

COVID-19, THE HUMANITY RELATIONS AND THE NATURES¹

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ABSTRACT

The present article emphasizes the recognition of the Coronavirus pandemic as the most recent manifestation of a crisis that is not only environmental, but civilizational. It concerns a project of humanity imposed from the seventeenth century, which today comes to an end due to the ecological collapse. The origins of this crisis are analyzed and alternatives are considered, socio-ecological transformations capable of modifying the current rationality and of “postponing the end of the world”. It is emphasized the theories and movements that comes from indigenous peoples and traditional communities in Latin America, which recognize the intrinsic values of nature and the interdependence between humans and non-humans and that lead to the biocentric turn of law. It is found out that is essential to establish a political agenda that addresses not only the symptoms, but also the causes of the Anthropocene, what provoked Gaia. Finally, it is clarified

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that the research procedures were focused on the survey and discussion of texts on the topic.

Keywords: civilizational and environmental crisis; COVID-19; indigenous peoples and Latin America communities; socio-ecological transformations.

RESUMO

Este artigo vem acentuar o reconhecimento da pandemia do coronavírus como a mais recente manifestação de uma crise não apenas ambiental, mas também civilizatória. Trata-se de um projeto de humanidade imposto a partir do século XVII, que atualmente chega a seu fim em função do colapso ecológico. Analisam-se as raízes dessa crise e pensa-se em alternativas, transformações socioecológicas capazes de modificar a racionalidade vigente e de “adiar o fim do mundo”. Enfatizam-se as teorias e movimentos oriundos dos povos indígenas e comunidades tradicionais da América Latina, que reconhecem os valores intrínsecos da natureza e a interdependência entre humanos e não humanos e conduzem ao giro bio-cêntrico do direito. Constata-se ser imprescindível constituir uma agenda política que trate não apenas os sintomas, mas também as causas do Antropoceno, o que provocou Gaia. Por fim, esclarece-se que os procedimentos da pesquisa se concentraram no levantamento e na discussão dos textos sobre o tema.

Palavras-chave: crise ambiental e civilizatória; COVID-19; povos indígenas e comunidades da América Latina; transformações socioecológicas.

INTRODUCTION

Discussions on Environmental Law have gained worldwide momentum since the United Nations Conferences on Environment and Development, held in Stockholm in 1972 and in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. After those major events, studies on ecology grew and so did a deeper awareness about the environmental crisis as a result of the damage caused to nature, especially by human action, and the need to fight it.

At present, the persistent ecological crisis affects the sustainability of life. We are facing, for example, times of profound climate change⁵, times of catastrophes, brutal expulsions of the most vulnerable peoples from their lands, and portions of the biosphere from their life spaces.

We emphasize that scientists also debate about the use of the term Anthropocene to refer to the geological period in which we are living, the transformations that have been taking place in the *modus operandi* of the planet, in the usual cycle of Ice Ages, in the biochemical space and time of resilience for any living creature due to the impacts caused to biodiversity by excessive consumption of natural resources, accumulation of greenhouse gases and other environmental and social injustices committed by the human species.

It can be understood in this context that the violations to nature, its capacity for regeneration, do not go unpunished, and the responses – already being felt –, the heavy mark caused by humanity on Earth, are not in fact the revenge of nature, but rather sheer self-defense. It is clear, however, that human life is a tiny part of the planet's life that needs to be defended.

In this sense, we see the recent coronavirus pandemic as the planet's latest form of self-defense specifically against the human species. We should stress, in this perspective, the environmental causes of the pandemic which are associated with the destruction of ecosystems, deforestation, trafficking in wild animals, spillover between forest and city, in short, the complex relationships between humans, other animals and nature.

However, we note that the public policies, attention and strategies to cope with the pandemic currently being developed generally have not covered their environmental perspective, and do not acknowledge the crisis of

⁵ According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Antarctic ice has been melting six times faster for four decades, and Greenland ice four times faster than forecast. According to the UNO, we have 10 years to prevent the global temperature rising 1.5 degrees compared to the pre-industrial era (SANTOS, 2020). Leff (2020), however, questions how much 10 years means in human existence to deconstruct the notion of humanity, the rationality of modernity that rules the world and that has triggered the environmental crisis, of which the COVID-19 pandemic is the latest consequence.

civilization in which we find ourselves.

Therefore, the objective of this article is to contribute to the reflection that we are facing an environmental and civilizational crisis. We thus seek to discuss the roots of this way of life that led us to such results – to such responses of nature – and the need to modify the current rationality and effect socio-ecological transformations.

