and the human productions that mirror this plural and kaleidoscopic realities: words, stories, poems, paintings, sculptures, traditions, heritage.

We must come to assume, in understanding the human past and in constructing historical narratives, the 'multi-species' systems that populate the planet and the oceans as a major part of Earth. As elements of the same (blue) biomes, humans and other species must be understood and studied as interdependent and interrelated.

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Making Bodies in the Anthropocene: Climate Change and Alterity among the Makushi in Guyana

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Abstract: This paper examines Makushi experiences of tourism-driven ‘development’ in Surama Village, Guyana, and how new perspectives have emerged concerning climate change. Building upon the author’s recent work on the Anthropocene and related crises, the paper describes how local understandings of climate change are linked to practices and perspectives stemming from ‘development’ and tied to interactions with outsiders. Different understandings regarding climate change and related crises are partially situated within tensions between divergent economic practices, such as eco-tourism, logging, and subsistence activities (e.g., hunting and farming). These practices are significant in local processes involving the making and re-making of bodily perspectives. This paper was part of the conference event ‘Beyond Modernity: Alternative Incursions into the Anthropocene’ hosted by the CES at the University of Coimbra on 15-16 June 2021.

Keywords: Anthropocene, Climate Change, Bodies, Makushi, Amazonia

This paper examines the ontological influence of different local economic practices on the formation of bodily-oriented perspectives concerning crises related to the Anthropocene (particularly climate change) in an Indigenous village in Guyana called Surama that consists primarily of Makushi people. The Makushi are an Indigenous (or Amerindian) group who live in Guyana, Brazil, and Venezuela and whose language is part of the Cariban language family. They have been historically documented in relation to interactions involving outsiders (particularly colonial forces) since at least the 1740s (Whitaker, 2016). I have worked with the Makushi in Guyana since 2012 and have previously written about the influence of outsiders in introducing new forms of knowledge to Surama, such as terminologies and discourses of ‘climate change’ and ‘conservation’ (Whitaker, 2020a; see also Rosengren, 2018). I have also examined various Plantationocene continuities between colonial era slaving raids against Makushi groups and current extractivism by outsiders in their territory (Whitaker, 2020b; see Haraway, 2015; Haraway, *et al.* 2016). In this paper, I explore the ontological dimensions of Makushi encounters with climate change and the broader Anthropocene through more recent relations with outsiders that centre around specific

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economic practices. My focus is on Makushi notions of embodiment as these relate both to climate change 'knowledge' and to related bodily-oriented perspectives.

Across Amazonia, according to Tânia Stolze Lima (1996, 1999, 2015), Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998, 2015), and others working within the framework of 'Amerindian perspectivism', there is a tendency for Indigenous societies to understand 'perspectives', as well as potentially 'knowledge' more generally, as mediated by the 'body' as an assemblage of dispositions. In this sense, self-similar 'bodies' are formed through practices that are shared within groups (Rival, 2002). These practices are embedded in 'relations' that often emerge through the circulations of 'objects' and other things whether material or immaterial (see Coelho de Souza, 2016). Such immaterial things can be broadly understood and expanded here to include terminologies, discourses, and forms of knowing that are borrowed from outside persons and even non-human beings. Body-forming 'practices' largely centre around what a person eats, how one dresses, and what 'objects' one has and manipulates (McCallum, 2001; Vilaça, 2002, 2005). For example, eating and dressing like a Makushi person results in a Makushi body and perspective whilst eating and dressing in a Brazilian or British manner leads to a transformation (whether intentional or not) into that kind of person (Carneiro de Carvalho, 2015; Whitaker, 2021). This can extend to non-human beings. Both Lima (1996, 1999) and Viveiros de Castro (1998) describe how a person can shift (or even lose) their bodily perspective through the adoption of the practices of non-humans. For example, the Makushi tell stories of men accidentally marrying and uxori locally living with women who appear as human beings, but later turn out to be various forms of non-humans. The realisation of this alterity occurs when the man suddenly realises that he is eating inappropriate food (such as uncooked meat) or behaving in strange ways (such as sleeping in a tree).

