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Introduction

To face the current planetary socio-environmental crisis, Burke et al. (2016) claim that we need a new political imagination in which “humans, animals, ecologies, biosphere are all together,” and to adapt or to create new institutions. Beyond that, we need to develop “a politics to nurture worlds for all humans and species co-living in the biosphere” (Burke et al. 2016, 2).

In this chapter, we will explore why worlding is necessary to global sustainability governance (GSG) studies and will provide a few examples of how to “world” them. GSG has predominantly been studied from a liberal-institutionalist perspective, from an international scale, based on a state-centric and top-down ontology (Barnett and Duvall 2005; Jordan et al. 2015; Jang et al. 2016), and with positivist epistemology and methodologies. Consequently, as in other modern perspectives, the nature/society divide has prevailed in most GSG approaches, definitions, and practices. We argue that in the Anthropocene, the relationship between human societies and “nature” must be reconceived and one way forward could be the “many worlds-one planet” perspective.

Worlding means that we are always making worlds and, consequently, recognising multiple worlds, different knowledge systems, and notions of nature is a starting point for inquiry (Tickner and Weaver 2009, 9; Inoue and Moreira 2016, 2). Many worlds mean more than tolerating different perspectives, but recognising many ways of being and experimenting with different worlds (Querejazu 2016, 3). Such recognition has ontological and epistemological implications. It entails examining and situating (contextualising) our own worldviews, concepts, theories, and opening space to other “reals,” in the sense that there are many different realities, which are simply other worlds, ontologically speaking, as well as acknowledging the ways through which we construct and validate knowledge in different times and places (Tickner and Weaver 2009, 11).

According to Latour (1993), modern Western knowledge is trapped in a Cartesian bind that consists of great separations or divides. Such separations include, for example, the binaries human/non-human, mind/body, animate/inanimate, nature/society, and aim to represent a singular reality. The separation of nature and society, in particular, is a central tenet of modernity.
on which global environmental politics has been founded. However, modernity’s particular way of representing reality is not universally shared, as many cultures around the world make little distinction between humans, plants, spirits, and other entities (Blaney and Tickner 2017).

This modern common sense is also challenged by what Burke et al. (2016, 4–12) call a new kind of power represented by the Anthropocene, in which nature is being reshaped by social actions, and human activity and nature are bound together in a complex and indistinguishable manner. Hence, categories and methodologies are being challenged, and there is a demand for a new global political project in which social justice is inextricably linked together with environmental justice, the end of human–caused extinctions, climate change mitigation, among other necessary actions (see also Kalfagianni et al., this volume). This means an effort towards new practices, new ideas, new stories, and new myths in the worlds we have created (Burke et al. 2016), and the inclusion of actors, who usually do not have voice, in processes of knowledge co-production.

Worlding and the recognition of the pluriverse are ways of making alternatives and engaging in these new dynamics. In this sense, the chapter will present five different cosmovisions from non-Western cultures that we consider as “worlds.” However, we do not have the ambition to present them comprehensively but to focus on how these visions challenge these divisions and separations and may contribute to the development of a more pluralistic and inclusive approach to environmental governance. We understand GSG as the many collective efforts by states and non-state actors to identify, understand, and address various present and future sustainability issues, considering many worlds in one planet, and the interdependence among ecological, social justice, and economic dimensions and the novel challenges presented by the Anthropocene. This chapter is divided into three parts: first, we discuss the implications of the Anthropocene for GSG studies; second we present worldism and the pluriverse as alternative approaches, and finally, we present different worldviews that could contribute to worlding GSG.

The Anthropocene and limitations of conventional approaches

Most social science accounts start from the assumption, framed in the Holocene, that nature is a stable scenario. The nature–society dichotomy, state-centrism, and the focus on global institutions, power, interests, and inter-state bargain highlight specific questions, commitments, and worldviews, which do not properly respond to today’s planetary reality and socio-environmental challenges. Such limitations reflect the way that GSG has been conceived and practiced. Burke et al. (2016) and Pereira (2017) contest this stability assumption and argue that the Anthropocene calls for new approaches.

