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Felipe Costa Lima

Abstract

Global environmental issues have been posing substantial challenges for governments and people worldwide. And western knowledge, grounded in capitalism/coloniality/anthropocentrism, has not been able to provide the answers we need to surmount this existential threat. So, this article links Marxism, decoloniality, and conflict resolution theory to denounce the current environmental violence in Latin America and worldwide by exposing the clashes between the Global North and the Global South in environmental matters. We hope to demonstrate middle-ground theories are found to be more able to explain ongoing global issues and lead to proposals that include alternative paths of liberation.

Keywords: anthropocentrism; decoloniality; environment; Eurocentrism; Global South; violence

Introduction

International capitalism in the current discourse around modernity/coloniality is at war with noncapitalist economic and political resistance, especially among non-White populations, a conflict that has a profound impact in environmental contexts. As an illustration, Latin America (principally its elites) coupled with (Western) multinationals and the great political powers have been oppressing the peoples and destroying the nature of this region through mechanisms of cultural and systemic violence. The connection between Marxism and postcolonialism (McClintock, 1992) needs to be understood to surmount the current environmental destruction. The term postcolonialism tends to incorporate an imperial time linearity (precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods) and erase heterogeneity. (For example, Brazil and Cameroon are

not postcolonial in the same way.) Applying the concept of decoloniality manages to overcome these problems by deconstructing our understanding of imperialism through specific colonial encounters.

Whereas critical theory enables a systemic critique of capital and capitalism through an unconditional and revolutionary universal theory, decolonial thought is a less-unified theoretical corpus. Rooted in post-structuralist methodology, decolonial thought has enabled criticism of an ongoing postcolonial existence and its egregious features, such as Eurocentrism, the concept of modernity, identity, and revolution (Parry, 1997). So, “while Marxism provides an overarching analysis of capitalist society, the decolonial theory’s analytic approach has been largely premised on deconstructing the overarching power of Western capitalism, imperialism and ‘modernity’” (Sinha & Varma, 2015, p. 3).

Yet, the skepticism of decolonial thinking about a viable radical option for replacing capitalism as the hegemonic world system comprises a huge portion of this intellectual field. Even worse, decoloniality appears to be a jump on the neoliberal bandwagon (Varma & Lazarus, 2008), and thus contributes to the rhetoric of Fukuyama’s end of history. For other intellectuals, Marxism possesses a more rigorous method of analysis. Vasant Kaiwar (2014) claims that Marxism has been learning and enriching itself from uncountable fields of intellectual inquiry. Slavoj Žižek (2001), on the other hand, rejects decolonial worldviews entirely, an attitude attributable to his hyper-Eurocentrism and very shallow understanding of theories outside the borders of Europe (see Nigam, 2010).

One significant aspect of the dissension between Marxism and decolonial perceptions is the practice of

comparing the economic realm and that of the literary and the cultural realms. The misunderstanding of this conflict resolution can contribute to linking these perceptions and placing ecology at the center of this conundrum. As a means through which to achieve this goal, we briefly introduce these three pieces of knowledge.

Decolonial thinking asserts that modernity is the historical process by which imperial Europe has built its hegemony worldwide. This rhetoric of modernity has created an image, notably since the French Revolution, rooted in the abstract principles of equality and fraternity among peoples around the globe. From this perspective, the three great ideologies of the modern world, conservatism, liberalism, and socialism, have been dominant (Sanjines, 2013). As a result, a civilizing process imposed by a lineal and future-directed view of history still controls the histories of those who have lived under the burden of imperial languages (Fanon, 1963).

Modernity does not need to go back to the past except to glorify its own glories, because the idea of modernity is built on the very modern idea of its own past. But that past is regional, local; it is European, adopted and adapted by the United States And the magic trick of the idea of modernity is that it makes us believe that all pasts that are not European have to be superseded by the march of European modernity, sold as universal modernity (Sanjines, 2013, p. 15).

Dialectically related to modernity, coloniality refers to the imperial construction of a hegemonic legal structure since America's conquest hitherto (Dussel, 2005; Quijano,

2005). This foundation of control and exploitation influence the economic, political, and social realms for subjugating individuals, and groups.