Economic practices can be included within this broader domain of body-making activities that ontologically index beings and their perspectives. In Surama today, three of the more relevant of these contemporary economic practices include (1) eco-tourism work, (2) small-scale logging (primarily at a local level in Surama), and (3) subsistence activities (such as hunting, fishing, and cassava farming). The first two involve cash-mediated exchanges with outside persons and are integrated into market-based circulations of the Capitalocene (Moore, 2016). This resonates with Latourian (1993) modernity, since capitalism is a system that separates 'nature' as a set of 'resources' for 'culture'. The Capitalocene is one way (like the Plantationocene) in which the Anthropocene has been re-conceptualised towards particular groups of humans (such as capitalists) and socioeconomic systems (such as capitalism) rather than attributed to all of *anthropos* in general. On the other hand, subsistence activities blur the lines of 'nature' and 'culture'. These categories are not traditionally separated ontological or analytically among the Makushi who generally share an animist ontology (see Descola, 2013). However, these three domains of practices (eco-tourism, logging, and subsistence) form contrasts in Surama that are linked to opposing local interests as well as minor tensions in the village. For example, I have heard local people involved in eco-tourism express opposition to more than very limited local logging activities due to desires to maintain plants and animals in the village for tourism purposes. Loggers do not generally oppose tourism, but often emphasise the value of the forest as timber. Despite these tensions, eco-tourism workers and local (as opposed to outside) loggers are both seen as working (albeit in different ways) within the broader domain of 'development' in Surama. In keeping with this, both groups tend to share a focus on the economic 'resource' value of beings in the forest. This contrasts with

villagers focused more on hunting and fishing who tend less often to economise the forest². This indexical association between perspectives and practices involves different formations of 'bodies', which are linked in this case to different bodily orientations (associated with dispositions and affects) to extractive activities in the local forests.

The association between these different economic practices and divergent 'bodies' are also linked with different knowledges and experiential horizons that implicate notions of 'climate change' as well as 'conservation'. Due largely to various entwinements with capitalist circulations and markets, whether implicated in the provision of tourists or the purchase of timber, local tourism workers and loggers both tend to place a higher priority on relationships with non-Amerindian outsiders than villagers involved primarily in subsistence activities. Those involved with tourism and logging are often said to be becoming 'developed' (or sometimes said to be turning 'white') through related practices, such as wage labour, employment in a cash-mediated economy, and related purchases and consumptions of food, outside goods and objects, and services associated with 'others' (see also Vilaça, 2010). Such ontological changes come to embody alterity in Surama and are tied to perspectival and epistemological shifts. For example, these villagers often have greater interest in 'scientific knowledge' (even if sometimes understood in unique and non-Western ways³), such as concepts and challenges concerning climate change.

Whilst villagers who are primarily engaged in eco-tourism work frequently identify climate change as a result of deforestation, which often implies a need for greater conservation efforts and stricter controls on logging (or even its elimination), villagers engaged primarily in logging often seem to suggest that climate change is less of a pressing contemporary threat or that it is mostly linked to people using chemicals and modern technologies. Over the years, I have heard such explanations for climate change that have ranged from the use of hairspray or cologne in the forest to the effects of rockets tearing holes in the ozone layer. Self-interest occurs in both cases, but in each case, there is a topical awareness of climate change as a form of knowledge and a perceived need to have an explanation for it. However, villagers engaged mostly in subsistence activities in Surama seem to be more likely either (a) not to evince knowledge or concern about 'climate change' or (b) to associate the problem with violations of taboos or various norms concerning non-humans, such as master or owner spirits (Whitaker, 2020a; Rudiak Gould, 2014, 2016). These villagers also seem to use the expression less than those in eco-tourism and logging.

These variations regarding knowledge concerning climate change, as well as the causes and ramifications related to it, reflect ontological differences in Surama that are indexed to bodily perspectives stemming from the divergent economic practices discussed above and also (in relation to these practices) from different degrees of exposure to outsiders. For example, terminologies and vocabularies concerning climate change and its risks and threats have been largely introduced into local discourse in Surama by visiting tourists, tourism consultants, and various researchers, which have included anthropologists, biologists, ecologists, and others. Local villagers involved primarily in tourism tend to have the most

² In the past, villagers in Surama tended to interact with species in the forest through exchanges with 'master' or 'owner' beings who controlled and protected these species as wards (e.g., animals, plants, and sometimes other various parts of the landscape). Local practices centred around these master-owners – the singular term in Makushi is *padtru* or *putori* – but has apparently declined in the present except for a few villagers. Some now view the forest as a generalised 'Mother Nature' who provides freely and without need for exchange or repayment (Whitaker, 2020a).