Though a contested notion (Harrington 2016; Chandler et al. 2017), the Anthropocene indicates that the stability experienced during the Holocene no longer holds because human activities are substantially altering the planet and its natural systems. Population mobility and growth and changes in the demographic structure, high level of energy and resource use, growing consumerism, urbanisation, globalisation of transport and communication systems, decoupling of financial from production economy are large-scale socio-economic changes that characterise the post Second World War great acceleration (Steffen et al. 2015). Humans can now be considered the main altering force on the planet and of its natural systems, with evidence of large-scale impacts on Earth systems.

However, the Anthropocene is not just an accumulation of environmental change effects, but a new world reality, with complex relations of life and non-life, between humans, non-humans, things, materials, sociopolitical, and biophysical elements (Burke et al. 2016;
Harrington 2016; Pereira 2017). Therefore, it becomes difficult to make a clear distinction between human and non-human realms, and to keep the dichotomy between nature and society (Rudy and White 2014; Wapner 2014; Steffen et al. 2015; Hamilton 2016; Pereira 2017).

Nature is a social, geographical, and historical construct, a repository of meaning, which is framed in relation to human experience and subject to change, but not in a unilateral relationship: humans and nature are co-produced social constructions that can change over time. As a consequence, traditional categories of environmental politics may not adequately respond to present social/nature challenges (Wapner 2014; Harrington 2016; Inoue and Moreira 2016) and the Anthropocene can be understood as a new way of apprehending reality, which orients political subjectivity and rationality (Hamilton 2016).

One of these new challenges is how to consider the agency of non-humans (Harrington 2016; Gumbert this volume) and to look for a new understanding of the world in the Anthropocene, based on the notion of the social, geographical, and historical co-production of humans and nature.

Another challenge is the tendency of some approaches to the Anthropocene that consider humans as a unified category and as if all humans were equally responsible for the current socio-environmental crisis (Harrington 2016; Chandler et al. 2017). Top-down and allegedly universal solutions, based on this kind of generalisation, have a potential to be authoritarian and exclusionist. Bäckstrand (2006), working on the “stakeholder democracy” model for environmental governance, presents a less state-centric and multi-layered notion of global governance, with informal, participatory, non-electoral, and non-territorial references, which includes marginalised groups, like women and indigenous peoples. In this model, a more bottom-up participatory and deliberative environmental governance has the potential to generate more effective and legitimate collective problem-solving, an argument based on the concepts of input legitimacy, which is the quality of decision-making processes regarding participation (openness to public scrutiny and inclusion of different stakeholders’ interests) and output legitimacy – effectiveness or problem-solving capacity of the governance system (Bäckstrand 2006, 473).

Many worlds mean that on a single planet – the Earth – there is a multiplicity of worlds that intersect, overlap, and conflict, and which are co-constituents and co-vulnerable. To think of many worlds on one planet opens up the possibility of new research avenues and has the potential to bring new solutions for GSG and challenges. Scientists around the world have been working with local populations and indigenous peoples in joint research, local development, biodiversity conservation, and other projects (Inoue 2007; Kassam 2009; Berkes 2012; Whyte 2013; Swift and Cock 2015; Athayde et al. 2016). Examples include the cooperation between scientists and Skolt Sami people on a biodiversity project to restore salmon in Finland and to gather information about insects as an indicator of changes in the Arctic, or the use of aborigine fire stick farming as a fire control practice in Australia (Robbins 2018).

However, global governance scholars have paid less attention to other ways of knowing. Inoue and Moreira (2016, 8) and Burke et al. (2016, 20–21) consider that it is better to think of multiple worlds (an Earth-worldly politics) and many natures to meet the new challenges brought by the Anthropocene, because this recognition can contribute to a new understanding of GSG, with broad participation and legitimacy.

Worldism and the pluriverse as alternative approaches to governance

Querejazu (2016) considers the pluriverse as an ontological starting point, based on the incommensurability of different ways of being and living in the world – many worlds exist on
their own and are interrelated. This means that reality is not a universe made of different realities, but it is per se a plurality, or a pluriverse. This perspective opens up the possibility of one to assess and to acknowledge multiple realities that stand ontologically as other “reals.”