We intend to emphasize the interdependence between human beings and nature, to question the logic and models that have hitherto prevailed and that matter in the causes of the Anthropocene. We also intend to shed light on the alternatives, theories and movements that represent ways of “postponing the end of the world”, with emphasis on indigenous peoples and traditional communities of Latin America and the prospects that regard nature as having intrinsic values and, therefore, its own rights, to the bio-centric turn of law.

Finally, we explain that the research procedures focused on the survey and discussion of the texts on the subject matter.

1 THE ENVIRONMENTAL/CIVILIZATIONAL CRISIS AND ITS ROOTS

Maristella Svampa (2019, p. 110, free translation) understands that the environmental crisis “must be read as a long-lasting process in which new ways of organizing the relationship between humans and the rest of nature are taking shape”⁶. Santos (2020), from a similar perspective, points out that the coronavirus pandemic is a manifestation, among many, of a model of society that began to impose itself worldwide in the seventeenth century and is reaching its final stage due to the ecological collapse.

We thus find it appropriate to undertake in this article the exercise of thinking about the aspects of the environmental/civilizational crisis and its origins with a specific focus on Latin America. We begin with the assumption that the current Western practices of consumption, way of living and relating with the environment expanded throughout the world are the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and modern colonial capitalism as a new standard of world power (QUIJANO, 2005).

We emphasize, in this context, how certain economies and ways of living originated in the implementation of – and represent the continuity

6 In the original: “debe ser leída como un proceso de larga duración en el cual van tomando forma nuevas maneras de ordenar la relación entre los humanos y el resto de la naturaleza”.

of – the modern colonial world system, with exploitation marked by processes of primitive accumulation, dependency, waste and profit unevenly distributed and, with with the domination by a few men, cultures and races over others and, in particular, over natures – which have “charged their price” – and over non-human beings.

Thus, in the exercise proposed here, among the enduring dynamics of colonialism, the colonialities of power and knowledge that consist in the repression of the means of production of knowledge, of production of meanings, of the symbolic universe, patterns of expression and subjectivity of the colonized stand out. Repression that was “admittedly more violent, profound and long-lasting among the Indians of Iberian America, whom they condemned to being a peasant, illiterate subculture [...]” (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 121).

Krenak (2019) remembers that the notion that European whites could colonize the rest of the world was underpinned by the premise that there was an enlightened humanity, a civilization that was supposed to bring that light to the “obscured” backward groups. That the right way to be on Earth was justified by this idea of humanity, and that this truth, this right way, guided many choices made at different periods of history. In this way, perhaps, we are conditioned to a single kind of existence.

We also underscore the genocide of indigenous populations, forced immigration of black people and miscegenation during the colonial period, which shook local societies to their foundations, destroying existing empires and exterminating free peoples. There was also, on the other hand, the mutation, substitution and devastation of nature, as the colonial economy was perversely extractive or agricultural, destroying the local nature⁷ (GUDYNAS, 1999; SOUZA FILHO, 2019).

It can be said that, as a colony, America underwent a transformation of its peoples and nature, and the very separation between people and nature was a concept brought from Europe (GUDYNAS, 1999; SOUZA FILHO, 2019). The notion of the separation between the state of nature and state of civil society, of the enclosure of land, was brought to the colonies of Latin America by the Portuguese, Spanish and French, and the gradual expulsion of Latin American human beings and their cultures, plants and animals was undertaken. Thus, “European modernity was introduced in America

⁷ Extractivism refers to “activities that remove, most often intensively, large amounts of natural resources, and agro-industrial crops that use many inputs, with the aim of exporting according to the demand of central countries, without processing – or with limited processing – of products” (Acosta; BRAND, 2018, p. 36). These activities cause serious social, environmental and cultural impacts in the affected territories.

as a profitable reproduction for Europeans and as a cruel farce for native societies” (SOUZA FILHO, 2017, p. 29).

Social theorists of modernity, such as Hobbes and Locke, already considered that a human, rational, conscious and contractual order must be created. The foundations of capitalism, private property, and individualism had been laid; the transformation of the environment into a commodity; and the idea that nature should be humanized, improved, made productive; that it has a value with the possibility of exchange in a world of the rule of law in which nature must be submitted to human society (SOUZA FILHO, 2017).

As the land was included into “the legal system, or in civil society, it ceased to be the provider of all the needs of life, to become the provider of individual capital, [...] becomes an object, a thing, a commodity and, as a part of nature, expelled from society” (SOUZA FILHO, 2017, p. 28).