³ See also Dan Rosengren (2018) on this point. For many villagers in Surama, 'science' can refer to research in general, to what 'scientists' do when they visit, and to outside or esoteric knowledges involving expertise and status. In this latter sense, villagers also sometimes refer to a kind of magical spell-work (locally called *taren*) as 'high science'. Knowledge of climate change is associated with 'science' in Surama and confers social status and prestige.

abstract knowledge of ideas and terminologies concerning climate change. This is largely because it is both a topic of interest and conversation among many of the researchers and affluent tourists who visit. This is followed by the local villagers primarily involved in extractivist work like logging who also often know of climate change but seem to have had less exposure to related ideas and terminology. Local villagers primarily relying on what is called the ‘traditional Makushi way of life’ in Surama (i.e., subsistence practices) tend to have fewer interactions with tourists and to evince less knowledge of these related discourses, although they do often have knowledge of changes in the local forests and savannas that can be linked to the broader notion of climate change. The key point, however, is that this latter group have often not adopted this outside discourse to explain these phenomena.

One way of interpreting these differences between villagers involved in eco-tourism, extraction, and subsistence activities would be to view them solely in terms of self-interest. This is based on different potentials for personal gain through divergent uses of the forest. However, it is important to note that a very different ontological framework is at work with the Makushi who tend to associate ‘knowledges’ as centred around the making and re-making of bodies as I have described above. Mario Blaser (2009, 2013) describes such ontological differences in terms of divergences from the ‘modern’, which he sees as a near-monolithic framework. In this sense, political ontology emerges in contexts where understandings of the foundations of the world conflict along related ontological and political dimensions (see De la Cadena, 2010, 2015). The ‘ontological turn’ – to use the language of Escobar (2007) and Holbraad and Pedersen (2007) – can be used to perceive these local relations that go beyond the ‘modern’. Makushi understandings of perspectives as linked to bodies constitute a domain in which such ontological differences can lead to tensions with political impacts concerning both internal relations between villagers working in tourism and logging and between villagers and various outsiders with different notions of knowledge as something that is disembodied and separate from any particular person.

Lucas Carneiro de Carvalho (2015) describes how Guyanese Makushi people in the border zones between Guyana and Brazil become Brazilian by eating Brazilian food, wearing Brazilian clothing, speaking Portuguese, and abandoning things and customs associated with Guyana or their home village there. These shifts in practices – this again involves food, clothing, speech, and other objects – enable transformations towards a bodily perspective (or an altered *habitus*) associated with Brazilians (see Bourdieu, 2013). Subsequently, as Brazilians, Makushi people undergoing such a transformation would be expected to have the ‘knowledge’ associated with Brazilians. This would involve norms and customs, but it also could include broader understandings associated with Brazilian society and culture. In a similar way, both tourism workers and loggers in Surama use ‘objects’ obtained from visitors – including discourses and vocabularies of climate change – in local projects of transformation that consist of becoming ‘developed’ and ‘white’ like the outside ‘others’ coming to Surama primarily through tourism. As such, ‘knowledge’ of climate change is linked to ‘bodily’ states that involve interactions with outsiders and adoptions of their practices. In this sense, such knowledge can actually be quite distinct from engagement with the empirical phenomena associated with climate change. So where does that leave villagers engaged in hunting, fishing, and other forms of subsistence?

Despite often having less familiarity with climate change discourses and terminologies, the latter group of villagers are often the most knowledgeable about the empirical phenomena associated with climatic and ecological change, which they frequently (but not always) attribute to other causes. For example, villagers engaged primarily in subsistence practices often describe recent challenges knowing when to burn and plant fields for cassava farming due to increasingly irregular seasonality (Whitaker, 2020a). They say that the rainy season is

now unpredictable and may extend into the dry season. One problem is that fires may spread if the conditions are too dry. These concerns have particularly increased since a forest fire was accidentally started several years ago near the village as a result of the unpredictable seasonal conditions⁴. Another problem is that crops may be damaged or destroyed if overly inundated by water. These villagers sometimes also speak of recent changes in local animal behaviors, which are traditionally watched for indicators that are used to time farming, hunting, fishing, etc. These recent changes impact seasonal markers for farming, as already mentioned, but also when certain species would be prevalent for hunting or fishing. Ecological disruptions linked to climatic changes have made life difficult in many ways for villagers who rely primarily on cassava farming, fishing, hunting, and gathering. Uncertainties have emerged and traditional ways of life have become difficult.