Worlding GSG means recognising that different ontologies ask for different epistemologies and methodologies. These ontologies and epistemologies allow one to overcome restraining categories and traditional concepts of international politics (e.g. power, security, sovereignty, state), and, as a consequence, give new insights about how to theorise the global. They can help us to understand how some concepts, like global governance, have become established, what mechanisms have naturalised them, and how these concepts influence the choice for issues or non-issues in research and policy development. Besides, they open possibilities to improve the international environmental agenda, and to assume a politically emancipatory position (Tickner and Weaver 2009, 3 and, 18). Despite that fact, many scholars still relegate different ontologies, such as those of indigenous peoples, to the realm of myths, legends, and beliefs (Querejazu 2016, 4–11).

For many people the human, the natural, and the spiritual worlds are interconnected and coexist in time and space. Therefore, the political is much more than what is conventionally considered, since it implies, for example, the recognition that non-humans (living and non-living) can also have political agency, rights, or responsibilities. Querejazu (2016) complements this perspective, including “subjects” who are neither human nor things – spiritual entities (meaning nonmaterial or transcendent, like nature forces), for reality is the result of intersubjective practices that are compatible with the existence of different kinds of subjects.3

In the Anthropocene, the Earth systems are starting to alter politics and have power on their own. Several indigenous peoples around the planet consider animals, plants, rocks, mountains, rivers, and so as sentient, with life and spirit (Inoue and Moreira 2016) and, in this sense, have rights and responsibilities, and so do human beings towards them. Some national states like Ecuador and Bolivia have recognised the rights of nature.

It is interesting to observe that while indigenous and traditional ways of knowing can call our attention to forms of non-human agency, with political, moral, and legal implications, the fast technological development in several areas is also calling our attention to non-human agency and power. Harrington (2016, 13) presents examples of how the agency of “things, humans and non-humans, configure the practices and understandings of war, diplomacy, security and the economy,” as algorithms in global economic relations, that can be seen as having independent agency, as they alter the conditions of human possibilities. Fast technological and artificial intelligence developments in many fronts (nanotechnology, biological engineering, genetics, facial and voice recognition, etc.), and the merger of human intelligence and technology point to this direction as well. Consider, for example, the possibility of a superhuman intelligence with no biological body, and how its agency can change today’s practices and understandings and build a new reality. Thus, to speak of non-human agency and the end of nature-society dichotomy is not a religious understanding of politics, but a view that changes our relation to things and to the more-than-human and, as such, can have moral, legal, and political implications.

In this sense, perhaps, worldism can be a better way to respond to present complexities and challenges, because it implies communication and negotiation across difference, not incommensurability. Worldism is defined by Ling (2014, 13–37) as an analytical portal that encompasses different traditions and cultures. Ling (2014) recognises multiple worlds with modes of thinking, doing, being, and relating that intersect with the Westphalian World.4 Worldism is different from the cosmopolitan version of the Westphalian world because it does not put forward isolated understandings of different modes of thinking departing from the Westphalian worldview, but it acknowledges the existence and the role of multiple worlds in international politics.
Different from the pluriverse, Ling (2014, 15) argues that Multiple Worlds and the Westphalian World contradict and complement each other, using the image of the Dao, in which there is communication and negotiation across difference, and not incommensurability. In Daoist dialogics, as the yin and the yang, you and I constitute each other (*I am in you, you in me*). The result is the recognition of relations and contributions of multiple worlds, in a co-constituted and engaged perspective. The *Westphalian* worldview constitutes and is constituted by the other worldviews, bringing a more accurate portrayal of world politics. In this sense, a worldist perspective in GSG can better respond to the present complexities of global life by bringing to the fore actors from many worlds that are usually not recognised.