Coloniality or coloniality of power transcends the mere notion of colonialism to refer to the set of principles based on which the Salvationist and Triumphalist narrative of rebirth and modernity was constructed justifying expropriation, exploitation, and much violence in the name of Christian salvation or a secular revival and progress. Coloniality of power, thus, refers to a grounded conceptual code in which the idea of Western civilization legitimizes itself—through actors, institutions, languages—as the controller not only of economy and authority but also of subjectivity and knowledge of non-Western peoples and ethnicities. The dehumanization of non-European inhabitants around the globe was necessary to justify the control of such “inferior human beings.”

Racism, as we know it today, was established at that time. Racism is not biological, but epistemic; it is the classification and ranking of some people by others who control the production of knowledge, who can attribute credibility to such classification and ranking and which establish themselves as the standard: “the humans”—all others are just different degrees of almost or semi-human. Coloniality is, so, constitutive of modernity. (Pinto & Mignolo, 2015, p. 383)

Coloniality is a complex process that involves politics and economics (Ballestrin, 2014; Quijano, 2005); knowledge, notably the geopolitics of scientific production (Castro-Gómez; Lander, 2005; Santos, 2007, 2010);

human beings, primarily gender, sexuality, ethnics, and subjectivity (Maldonado-Torres, 2016); and nature (Bernabe, 2019; Escobar, 2005; Mendoza-Álvarez, 2019). The relationship between modernity and coloniality form a colonial matrix of power (Ballestrin, 2013; Quijano, 2005). Understanding decolonial thought, therefore, appears to be required to comprehend our current environmental catastrophe, even though international relations' scholars have not always paid attention to social power and the importance of social categories such as gender, ethnicity, and class (Dalby, 2009; Stevenson, 2014). Decolonial thought is also essential for recognizing that cultural violence appears to be deeply related to the systemic violence created by capitalist relations.

The penetration of this system in precapitalistic societies through colonialism was extremely violent. Through the assimilation and subjugation of colonized peoples, the capitalist battle to annihilate all historical forms of autochthons economies became the most important goal (Luxembourg, 1913), and the neoliberal capitalist hegemony continues to head this project in the present:

What is the major problem facing this unipolar world to globalize itself? The national States, the resistances, the cultures, the forms of the relation of each nation and what makes them different. How is it possible that the village is global, and that everyone is the same if there are so many differences? When we say that it is necessary to destroy and harm the national States, it does not mean ending the people, but the ways of being of the people. After destroying, you must

rebuild. Rebuild the territories and give them another use. The use is determined by the laws of the market; this is marking globalization. (Marcos, 2001)

Grounded in a neo-Gramscian understanding, the influence of capitalism has created and recreated a reciprocal relationship between structure (economic relations) and superstructure (the ethical-political sphere), which contains the potential for “considering state/society complexes as the constituent entities of world order and for exploring the particular historical forms taken by these complexes” (Cox, 1981, p. 134). Therefore, the articulation between the international and the various national spheres establishes uneven developments in the territories affected by neoliberal forces (Morton, 2007). As we will show, neoliberalism perpetuates cultural and systemic violence all over the world.

Johan Galtung (1996) affirmed that when someone acts willfully to inflict harm on others, it is direct violence; when there is no intent, it is referred to as structural violence. The latter comes from the social structure itself, that is, individual, intra-societal, and intersocietal relations (Yeh, 2006), inflicting on human beings a structural personality of violence, often indirect and unintended. From this perspective, the most prominent forms of structural violence in political and economic contexts are repression and exploitation, respectively. Underlying these types of violence is cultural violence, which refers to various symbolic spheres, including religion and ideology, language and the arts, science, law, media, and education.

Galtung’s theory allows for an interesting connection between deco-

lonial and Marxian ideology, considering that cultural and structural violence appears to be connected with the former’s modernity/coloniality and the latter’s structure/superstructure concepts. Therefore, when counter-hegemonic forces target the entire complex of violence, it will not matter where this violence came from (from economy to culture or from culture to economy). The ideological realm for apprehending our current ecological international reality must also be considered. In this light, a genealogical and “archaeological” (Foucault, 1969, 2015) understanding of the present-day state of affairs can broaden our criticism and search for alternative solutions.

Race and capitalism both have great influence on the world’s ongoing environmental tragedy. To establish these connections, it is important to include these contexts when attempting to understand the impact of coloniality and capitalism both on the environment and the people. The following sections explore the roots of anthropocentrism and its transformation into Eurocentrism, and the constant influence of coloniality and capitalism over cultural and structural violence in Brazil. Lastly, the clashes between the Global North and Global South in the context of ecological issues show the fallacy of Global North neo-Malthusian arguments for dealing with contemporary environmental violence.