When villagers primarily relying on subsistence activities speak of these changes, which they mostly emphasise in terms of ecological disruptions, they often speak of them in relation to violations of norms at a local level (Whitaker, 2020a). This includes tourists walking around too much in the forest and disturbing the animals, tourists spraying insect repellent and other chemicals, and the perceived overuse of tourism-related vehicles. They sometimes also blame villagers for not following normative expectations in relation to the forest and its beings. For example, I sometimes heard some villagers lament that others did not provide tobacco or other offerings to the master-owner beings that control animals and plants in the forest. Changes in the local landscape (including the weather) were sometimes attributed to these changes in practices. Other villagers said the increased heat was due to an expansion of the savannas and a decrease in forest areas, although some argued inversely that it was the forest that has grown larger in recent years. Although these explanations are diverse and sometimes seem to conflict, they generally view the problem-inducing changes as stemming from local actions rather than global patterns.

This group of villagers often express desires for patterns of life to return to how they are perceived to have been in the past before the rise of cash-mediated socioeconomic relations and 'development' in Surama. Although evincing less formal or abstract 'knowledge' of climate change and the science surrounding it at the level of discourse and terminology, this group's direct and personal experiences of the local landscape and understandings of the waxing and waning of seasons and wildlife (acquired through long-term bodily engagement with the forest and its beings) reveal many of the empirical phenomena described by scientists as belonging to climate change and the Anthropocene. This engagement is centred around subsistence-oriented practices that produce a bodily perspective that is not associated with abstract 'knowledge' of climate change but yet that enables the experiential dimensions described by such knowledge.

There is perhaps an irony that some of the same capitalist vectors (e.g., tourism and logging) through which discourses and vocabularies of climate change are introduced to Surama through relations with outsiders also contribute to altering the practices (e.g., farming, hunting, and fishing) that facilitate direct experiences of climatic and related ecological changes. Although some villagers who are involved in tourism and logging also engage to some degree in traditional subsistence activities, this paper has shown how knowledge and experience of climate change and the Anthropocene are linked with practices that centre around the differential axes of tourism, logging, and subsistence activities. Among

⁴ Traditional practices of burning fields for cassava farming, as well as those involving seasonally burning the savannas, are complicated by the unpredictability of rainfall and thus of conditions related to wetness and dryness.

villagers in Surama, these differences emerge as productions of bodily perspectives that are formed and maintained through these practices.

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¿En camino a la Paz integral? Indigenous perspectives for an environmentally sustainable peace in Colombia

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Abstract: In Colombia, the access and management of land and natural resources has been a source of environmental disputes ever since the colonial period. Coupled with extreme inequalities and ethnic-racial discrimination, these were some of the root causes of the conflict between the FARC and the State, which would formally last until 2016. Although land distribution was at the core of the Havana Peace Agreement, the end of the conflict has not yet brought peace to Colombia's biodiversity and ethnic communities. Based on local concepts such as *paz integral*, and on academic ones such as indigenous peace and everyday peace, this article analyses the contrasts between indigenous cosmovisions and the dynamics of illiberal and liberal violence and peace that repress them. In face of these dynamics, this paper also highlights some of the strategies of activism used by environmental defenders with the aim of building an environmentally sustainable peace.

Keywords: paz integral; indigenous peace; everyday peace; environmental defenders; Colombia.

Introduction

Paz integral, indigenous peace and everyday peace

Emphasizing the crucial role of Environmental Defenders in building an environmentally sustainable peace in Colombia, this paper draws both from a Critical Peace Studies perspective, focusing on transforming peace from below; and, from a Critical Security Studies standpoint, on Environmental Defender's role in emancipating and transforming oppressive structures. This paper brings together locally owned concepts like *paz integral* with academic conceptualizations of positive peace, indigenous peace and everyday peace.

In the past decades, much literature has been written on the consequences of accepting one-size fits all solutions of peacebuilding, namely its (in)adaptation to local contexts and the imposition of liberal strands of thought and of society-building. Years of experience in peacebuilding have shown that nor liberal peacebuilding – with top-down one-size-fits-all approaches, often imposing liberal democracy and a neoliberal governmentality – nor

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illiberal peace – often associated with authoritarian types of conflict resolution – could suit people’s needs (Lewis et al, 2018).