For Jang et al. (2015, 2), a multiple-actors governance configuration can broaden the scope of policy solutions, but it can also increase fragmentation and segmentation of rule-making and rule implementing, resulting in competition that can lead either to paralysis or innovative solutions. There is indeed a risk of paralysis. The dialectic and hybrid approach of worldism, however, questions dualities and complements competition with continuities and connections.

The benefits of broadening the scope of policy solutions and encouraging novel solutions, with the development and diffusion of different normative standards and new knowledge that can inform unilateral and multilateral behaviour and practices (Underdal 2008; Robbins 2018), may outweigh the risks of fragmentation, segmentation, and competition. Scholars have argued that indigenous knowledge can improve the implementation of global policies at the local level, for instance, in climate change adaptation or reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) (Moreira and Baniwa 2011; Schroeder and González 2019) as well as by linking local, indigenous, and scientific knowledge systems in processes of knowledge co-production, for example, within the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Then, the future of global governance rests not only on the liberal paradigm of world politics (Jang et al. 2015) but also on many worldviews and cosmologies that are also concerned with the future of our planet, natures, and societies.

So, worlding in GSG is needed to:

- interrogate mainstream ontology and epistemology of GSG and consider other knowledge systems and ways of being, in parity with Western epistemologies. This proposition may offer a more realistic portrayal of world affairs and invigorate research about global environmental issues with new methodological developments;
- question the nature-society divide, which makes it difficult to cope with the Anthropocene and other sustainability challenges, opening the possibility of considering non-human agency and bringing different worldviews that overcome this divide, like indigenous knowledge (Inoue and Moreira 2016);
- present new ways to overcome the limitations of the Westphalian theorisation about the world, such as the subject-object divide and the top-down formulations, especially in the Anthropocene;
- consider humanity as non-homogeneous, made of different actors and agents with diverse worldviews, which are equally important for making an effective, socially and environmentally just, and legitimate GSG.

**Examples of perspectives that a worldist approach could draw from**

When Western approaches to GSG acknowledge non-Western perspectives merely as objects of discourse rather than as an essential source of theory building, they abdicate from a more pluralistic perspective, in which the existence of many worlds is taken into
consideration. As different cultures have different views on the relations between humans and nature, each one of them could potentially provide relevant insights when it comes to GSG.

In our view, these attempts that are in search of new ontologies, ways of knowing, and being in the world coincide with the concept of worldism. Non-Western knowledge systems illustrate how GSG can be “worlded,” as different worldviews can enrich and contribute to establishing new principles, norms, and rules that would be more adequate to how we relate to the new power in the Anthropocene proposed by Burke et al. (2016).

Using Ling’s worldist approach, Inoue and Moreira (2016) develop the understanding of many worlds as many knowledge systems in epistemological parity, to which many different notions of nature correspond. One way to “world” GSG is to recognise and connect different knowledge systems in processes of knowledge co-production in which all the actors are equally agents, and research problems, methods, and validation procedures are jointly defined (Tengö et al. 2014). This can help one to better understand and find solutions for socio-environmental problems, as illustrated in the example of cooperation between scientists and Skolt Sami people in Finland or between scientists, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and indigenous peoples in Xingu (Brazilian Amazon) with respect to bees, pollination, pollinators, and food production (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network 2019).

Five perspectives are presented because of their richness and relevance regarding their views on humans, cosmos, and nature, and because they present perspectives from distinct geographies and ethnicities. It is not our intention to generalise these worldviews, as there are many differences within and among them, but to call attention to the diversity of views that exist beyond the “West” and to their potential to enrich GSG approaches. The first two perspectives are from South American indigenous cosmovisions: Amazonian and Andean–Kichwa peoples; the third one refers to Islamic traditions as revealed by the Quran (the sacred scripture of Islam) and the teachings of the prophet Muhammad; the fourth reveals the cosmovision of the Oromo people, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and in the wider “Horn of Africa;” and the fifth refers do the Daoist perspective as shown in the Daodejing, a classic of Chinese philosophical literature.

Amazonian and Andean indigenous voices

Amazonian and other South American indigenous cosmovisions – especially those of Andean peoples – can contribute to the development of more pluralistic environmental approaches. Relevant aspects of Andean indigenous cultures regarding environmentalism are addressed with special care in the chapter by Vanhulst and Beling (this volume).