For a long time, we were lulled by the tale that we are a humanity, and we alienated ourselves from the organism of which we are a part: the Earth, as if human beings were one thing and nature, another. We depersonalize the river or the mountain, take their meanings from them, their value in themselves, and release them so that they become residues of industrial and extractive activities. It is a disconnect, a dual view between humanity and nature that has affected us all (KRENAK, 2019).

However, it should be said that two Americas were formed: the colonial one, which excluded nature, controlled the land, exploited it in a slave-like manner and amassed wealth for the colonizers; and another, hidden, which kept nature preserved, made up of runaway slaves, peoples who retreated into the interior, mingling, planting, preserving the biodiversity (SOUZA FILHO, 2019).

It is a non-integrated America, with “resisters or survivors, kidnapped Africans and their children who could not, or knew not how to, return to their homeland anymore, but did not want, or were not welcome, to be part the colonial hegemonic society [...]” (SOUZA FILHO, 2019, p. 11). They became indigenous and tribal peoples recognized for their struggles and movements in Convention No. 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and other international and national Instruments, and they are still considered inadequate in the twenty-first century because they occupy lands that would be necessary for the capitalist expansion of hegemonic society. Their organicity is inconvenient, and corporations have created more and more mechanisms to separate the children of the Earth from their mother (KRENAK, 2019).

At the end of the seventeenth century, these peoples took part in the struggle for the independence of Haiti and Paraguay, for example, believing that it would mean freedom and autonomy and, “generally, were not deceived by the liberators, but by the governments that followed” (SOUZA FILHO, 2019, p. 12). The Latin American anticolonial constitutionalism of these countries in this period “served to defeat the metropolis, but was not implemented by the Creole elite in power that revives coloniality, by maintaining anti-popular control of the land, slavery, submission to indigenous peoples and dependence on foreign markets” (SOUZA FILHO, 2019, p. 14-15).

The independence of Haiti – the Republic of Santo Domingo – and the independence of Paraguay, in these dictates, represent examples of colonial defeat, the creation of a Latin American constitutionalism focused on local interests that broke with European exploitation. However, they are also examples of the still ongoing struggle to implement anti-colonial devices in the Constitutions of Latin America by oligarchies that keep trying to destroy or prevent the construction of fraternal societies⁸.

The financial control of peripheral countries by the dominant nations in the global economy has become so complex and profound that the export-import scheme has been reformed to include the protection of rural interests, besides others, supporting the production of raw materials, primary goods, according to the development model absorbed by European countries which are importers of the globalized nature (PORTO-GONÇALVES, 2017).

For the most part, except for non-integrated America, there remains the separation between man, nature and other living beings, the overlap of practices and interests driven by local groups and by the dominant poles of the modern colonial system, the consolidation of dependent capitalism based on the exportation of commodities and other activities that entail major environmental and social injustices.

8 In Haiti, war was waged on the island by Africans and their descendants against their masters. At the end of the eighteenth century, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the extinction of slavery was declared, all considered themselves free French citizens. In 1801, Toussaint L'Ouverture called the first Constituent Assembly and promulgated the Haitian Constitution, which was the first constitution in Latin America written without any external interference, which, however, recognized Haiti as an extension of France. Subsequently, under the command of General Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Haiti called a new Constituent Assembly. The second constitution of Latin America and the Caribbean constituted the first Independent National State of Latin America, anti-colonial and anti-slavery. Nevertheless, they were not recognized as a nation by any superpowers. To grant independence to Saint-Domingue in 1825, France demanded to be paid 150 million francs as compensation for the former owners. The local government, pressed also militarily, accepted and paid the first installment with a loan of 30 million francs from France itself (JAMES, 2000).

Finally, we point out the existence, to this today, of trends denying the Anthropocene linked to the rejection of the idea that we are experiencing an environmental and civilizational crisis and that we must modify our Western living standards. Issberner and Léna (2018) listed some of the factors related to such refusal: blind faith in progress and development, powerful interests that benefit from this dynamic and intense lobbying; a belief in the ability of science and technology to solve all problems; the control of the minds of consumers by the media, which creates a craving for individual consumption aimed both at providing comfort and a way to stand out and be recognized, besides others. From this perspective, the patterns of overexploitation and overconsumption imposed by the way of life of the global north through this modern colonial world-system are not questioned.

Thus, it is important to highlight that, as was explained, the Anthropocene is rooted in the misconceptions of capitalist modernity – in the war against nature, and against the peoples and communities that live with nature, in an ongoing scheme of colonialism of power and knowledge, by implementing practices with high environmental impacts perceived by some as inevitable for achieving development – and that we are facing a crisis of the patterns of civilization hitherto predominant in globalization (SOUZA FILHO, 2017).