Shifting the attention away from these top-down approaches to peacebuilding, Peace scholars of the ‘local turn’ started advocating for the alternative proposing the ‘three p’s’: local people, local policies, local peace’ (Brewer et al., 2018: 201). With this conceptualization, Critical Peace writers essentially called for ‘learning from the South and with the South’ (Santos, 2014): focusing on local or indigenous communities as ‘local people’, supporting ‘local policies’ and ways of ‘local peace’ (Brewer et al., 2018: 201). Peace researchers, namely from the so-called Manchester School of Peace Studies, Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond, reflected upon the need to emphasize the role of ‘civil society, local government and local communities’ in building peace (Brewer et al., 2018: 201-2). Roger Mac Ginty (2008) paid attention and conceptualized two phenomena: indigenous peacebuilding and everyday peacebuilding.

In his words, traditional and indigenous peace-making mean making use of ‘dispute-resolution and conflict-management techniques that are based on long-established practice’ (Mac Ginty, 2008: 145-6). One of the cited examples is precisely the one of the *Guardia Indígena*, from the Nasa indigenous community in Colombia, who have historically resisted to the actions of Colombian armed groups through massive non-violent action (Mac Ginty, 2008: 141). Indigenous peace is typically linked to non-violent and civil resistance methods of conflict transformation.

On the other hand, Mac Ginty reframed the sociological concept of everyday life, referring to ‘the realm in which ordinary, taken-for-granted, habitual social life is performed, experienced and understood as ordinary, taken-for-granted and habitual’ and applied it to peacebuilding (Brewer et al., 2018: 200). While everyday life refers to ‘the day-to-day, taken-for-granted, ordinary habits and routines of social life’ (Brewer et al., 2018: 200-201), everyday peacebuilding is the congregation of behaviours people take in their daily existence in conflict or post-conflict societies towards peace. In this sense, everyday peacebuilding involves as well the ‘conflict calming practices’ employed by people in their daily ordinary life that end up transforming and reducing conflict, with or without that intention (Brewer et al., 2018: 204-5) – for instance, being empathetic, participating in local networks of solidarity or doing social activism. Furthermore, everyday peace is not only strict to contexts in which armed conflict is formally active, but also to phases of post-conflict where everyday peace can have a transformative role.

Looking at ONIC’s (National Indigenous Organisation of Colombia) calls around the establishment of a true *paz integral*, all these elements are present: ‘peace from the respect of peasant, indigenous, Afro-Colombian and urban territoriality’, ‘peace with agrarian reform, that recognises ownership, uses and distribution of land for peasants, indigenous people and Afro-Colombians’, ‘respect for ethnic and cultural diversity’, ‘peace without impunity; ‘truth, justice, reparation and guarantee of non-repetition for individual and collective victims’, between others (ONIC; 2015).

Understanding the broadness and depth of factors integrated in this indigenous vision of peace, it is clear there are connections to Johan Galtung’s initial conceptions of positive peace and linkages to sustainable peace. Here, the meaning of sustainability is twofold: on one hand, it accounts for the durability of peace and, on the other, for the post-anthropocentric future that is being built as an intrinsic dimension of peace.

What kind of peace is being created in Colombia? Indigenous perspectives and resistances

Violence disguised as peace: how liberal and illiberal manifest in Colombia

There can be many exhaustive ways to describe the intersection between different approaches to peace being advanced in Colombia, even long before the 2016 Peace Agreement, but especially considering the political dynamics that developed since the peace referendum of that same year and the Presidential elections of 2018 in which the conservative Iván Duque, rose to power. Danelly Estupiñan, an Afro-Colombian activist, summed up the violent co-existence of these different ‘peaces’ superbly:

In Colombia, there are three visions of peace. On the one hand, there is violent peace, which is led by the ultra-right-wing and believes that by generating revenge and repression it can strengthen peace; a peace that has already proved not to be the solution because the country has been bleeding to death over the last 50 years. On the other hand, there is the peace of capital, which is the peace of development led by President Santos, who feels that with the international investment he can change the circumstances of the Colombian population, but that is not the solution either, because multinationals are generating displacement and are not contemplating the communities. Finally, there is the peace that we, as communities, envision, a peace in which there can be harmony with our ways of life and our ecosystem. (Blay, 2016).