Several Amazonian and Andean indigenous peoples believe that subjects can embody objects and objects can embody subjects (Querejazu 2016, 9). This shaman’s ability to embody other beings and to transit between worlds can be explained by these beings’ common origins. For many Amazonian peoples, what we call “nature” comes from humanity or from culture. In their mythical cosmovisions (Ashaninka/Campa, Yanomami, Yawanawa, Aikewara) humans are empirically prior to the world: a kind of primordial humanity existed as the only substrate or matter from which the world was formed. Portions of this humanity were turned into animals, plants, other living beings, meteorological phenomena, and parts of the cosmos (stars, the moon, and so on), spontaneously or through the action of a demiurge. The portion that did not transform into something else is the historical or present humanity (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017, 91–92).
Danowski and Viveiros de Castro (2017, 90–94) call this period of time the first Anthropocene. Unlike modern myths, animals and "nature" are humanity’s future, not the past; and humans are the seed, the soil, the background, and not an innovation or the apex of creation.

By rejecting anthropocentrism, the Yanomami and other Amazonian peoples also reject the nature-society dichotomy. They see themselves as just one more among the various peoples and entities of the forest – such as animals, spirits, other beings associated with the land and even dreams. For them, the forest is a living entity and endowed with intrinsic value, not only as a repository of biodiversity or carbon stocks. Animals and other living beings are considered other kinds of “folks” and “peoples.” As a consequence, they can be considered political entities, who live in their societies, in their realities (their “reals”). The natural world, or the “world,” is an interconnected “multiplicity of multiplicities” (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017, 97).

In the same direction, several Andean cosmovisions are based on relational ontologies. These ontologies present different forms of interaction and recognise that truth is not about uniqueness, or singularity. According to them, the connections between the factual, the divine, the social, and nature are paramount, and reality cannot be separated from the observer. Consequently, “nature” needs to be liberated from the condition of a mere object which belongs to human beings, since all beings have the same ontologic value – which does not mean they are identical, but that they have the same importance and deserve to be protected. This would be achieved by a major political effort in the sense of recognising nature as a subject of rights (Acosta 2016).

Andean relational cosmovisions consider the state or condition of being relational as the most important principle of reality. Other principles are correspondence, complementarity, and reciprocity. Correspondence implies that elements are correlated in a balanced duality; complementarity implies that opposites complete and cannot exist without each other; and reciprocity is the fundamental idea of justice which permeates the relations between natural, human, spiritual, and cosmic (Querejazu 2016). A particularly interesting aspect of “Pacha Mama” is its relationship with the concept of pluralism. The deity has different roles: it can both be a generous entity who provides food and water; or a cruel one when she does not receive what she expects from humans. Actually, more than a deity, “Pacha Mama” could be considered a connection between three worlds (heaven, earth, and hell). Their roles do not follow fixed Manichean interpretations, for they can be both good and evil. It shows that in the Andean pluralistic cosmovision sacred supernatural entities are political actors with agency as well as interests (Acosta 2016).

Islamic worldview

Islamic culture(s) and their teachings also provide valuable insights regarding the relationship between humans and nature. According to Kamla, Gallhofer and Haslam (2006), the environment is central in Islam, and both the Quran and the words of the Prophet carry concepts and principles that reflect the way Muslims relate to nature. The colour green – as used by many Muslim countries on their national flags – is considered the most blessed of all colours and represents in a deep sense the importance of nature for Muslims. According to the authors, there are key guiding principles that are fundamental to understand the relationship between Islam and nature.

The first principle – “Unity of God” (“Tawheed”) – implies unity and equality concerning both the worship of God and the partnership among all beings in terms of appreciation of interdependence and interconnectedness. It also implies that there is an equilibrium ruling
the natural world, and that all of God’s creations coexist in harmony or balance. According to the “Tawheed,” people are part of the environment – different from the idea of separations and divisions proposed by Western and positivist perspectives – and humans deserve no more respect than the rest of Creation. All beings are equally important when it comes to maintaining balance (Kamla, Gallhofer and Haslam 2006).