Planet Earth tries to defend itself in the face of impacts on its cycles, its time and ability to regenerate. It can be said that it tries to curb the processes that destroy it. We note that, in this momentum, the coronavirus “does not kill birds, bears or any other other beings, only humans. It is the human populations and their artificial world that are in panic, it is their mode of functioning that has entered a crisis” (KRENAK, 2020, p. 7).

2 THIS IS NOT A “BAD MOMENT THAT WILL PASS SOON”

The Anthropocene itself is a concept in dispute, with many different narratives concerning not only when it supposedly began, but, above all, the possible exits from this systemic crisis (SVAMPA, 2019). Philosopher Isabelle Stengers (2015) believes that we must create a way to respond not to Gaia, but to what caused its intrusion – the forecast disasters – and the consequences of such intrusion. The fight is against what caused Gaia.

The author (STENGERS, 2015, p. 38) explains that calling the living planet Gaia – highlighting the dense set of relationships that disciplines

of science used to treat separately (the climate, living beings, the soil, the ocean, and others) – consists in undoing the idea that we take for granted what we depend on and revive the understanding that the “global framework of our stories, our calculations, is the product of a history of co-evolution whose first artificers, and real permanent authors, were the numerous populations of microorganisms”. Gaia must be recognized as a living being, with a history and a regime of activities of its own, originating from processes articulated with each other.

We can further argue that naming Gaia means shouting out the emancipation against what has allowed us to believe that it is possible to set a direction for the progress for the whole humanity – the belief in the great narrative of man’s superiority and his ability to overcome obstacles, in the power of science and technique – against this strange right not to be careful that frightened, and continues to frighten, all the peoples who know how to honor Gaia (STENGERS, 2015, p. 54).

As heirs of Western modernity, colonized by it, we have thought of nature as an anthropocentric concept, as something external, that can be tamed and exploited, a vision that does not lead us to the solution, but is a crucial part of the crisis in which we find ourselves. We question the cultural paradigm of modernity based on an instrumental view of nature, functional to the logic of capitalist expansion, in the idea of autonomy and individualism (SVAMPA, 2019).

We allude that there is nothing imaginable that is not nature. Everything is nature (KRENAK, 2019). Society reproduces itself through socio-ecological processes, and it is not possible to separate nature and society.

The coronavirus is another sample that the predation of nature is damaging the Earth’s ability to sustain life, and that everything is interconnected, we are not detached beings as the abstraction of civilization in which we live makes us believe every day; instead, we are a tiny part of nature. So much so that “when microorganisms are released from their animal hosts, it means that they must attach themselves to other bodies to survive. Humans are part of nature – and everything is connected to everything else” (KOTHARI *et al.*, 2020, p. 1).

We should remember that the latest viruses, such as the one responsible for severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), avian influenza and the coronavirus, for example, are related: with the destruction of habitats, the capture and extinction of wild species that were symbiotic hosts, with

the extractivist relationship of large cities with forests, among others. Epidemics break out “on the fringes of threatened forests, in the interstices of interspecies friction, and from there are quickly transported to the whole world by trucks, boats and airplanes” (LAGROU, 2020, p. 5).

The latest research to date detects that COVID-19 is the result of the the virus passing from a bat species (*horseshoe bat*) that lives in the forests of China to humans. The first cases were detected in a large market in Wuhan where wild animals are sold, although capture and sale are prohibited (LAGROU, 2020).

We stress that the cause of zoonotic spillover⁹, or the transfer from wild species, is almost always human behavior. Bats, for example, are the only mammals that fly, live in large groups and are important pollinators of tropical rainforests, and some species of the flora depend exclusively on bats to survive. However, like humans, bats feel stress when they realize that their habitat has been deforested, or when they are bundled up at a market to be slaughtered, which causes the virus which they symbiotically host to become, by the pressure of the immune system, more latent and contagious (LAGROU, 2020).

Other animals are also hosts and can transmit viruses to humans, thus starting an epidemic. As an illustration, it was in large industrial chicken and pig farms, where these animals are confined for the food agribusiness, that the swine flu first broke out a few years ago. In this context, “the large network of humans and non-humans is the cause and the solution of the problem” (LAGROU, 2020, p. 5).

We should clarify that it is not the fact that we eat pigs, bats and chickens “that causes world epidemics, but the way in which the world civilization, which feeds on the endless growth of cities over forests, trees and their inhabitants, has stopped listening to the indignation, not of things, but of animals, plants and Gaia” (LAGROU, 2020, p. 6).

