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Sustainability perspectives: requiem for a dream?

Perspectivas da sustentabilidade: réquiem para um sonho?

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ABSTRACT The article comprises three sections. The first is epistemological or methodological in nature and presents our approach to complex phenomena associated with contemporary socio-environmental crises, also known as 'polycrises'. The second section offers an assessment that has been carried out, mainly by ECLAC (2025), on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Latin American and Caribbean countries, attempting to predict what may happen by 2030, according to UN planning in 2015 on the performance of public policies and the actions of other agents involved (private and third sector) and assessing indicators that promote sustainable development, according to the official blueprint. In the third and final section, we provide another configuration for nature policy strategies in defense of life, from the perspective of organized subaltern agents who, from a critical perspective, envision a path to other possible worlds.

Keywords: polycrisis; sustainability; sustainable development goals; climate crisis.

RESUMO O artigo compreende três seções: a primeira, é de ordem epistêmica ou metodológica e apresenta a forma de abordagem dos fenômenos complexos associados com as crises socioambientais contemporâneas, também designadas por '*policrise*'; segue na segunda seção uma exposição sobre a avaliação que tem sido feita, pela CEPAL (2025) principalmente, sobre os Objetivos do Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS), para os países latino-americanos e caribenhos, antecipando assim o que pode suceder até 2030, de acordo com o que foi desenhado em 2015 pela ONU, sobre o desempenho das políticas públicas e das ações dos demais atores envolvidos (privados e do terceiro setor), com indicadores promotores do desenvolvimento sustentável segundo o desenho oficial; por fim, na terceira seção, é apresentada uma outra configuração sobre estratégias de políticas da natureza em defesa da vida, ou seja, de uma perspectiva de atores subalternos organizados que vislumbram a promoção de outros mundos possíveis.

Palavras-chave: policrise; sustentabilidade; objetivos do desenvolvimento sustentável; crise climática.

1. Introduction

In his book, *Istanbul*, the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk writes of memory and the city. It is a masterful exercise in memoir, blending space, time, history, and sensory and cultural experience on metamorphosis and melancholy in the collective historical imagination of the city's inhabitants.

In section 33 of the book (Pamuk, 2007, p. 315-330), Pamuk recounts how in his late childhood, he discovered that the world was more perplexing and inaccessible, and far more boundless than he had imagined. He had taken his home, his neighborhood, and even his city as the center of the world. We can imagine his surprise as he came upon other places, other settings that ultimately revealed the fragility of his own place in the universe and, at the same time, pointed to the vastness of this world...

We can say (almost) the same when we talk about environmental problems: it is always limiting to treat them from the vantage point of just one or several of their aspects, through our particular thematic approaches, even if we apply multi- or interdisciplinary approaches in doing so. And when we encounter phenomena associated with climate emergency, with geopolitical negotiations on relieving the effects of climate change, or even strategic policies on sustainable development models, we begin to realize not only the complexity involved in these mechanisms, but also the obstacles and limits of our small-scale analyses and proposals, in the search for solutions in a convincing, consensual, and decisive manner on larger scales.

Certainly, it is not enough to diagnose current socio-environmental problems as complex or polycritical, or as Morin puts it, intertwined and inseparable from the nature-culture relationship. Yet at the same time, to point out that these entangled issues have sprung from multiple factors may not be a bad start. The search for solutions is the most sensitive stage of negotiations between different diagnoses, implying clashes in points of view and attitudes, and interpretative conflicts which, as Paul Ricoeur (2008) reminds us, are often antagonistic[1].

Dominant views and attitudes derive from agents who implement actions and adopt technological standards in production for the market. The latter are based on productive and commercial guidelines, or on models of agricultural exploitation, extensive livestock farming, and mineral and forestry extraction. They involve large-scale environmental impacts that are hard to reverse in the short term, despite plentiful measures to mitigate them, including those based on technological innovations that are considered ecologically clean[2].

[1] "[...] interpretation is the work of thought that consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning insinuated in the literal meaning" (Ricoeur, 2008, p. 17).

[2] In a recent diagnosis on a sustainable transition economy for Latin America, ECLAC (2023) calculated the impact of converting polluting industries to a clean economy. Taken into account were the so-called declining sectors, the most responsible for environmental degradation (crude oil and natural gas extraction, support services for mining and quarrying, timber production and manufacture of wood and cork products, excepting furniture, the manufacture of coke and petroleum refining products; manufacture of chemicals and by products; manufacture of basic metals), using the so-called three-gap model, which expresses economic, social, and environmental objectives through growth rates. The model takes into account the external impacts of this substitution, as well as the resulting employment level. Yet it does not consider the political aspects of this change, that is, the motives and obstacles that would, or would not, drive policymakers' decisions to adopt policies to mitigate the current environmental impacts of these processes.

Thus, the subtitle of this article, requiem for a dream, is an allusion to the current state of the crisis of modernity, of the depletion of nature and consequent production of extreme climate events, whose repercussions affect the bonds of social cohesion, on a planetary scale, with a growing state of entropy in contemporary societies. It is an elegy that refers to a critical and systemic dysfunction of the conditions and situations of production and reproduction of life on the Planet.

Production and reproduction here refer to the combination of nature's state of exhaustion and the ways in which human beings act in society. That is, we ask whether the responses orchestrated by the political organization of states, governments, and multilateral agencies respond to and seek solutions to current socio-environmental problems. The effects of the current climate crisis are expressed through a series of extreme telluric phenomena, some of which will be listed here, gathered from documentary sources that discuss their nature and their consequences for planetary socio-biodiversity.

Counterpointing this extreme situation, we ask whether some of the antidotes that have emerged, arising from the critique and resistance of diverse social actors – both hegemonic and subaltern – are mere attempts to deter this anomie, whether they are sufficient or feasible to contain the damage, and whether such life strategies are durable, that is, sustainable over time. We assume that the successive setbacks of governments and societies responsible for the emissions of gases that are harmful to the planet's health will increasingly aggravate our current critical situation, in addition to reinforcing the position of climate change deniers and those indifferent to the resulting damage.

Once these inescapable or wicked problems of environmental crisis have been identified, it is important to ask what types of actions and attitudes emerge from measures to find solutions, and whether stakeholders and decision-makers are convinced not only of the existence of these problems, but also of their cruciality and the urgent need to address them. What bases (scientific or popular opinion) are relied upon to diagnose them? Are their prognoses on how to address the climate crisis credible, and are they shared by those who are primarily responsible for global warming?[3] One way or another, we know that the diagnoses are not a sufficient condition for crisis solution. The question remains as to what the main factors to be addressed in the search for a solution are, if indeed there is any solution at all!

A question that is anything but trivial refers to the set of measures taken or promised by multilateral agents, national governments, businesspeople and the third sector: do these measures, touted as capable of providing a green solution for the planet, such as SDGs, Agenda 21, COPs and other treaties, constitute a sufficient condition for the construction of alternatives to the hegemonic production model?