Capitalism and Coloniality: The Necessity of a Favorable Superstructure and Modernity

Whereas classic (Marx, Durkheim, and Weber) and great (Habermas and Wallerstein) sociological approaches seek to construct universal

and systemic theories, respectively, decolonial arguments criticize these attempts of universalization as Eurocentrism. In this light, cultural-anthropological and cultural-ecological conceptions focus on local and non-Western societies (Bruckmeier, 2016), thus provincializing Europe (Chakrabarty, 2000).

Re-engaging critical theory and decoloniality may produce new thinking on specific histories and their connections with world systems. Both critical and decolonial theories are unstable and develop positions that respond to and challenge recent developments in the world (Sinha & Varma, 2015). Johan Galtung’s concepts of cultural, systemic, and direct violence (1992, 1996), in particular, may provide an interesting basis for comprehending ongoing reality and allowing new responses for supporting the liberation of the oppressed.

Anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism: Cultural Violence

We were, for a long time, lulled by the story that we are human. In the meantime ... we have alienated ourselves from this organism of which we are a part, the Earth, and we have come to think that it is one thing, and we are another: the Earth and humanity. I do not understand where there is anything other than nature. Everything is nature. The cosmos is nature. All I can think of is nature.... The idea of us humans detaching ourselves from the Earth, living in a civilizing abstraction, is absurd. It suppresses diversity; it denies the plurality of forms of life, existence, and habits. Offers the same menu, the same costume and, if possible, the same language for everyone. (Krenak, 2019a)

In his *Man And The Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800*, Keith Thomas (2010) explicated the development of the concept of anthropocentrism within Western countries and the United Kingdom in particular. According to orthodox doctrines, primordially those of the Catholic Church, the world was created for the good of humans; other species were to be subordinated to human desires and needs. As explicated in the Bible (Genesis 1:28), Adam had domain over all things in the Garden of Eden. Within it, humans and beasts lived together peacefully. However, since the Sin and the consequent Fall, humans' unchallenged dominance over other species ended, and as a result, the renewal of human authority on animal husbandry had to be accomplished by coercion and force. Further, based on Genesis 9:2-3 and replicated by Aristotle, plants were created for the sake of animals, and animals were created for the sake of humans. Still, this worldview was built on and further developed by Francis Bacon's utilitarianism and Thomas Hobbes' social contract theory. Afterward, from the Enlightenment onward, the victory of humans over beasts has been perceived as a legitimate victory due to its civilizing effects on animals. Nonetheless, the Judeo-Christian legacy is ambiguous.

Thomas (2010) also affirmed that to conform with the Old Testament, humans must act responsibly toward animals, as these holy creatures are essential participants in the holy covenant. Still, according to Thomas, other intellectuals also have engaged in discourse contesting animal mistreatment by humans and the superiority of the latter over the former; examples include: Porphyry (third century BC); the skeptical intellectual

Celso (second century BC); John Bradford (16th century); and other orthodox clerics at the end of the 17th century. Yet, the development and expansion of modern scientific knowledge, particularly astronomy, botany, and zoology, played a definitive role to erode (but not entirely) the Western anthropocentric worldview. For instance, as astronomy showed that the Earth was not the center of the universe, humans became small creatures in a large universe. Besides, rooted in botany and zoology, scientists realized the Earth and other creatures had independent lives and stories that were not dependent on humans. In line with Thomas (2010), the assertion is "it is not necessary to determine, here, whether or not Christianity is intrinsically anthropocentric. The point is that at the beginning of the modern period, its main English exponents, the preachers, and the commentators, without a doubt were" (p. 30).

Eurocentric assumptions derived from colonialism but its colonial sciences transformed anthropocentrism. Mudimbe (1988,) claimed the discipline of anthropology entrenches a deep distance between barbarism and civilization based on the line of progress. By ranking beings and societies on evolutionary bases, "this methodology reduces and neutralizes all differences into the sameness signified by the white norm"; and then, "it establishes a second representation that unites through similitude and eventually articulates distinctions and separations, thus classifying types of identities" (p. 31).

When drawing a solid dividing line between man and animals, the main purpose of the early modern period's intellectuals was to justify hunting, domestication, the habit of eating meat, vivi-

section (which had become a current scientific practice in the late century) and the systematic extermination of harmful or predatory animals. But such a strong insistence on distinguishing the human from the animal also had important consequences for relations between men. Indeed, if the essence of humanity was defined as comprising some specific quality, then any man who did not show such a quality would be subhuman or semi-animal. (Thomas, 2010, p. 49).