We should, therefore, admit the socio-environmental causes of the pandemic as being specifically interrelated to human action, stress the connection between care, health and the environment, and include in State policies the necessary transformations regarding what has been causing Gaia and the responses to its consequences. Because “they do not have only other pandemics in store for us, but also the multiplication of diseases

⁹ The term zoonotic spillover refers to the transmission of a pathogen from a vertebrate animal to humans (PLOWRIGHT *et al.*, 2017). It should be pointed out that zoonotic spillover of viruses coexisting harmlessly with wild species to humans, where they cause terrifying pandemics, did not begin and will not end with the new coronavirus. Other recent epidemics such as malaria, aids and yellow fever were the result of spillover between forest and city” (LAGROU, 2020, p. 3).

linked to pollution and the worsening climate crisis”¹⁰ (SVAMPA; VIALE, 2020, p. 5).

As Isabelle Stengers (2015, p. 41) had noted about the intrusions of Gaia – the current coronavirus pandemic being one of these intrusions –, it is not “a bad moment that will pass soon”, a happy ending in the sense that the problem has been solved. “We will not be allowed to forget it. We will have to answer incessantly for what we do to a ruthless being [...]”. We have exceeded the limits of the planet (ISSBERNER; LÉNA, 2018).

In fact, we can understand that the health crisis currently being experienced “is embedded in something that is not a crisis – a crisis is always temporary –, but a lasting, irreversible ecological mutation. We are very likely to of ‘get out’ of the former, but we have no chance of ‘getting out’ of the latter” (LATOURE, 2020, p. 1).

In this sense, we can understand that the coronavirus pandemic can work as a hook pulling us to consciousness, so that we look at what really matters. That we must strive to make sure that the economic recovery post-COVID-19 pandemic is not a return to the same old regime. Let us not return to normality, to the idea that we can continue to devour planet Earth (KRENAK, 2020; LATOUR, 2020).

Boaventura De Sousa Santos (2020) highlights, moreover, as one of the lessons of the coronavirus, that it is possible to suspend worldwide an economic system that, until now, we were told, was impossible to slow down in the name of progress. With the coronavirus pandemic, which requires drastic transformations, it suddenly became possible to consume less, to do away with the addiction of going to shopping centers to look at what is for sale and to forget about everything we want, but cannot get by purchasing.

However, supporters of globalization also see it as an opportunity to get rid of what is left of the welfare state, “of what is left of regulation against pollution and, more cynically, to get rid of all the excess people littering the planet” (LATOURE, 2020, p. 4). Boaventura (2020, p. 22) states:

In the present humanitarian crisis, far-right or neoliberal right-wing governments have failed more than others in the fight against the pandemic. They hid information, disparaged the scientific community, downplayed the potential effects of the pandemic, used the humanitarian crisis for political sophistry. Under the pretext of saving the economy, they took irresponsible risks, for which, we hope, they will be held responsible. They implied that a dose of social Darwinism would be beneficial:

¹⁰ In the original: “nos aguardan no solo otras pandemias, sino la multiplicación de enfermedades ligadas a la contaminación y a la agravación de la crisis climática”.

the elimination of parts of populations that are no longer interesting to the economy, neither as a workforce nor as a source of consumption, in other words, disposable populations, as if the economy could thrive on a pile of corpses. The most striking examples are England, the USA, India, Brazil, the Philippines and Thailand.

We identify the possibility that international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank, incite countries to take on debt, more than they are already have, to pay for emergency expenses, which can influence a post-pandemic world dominated by alternative policies of greater degradation of public services (SANTOS, 2020).

We note that everything has stopped and everything can be inflected, stopped for good, or, on the contrary, accelerated. It is important, in this time of confinement, that we all ponder, individually and then collectively, what we are attached to and what we are willing to let go of, the chains that we can replace and those that we must interrupt, and their consequences for nature, for human and non-human beings, Gaia and their interconnections (LATOURE, 2020).

It is important that people understand what is at stake – still with the perception that the pandemic, a rapidly progressing health crisis that mobilizes the media and political powers, is one of the dimensions of the slow-progressing ecological crisis that tends to go unnoticed, or is denied, but kills 7 million people every year. That “there will be more pandemics in the future, probably more severe ones, and neoliberal policies will continue to undermine the State’s ability to respond to them, leaving populations increasingly defenseless” (SANTOS, 2020, p. 21). Again: “it is not a bad moment that will pass soon” (STENGERS, 2015, p. 41).

3 TELLING SOME OTHER STORIES

Krenak (2019) proposes, as “ideas to postpone the end of the world”, the possibility of always being able to tell another story. We have to exercise the ability to expand the vision to places beyond those to which we are attached and where we live, to other styles of sociability and organization. Leaving this state of non-recognition of each other, and getting to know other ways of listening, feeling, inspiring, living our circulation on the planet.