[3] "Bringing together almost every country in the world, the United Nations Conferences (COPs) dedicated to the topic [combating climate change] tend to lose sight of the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, focusing much of their efforts on the antagonisms between rich and poor nations. [José Eli da Veiga] has a different suggestion. A 2024 study revealed that 80% of emissions are generated by 57 companies, headquartered in 34 countries. Under these circumstances, it would be more efficient to negotiate an agreement directly between these major contributors to global warming. For Veiga, the agreement could follow the 'cap and trade' model, in which an emissions limit is set and those who fall short pay those who exceed it." (Viana, Valor Econômico, Caderno Eu &, p. 9). However, the problem of climate change is more complex than simply attributing it to a single, albeit relevant, economic factor; it involves multiple factors, as we argue below.

What comes next is the question of whether these agents are convinced that the measures proposed to contain the unbridled advance of extreme weather events and other side effects of the overexploitation of nature represent the only valid solution to ensure that the existing global system of production and consumption continues on its current course. We ask whether it would be enough to replace the existing energy matrix with more nature-friendly mechanisms (renewable sources, for example), and eventually reduce economic growth rates, adopt acceptable consumption measures, and institute urban mobility based on public transport with the use of clean energy matrices...

The transition to sustainable forms of production and consumption supported by the protocols endorsed by various international environmental treaties is anchored in official concepts of sustainability. Such concepts seek to implement clean technological measures, while coexisting with the current fossil-fuel based production model and the overexploitation of natural resources. The fundamental issue to address here is whether the current logic of market-driven commodity production can create other viable forms of production and consumption, based on social equity, redistributive justice, a democratic political system, and social customs compatible with contemporary civilizational requirements.

One might ask whether currently-advocated environmental measures are merely palliative, failing to guarantee a strong and lasting sustainable transition, or if their measures to combat unsustainable practices – especially those focused on forest resource management – can take on a form of cooperative coexistence with the long-standing experiences developed by traditional populations and indigenous peoples, thus moving toward the consolidation of sustainable territories. Sociopolitical indicators on the implementation of consensual measures are plagued by serious limitations, and understandings of the meaning of sustainability are not shared by the different actors involved. More than not simply different worldviews, it is a matter of conflicting and even antagonistic strategic interests[4].

While attempting to foster reflections on the perspectives of the sustainability debate, this article also introduces the current approach to a methodology that characterizes the current crisis as a combination of numerous simultaneous crises. Even beyond this notion of overlapping crises, we must also consider a set of threats that together place our planet's environmental balance at risk. The pages that follow are organized into three sections. The first is epistemological or methodological in nature and presents our approach to complex phenomena associated with contemporary socio-environmental crises, also known as 'polycrises'. The second section offers an assessment that has been carried out, mainly by ECLAC (2025), on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Latin American and Caribbean countries. attempting to predict what

[4] The current political disputes surrounding the' historic cut-off point' for the demarcation of Indigenous territories are intertwined with conflicts among state powers that impact Brazilian society as a whole, exacerbating the difficulty of consensus on sustainable development strategies. "The issue of demarcation as a climate action ally is also included in a letter from eight Amazon Basin organizations, released in February [2025], demanding that countries place the demarcation or titling of Indigenous territories at the center of their climate policies and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)" (Causin, 2025, F9)

may happen by 2030, according to 2015 UN planning in 2015 on the performance of public policies and the actions of other agents involved (private and third sector) and assessing indicators that promote sustainable development, according to the official blueprint. In the third and final section, we provide another configuration for nature policy strategies in defense of life, from the perspective of organized subaltern agents who envision, from another perspective, the promotion of other possible worlds.

2. Complex thinking and polycrises: diagnosing severe socioenvironmental crises

Morin & Kern (1994) define the overlapping of contemporary problems as polycrisis[5], a situation in which interconnected and overlapping crises take the form of an interdependent complex of problems, antagonisms, crises, and uncontrollable processes that forge the overall crisis of the planet (Deweik, 2022).

In turn, the Cascade Institute of the Royal Roads University in British Columbia, Canada, engages critically with the concept of polycrisis, as follows,

> The polycrisis concept highlights causal interconnections between multiple crises, but our theoretical grasp of the nature of these connections – and hence of the mechanisms through which crises spread – remains weak. The polycrisis concept implies that the simultaneity of crises is not merely coincidental. But the extent and strength of causal entanglements among crises remains unclear. Minimally, the causal interactions among systems and crises are loose and eclectic; maximally, they are so dense and strong that the polycrisis can become a self perpetuating system in itself. (Cascade Institute, 2024, p. 6).

Authors associated with the Cascade Institute (2024) use the term "polycrisis" to highlight the interactions between crises. Although there is no official, agreed-upon definition of the term, its proponents broadly agree that the polycrisis phenomenon has five main characteristics, as their report states: 1. Emergent damage: when crises interact, their impacts are different – and often worse – than if the distinct crises were separated from each other; 2. Multiple causes: crises arise from complex causal interactions that require multifaceted responses; 3. Profound uncertainty: crisis interactions generate changes that hinder understanding and exceed our ability to predict future developments; 4. Systemic context: crises arise in complex systems and, therefore, must be understood and addressed through complex systems thinking; 5. New knowledge and action: established frameworks, institutions, and practices are ill-equipped to deal with crisis interactions; new modes of research and practice are needed.

In addition to these general characteristics of polycrisis, the entangled situations to which its current manifestations belong refer to the following

[5] "Many of these crises can be considered as a polycritical set in which the crisis of development, the crisis of modernity, and the crisis of all societies intertwine and overlap, some wrenched from their lethargy, their autarchy, their stationary state, others accelerating their movement vertiginously, swept up in a blind unfolding, driven by a dialectic of the developments of technoscience and the unleashing of human delusions." (Morin & Kern, 1995, p. 94).

phenomena, according to the aforementioned document (Cascade Institute, 2024): 1) climate change and Earth system tipping points; 2) biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse; 3) outbreaks of zoonotic viral diseases and, specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic, including its long-term social and health impacts; 4) the resurgence of violent conflict, both international and subnational, after decades of decline; 5) geopolitical tensions associated with major -power rivalries and hegemonic transition; 6) rising populist authoritarianism and declining support for democratic institutions; 7) food vulnerability, insecurity, price increases, and shortages; 8) turbulence resulting from the transition away from fossil fuels; 9) economic precariousness, inflation, growing disparities between rich and poor, and persistent public and private debt; and 10) the economic, political and social impacts of artificial intelligence in a context of increasing information/ disinformation and growing cybersecurity risks.

To visually represent how multiple crises intertwine, two figures are transcribed below. They illustrate a list of shocks that were felt in 2022, within a short interval, as observed by Yale University Professor of History Adam Tooze (2022) and reproduced on Sabina Deweik's Blog (2022). The phenomena evoked are comprised by pandemics, droughts, floods, mega storms, forest fires, war in Ukraine, high energy and food prices, ...

The first map, from **January 1st, 2022**, is a clear demonstration of how several crises interconnect (Figure 1).

Figure 2, from **February 24th, 2022**, reveals significant modification in relation to the previous one, with the outbreak of war in the Ukraine. The scale and intensity of interconnections increase dramatically, and what was once a fairly easy-to-read maps becomes a busy disarray.