The artificial separation between humans and nature, therefore, has been reworked by capitalism and coloniality since their violent expansion worldwide, even though this split is older than these paths of violence. In this line of thought, Ailton Krenak (2019b) pointed out that Western culture wants to take control of nature, so it has to name it as a means through which to appropriate this abstract idea. (See also Foucault, 2015, p. 12.) This ideological construction can be linked with the dehumanizing processes that autochthons and Black peoples within Latin America have been experimenting with since the colonial epoch. As an illustration, during the expropriation of their lands and labor force, they became "inferior" Indigenous and Blacks, which dialectically facilitated expropriation (Munanga, 2009, p. 76).

Through coloniality and capitalist reproduction, self-centered anthropocentric humanism (the separation between nature and culture, and the implementation of hierarchies of living beings) was expanded and retransformed in Latin America (Coronil, 2005; Escobar, 2005; Macas, 2005; Santos, 2010).

Developmentalism/Assimilationism and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Brazil: Repercussions to the Environment

A requisite method for expanding modernity and its twin brother, coloniality, has been to apply what may be called the whitening strategy to Latin America. White elitism has been egregiously promoted since formal independences. The applied hierarchy had four main components: 1.) the genocide of Indigenous and Black peoples based on their obstructive resistance (uprisings, revolutions) to White economic projects (slavery, looting of lands, concentration of wealth); 2.) complete marginalization of Indigenous and Black populations in particular by refusing any kind of inclusive reforms; 3.) enormous waves of European immigration as a means to “clean Latin-American’s blood” and replace slave labor; and 4.) assimilation, not only through imposing White perceptions over these “inferior races” but also the “browning” (*morenização*, in Portuguese) of the population’s skin color. This method is in line with two complementary and nonexclusive interpretations on genocide:

The use of deliberate and systematic measures (such as death, bodily and mental injury, impossible living conditions, prevention of births), calculated to exterminate a racial, political, or cultural group, or to destroy the language, religion, or culture of a group. ... Refusal of the right to exist for entire human groups, by the extermination of their individuals, the disintegration of their political, social, cultural, linguistic, national and religious institutions. (Nascimento, 1978, pp. 16-17)

Developmentalism/assimilationism
The focus of this article is on the revision of capitalism through developmentalism (*desenvolvimentismo*, in Portuguese) and racial assimilationist policies, even though the criminalization and abandonment of the Brazilian oppressed peoples are also crucial specters of the ecological present-day Brazilian reality. Rooted in coloniality and capitalism, developmentalism was applied mostly at the expense of Indigenous and Black peoples, chiefly during the Brazilian dictatorship (1964-1985).

Bernardo Fernandes (2000) has attested that the state-led capitalist accumulation project of the civil-military Brazilian dictatorship led to a greater concentration of income and poverty, coupled with the intensification of land concentration and rural exodus. This project also resulted in the exclusion of the peasantry, as this group was a challenge for the state’s political and economic pretensions. Consequently, particularly from 1975 until 1985, mechanized agriculture controlled by large companies and landowners became paramount in the colonization policies in the Brazilian midwest and Amazon region. These policies have resulted in social and environmental disasters with impacts still felt to date. As stated in a pioneering census released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), “white producers occupy 208 million hectares, or 59.4% of the total area of the establishments, while blacks and mestizos have, together, less than half: 99 million hectares, or 28%” (Silva, 2020).

When dealing with coercive assimilation of autochthons, in 1976 Minister Rangel Reis, who handled Indigenous affairs at the National Indian Foundation

(Fundação Nacional do Índio), said in an interview to a well-respected newspaper in Brazil:

[W]e will try to meet the goals set by President Geisel to reduce the indigenous population from 220 thousand to twenty thousand in 10 years, through concentrated work among various ministries; in 30 years, we expect that of them will be properly integrated into the national society. (Nascimento, 1978, p. 44)

The discourse of nationalism, hence, attempted to incorporate all ethnic groups, impose a national language, and force acculturation. This structural and cultural violence led to uncountable ecological violence.

Rooted in nationalism and developmentalism, the civil-military regime preached the unification of the country and the protection of the Amazonian rainforest against “internationalization.” Against this backdrop, in 1966, President Castelo Branco spoke of “integrating in order not to deliver.” Besides, the construction of major road works, such as the 1972 *Transamazônica* and the 1974 *Bélem-Pará*, the project also further strengthened the Amazonian destruction. This colonizing movement was supported by satellite monitors, designed during that time to add to the destruction of the Amazonian rainforest; the devastation would mean the colonization (thus progress) was successfully achieved (Peixoto, 2009).