It is necessary to awaken from the feeling of emptiness, from life as an abstraction guided by the logic of production and consumption of goods,

as if we were loose in the cosmos, unaccountable, to enjoy without any purpose. It is about undoing ontologies that lead to the conception that the mountain is not a being, but a lifeless object that can be undone by mining (KRENAK, 2019).

We have to make a commitment to life. To admit nature as an immense multitude of forms, including every piece of ourselves, for we are part of the whole, extrapolating the concept of man as a measure of things and the humanity that acts as if the planet is at its disposal (KRENAK, 2019).

Arturo Escobar (2014) understands that we have to think of alternatives opposite to the modern colonial system that affirm life in all its dimensions, invoke multiple concepts of Nation, citizenship, nature, time, and give light to the pluriverse. “It is necessary to explore and move toward other forms of organization based on reciprocity and redistribution”¹¹ (SVAMPA, 2019, p. 113).

Thus, the article intends to tell stories about struggles and resistance originating in the experiences of groups that still consider their connectivity with the Earth, but “have been half-forgotten by the edges of the planet, on the banks of rivers, on the edges of the oceans [...]”, considered a sub-humanity because they live outside the standards of what is understood to be progress and well-being (KRENAK, 2019, p. 21). Let us tell the stories, for example, of the indigenous peoples and traditional communities of Latin America, who represent a harmonious and fraternal life, focused on the biocentric turn of the Law.

We intend to show the existence of a pluriverse of worlds, other possibilities that help us think about how to overcome the civilizational crisis in which we find ourselves and how to effect of a socio-ecological transformation. We make it clear, however, that we do not intend to analyze in detail or exhaust all the alternatives (ACOSTA; BRAND, 2018; ESCOBAR, 2014; KRENAK, 2019).

We explain that many activists and theorists have been producing and shedding light on ways of thinking about transition, to the paradigm of *re-localización*. Arturo Escobar (2014) cites some of the trends that have been emerging in Latin America that, in his opinion, are the most interesting: the critiques of modernity and coloniality, decoloniality, alternatives to developmentalist logic, the conceptualization of *Buen Vivir* (*Good Living*), the proposals of post-extractivist transactions, the great resonance

¹¹ In the original: “Es necesario explorar y avanzar hacia otras formas de organización basadas en la reciprocidad y la redistribución”.

of the political practices of social movements, including the notions of pluriverse, in addition to others. Interrelated perspectives in multiple ways and which have been impacting the epistemic, social, political and cultural fields. Production of knowledge, for example, has outgrown the academies.

We highlight the avant-garde steps taken by Ecuador, which, in its 2008 Constitution, incorporated the *Buen Vivir*, recognized the State as being plurinational and nature as being a subject of rights (ACOSTA, 2016; Shiraishi NETO; LIMA, 2016).

Good Living revives ancestral wisdom. It is a lesson of coexistence with nature, recognizing that we cannot live a separate existence from the other living beings on the planet, that nature is not here to serve us because we, too, are nature, and when we disconnect from it or harm it, we are harming ourselves. We affirm harmony and balance between beings and the need to guarantee a dignified life for all species and for the planet (ACOSTA, 2016).

Therefore, the Ecuadorian constitution defines nature, or *Pacha Mama*, based on the worldviews of indigenous peoples: as the dimension in which life is realized and reproduced; and further elaborates that its existence and the maintenance and regeneration of its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution must be fully respected; that every person, community, nation or nationality may require the public authority to enforce the rights of nature; and that the State will encourage natural and legal persons and collectives to protect nature and to promote the respect of all of the elements that make up an ecosystem (art. 71)¹² (GUDYNAS, 2019).

It is an important reference mark among the Constitutional regimes of Latin America because it signifies a break with the way of thinking of modernity and anthropocentrism, incorporating nature into the legislation as a subject of rights, with intrinsic values regardless from human beings. It would be possible to say that a step was taken toward building a common good with nature (GUDYNAS, 2019).