Global systems – from finance to energy – are highly susceptible to systemic risk. Their interconnectedness allows a problem in one part of the system to spread rapidly and disable the rest. The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have confirmed these risks. As Deweik (2022) warns us, these events, by disrupting global food and energy systems, have reinvigorated the NATO alliance, exacerbated ideological positions in many countries, and continue to threaten the diversion of international resources away from climate action.

It is evident that global crises are becoming increasingly frequent and variable. They are occurring at increasingly shorter intervals, oscillating between emerging "natural" factors (catastrophes, pandemics) and social ones (economic, political, technological, etc.). The current hot topic is a mix of economic phenomena provoked by the Trump administration (sharp tariff hikes), military threats (threats to Canada and Greenland, attacks on Iran), geopolitical realignments around China, threats to democracy in the US, and the expulsion of migrants, with controls on their entry into the country. Thus, another disorganization of causal flows is occurring, with uncertain consequences for the geopolitical and economic landscape on a global scale, compounded by the sharp political-ideological rise of neoconservative governments.

In turn, the World Risk Report 2024 presents results on the global risks linked to various crises (the global water crisis, which amplifies multiple crises worldwide, the catastrophe-conflict nexus, the interconnections of disasters, armed conflicts, and fragility and their invisible effects: psychosocial

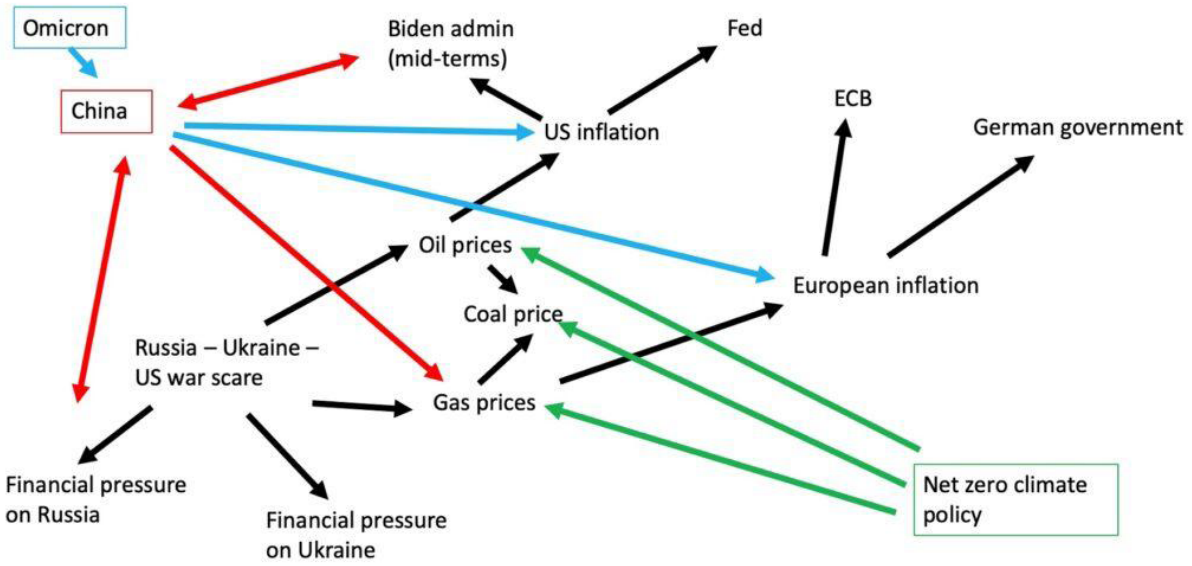

FIGURE 1 – Interconnected crises (as of January 1st, 2022).
SOURCE: Adam Tooze.(2022)

stress in times of multiple crises) as well as their impacts on the diversity of human populations and biodiversity.

This report is also aligned with the theoretical and methodological discussion of the polycrisis outlined above[6]. Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind the measures proposed to overcome the crises[7] do not go beyond expectations that are hard to achieve, if not merely palliative. They fail to consider the complex conflicts in which concrete and even irreconcilable strategic interests are contested, such as those of the oil industry and the entire production chain that is dependent on it.

The question then arises as to whether there is anything to be done in the face of our current uncertainties. It also explains why complex thinking is

[6] "These complex interactions illustrate that a one-dimensional perspective on individual crises is insufficient. Integrated approaches are needed that address multidimensional risks in their entirety as well as their root causes. This includes strengthening health and education systems, promoting resilience through sustainable development strategies, as well as improving comprehensive, conflict-sensitive disaster risk reduction and management measures. Global cooperation and data exchange are essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of compound risks and their interacting effects and to develop effective measures" (World Risk Report 2025, p. 49, 2025). However, it would seem that in terms of global cooperation we are currently experiencing an inverse movement, with the rise of Donald Trump to power in the USA.

[7] "Strengthen holistic approaches to risk analysis and crisis management. Improve healthcare systems and psychosocial support in crisis situations. Reduce social and gender-specific inequalities. Foster effective disaster risk management in unstable and conflict-affected areas. Promote and fund comprehensive climate change adaptation." (World Risk Report 2024, 2024, p. 49-50).

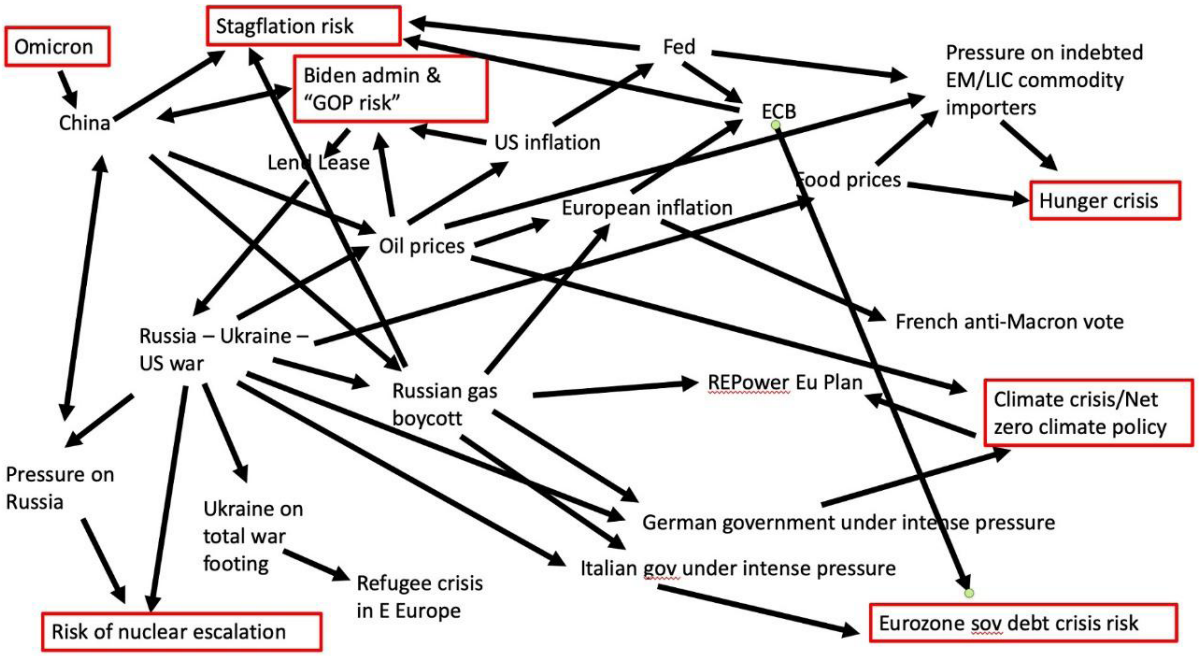

FIGURE 2 – Several interconnected crises, February 24th, 2022.
SOURCE: Adam Tooze (2022).

often questioned and even discredited: in extreme cases the system is governed solely by Mayday, that is, by emergency itself, or simply by every person for themselves! Under such circumstances, it is as if preventive measures were superfluous, ineffective, and dispensable. The question remains, then, as to whether awareness of these acute crises, as well as the measures to be taken by policymakers, will derive from the unavoidable pain of climate catastrophes or from a voluntarily-accorded consensus[8].