The second principle is trusteeship. Although people are considered part of the environment and deserve the same respect as other beings, this principle implies a special role for humans in relation to the environment, for they are considered guardians (or “Khalifah”) and have the duty to look after the self and others, including non-humans. Being a trustee implies that besides acting as guardians, Muslims must also cultivate the environment – but in a way that does not affect the equilibrium. They should cultivate it to the highest point consistent with sustainability (Kamla, Gallhofer and Haslam 2006).

The third principle gravitates around the idea of community (“Umma”), and emphasises social justice, social welfare, and the countering of oppression, implying that concerns about people are also relevant for the environment. Since people are part of nature, important for the equilibrium, and have the responsibility of being guardians of nature, respecting people also means respecting the environment.

The fourth principle refers to the idea of holism in a way that encompasses the future. Holism, in this sense, addresses the duty to ensure the wellbeing of future generations and could be considered the Islamic principle most closely related to the idea of sustainable development, since it emphasises the negativity of waste. The Prophet, for example, demanded Muslims not to waste water even when they are washing before a prayer. In this sense, today’s consumption patterns could be considered incompatible with the holistic perspective, since they are potentially dangerous to the environment. The Quran itself condemns any sort of abuse of the Earth, for it compromises the wellbeing of future generations (Kamla, Gallhofer and Haslam 2006).

The last principle is about appreciating the beauty of nature, which provides the inspiration humans need to act as guardians of the environment. The splendour of nature is mentioned in many parts of the Quran, and the beauty of animals is considered a sign of God’s existence. Muslims are encouraged to contemplate and meditate on the beauty of nature, so that their connection to it and their will to protect it remain strong (Kamla, Gallhofer and Haslam 2006).

An African cosmovision – the Oromo

African cosmovisions concerning the relationship between humans and nature are not homogeneous. Given the impossibility to address multiple African cosmovisions in a single chapter, we focus on the Oromo People, since – according to Kelbessa (2005) – the critical examination of Oromo worldviews suggests that some Oromo groups have developed strong indigenous environmental ethics. They are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia (more than 30% of the country’s population) and also inhabit parts of Kenya and Somalia.

Oromo ethics regarding nature have two sides: one is material and pragmatic, while the other one is spiritual and moral. The material and pragmatic side is related to the fact that the Oromo people protect their environment for utilitarian reasons. They are aware that, if their environment deteriorates, their very existence will be in danger, as well as the lives of future generations. They pay special attention to changes in nature: the cycles, the seasons, the movement of the stars, the behaviour of wild and domestic animals, the condition of trees, and many other signs that could potentially reveal practical problems for their subsistence in the present and in the future (Kelbessa 2005).
The more spiritual and moral side is related to principles implicit in Oromo thought and practice. Besides being a means for their subsistence, the land is also a gift from God (“Waaqa”). Therefore, it has inherent value, despite any utilitarian considerations. Since the land is a gift and “Waaqa” is its guardian, no one is free to destroy nature in order to satisfy particular needs or see the land as something to be owned. Humans are simply friends, beneficiaries or users, and do not have the right to treat it as a commodity and dispose of it as they please. It should be stressed, however, that although “Waaqa” is an important influence when it comes to handling the environment, religious beliefs are not a necessary condition for ethical behaviour among Oromo farmers and peasants. Activities such as tilling the land, dealing with animals, and planting trees have their own moral codes, regardless of one’s particular beliefs.

By means of both pragmatism and moral codes – religious or not – Oromo cosmovision implies a responsible attitude towards nature, and the essence of this vision is the partnership between humans and the environment. Once again, unlike Western and positivist approaches, humans are perceived as part of nature (Kelbessa 2005).

The Oromo political system (the “Gadaa” system) is also a source of insights, since it addresses the need to protect the rights of both human and non-human species. The Oromo care not only about animals and plants that are economically exploitable, for they consider that all species have inherent value. Some wild animals and groves are even considered sacred and have symbolic meanings; and domestic animals should not be mistreated, according to their principles (Kelbessa 2005).