Given the policy, the only possible destiny for the oppressed was to be “integrated” into the hegemonic society or perish trying to maintain their rights of self-determination. The Amazonian biome should be destroyed and become, preferably, a

common urban area such as those from the West. The internationalization of Brazil's environmental destruction and re-democratization seemed hopeful signs for the future.

Multicultural Neoliberalism and Bolsonaro's Return to Assimilationism

The Brazilian Citizen Constitution of 1988 was a milestone in Brazilian history. It marked the negotiated transition from a civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985) to a democratic republic (1985-to date). From its inception until 2020, the constitution was amended 107 times, helping to establish a welfare state constitution in a scenario of neoliberal hegemony at a global level.

Until the promulgation of the 1988 constitution, the integrationist paradigm guided Brazilian Indigenous law, which defended the cultural assimilation of autochthons to the hegemonic (White) society. In effect, Indigenous peoples were objects of state tutelage to ensure their basic rights, while progressively inserting them into the "national communion" ("Estatuto do Índio," 1973). Since the promulgation of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, a more pluralistic view has replaced the integrationist principle. Inspired by a multicultural bias in law, it dedicates a specific chapter to these peoples and ensures the recognition of their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs, and traditions, as well as their original rights over the lands they traditionally have occupied.

The 1988 Constitution has not specifically provided juridical bases to Black peoples, to surmount their subservient reality. Notwithstanding holistic interpretations, this foundational law has permitted new possibilities for dealing with this conundrum, even though the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s have

incrementally created inequalities within Brazil. Although improvements have been occurring, cultural and structural violence are still huge conundrums to be overcome within the country.

Neoliberal domestic forces and international pressures have been pushing the Brazilian economy to refocus on commodities production, thus putting even more pressure on Brazil's biomes. In 1995 (during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's center-right government) the Brazilian Amazonia suffered from the worst deforestation of its history—29,059 km² were destroyed, an area similar to the size of Belgium. In 2004 (during Lula's center-left government), the deforestation of this biome achieved 27,400 km², an area comparable in size to Albania. Investments in technology and public institutional monitoring paid off notwithstanding, notably, when deforestation achieved in 2012 approximately one-sixth of its 2004 level. Nevertheless, from 2014 onward, less rigorous laws and investments in surveillance led to more devastation, until achieving 9,165,6 km² in 2019 (during the far-right, anti-environment government of Bolsonaro) (DW, 2020). This is not a coincidence, as feeding cultural and systemic violence leads to direct violence, mainly against non-White and noncapitalist forces:

Unfortunately, some people both inside and outside Brazil, supported by NGOs, have stubbornly insisted on treating and keeping our Indians as if they are real cave dwellers The indigenous people do not want to be poor, large landholders sitting on rich lands ... especially sitting on the world's richest lands. (Bolsonaro, 2019)

This conservative perception seems to be also shared by some groups within the Catholic Church, especially those who opposed the Amazon Synod convoked by Pope Francis I:

[The undersigned requires] the Synod Fathers a thriving Christian Amazon, not a huge green slum divided into tribal ghettos. ... (the group also repudiates) the communist-tribalist utopia by which a minority of neo-Marxist anthropologists and liberation theologians intend to keep our indigenous brothers in underdevelopment by confining them to an ethnic-cultural ghetto ("human zoos") that deprive them of benefits of coexistence and national civilization ... (Monteiro, 2019)

To comprehend the ongoing Brazilian environmental disaster, a look at other actions taken by Bolsonaro's government is also required. First, the budget concerning "actions to prevent climate changes" suffered a reduction of 95 percent in 2019 (Pina, 2019). Second, Norway and Germany have suspended their funding to environmental preservation in Brazil, that is 30 million and 35 million euros, respectively, owing to both the alarming deforestation rates in Amazonia in 2019 and the extinction of two important committees of the Amazonian Fund by the former Minister of Environment of Brazil, Ricardo Salles (2018-2021) (DW, 2019). (The Amazon Fund is a REDD + mechanism created to raise donations for nonreimbursable investment in efforts to prevent, monitor, and combat deforestation, as well as to promote the preservation and sustainable use in the Brazilian Amazon.) Third, the current Brazilian government has been trying to release rights to the exploration of

mineral deposits in Indigenous territories, which is constitutionally forbidden to date (Borges, 2019).