None of these positions imply clear decision-making. International climate change treaties are an example of the advance and retreat of intentions on the part of those largely responsible for

[8] "In democracies, most of the 'big' issues of modern life – social, economic, environmental, technological – are likely to be controversial. The big issues are indeed very real – they shape our lived worlds. Many of these issues seem messy and intractable. And in most cases, there are no 'correct' and comprehensive answers. Everyone has an opinion about some aspects of the problem, and about what needs to be done" (Head, 2022, p. 1).

greenhouse gas emissions, leaving the search for responsible solutions far from what humanity really needs and desires. This ambiguity in the search for effective results is linked to the financing costs of reducing emissions effects, but also with the production matrix of major powers that delay changes in their energy matrixes[9].

Since all of this takes place on a hypothetical terrain in which solutions are sought, the latter appear to derive from erratic strategies stemming from political-ideological clashes, reminiscent of the periods of political crisis in Central European societies which, beset by attempts to restore the *Ancien Régime*, have been going on since the French Revolution. Now, however, the restoration of conservative, protectionist, and xenophobic values is the expression of a broad agenda of patriarchal and religious customs, updated through guerrilla warfare on social media[10].

Today, after some respite in the post-Cold War period, we are witness to the global political arena of an increasingly polarized world. While that earlier period was marked by the division of territories based on political and ideological criteria, the current dispute over nature is marked by persistently tenuous conditions for the reproduction of life on the planet. We are at the extreme limit of the depletion of non-renewable resources, linked to the continued dominance of an energy matrix associated with fossil fuels and tied to the strategic interests of hegemonic economic and geopolitical groups. In this sense, the current socio-environmental clash is one of the important chapters of this global polarization.

The climate crisis is directly linked to the issue of energy transition. In an attempt to align this transition with factors associated with growing geopolitical rivalries, food insecurity, and the rising global cost of living, the current production model resists reducing the exploitation of fossil fuels, thus exacerbating the difficulties of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reinforcing the vicious cycle. In turn, the search for alternative energy sources for electric vehicles offers little to put in the place of the ongoing exploitation of rare earth mineral resources.

Thus, we seek to identify a set of factors that work for and against these (un)sustainable strategies, examining political, economic, and worldview dimensions of the actors involved in these disputes over nature and consumption styles. Such factors imply different ways of addressing serious environmental dilemmas and different modes of action on a planet ravaged by the climate crisis. This is a

[9] World talks energy addition rather than transition, ex-minister says By Eduardo Geraque. In a recent interview, ex-minister of the Ministry of the Environment in Brazil, Izabella Teixeira, states that "there has not been a replacement of one energy matrix for another, but rather the addition of new energy sources to the existing matrix. The numbers show that there has never been so much investment in renewable energy, but at the same time, investment in fossil fuels remains high" (Geraque, 2025, Valor Econômico, Special COP30, F10).

[10] However, it must be said that the act of 'restoration' can also swing between opposing poles, conservative and progressive. The recent movement to reclaim the memory of the disappearance of former congressman Rubens Paiva in Brazil, following the release of the film 'I'm Still Here', is one expression of this restoration. It questions the amnesty granted to torturers and those responsible for the disappearance of people during the dictatorship. In theoretical terms, to assess the permanence of tradition in modern culture, Beatriz Sarlo (Tresoldi, 2019, p. 11) points out that "...some of Raymond Williams' concepts contribute to our reflections on aspects of contemporary culture – for example, the temporalities that permeate a culture, where archaic and modern elements combine".

symptom of the polycrisis, the tip of the drifting iceberg, yet does not mean that we cannot perceive the submerged side and its effects on planetary living conditions and situations.

As if these limits and obstacles were not enough, we must also look at the belief systems that underpin the intentions and attitudes of pro-system (read: capitalist) agents, disguised as holding anti-system positions[11]. On one end, there is an absolute belief that nature and its ecological potential should guide economic growth solely through the market and at any cost. On the other, we encounter a range of views that oppose the hegemonic, whether they are ecocentric ones that reaffirm positions of an untouchable nature, or those that base their conceptions of sustainable development on the uses of nature's own ecotechnological potential, such as bioeconomy, agroecology, and other forms of ecoproduction.

Although reality unfolds despite these opposing views, the scales almost always tip in favor of dominant views, or rather, it is the dominant views that reinforce the dynamics of this reality. Thus, we understand that ideology is not simply a reflection of reality on people's minds, but the way in which their minds reinforce this reality, following Duby's (1978) conception.

Hence, when analyzing some of the choices that emerge from current environmentalist theses on what is expected regardig the present and future of (un)sustainable societies, more than just doubts, we observe that it is unlikely that many of the uncertainties we face can be effectively overcome. This leaves us in the realm of improbable theses, merely awaiting the announcement of the Trumpets of Jericho regarding Armageddon[12]. In this context, we are obliged to infer the following positions regarding what can be expected in the short and medium term – because, to paraphrase Keynes, in the long term, we will all be dead!

a) A first, more radical position, seeking alternatives to the current dominant model of societal appropriation and exploitation of nature, might ask whether the dominant system will collapse under the weight of its own contradictions, that is, due to successive waves of ecosocial devastation. Like the catastrophic visions of the 1930s about the end

[11] In the case of the current far right, for example, there is no way to be more pro-system than to be anti-system, libertarian anarchist, ultra-protectionist, or even pro-coup, to preserve a dangerously unsustainable world! In post-truth times, it becomes difficult to assess whether lies are intentional - an épater le Bourgeois – or whether there has been a complete occlusion of reason in the face of the world's diversity!