Their concept of “saffiuu” is also a relevant one for the understanding of the Oromo relationship with nature and what differentiates humans from other animals. It serves as a moral code that guides human behaviour in multiple kinds of situations, for it refers to mutual relationships in the cosmic order. As Kelbessa (2005) points out, “saffiuu” is respecting one another and respecting one’s own “Ayyaana” (spirit) and that of others. According to the Oromo, “saffiuu” is “ulfina” (respect). We need to show respect to our father, mother, aunt, uncle, and our mother Earth. Since “saffiuu” guides people’s activities, it regulates the exploitation of natural resources.

Daoism

Daoism provides relevant contributions regarding environmental ethics, and there is relatively abundant literature on the application of Daoist perspectives to discussions about the environment. Such contributions could be summarised in three main aspects, as proposed by Lai (2014): anti-anthropocentrism; opposition to human separateness and other dualisms; and holism and integrity.

Anti-anthropocentrism is a major theme in many debates on environmental philosophy and relates to the idea that human beings are unwilling or unable to act according to moral considerations towards nature, being responsible for the degradation of the environment and the extinction of species. The “Daodejing” – a Daoist classic often cited for its insights regarding the nature of reality and the relations between individual things and beings – provides interesting insights about the matter (Lai 2014).

First, it provides an inclusive theory which opposes the idea of human priority and implies that the relationship between humans and nature is characterised by interdependence and unity instead of dependence and separation. Second, it criticises the Confucian proposal of creating a human cultural identity which would be different and separate from all other beings and nature. Third, it promotes the idea of transcendence of the human condition and opposes that of imposition of human values on non-human existence. Fourth, as it rejects
separation, it also rejects both dualism and the perspective that humans deserve absolute priority. Fifth, it recognises the integrity of all individuals – human and non-human – and seeks to promote the wellbeing of all (Lai 2014).

The anthropocentric perspective, often linked to a dualistic framework, can potentially discourage ethical behaviour, since it implies that, by harming nature, humans would not be negatively affecting themselves. Such a perspective could be damaging not only for the environment but also for humans. Also problematic is the fact that the dualities, or dichotomies, oversimplify many aspects of reality, especially those related to the connections between humans and the environment, and could restrict humans’ capacity to properly evaluate ethical issues, for they present such connections as simple trade-offs (Lai 2014).

According to Lai (2014), holism is not universally accepted among environmental philosophers, because certain versions of environmental holism neglect the needs of individuals. Holism in Daoist philosophy, however, maintains a sense of individual integrity and assumes that the whole is neither just the sum of its parts nor independent from them. Since it is not considered an end in itself, its integrity and stability are valued because such conditions are fundamental to ensure the wellbeing of its parts, no matter if they are humans or non-humans.

Although holism in the “Daodejing” implies harmony and balance between the realisation of individual excellence within a context of interdependence and mutual enrichment, Daoist environmental ethics are not about the satisfaction of all parties. They are about achieving a “maximally coherent and superlative state of affairs” (Lai 2014, 189). This would be a state in which the whole is considered to be more than simply the sum of its parts, in the sense that not all individuals or groups may always achieve their desired outcomes, for interdependencies must be considered, as well as the need to negotiate and to compromise (Lai 2014).

Conclusion

GSG has been traditionally based on the ideas of independence and separation of humans from nature and on the Holocene’s stability patterns, which no longer hold. The severity of the current socio-environmental crisis and the evidence that planetary boundaries have been trespassed indicate that GSG studies need new frameworks or a new political imagination, as argued by Burke et al. (2016), to address non-human agency, the challenges presented by a new kind of power in the Anthropocene, and the need for a new global political project.

Based on this assumption, the chapter has tried to answer two main questions: why worlding is necessary to GSG studies and how to do it. Both the pluriverse and worldism are approaches to recognise that we live in many worlds, many natures, but on one planet (Ling 2014; Burke et al. 2016; Inoue and Moreira 2016; Querejazu 2016). We emphasised worldism as a way to respond to present complexities and challenges, because it implies communication and negotiation across difference, not incommensurability.