Even worse, the rhetoric of this government has been inflaming other civil society sectors historically hostile to environmental preservation, mainly land grabbers and landowners. From the beginning of his presidential term on January 1, 2019, Bolsonaro has been affirming that his government will not demarcate lands for Indigenous peoples. As a result, 130 demarcation processes already started, 116 under study, and 484 claimed for review, are in danger of not being analyzed at least until 2022. Even though Bolsonaro's government cannot formally stop these analyses, it can delay and not follow up on these requests (Jucá, 2018). In a country in which land wars are a common reality, Indigenous peoples are extremely vulnerable nowadays.

After analyzing the national realm, the next section highlights international arguments for explaining the present-day ecological problem. The discussion sheds light on concrete and ideological struggles between the Global North and the Global South.

The Global North (and Its Domestic Allies) Hypocrisy and the Global South Refusal of Neo-Malthusianism

The concept of eco-development and its movement toward sustainable development led to new attempts to integrate ecology and society. The Global North succeeded to internationalize tropical forest deforestation issues, and Global South denounced the Global North's past (and current) exploration of natural resources and

high levels of consumption (Le Pres-tre, 2000, p. 254).

According to Mitchell (2009):

[L]and-use change ... dramatically alters the environment but has received little international attention because the responsible activities, their immediate impacts, and the concerns they raise tend to be contained within one country's borders. [Even so,] the activities and impacts of some environmental problems can occur within a single country but become international when citizens in other countries become concerned about those impacts. (pp. 23-25)

In this context, power influence is obvious with the realization that "efforts to internationalize temperate and boreal deforestation have been less successful than those targeting tropical deforestation" (p. 25).

Dealing with the question, Whose fault is it? Western cultural violence and its repercussions over structural violence become even more apparent. From this viewpoint, neo-Malthusianism has gained force during North-South environmental discussions. Conforming to the IPAT identity, the factors that determine impacts (I) on the environment are population (P), affluence (A), and technology (T) (Mitchell, 2010). This idea, grounded in "the logic of absolute scarcity," morphed into the "limits of growth" narrative, which still is an important assumption when dealing with global environmental change and bio-environmentalism (Stavis, 2014, p. 16). To point out one misleading feature of this mathematical identity, it does not consider the abysmal difference in consumption between developed and under-

developed countries. The *2020 Human Development Report* (United Nations Development Programme, 2020) sheds light on this conundrum by connecting human development and environmental destruction:

Norway is the most developed country in the world, according to the latest UN Human Development Index (HDI), which measures prosperity according to the population's living conditions, as well as access to education and health. But, if the pressure on the planet enters this equation—with its CO2 emissions and the trail left by its consumption—the Nordic country falls 15 positions in the list. Iceland drops 26 steps, Australia 72, and the United States 45. The biggest blow is to Singapore (-92 positions) and Luxembourg (-131). In short, its inhabitants live comfortably at the expense of the environment. In the lower part of the table, however, the poorest countries practically do not change their development qualification when considering their environmental impact, which is almost nil, although they are the ones that suffer most from climate catastrophes. (Agudo, 2020)

The productive pressure that Global North consumption places on the Global South also feeds the plunder of natural resources by the North in the South, chiefly by the North's Transnational Companies (TNCs). Resource extraction has been strengthened worldwide, notably in Latin America, because of what are called "structural" adjustments pleaded by neoliberal policies (American policies have turned into universal policies). (To comprehend this statement, see Arrighi & Silver, 2003;

Morton, 2007; Pijl, 2005; Rupert, 2007), Nevertheless, although TNCs have joined national governments to exploit the region's natural assets, they have been facing effective subaltern uprisings ever since. For example, "the Huaorani, the Secoya, and the Cofán in Ecuador have been involved in a decade-long international campaign to hold Texaco accountable for massive oil spills in their territories." Further, the U'wa peoples' struggle against Occidental Petroleum Corporation (ONY) for continuing the exploration of petroleum in their territory (Rodríguez-Garavito & Arenas, 2005, pp. 245-266).