[12] In times of environmental destruction and geopolitical conflict on a global scale, perhaps this allegory of the Trumpets of Jericho is not the most appropriate, as it reinforces the idea that the Old Testament favors only a one-sided Judeo-Christian vision! Our position is that no besieged city be taken, nor that any people be deprived of their territory or exterminated, just as we advocate dialogue among nations to confront the climate emergency. Regarding Armageddon, Revelation 16:21 records: "And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe" In a contemporary reading, this allegory could very well mean that the now disenchanted God of modernity who is being accused – and to whom the blasphemies are directed - is the current predatory societal model that governs the world's leading economic, military, and technological powers. This destructive, paganized, and implacable god, besides being disenchanted – that is, secularized – is unchained and spares no one from his destructive fury!

of capitalism, the current "eco-devastationist" conception puts its wager on the decline or crisis of the ecosystem as the expression of this destruction[13].

b) There is also a gradualist position that advocates for gradual change toward technological, political, economic, energetic, and cultural transition regimes, until systemic stability finds new equilibrium. Of course, this begs the question as to whether world would have the capacity to weather the storm, rebuilding from the devastation caused by climate catastrophes, no matter the scale of the destruction.

c) One might wonder whether micro-experiments focused on alternative models of societal functioning (the countless alternative micro-management models implemented by traditional populations and indigenous peoples) can function as catalysts or molecular mechanisms that erode hegemonic molar processes. Or alternatively, whether these alternatives will be assimilated by the dominant system itself so that it can continue functioning.

d) We might also attempt to approximate the warnings issued by the ancient Greeks and contemporary Indigenous peoples regarding the dangers of human transgression of nature's limits. This scenario is much more evident in the Anthropocene (or Capitalocene) than in other eras, as its violations pose serious challenges to the maintenance and reproduction of living conditions on the planet. The consequences of these patterns stem from the hegemonic model of development itself, whose institutions and concepts are challenged by this critique. The question is: how to develop or guarantee a pattern of democratic dialogue between the various political and ideological forces vying to guide the destinies of nations? (Floriani, 2023). Everyone is on the same ship – our planet Earth – whose captains seem not to care at all about the consequences of our remaining adrift!

e) Dialogue may emerge consensually, but the conflicts that erupt when there is no longer any way to convince the other side of their intransigence can delay the search for solutions. The erosion of democratic institutions by neofascist power strategies, through the dissemination of lies or the nonsense of fake news to shock public opinion and reinforce followers' loyalty to far-right populist leaders, are civilizational symptoms of a disruptive era. Climate denialism, in turn, accelerates the time-frame of catastrophes and the push to drive use of non-renewable energy sources to its ultimate consequences.

The dynamics of the dominant system seek to impose itself, as a World-System, through the instrumental and structuring rationality of the certain conception of capitalist development. It spreads as a planetary chain through the financialization of

[13] Since literary figures have been used to illustrate some emblematic cases, let us mention the film, Triangle of Sadness, to summarize how, in extreme situations, power hierarchies can be inverted. This sarcastic comedy, directed and written by Ruben Östlund, follows the lives of millionaires on a cruise ship. When they get shipwrecked, these millionaires fall to the mercy of the skills of a crew member who, on an inhospitable island, takes control over castaways' lives. We can hardly begin to imagine how, if this parody were to take place in current times, the collapse our dominant system of production, consumption, and lifestyles might be portrayed. In this case, currently subordinate and marginalized traditional and indigenous populations, might reverse the logic of dominant power and come to the helm, to command new survival strategies!

capital, the asymmetric geopolitics of international power, and the corrosion of nature (unsustainability), the effects of which have different repercussions at the periphery of the globalized system. These different modalities of the reproduction of the hegemonic system, as they unfold in peripheral spaces, respond heterogeneously to globalization processes.

More recently, Fraser (2024) defined the current process of capitalism as 'cannibal capitalism'. While capital is defined by its contradiction with the social (exploitation and expropriation), it is also defined by its contradiction with nature. Fraser reminds us that social reproduction is intimately intertwined with ecological reproduction, turning crises of the former into crises of the latter, and struggles over nature into struggles over ways of life (see Fraser, 2024, p. 136-137).

The cannibalization of nature is hence expressed through the voracity with which capital expands along territorial borders, and through the exploitation of new products. Capitalism moves from the green to the blue economy.

> Amid the rising demand for "transition minerals" required for clean energy technologies, the deep-sea mining (DSM) commodity frontier is emerging in the Pacific Ocean. Promoted under the "blue economy" as a means to stimulate "blue growth" and generate equitable economic and environmental benefits for Pacific Small Island Developing States, there has been growing commercial and state interest in extracting minerals from the deep sea. (Murphy & Gard, 2025, p. 1).

In contexts radicalized by neoliberalism, the contradiction has invaded even the domain of technoscience. Ecological modernization firmly believes that science alone will resolve technoscience's harmful effects on the exploitation of nature, now caught in the crossfire of the choices made by economic agents and other social actors vying for control. This dilemma presents itself sharply when it comes to the management of the commons[14].

When connected with other societal factors (economic, political, technological, military...), the current environmental crisis may suffer from additional side effects, such that the emergence of a new event, like the "trade war" wrought by unilateral imposition of tariffs, may trigger unpredictable consequences on a global scale[15].

In the section that follows, we examine two models for evaluating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We hold them up to the light of the progress of the measures adopted to achieve them, which includes their undergirding and strategies, as well as the evaluation of their limits and short-

[14] Ailton Krenak (2024) and Txai Suruí, a young Indigenous feminist leader from the Surui people of western Amazonia, state that "Protecting a river is more technological than creating a machine to clean it later on. We are speaking of ancestral technologies" (Oliveira, 2024).

[15] Associated with the trade war, there has also been a shift in the current US administration's stance on the environmental policies of large corporations: "Trump is a turning point. He changed the behavior of large corporations, including those in the financial and oil sectors. Until recently, they were under pressure, but enjoyed a comfortable environment that allowed them to promote sustainability through 'net zero.' Instead of the imperative to reduce (greenhouse gas) emissions, they could buy offsets for their emissions. Now, a counter-movement has emerged. As soon as Trump was elected, all of this was abandoned – and this includes the Big Techs, which had a strong neutrality agenda. It's a setback for the already meager global decarbonization efforts." (Viana, 2025. Interview with José Eli da Veiga).

comings, as they make their still small advances toward what has been conventionally designated as "sustainable development." On the one hand, we look at how official agencies of multilateral sectors associated with the UN and the signatory countries of the 2030 have assessed this performance, using the ECLAC report (2025) on Latin America and the Caribbean. We then proceed with a discussion of critical and radical visions present in the work of Latin American thinkers, especially Enrique Leff, seeking alternatives to development – an approach that incorporates sectors that lie at the margins of the hegemonic process of economic growth but claim a relevant role, as condensed by Krenak (2022)'s syntagm of an "ancestral future", referring to the worldview of the indigenous peoples and traditional populations of the region.

With these two examples, we revisit conceptions and positions of the different interpretations of contemporary civilizational and socio-environmental crisis and its possible alternatives, as well as the debate surrounding a probable transition from the current development model and its uncertainties.

3. Brief overview of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to the ECLAC[16]

As explained at the beginning of this text, the causes underlying polycrises are multiple. When, due to the emergence of new phenomena they combine in different ways, they can alter the initial course of events. However, when a set of indicators is analyzed over medium and long timescales, diverse trends and their levels of intensity, as well as their weaknesses and vulnerabilities can be assessed. ECLAC's (2025) assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the UN in Paris in 2015, aimed at achieving the targets set by the 2030 Agenda, is a case in point.