Svampa and Viale (2020), thinking about exits from the current globalization, and questioning the destruction of nature, the idea of society and the social bonds marked by individuality and false notions

¹² “Art. 71. La naturaleza o Pacha Mama, donde se reproduce y realiza la vida, tiene derecho a que se respete integralmente su existencia y el mantenimiento y regeneración de sus ciclos vitales, estructura, funciones y procesos evolutivos. Toda persona, comunidad, pueblo o nacionalidad podrá exigir a la autoridad pública el cumplimiento de los derechos de la naturaleza.. Para aplicar e interpretar estos derechos se observarán los principios establecidos en la Constitución, en lo que proceda. El Estado incentivará a las personas naturales y jurídicas, y a los colectivos, para que protejan la naturaleza, y promoverá el respeto a todos los elementos que forman un ecosistema”.

of autonomy, emphasize the implementation of the care paradigm as a sociocognitive framework for the implementation of a new socioeconomic pact. The care paradigm has already been pointed out from feminist perspectives and implies recognition and respect for the other. Its key notions are interdependence, reciprocity and complementarity, abandoning anthropocentric views and resuming the idea that we are part of a whole with others and with nature. This means caring for other living beings and nature.

In Brazil, the Federal Constitution of 1988 recognized the right to difference and cultural diversity; identity in their ways of creating, doing and living (art.216); indigenous peoples and respect for their organizations, customs, languages, traditions and their original right over their lands (art. 231); it recognized the quilombolas (art. 68 of paradigm of care (ADCT)); the rubber tappers (art. 54 of the ADCT), and other traditional communities (SHIRAISHI NETO, 2014). They are groups that have been re-signifying their relations with the State, demanding recognition and protection of their ways of living, their identities and lands as collective subjects of rights.

It is also worth pointing out that Brazilian authors, such as Tiago Fensterseifer (2008) and Ingo Sarlet (SARLET; FENSTERSEIFER, 2017), have discussed the inclusion of the ecological dimension into the idea of human dignity and the expansion of the concept of dignity beyond human life, to reach all forms of life.

In a local context, the struggles of babassu coconut crackers, organized as the Movimento Interstadual das Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu (MIQCB), is illustrative in Maranhão, as it has been relativizing notions such as national citizenship, private property, among others, requiring the protection of palm trees and the guarantee of access to the babassu forests, regardless of their location and the type of domination (ALMEIDA, 2008). Coconut crackers treat the babassu coconut palms as true mothers who provide the sustenance of their children. This is knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation (Shiraishi NETO, 2017).

We stress, however, that the visions of the Andean and Amazonian peoples and communities, the movements, debates and transformations unleashed in Latin America are not the only inspirations related to *good living*. In many parts of the world, voices have been raised in tune with this vision, and the biocentric turn, in these dictates, is the product of a process of accumulation of experiences, political constructions occurring at national and international level¹³.

¹³ We highlight the The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, or the Stockholm

Transition discourses, for example, also emanate from the global north, with the theory of degrowth being the most prominent¹⁴. There is no clear definition of degrowth, but claims that are central to this idea. Degrowth represents a double proposal: on the one hand, it suggests a social change and identifies the imperative of capitalist economic growth as a fundamental problem. On the other, it seeks to contextualize the various concrete experiences – an example are the resistance movements against megaprojects in favor of the right to the city, movements that defend democracy, demand climate justice and food sovereignty. Acosta and Brand (2018) understand that, thus, it may be that “in a few years, perhaps, the term ‘degrowth’ will disappear, to be replaced by concepts such as Good Living, for example (ACOSTA; BRAND, 2018, p. 110)”.

Degrowth is, therefore, not synonymous with crisis, nor does it accomplish its objectives with the decline of industrial production; it is rather a process of emergency and emphasis on forms of production and social life that are ecologically sustainable, just and mutually supportive. In short, materially rich countries must modify their way of production and living and take co-responsibility in the global restoration of environmental damage – unequal and ecologically unbalanced commercial and financial exchange (ACOSTA; BRAND, 2018).

From the South, the proposals for transition to post-extractivism also stand out. Post-extractivism was born in the heat of the struggles against predatory extractivism. Post-extractivism challenges the exploitation of nature as a resource available to humanity, criticizes the socioeconomic, political and ecological problems caused by such exploitation and questions the notion of development, underdevelopment, modernity, progress among others, joining the demands for decolonization of knowledge (ACOSTA; BRAND, 2018).

Degrowth and post-extractivism, therefore, share some characteristics: they perform a critical diagnosis of capitalism as a driving force of a socioecological crisis of civilizational proportions, they argue that the planet has ecological limits, stress the unsustainability of imperial con-

Conference of 1972, as well as Rio-92, in which three international treaties were crystallized: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Reference is also made to the contribution of theologians, biologists and other scientists, and of indigenous peoples and traditional communities themselves. All these efforts that paved the way for the reunion between humans and non-humans (ACOSTA, 2016).