In addition, according to the 2010 United Nations Environmental Programme Finance Initiative, the 3,000 biggest companies in the world handled 35 percent of the total global environmental damage. However, because of their structural, instrumental, and discursive powers, which are explicated by their importance to capitalism's reproduction, their strong lobbies and material resources, and their influence to create interests and direct innovation, TNCs can avoid restrictions to their operations, such as a global convention on corporate responsibilities (Tienhaara, 2014). This parallel private environmental governance run by corporations appears to be one of the utmost challenges to democracy and public relations (Pinto, 2020). The G7 states' agreement for taxing transnational companies seems to be an initial step for avoiding these private interferences in democracy, at least in the Global North (DN, 2021).

Population growth, chiefly within the Global South, can put pressure on the planet's environmental issues; however, when compared to the other

problems, this hypocritical argument is unethical. From a decolonial viewpoint, introducing the non-Whites' world into the artificial (Western) global market was notably triggered by colonial (e.g., the colonial decimation of Indigenous economic lives) and neocolonial (liberalism and neoliberalism) forces (Costa Lima, 2019, 2020). Further, ethnic cleansings, genocides, and conflicts promoted worldwide by these same forces and actors impeded a great deal of the natural growth of these populations (touching on Indigenous and Black slaughtering in Latin America (Araujo in Bolognesi, 2019a; Fausto in Bolognesi, 2019b)). Besides, the population growth in the West was largely supported by the intense exploitation of the Global South peoples and resources from the 15th century onward.

Robert McNamara, the fifth president of the World Bank (1968-81), once pointed out that the Latin America demographic explosion was the biggest obstacle to its progress. So, the World Bank has made population control an important factor in granting loans to states. In this context, US President Lyndon Johnson once claimed that "five dollars invested against population growth are more effective than 100 dollars invested in economic growth." President Dwight Eisenhower predicted that if the inhabitants of the Earth continued to multiply at the current rate, the danger of revolutions would sharpen and "a deterioration in the standard of living of all peoples, including ours" would menace the developed world.

Rooted in these scandalous arguments, a gamut of American misdeeds, also financed by the UN, have sterilized thousands of Amazonian

women, "although this is the most desert habitable region of the planet." This is genocide. (To comprehend these scandals, see Casado, 2012.) Therefore, these Global North pretexts offend our intelligence and provoke indignation. It is important to highlight that in 1978 per square kilometer, Brazil had 38 times fewer inhabitants than Belgium; Paraguay had 49 times fewer than England; and Peru 32 times fewer than Japan. In addition, half of the territories of Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Venezuela were not even inhabited (Galeano, 2010, pp. 22-23).

Finally, a survey by medical students at the University of Washington (2020) indicates that the world's population will decrease from 2064 onward when it will reach a peak of 9.7 billion people. In 2100, 183 of the 195 countries in the world will suffer from population reduction: the Middle East coupled with Sub-Saharan and North Africa will be the only regions with increasing populations.

In contrast, the foremost consumers and polluters in the world, that is, Western countries, will experience a decreasing population. Italy, Spain, and Portugal, for example, will lose almost half of their current population until 2100, from 61 to 31 million, 46 to 23 million, and from 11 to 5 million, respectively. So, if there is no great catastrophe in the future, those inhabitants living comfortably at the expense of the environment will experience a population reduction, while those who do not change their development patterns when considering their environmental impact will increase in number. As can be seen in Table 1, cultural, structural, and direct violence affect the environmental realm.

Table 1. Environmental Violence

Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental destruction • Violence against those individuals and people who attempt to protect the environment
Structural	<p>Internationally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neoliberal and White supremacist international governance, primordially dominated by Western great powers and TNCs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Erasing Western influence (in the West and elsewhere; public and private) in the ongoing environmental destruction while blaming the Global South for it B. Avoiding structural changes while triggering some minor reforms such as the liberal concept of Green Economy • Domestically (Latin America): Peripheral capitalist and white supremacist dominance, chiefly dominated by white elites and their intrinsic relations with Western elites and transnational corporations
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The divorce between nature and humans: nature as a commodity to be exploited • Erasing and discrediting Western and non-Western alternatives to a more harmonious relationship within this complex reality

Source: Developed by author

Conclusion

Rooted in these arguments, there is basis for mistrust of current policies like Joe Biden’s climate change plan or the defense of Green Investments based on the international environmental governance (Klinc, 2020), given that these purposes do not challenge the roots of our contemporary ecological disaster. A broader project, based on social, political, economic, and ideological transformations must take place, attempting to minimize and overcome racism, xenophobia, (hetero)sexism, and our visions of nature. Marginalized communities, from this perspective, play an essential role in this project, owing to their articulation in a gamut of counter movements against the present-day hegemonic capitalist and White supremacist power structure.