ECLAC's recent study (2025) on the 2030 Agenda and its 5-year goals for Latin America and the Caribbean is divided into four chapters, in addition to the conclusions and recommendations, addressing the following topics, with their respective assessments:

1. The challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean: Low growth capacity, high inequality, environmental unsustainability, and weak institutional capacities;

2. Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals: prospects for achievement by 2030;

[16] "Adopted in September 2015 by 193 UN Member States (UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development resulted from a global participatory process lasting more than two years, coordinated by the UN, in which governments, civil society, the private sector, and research institutions contributed through the 'My World' Platform. Its implementation began in January 2016, building on the Millennium Development Agenda (2000-2015) and expanding its scope. The agenda encompasses economic development, the eradication of poverty, extreme poverty, and hunger, [the promotion of] social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and good governance at all levels, including peace and security" (Brazilian Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals, official website of the Brazilian Government, n/d).

3. Progress toward some SDGs (3, 5, 8, 14, and 17) [17] of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

4. Participation of other governmental and non-governmental actors in accelerating and monitoring progress toward achieving the SDGs;

5. Conclusions and recommendations.

The study (ECLAC, 2025) recognizes the importance of analyzing the trajectory of SDG indicators as a fundamental tool to analyze the current situation, predict possible future scenarios and adopt measures that promote improvements in the dynamics observed, to achieve the 2030 targets. Summarized study results on the progress of each of the 17 objectives are presented below, classified as follows:

1) In addition to the uneven progress among Goals, with regard to poverty reduction (SDG 1), ending hunger (SDG 2), reducing inequality (SDG 10), climate action (SDG 13), peace, justice and effective and inclusive institutions (SDG 16), *none of the 17 objectives are expected to be fully reached and several of them have undergone significant setbacks* (Palermo, 2025).

Particularly striking is the fact that climate action (SDG 13) is showing signs of regression or stagnation. Recent ecological disasters in many Latin American and Caribbean countries demonstrate that extreme weather events are an effect of the climate crisis, such as those described in the ECLAC study (2025, p. 26):

> In 2024, Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico experienced a persistent extreme heat wave, which claimed dozens of lives, triggered power outages and afflicted many with heat stroke. Ecuador also endured significant water shortages and power cuts. The Amazon River basin suffered an exceptional drought, whose main underlying cause was climate change rather than El Niño (WWA, 2024).

Chile also suffered a devastating fire that is considered one of the world's deadliest of the last fifteen years. The event was exacerbated by high temperatures, drought, and strong winds in the Valparaíso region. Flooding also took its toll in the region.

In Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), flooding left 183 dead, 27 missing, and hundreds injured. Almost 78 thousand people were evacuated, and the total cost of damages and losses was estimated at around 16.5 billion dollars, a figure which is equivalent to 13.9% of the state's GDP.

2) There have been *less delays and some advancement* in goals related to water availability and sustainable management and sanitation (SDG 6), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and partnerships in goal fulfillment (SDG 17). Goals related to reliable, sustainable and modern

[17] This includes the following SDGs: Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages; Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, Goal 8: Promote continued sustainable and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Alliance for Sustainable Development.

energy (SDG 7) and underwater life (SDG 14) show the best balance between progress and delays in reaching objectives.

3) Goals that present a majority of indicators with *correct tendencies but insufficient progress* are those related to quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), economic growth and decent work (SDG 8), infrastructure, industrialization and innovation (SDG 9), and sustainable cities and human settlements (SDG 11). Clear trends in progress or setbacks have not been possible to identify for SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 15 (terrestrial ecosystems).

Hence, we are able to observe that the 17 SDG objectives represented by 183 indicators and 179 targets (ECLAC, 2025, p. 38) may be seen as a large and complex panel whose dynamics are not linear and, as indicated below, reflect the heterogeneity not only of the objectives themselves, but also the diversity and difference between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean[18].

The ECLAC study (ECLAC, 2025, p. 42) highlights the problem of the heterogeneity of indicators when analyzed as aggregate results, using target levels for each of the 2030 Agenda Goals and the year 2015 (when the SDGs were formulated) as a baseline. Less auspicious situations regarding the achievement of the goals are found in the following areas:

• Access to clean water, efficient use of water resources, and water-related ecosystems;

• Sustainable consumption and production programs, sustainable use of natural resources, reduced food waste and loss, and chemical and waste management;

• Climate change policies and climate change awareness;

• Marine and coastal ecosystems, desertification and soil degradation, conservation of mountain ecosystems, and biodiversity loss.

In contrast, progress on the following points, held up against the 2015 baseline, is somewhat better. They reveal trajectories that move in the right direction yet are still too slow to achieve compliance by 2030 (ECLAC, 2025, p. 43-44):

• access to sanitation and hygiene services, water quality, and cross-border cooperation in water resources;

• air quality and urban waste management;

• marine pollution;

• terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, sustainable forest management, and control of invasive alien species.

Similarly, very positive results were observed in the following set of objectives for which the region as a whole implemented action:

• use of renewable energy and energy efficiency;

[18] In this regard, it is possible to capture the diversity and difference between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, through another UN study on statistical data and institutional resources for monitoring the 2030 Agenda. It organizes the dynamics of indicators and targets by country and region, according to the UN Center for Statistical Knowledge Management (n/d).

• clean and sustainable industries, waste reduction, and sustainable business practices;

• coastal and marine conservation, subsidies for fisheries and marine resources of small island developing states and less developed countries;

• strengthening capacities related to SDGs;

• policies related to disaster management;

• resources for biodiversity and ecosystems, and resources for forest management.

One of the questions that the United Nations system and its Member States have been asking repeatedly since the Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals at the 78th session of the General Assembly in 2023 is how to manage transformations to accelerate advancement[19].

Recommendations made by multilateral institutions to overcome the numerous obstacles to achieving SDG targets, while pertinent and in many cases correct, are overly optimistic. They fail to consider that the limits and obstacles to their overcoming depend on political and cultural factors. It is therefore no coincidence that the recommendations are repeatedly postponed and projected onto unlikely horizons. Numerous official statements bearing titles that express postponed intentions have been issued, as in one of the latest documents coming out with the very significant title of *A Pact for the Future*, signed in 2024[20].

While this pact depends on strong international cooperation and multilateral agreements that facilitate technology transfer and access to development financing, setbacks in these arenas come precisely from the largest economic and military power on the planet, which is moving in the opposite direction to the intended agreements and cooperation![21]

It seems, then, that the political-cultural and, by extension, geopolitical dimensions of these processes hinder peripheral capitalist countries from engaging in equal dialogue with major greenhouse gas-emitting powers. Furthermore, their ability to fully position themselves as global players in the face of energy transition and climate crisis is harmed, even though Brazil and some of its neigh-

[19] It would be more interesting to understand 'progress' as effective measures to achieve these objectives than as progress in the sense of a higher stage of development of societies that could be confused with the old vision of stages of economic growth proposed by Walt Whitman Rostow, [1960] (2017) or as an opposition between developed (advanced) countries and underdeveloped (backward) and developing (intermediate stage) countries.