¹⁴ The notion of degrowth, also called post-growth, was born in industrialized countries, especially in Europe, and has more academic roots – it was launched in the 1970s and gains new strength in 2008, when Europe faces a crisis and neoliberalism is brought into question (ACOSTA; BRAND, 2018).

sumption patterns spread throughout the world. Both are perspectives aimed at changing the relationship between society and nature and try to find new insights about what would be a life with dignity for all beings, both human and non-human, in a society where growth and waste are not the norm (ACOSTA; BRAND 2018).

For Acosta and Brand (2018) and Arturo Escobar (2014), degrowth and post-extractivism are two promising alternatives within our reach. However, they consider that so far the interpellations of these two perspectives have been scarce and insufficient, although they are closely linked, because the blood that flows in the veins of the imperial way of life of the North – a way of life also found among the elites of the south – comes from the extractivist logics applied in the South (ACOSTA; BRAND, 2018; ESCOBAR, 2014). We understand that the degrowth of industrialized regions should be followed by post-extractivism in the countries of the South.

In this context, on the one hand, impoverished and structurally excluded countries should “seek options for decent and sustainable living that are not a caricature reissue of the Western way of life” (STENGER, 2015, p. 41). On the other hand, the countries considered developed will have to solve the problems “of international inequality that they caused along their path to ‘development’ and, in particular, incorporate criteria of sufficiency in their societies instead of sustaining the logic of permanent material accumulation at the expense of the rest of humanity” (Acosta; BRAND, 2018, p. 114-115).

In conclusion, these are some notes and illustrations that help in the challenge of decolonizing minds, questioning the “right way of living on Earth”, transforming the imperialist structures of domination – that currently impose a new geography of extraction and further increase the historical ecological debt of the global North – building a new understanding of a dignified life for human and non-human beings, conceiving the pluriverse and reintroducing the interdependence between humans and non-humans (ACOSTA; BRAND 2018; the KRENAK 2019).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We contextualize the current environmental crisis, of which the coronavirus pandemic is one of the latest facets, as the result of a project of humanity that has been imposed since the seventeenth century and currently comes to an end due to the ongoing ecological collapse. We emphasize, in

this sense, the connection of the perception “of the right way of being on Earth” with the Constitution of America and modern colonial capitalism as a new standard of world power.

With the arrival of the Portuguese, Spanish and French, America underwent a transformation of its peoples – with the genocide of the indigenous population, forced immigration of black people, miscegenation, among others – and nature. We also indicate the coloniality of knowledge and power over the bodies and minds of the colonized, considered wild, not rational. Thus, Latin American humans, culture, nature, and animals were expelled.

It is a thought that alienates humans from the organism of which they are part, that is, of the Earth, and it creates an artificial life, an abstraction. It depersonalizes the mountain and the river, for example, turning them into resources to be exploited.

We also highlight the existence of trends that continue to argue for the unlimited exploitation of nature, disregarding the connectivity of humanity with the environment, the limits of the biosphere and environmental impacts. Such trends deny that we are facing a civilizational crisis, crisis of the Western standards of living, individualistic and accumulation of goods.

The coronavirus pandemic, however, comes to signal the end. As in the latest viral infections such as SARS, the coronavirus is related to the destruction of *habitats*, the capture and extinction of wild species that were symbiotic hosts, the *zoonotic spillover* between forest and city, in short, the complex relationships between humans and non-humans. It is a crisis of the Western way of life.

Planet Earth tries to curb unsustainable activities and consumption. We also explain that this is not a bad moment that will pass soon. Not only new pandemics await us, but also a multitude of diseases linked to the worsening of environmental damage and climate change. Thus, the socio-environmental causes of the pandemic, the need for a socio-ecological transformation, should be included in the state-political agenda.

On the other hand, we note that besides the American continent integrated into the geopolitical geography of importation and exportation of globalized nature, the unequal distribution of income and waste, there is an American continent not integrated into this lifestyle. Indigenous peoples and traditional communities were gradually pushed to the margins of the world and are still considered obstacles to the expansion and capitalist domination of space.

In this sense, as Krenak (2019) points out “ideas to postpone the end of the world”, this article tells other stories, theories, alternatives and movements, such as those of indigenous peoples and traditional communities that represent the revival of the idea of interdependence between humans, nature and non-humans. Which mean other ways of living, feeling and dreaming.

We understand that this reflection is crucial in the attempt to decolonize minds, to highlight interdependence and reciprocity, to reconcile a dignified life for all species, to perceive the pluriverse, to extrapolate the perspective of man as a measure of all things, to think of an ecological and cultural turn that undoes economic irrationality. Finally, to show ideas to postpone the end of the world in a post-pandemic moment, in which everything stopped and can be reflected on, interrupted or, however, accelerated in the developmental logic of economic growth and austere measures on social rights.

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