When peace negotiations started between the two delegations, the FARC, on one side, and the Colombian government, on the other, this was a very national-based process, made without external interference. It was still, however, a process dominated by the two delegations in which there was not adequate space or voice for the groups that had been particularly victimised by the conflict: women and girls, ethnic associations and leaders, Environmental defenders, activists in general. Only after many pressures ethnic organisations and the civil society managed to be included in the negotiation process.

The governmental initiative for peace came from the President Juan Manuel Santos who, despite having been the Minister of Defence of the former President Álvaro Uribe (whose Presidency is associated to shocking human rights violations), projected a more moderate, yet liberal future for Colombia. Santos meant the country to overcome the stigmatization of war, of narco-trafficking and criminality and finally be able to attract foreign investment, tourism, and reborn from the ashes. That same opening of the country to the international community was evidenced by Colombia joining NATO as a ‘global partner’ in May 2018 and by attaining membership of the OECD in 2020, completing Colombia’s welcoming into ‘the West’ (Diplomat Magazine, 2018).

The 2016 referendum that asked the Colombian people ‘Do you support the final agreement to end the conflict and build a stable and lasting peace?’ on the 2nd of October of 2016 meant a political turning point and international astonishment when they indicated that the ‘No’ had won by 50.2% (Mitchell, 2017). The result can be explained by the force of the campaign that was built around the ‘No’ by the former President Álvaro Uribe, the leader of Colombian landowner elites, of Colombian conservative sectors, supported by some religious congregations and indicted for connections with paramilitarism (Gómez Santamaría, 2011).

Even though the national referendum meant a political catastrophe, President Santos proceeded with the PA and its implementation, receiving wide support from the international community. When his Presidential term ended in 2018, Álvaro Uribe’s main follower, Iván Duque, won the Presidency. The election of a subscriber of the Uribist doctrine restarted an era of political paradoxes and an ‘illiberalisation’ of the peace process. As mentioned by

Lewis et al (2018), the issue with illiberal approaches to peace is that they can generate even more pernicious effects over populations that liberal peace: neutralising opponents, stigmatizing social protest and pacifying through violent means. The emergence to power of the sectors that were against the PA from its beginning has brought dramatic consequences for the implementation and the human rights situation in the country, bringing the process of conflict transformation many steps back.

As an example, in the first days of his government, President Duque immediately called off the peace negotiations with the ELN (National Liberation Army), currently the largest active guerrilla of the country and resumed greater offensives against dissident factions and other armed groups (FIP, 2018: 4). Additionally, the environmental and territorial concerns of the PA have been left unattended. The current trend of ‘illiberal peace’ that is governing Colombia has also been issuing licenses for the exploitation of natural resources and been inactive to prevent the bloodshed of environmental and human rights defenders. In fact, in 2019’s assessment of the United Nations Verification of the Peace process, it was indicated that one of the greatest challenges this government would have to face was the improvement of protection measures for former combatants of the FARC, as well as defenders working in the regions, and to consolidate the security guarantees for communities, especially in the poorer regions (Pulzo, 2020).

The missing peace: paz integral as a Colombian indigenous peace

The struggles of indigenous and afro-Colombian groups in Colombia for their territories, the environment and peace did not emerge in the 21st century or in the 50 years of armed conflict. They are rather an old exigence of these peoples, who have suffered continuous patterns of social-economic exclusion and violence. As such, peace implementation was firstly seen as an opportunity to build a long envisioned cosmivision of *paz integral*. But according to Environmental Defenders, what does that *paz integral* entail?

Like ONIC’s statement, the calls of Environmental Defenders back a cosmivision of a comprehensive peace that is much more complex than ‘less violence’. When asked what he expected the peace process would bring, Eduardo said that he expected the peace process to:

Peace is not only achieved by the silencing of the guns. (...) True and lasting peace is the peace that guarantees a better quality of life, that guarantees education, that guarantees health, that guarantees employment. Peace that guarantees all that we have come to claim through many struggles to *estar bien*. For many people, perhaps they thought that "well, the guerrillas will be disarmed, so we will be at peace". But no, no, no. I cannot be at peace if I do not have enough to eat at home, I cannot be at peace if my sons are not guaranteed a job or schooling, I cannot be at peace if I do not have social security, if I get sick and do not have the health or means that allow me to take medication, I cannot be at peace if I do not have labour rights. (...) Peace is this set of elements that are necessary for any human being to live with dignity. And all these hopes have been dashed because there is no one to respond to them. Interview with Eduardo, Afro-Colombian Defender, 13th June 2020