[20] The official UN document, Pact for the Future (2024) has 64 pages, including 2 annexes. It comprises 5 sections, each of which is accompanied by a plan of action (1. Sustainable development and financing for development, with 12 actions; 2. International peace and security, with 15 actions; 3. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation, with 6 actions; 4. Youth and future generations, with 4 actions; 5. Transforming global governance, with 19 actions).

[21] "Donald Trump's new tariffs are set to hit the renewable energy industry, threatening to raise prices, disrupt supply chains, and undermine America's ambitions to lead the AI (artificial intelligence) revolution, cleantech executives said. (...) Analysts say green energy is particularly vulnerable to tariffs, given its heavy reliance on foreign imports and reduced government support. Trump has promised to dismantle the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act), calling it a "new green scam", pausing permits and lending for some renewable projects, while prioritizing the development of fossil fuel projects. This has chilled investment in the green energy industry, which faces the added cost of sourcing equipment from countries subject to punitive tariffs." (Smith, Chu, & Millard, 2025, retranslated from article in the Folha de São Paulo).

bors have "comparative advantages" in terms of nature reserves, due to the variety of their biomes, especially the Amazon[22].

In addition to the indicators for measuring the targets of the 17 SDGs already presented, we move on to highlight other alternative proposals for development, ones which combine hybrid models for our use of nature by recovering the experiences of traditional populations and indigenous peoples in the management of natural resources. This model is considered a type of weak sustainable development (Gudynas, 2012), since it coexists with other dominant forms of production for the market, as in proposals for the bioeconomy (Abramovay, 2019, 2021, 2022). On the other hand, a more radical reading in which nature is considered a heritage that, belonging to humanity, has rights of its own, and in which life is valued as a non-negotiable principle, reclaims creative invention through an environmental rationality opposed to the dominant instrumental one. Enrique Leff's interpretation (2009, 2014) is an innovative and inspiring case in point.

4. How to take on the challenge of a sustainable life, from a position of subaltern resistance?

Generally speaking, thought on sustainable development in Latin America has been largely represented, on the one hand, by defenders of models inherited from eco-socioeconomics (Sachs, 2007) who favor development alternatives such as those associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and with the more recent discussion on the bioeconomy (Abramovay, 2019; 2021; 2022). The latter approach is now on the rise, through the debate on how to optimize the use of natural resources (forests, rivers, biodiversity) for economic objectives, without destroying them. It may be seen as a "weak type of sustainable development", since it aligns with the ideology of progress and modernity (Gudynas, 2012).

On the other hand, alternatives to development which strive to lead us beyond progress and modernity can be considered proposals for "strong sustainable development". Such conceptions embrace the objectives of [conviviality, biocentrism, deep ecology, ecofeminism, the care economy, dematerialization of economies, degrowth, interculturality, pluralism, relational ontologies (Escobar, 2014), expanded citizenships, nature as a subject of law, and *buen vivir* (Acosta, 2016), according to Gudynas (2011) and Floriani (2024, p. 239).

The bioeconomy (Abramovay, 2019, 2021, 2022) is seen as applicable, preferably, to Amazonian territories, where the majority of Indigenous peoples and a diverse range of traditional populations are located. The idea is that it would combine with market entrepreneurship, but respect the local autonomy of Indigenous and traditional communities, keeping the forest standing, and obtaining investment resources from international funds.

[22] Brazil, like other countries that perceive comparative advantages in exploiting the renewable natural resources of their biomes, associates green business with measures to mitigate the negative effects of greenhouse gas emissions. Clearly, sustainability is seen here as an ally of economic growth, with clean technologies representing a major investment and profit niche, as Bertão (2025) argues in a report in the newspaper *Valor Econômico*..

It may also reference the conservation potential of management practices in conservation units managed by Indigenous peoples and traditional populations, as suggested by a study carried out by researchers from the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA) (Oviedo & Doblas, 2022).

It is recognized that different systems of social organization influence each other and connect on different spatial and temporal scales. Yet such reciprocity does not imply symmetrical power relations. Different forms of resistance and response come from populations belonging to peripheral social systems that develop their own strategies, consistent with their cultural and political resources and according to the responsiveness that each of these systems is able to mobilize.

In the case of traditional populations, but especially Indigenous identities, movements of de-ethnicization and re-ethnicization of subjects may occur, simultaneously opposing and complementing one another asymmetrically, in response to shifting subaltern survival strategies. For hybrid rationalities to be generated, and in this case, for the production of *mestizo* identities, it is necessary to gather or accumulate symbolic forces. This unfolds through the production of texts and discourses that are able to create advantages in the context of a national and global modernity that, until recently, disallowed the image of the subaltern Indigenous or Indigenous-mestizo person (Floriani, 2024).

Subaltern rationalities are nourished by the reciprocal interplay of other rationalities, including those originating from dominant matrices. It is from this interplay that new hybrid rationalities can emerge, showing that a new politics is also possible, as people reinvent themselves from the perspective of their own traditions. Thus, it is important to consider the culture of traditional populations as a guiding principle for the reaffirmation of identities, and not as a reflection of a bygone history.

Yet far from essentializing this countermovement of collective actors that are multiple and marked by socio-environmental conflicts, by the ontology of diversity and the politics of difference, Enrique Leff[23] proposes another reading of the ecologization of the economy and the politicization of ecology, through the existential reinvention of territory and identities[24].

In this way, the debate on indigenous environmental actors in Latin America, with their critical conceptions of sustainability, occurs within the confines of practical environmental rationality. It implies the complex interweaving of diverse cultural rationalities, since each cultural rationality is a particular way of territorializing the category of environmental rationality, as eloquently expressed in footnote 27 of the book *Ecologia, capital e cultura* [Ecology, capital and culture] (Leff , 2009, p. 306).

Ethnic styles refer to the particular imaginaries, habits, and practices of traditional societies,

[23] The reference to Enrique Leff derives from the prologue we wrote to an anthology of his work (Forthcoming, ISS-UNAM). Leff is one of the most renown authors of Latin American socio-environmental thought.

[24] The reinvention of the most significant processes of reappropriation of biocultural heritage is evidenced by the Indigenous peoples of Latin America, who affirm, "We don't want sustainability, we want 'a good life'. This was the clear conversion of the incommensurable and untranslatable otherness separating codes for understanding the world, of the radical sense of the dialogue of knowledges..." (Leff, 2014, p. 11).

indigenous peoples, and peasant communities. Associated with these ethnic styles is "ecological culture"[25] in its current sense, defined as a system of environmental values that reorients individual and collective behaviors in relation to the use of natural and energy resources. This dynamic of ecological processes co-evolves with the organization of societies and their agents involved in cultural and ethnic styles, as they claim their environmental rights and the participation of their communities in the self-management of their natural resources and territories (Leff, 2009, p. 124-25).

Ecological culture is, therefore, intrinsically linked to the debate of recent decades on sustainable development, namely

1) as a set of ethical principles and cultural knowledge that shapes a new democratic culture;

2) as a process of valuing ecological balance, ethnic identities, and cultural practices of environmental management;

3) as a principle of cultural productivity within an alternative production paradigm (Leff, 2009, p. 128, our translation).