Therefore, GSG can be re-conceived and reframed by an Earth-worldly politics, based on the understanding of a single planet inhabited by multiple worlds, many worldviews, many knowledges, and many natures, in which the relationship between humans and nature is a social, geographical, and historical co-production (Burke et al. 2016, 20–21; Inoue and Moreira 2016, 8). This understanding has ontological, epistemological, and methodological implications for how GSG has been studied and practiced, with potentially more just, legitimate, and democratic practices.

The many worlds–one planet research agenda is a work in progress. The five cosmovisions offer some examples of how to world GSG, with ontological and normative implications.
In common, they all reject the human–nature dichotomy. When Andean and Oromo cosmovisions consider that all beings have the same ontological value, or all have an inherent value, they put forward matters of equality and justice that should be enforced in GSG. Also, Andean indigenous peoples consider that reality cannot be separated from the observer, which can reinforce mind-world monism – the world, or the “real,” is not an independent part of knowledge – and, as consequence, challenge mainstream GSG research (Jackson 2011). Amazonian peoples consider that everything has a human origin, so there is no nature, but a society of societies (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017). The Yanomamis, for example, consider the forest as the world. In this sense, politics is about everything (humans and non-humans, or former humans) in constant interaction, and the relations within the forest–world are considered a delicate balance.

The Islamic view can be considered the most anthropocentric of all the cosmovisions presented here, as it puts humans as the guardians of nature. However, it is based on trusteeship, justice, and intergenerational concerns, values that should be reinforced in GSG. Daoism is a valuable approach to consider complexities, and the maximally and superlative state of affairs offers ground to reconsider bargaining and interdependence, for all stakeholders in GSG should negotiate and compromise, bearing in mind that the wellbeing of all is not equivalent to the satisfaction of individual desired outcomes.

Finally, a GSG research agenda based on worldist and/or the pluriverse perspectives can, perhaps, be advanced in three ways. The first is to answer why is it necessary to recognise the existence of many worlds and to think about the possibilities of knowledge co-production among different worlds. The second is empirical research to look for alternative ways to understand today’s main socio-environmental challenges and the normative claims that come with it. The third is to learn how to co-produce knowledge, listening and interacting with agents, whose voices have not been heard, to build new theories and practices of GSG. Such a move, perhaps, could respond to the call by Burke et al. (2016, 2) to develop “new practices, new ideas, stories, and myths (…)” in order to face Earth politics in a way that “humans, animals, ecologies, biosphere are all together.”

Notes

1 For Escobar (2016, 22), looking at reality as the “pluriverse” in contrast to the “universe” means acknowledging that there are multiple realities.

2 The pluriverse and worldism are not the same as multiculturalism. According to Querejazu (2016, 8), multiculturalism works within Western ontology, in a process of dominance. Different beliefs and imaginations are allowed in a general framework that does not question Western ontological premises. Therefore, in this work, cosmovision should not be read as a synonym for culture.

3 The role of non-humans in indigenous perspectives is addressed in more detail in section “Examples of perspectives that a worldist approach could draw from” of this chapter. For more about the Andean cosmovision, see also Vanhulst and Beling (this volume).

4 Ling (2014) considers the Westphalian world as state-centric and with an exclusionist version of civilisation, meaning that there is a hierarchy between world understandings – the Western rule with the upper position – and no possibility of mutual learning, reciprocity, respect, adaptation, connections, or continuities.

5 See Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (2019) and IPBES (n.d.).

6 The expression Quechua is sometimes used as a synonym for Kichwa, but actually each word stands for different languages spoken in different South American regions, although they are very similar and share common origins. The language used as a reference to incorporate “Sumak Kawsay” in the Ecuadorian Constitution is Kichwa, the language spoken by most indigenous peoples living in Ecuador.

7 Ecuador was the first country to explicitly recognise the existence of Nature’s Rights in its 2008 Constitution, including the right to be fully restored in case of damage or degradation.
References