Researchers from the Global South have been showing that humans and nature should be considered elements of a complex system (Stavis, 2014, p. 27). Yet, these discourses have been colliding with a capitalist and White supremacist structure that impedes deep progress touching on this critical issue. According to José

Domingos Miguez (2020), an important Brazilian negotiator on international environmental issues, Europe’s rhetoric on climate change and sustainability only appear to be pro-environmental. From this viewpoint, European Union’s representatives have been systematically blocking the Clean Development Mechanism Council to destroy the Kyoto Protocol. Notwithstanding that Europeans dominate the world’s dissemination system and media, they can control the rhetoric that is beneficial to them. Thus when their blockage is exposed, they play for the public, but their votes systematically collide with these demagogic exposures. As a result, because of this blockage, international cooperation (from developed to underdeveloped countries) on the mitigation of environmental effects will never be accomplished.

Rooted in these conclusions, the capitalist/White-supremacist structure controlling environmental policies and supporting private governance run by corporations will not be reformed by itself. A middle-ground theory embedded by critical studies and decolonial thought can support the overcoming of this real-

ity by explaining and proposing alternative solutions to our present-day cultural-structural-direct vicious circle of violence.

Taking cultural aspects to the fore, the Andean philosophy of Sumak Kawsay or Good-Living has been influencing the Gaia theory and deep ecology. Rooted in the balance of life on Earth (Fehlauer, 2016; Guillemot, 2006; Lajo, 2006), this philosophy denounces our current racist, excluding, patriarchal, and artificial world (Macas, 2005). On the other hand, critical scholars denounce the capitalist mode of production and its infamous features that systematically oppress peoples worldwide rooted in a scheme constructed to benefit few at the expense of the majority. Thus, the ideological path to reinforce this system was to support theories that should disenfranchise and exteriorize the idea of nature, transforming it into a good to be consumed by superior living beings.

To deal with this holistic oppressive conundrum of modernity/coloniality and capitalist structure and superstructure in the ecological realm, it seems plausible to consider cultural, systemic, and direct violence through the amalgamation of different perspectives for rebuffing this heinous domination. The chicken and egg metaphor matters little in this case; the most important thing is to understand that these factors are indispensable for apprehending and overcoming violence, as they align and reinforce oppression.

Both sides should listen to each other’s voices. The Bolivian peoples, as an illustration, have been establishing an outstanding Indigenous rebellion and revolution from below by democratic tools, although it has been facing hegemonic pressures from international capitalist-imperialist

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and domestic White supremacist forces. In the past, Marxist revolutions were not effective in Bolivia, as neither Indigenous ideas nor their specific issues were incorporated in these efforts (Reinaga, 2010). Intellectuals have also been criticizing the ongoing Movement for Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo, in Spanish) for implementing a sort of state capitalism in Bolivia, which potentially contrasts with its Marxist/Indigenous ideological basis (Storey, 2000; Ziai, 2007).

Current international violence has multiple causal phenomena and has been changed and reworked by oppressors and oppressed throughout history. Then, universal logics create a fixed mentality that perpetuates historical injustices as natural and immutable, but specific theories weaken solidarity, thus affecting common struggles against the same opponents. Not contending but connecting these worldviews through middle-ground theory/practice seems to possibly enact new and more effective paths to liberation.

These results show dialogue and holistic comprehension must become a priority as a means through which to inform future research, practices, and policies. Dealing with research, the prison isolation of modern scientific knowledge seems incapable of providing a deep transformation of our relationship with and within the world. Such change is so critical; decolonial theories can turn knowledge into an enchanted adventure again, as they can clear the path for a distinct reality in which the promotion of a decent life for all becomes the principal goal. While critical theory should listen to subaltern peoples and their millennial cosmologies, decolonial thinking needs to focus on subaltern commonalities and consensus for over-

coming violence worldwide and enacting an effective healing process.

Touching on practices and policies, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an aid in highlighting the threats neoliberal ideology and policies pose to the world since they put at risk lives and democratic regimes. As the 2021 G7 proposed 15 percent minimum global tax rate on multinationals illustrates, even the West is attempting to reform and control the neoliberal hegemony. This is an interesting opening to the Global South and subalterns for fostering political alternatives for surmounting our abysmal current reality. The state must be restored but dialectically transformed in an ever-evolving democratic machine, and, through dialogue, the opportunity exists to construct new possibilities. Otherwise, no other path than perennial crises or even total annihilation will be possible for the next generations.

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