To generate new productive potential in sustainable development, processes of ecology, technological innovation, productive reorganization, and social change must be synergistically integrated. This perspective includes an ecologically and economically sustainable, as well as socially equitable and fair development process. It also means reorienting production in rural areas, based on a rationality of different cultural practices and their ways of conceiving life, capable of guiding the increase in their ecotechnological potential. This in turn responds to the challenges associated with community self-management and self-sufficiency, the preservation of global ecological balances, and the production of marketable surpluses for the national and international economy (Leff , 2009, p. 141-2).

Leff's multiple works interpreting the Latin American socio-environmental issues have served to bring together intellectuals, environmental actors, such as social movements and indigenous community leaders, peasants and other actors from traditional populations. He has spent the last five decades devoted to theoretical and critical evaluation of the important role of the political exercise of the new actors of Latin American rural environmentalism. Among them are rubber tappers, Zapatistas, Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, and landless peasants and rural workers.

The emergence of indigenous insurgency in Latin America is a sign of the protagonism of these new social and political actors who, over the last half-century, have been building an agenda of autonomous struggles. Their projects encounter

[25] Regarding the possibility of leveraging scientific and technological advances within a bioeconomy founded on the principles of environmental rationality, Leff points out that "Recent advances in science – microelectronics, biotechnology, etc. – have produced knowledge that can be applied to highly productive processes that do not necessarily depend on high concentrations of capital, natural resources, and industrial inputs. These scientific resources can be directed toward the development of new natural and technological potentials, the use of alternative energy sources, the decentralization of productive activities, and the definition of new products, thus supporting a civilizational project and a development strategy that incorporate, within the social forces of production, the ecological and cultural conditions of sustainable development" (Leff, 2009, p. 155).

resistance from the dominant economic, legal, political, and ideological powers, and from governments with conservative and neoliberal agendas, as well as from those with a "progressive" agenda. These confrontations have led to the persecution and death of people who challenge these established powers – violence perpetrated by the same state that is governed by the coercion of the ruling classes, defenders of the private appropriation of territories and declared enemies of communal life territories.

Nonetheless, the environmentalization of the struggles of peasants, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendant communities, as well as those of forest peoples and artisanal fishermen, has opened up a broad path for new theoretical and practical meanings, very well explained in chapters 8 and 9 of Ecology, Capital, and Culture (Leff, 2009). Although these struggles focus on access to land, rural social movements incorporate into their struggles for land and democracy, new demands for the reappropriation of nature – that is, of the biocultural heritage of popular sectors and their capacity for self-management of the production process (Leff, 2009, p. 348).

The opening of these new horizons of struggle produces political effects on the State apparatus (incorporation of new legislation and affecting legal bodies), in addition to generating new spaces in the public sphere, raising awareness among sectors of "public opinion" to broaden their perception of socio-environmental problems.

Leff's theoretical vision is not limited to the externalities of environmental phenomena and the construction of an epistemic framework for interpreting socio-environmental systems and power regimes. Rather, it reveals situations of historical conflict between dominant and subordinate systems. In this sense, when analyzing the conditions of environmental citizenship, Leff emphasizes the legitimization of new ethnic rights for the Peoples of the Earth, their existential, cultural, and territorial rights, as well as the emerging demands of indigenous and peasant groups for the collective reappropriation of their natural and cultural resource heritage (Porto-Gonçalves, 2006; Floriani, 2004).

Despite current setbacks in the democratic process in some Latin American societies, civil society's fight to expand democratic spaces has been extremely important, as it opens the public agenda and gives rise to new formulas for organizing society. Although the environmental movement, in its broadest sense, has a trans- or poly-class character, hampering the construction of a common front, environmental issues bring new meaning to social demands and struggles, creating a new vision of its collective nature and an expanded meaning of both human rights and the rights of nature.

Thus, by reclaiming the principles of decentralization and autonomy in organization and decision-making, environmental movements put a broader and more participatory concept of environmental democracy into practice. By opening the field of political ecology to the reinvention and rights of each people's cultural identities and the right to community autonomy, these movements strengthen their capacity for self-management of production processes and living conditions. In this sense, the environmental democracy project promotes socio-environmental reintegration based on new social solidarities, the plurality of ethnic and cultural identities, and the diversity of ways of life and development styles (Leff, 2009, p. 327 et seq.).

5. Final considerations

Throughout this text, we have presented critical arguments surrounding the debate and the practices associated with the category of sustainable development. Our approach to socio-environmental issues relies on epistemic resources associated with complex thinking, both scientific and other cultural and practical knowledge about the uses of nature. Conflicts arising from the diverse interpretations and different strategies surrounding uses and appropriations of nature depend on the varied conceptions of the different agents engaged in dispute and, therefore, on how each of these agents projects and imagines what a better society would be for them.

To this end, figures have been brought in. They illustrate the dynamics of the interacting problems that forge a picture of contemporary crises, on a planetary scale, as polycrises – that is, combined and simultaneous crises, marked by uncertainty and the metamorphosis of phenomena, among which figure the socio-environmental.

Next, five possible scenarios are presented based on various expectations regarding the outcome of the contemporary environmental crisis. These expectations are diverse and project possible outcomes of the phenomena and events associated with the current climate crisis. They range from the most dystopian, with eco-devastationist expectations, to scenarios that represent desires for a gradual transition to sustainable societies, such as those linked to the SDGs or the bioeconomy (weak sustainable development), or utopian projects a new rebirth of societies' alliance with nature, expressed as varying strands (strong sustainable development).

Such diagnoses are analyzed in detail in two sections. The first evaluates the ECLAC report, Agenda 2030, with an assessment of sustainable development indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean, five years from the 2030 target, in which three different situations are presented, for some of the 17 SDGs:

1) some of these goals are *unlikely to be achieved, and several of them show significant setbacks,*

2) there have been *fewer delays and some progress* toward some of the goals

3) there has been a *correct trend*, albeit insufficient, for others.

The second section addresses the concepts designated as strong sustainable development, especially those associated with alternatives to development itself, in which the defense of life is non-negotiable. These are the alternatives actively promoted by new social movements, indigenous peoples, and the Peoples of the Earth.

It may be fittingto conclude through a poetic reference to the gift of conviviality of all living beings with nature. The year before her death in 1957, Gabriela Mistral published in her *Cuaderno de los Adioses* [1956] (2002, p. 316) a reflection on the beauty of life that is also premonitory in its view of *what may happen to the kingdom of this world* (to paraphrase Alejo Carpentier). For each and every one of us who are alive and who still – although we know not for how long!- have the privilege of contemplating the beauty of life, the poet says: "On the last day of life, whoever has walked the entire earth is able to say, 'I have had the noblest visions this world offers' ["*En el último día de la*

vida, quien ha caminado por sobre toda la tierra puede decir: 'Yo tuve las visiones más nobles que da este mundo'"]

May the human will to continue appreciating the gifts bestowed by nature persist! It will be up to those who come later to attest to whether or not this will prevails and whether there is still time left for it – for the opportunity for nature to continue producing its beauty.

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