Highlighting the holistic dimension of peace in its relation to la *Madre Tierra*, Manuel, a Kankuamo Indigenous defender said that he expected the peace process to:

Achieving a territorial peace. (...) The conception of the defence of life and of territory held by the Indigenous Peoples in Colombia comes from an integral point of view. And there cannot be peace only among human beings, but also with the *Madre Tierra* as a whole. Every action we develop is done in the name of the *Buen Vivir* of all things, including the *Madre Tierra*. Questionnaire with Manuel, Kankuamo Indigenous Defender, 9th June 2020

It would be unfair to say that nothing has been done for peace in Colombia when thousands of people – Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, from the national civil society, the

international community, the humanitarian and development sector and even the Colombian government – work daily to advance it. Nonetheless, the Kroc Institute 2020 Report indicates that, in the third year of implementation, only 25% of the dispositions had been fully implemented, and that delays were particularly significant in what comes to ethnic rights, participation and land reform (Kroc Institute, 2020: 12; 37). As explained by Eduardo:

All these hopes have been dashed today precisely because of a government that doesn't care about the lives of Colombians, a government of the centralist elite, a selfish government, a government of the oligarchy and that doesn't value life. And not valuing life leads to undervaluing everything else. Interview with Eduardo, Afro-Colombian Defender, 13th June 2020.

Furthermore, evidence that peace implementation has not been anything but peaceful are the astonishing numbers of threats, aggressions and assassinations against Human Rights and Environmental Defenders, unionists, and others. According to Indepaz, over 611 Environmental Defenders have been killed in the past 5 years: 332 were indigenous persons (ancestral custodians of *la Madre Tierra*) and 75 were Afro-Colombians belonging to communal councils (Indepaz, 2021). The same organisation highlights that the continued victimisation of Environmental Defenders even after the signing of the PA is explained by the existence of more than 152 environmental conflicts related to mining, energy, agro-industrial and infrastructure megaprojects that contradict the socio-environmental wellbeing of these communities (Indepaz, 2021).

Everyday resistances: en camino a la paz integral

Amid such threats and intersecting insecurities, resisting is a way of life and a necessity. As the 'best guardians of world's biodiversity' (Hill, 2017), Ernesto explains how, in the Nasa indigenous community, protecting *la Madre Tierra* is an act of the everyday, an act of peace towards the goal of *paz integral*:

It gives me great joy when I see an older person from our community working the land, taking care of the trees, caring for the water sources because despite their age, they are leaving us an inheritance, a legacy. Not in wealth, not in coins, but a wealth of ideas about how to take care of the environment. Those persons and our ancestors have left us water, oxygen, the sun, the moon so that we can continue to take care of them and that is what we should teach our children. Because if we don't take care of the environment, what are we leaving our children? I sometimes ask people "do you love your children?" and they say "yes", but what is to love? (...) To love our children is to take care of the environment so that they can remain in a healthy territory, with health, where they can eat healthy food because *la Madre Tierra* gives us everything we need. Interview with Ernesto, Nasa Indigenous Defender, 28th June 2020.

Passing on indigenous traditions to younger generations is an act of resistance against violence and against dominant approaches to peace, rather advancing bottom-up, grassroots, indigenous peace-oriented pedagogies and behaviours.

For us the indigenous communities, so that our traditions, our customs, and our organisation are not lost (...) we begin to know the process of our organization from an early age (...). Because if we, as an organisation, educational centre, from our children, don't start to reproduce this knowledge, logically many rights will end being lost, much knowledge that our ancestors had, and that is why we keep it alive. Interview with Ernesto, Nasa Indigenous Defender, 28th June 2020.

Besides the almost intrinsic inevitability of defending *la Madre Tierra* in their everyday life, communities have also been historically forced to organise and 'become active, becoming advocates on the frontlines of this struggle' (Global Witness, 2018). For instance,

if it were not for the coordination between local associations, indigenous and afro-descendent organisations, the Ethnic Chapter of the PA would have never been included in the final text.

The strategies of resistance used by social leaders in Colombia are diverse, and sometimes more traditional to indigenous practice, other times more in tune with what the State would recognise as legitimate. On the side of indigenous practices, we can highlight the strength of the *Minga Indígena*, a mass mobilization that takes hundreds or thousands of indigenous persons to the capital, if need be, to spread their calls (Quiñonez, n. d.). Another paradigmatic example is the *Guardia Indígena*, of the Nasa community in the north of Cauca, also studied by Mac Ginty, and that makes use of massive non-violent actions to counter the violence of legal and illegal armed groups and corporations which disturb and threaten the safety and well-being of the people, the land and natural balance (Chaves et al, 2020).

In the *Guardia Indígena* we take care of our territory ourselves because nobody else takes care of us. If we look at the legal side, the police, the ESMAD, the army, they don't protect us. Besides, they have also killed us because they too protect the interests of multinationals. Now, if we look at the side of the insurgency, the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, it's the same, because they are also looking for economic benefits, looking for the one that pays the most, the multinationals pay them to do the dirty work in our land. We are persecuted from one side or the other. And to provide a solution for our territory, our community formed the *Guardia Indígena*. That is what takes care of the territory, that guards, alarms, and alerts the community so that we can massively go out and take care of the territory when they give the alarm. For us, the *Guardia Indígena* has been the fundamental axis of resistance here in the northern part of the Cauca. Interview with Ernesto, Nasa Indigenous Defender, 28th June 2020.

On the other hand, there are many occasions in which other groups opt for engaging in more formal fora's of discussion – such as participating in consultations organised by the UN, the EU Delegation, and the government itself, requesting the support of larger NGOs or participating in academic events (Ulloa, 2001). In other circumstances, Defenders and organisations may also resort to legal action against the State or against corporations – this is not a recent strategy, but one that was already used in the 17th century by the *cacique* Juan Tama, who read about law and wrote letters to the Spanish crown advocating for the legal recognition of indigenous laws and territories, centuries ago (Chaves et al, 2017: 467).

We have to make use of a binomial of mobilizations and legal actions. We have already understood that the two are complementary. Because there is no point in carrying out mobilization and leaving it there because the government will remain relaxed. We have understood that when we mobilize and carry out legal actions, it becomes something different. To make use of legal actions is to tell the government that when we ask them for our rights, we are not asking them for a favour, we are asking for our rights as set out in the political charter of the country, which they are denying us. Acting in a dual manner [mobilizations and legal actions] is what has allowed us to achieve what we have achieved. Interview with Eduardo, Afro-Colombian Defender, 13th June 2020.

This has proven to be quite effective in the case of the Atrato River, in the region of Chocó, where a group of Communal Organisations filled a legal action against 26 entities of the State for allowing the destruction of the river basin and of the communities' wellbeing, and the Colombian Constitutional Court ended up recognising the river as a 'subject of rights' (Quintero, 2019) (Tierra Digna, n.d.). This was the third time in the world in which a natural element, in this case, a river, received such recognition (Quintero, 2019) (Tierra Digna, n.d.).

Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to compare and contrast conflicting and complementing approaches to peace in Colombia, shed light on the indigenous cosmovision of *paz integral* and highlight

some of the strategies that are used by Environmental Defenders to advance an environmentally sustainable peace in Colombia.

If on the one hand, Environmental Defenders envision a concept of integral, environmental and sustainable peace that renders the *Madre Tierra* as an inherent condition for peace, on the other hand, illegal and legal armed groups, corporations and the State oligarchy take a violent response to those aspirations, stigmatizing, threaten and killing those who oppose a liberal/illiberal idea of “progress”.

Building a post-Anthropocentric future and an environmentally sustainable peace has been done through several strategies such as organised social protests, marches, legal petitions and other legal instruments, self-organisation around non-violent bodies, as well as by other actions of everyday life. While some of the struggles in which defenders have engaged in the past years have been more successful than others, it can be concluded that environmental conflicts, just as any other conflicts, can never be fully resolved, but gradually transformed.

In order to achieve that urgent transformation, one thing is evident: indigenous traditions of everyday peace and indigenous cosmovisions for *paz integral* can improve upon the current state of the peace process, gradually transform it into a more comprehensive and sustainable process and provide lessons for the Colombian and global society to reconcile with *la Madre Tierra* as a whole.

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