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Is the Grass Greener in a Post-Pandemic World? (Re)Connecting Humanity with Nature for a Just Recovery

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Abstract
This article assesses the potential for reconnecting human and non-human nature in global post-COVID-19 recovery plans. The article utilises a critical perspective on the neoliberalisation of nature as a framing, as well as the case of sustainability and deforestation in forest risk commodity supply chains, to assess whether sustainable development initiatives and neoliberal environmental governance adequately protect the interests of vulnerable human and non-human nature. It finds that existing approaches to sustainable development in international governance prioritise liberalised global markets and the neoliberalisation of nature through commodification, privatisation and marketisation, thus furthering an unjust human-nature dichotomy by placing humans separate from nature and removing the intrinsic value of non-human materiality. It identifies a synergy between the global campaign to 'build back better' after COVID-19, environmental regulation and principles of Wild Law. The article concludes by recommending that a just post-pandemic economic recovery must realign the human experience as a part of the wider whole of the non-human natural world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has stripped away the last remaining veils of equality, revealing the disconnect, an ontological and epistemological dualism, between human populations across the world and also between

human and non-human nature in the Global North. Hitherto, scholars across a number of fields, including political ecology, human geography, sociology, and law, have explored neoliberal ideology in relation to the environmental domain. At the same time, Wild Law has gained international momentum as a means of advancing the wider notion of 'Earth jurisprudence' and attempting to bring human governance into a wider Earth Community. However, there is space for more engaged scholarship on the intersection between these methodologies, especially in relation to fostering human-ecological connectivity in post-pandemic recovery plans.

This article considers the opportunity for a green and just recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. The first section contains a critical review of the literature on neoliberalism which establishes the ideology's relationship with human and non-human nature and assesses how it drives a disconnect between them. Section 2 utilises the case study of sustainable development in relation to environmental governance to support the argument that globalised neoliberalisation has maintained a trend of sustained economic growth for the benefit of human populations and predominantly those in the Global North. Recent trends in neoliberal environmental governance, specifically sustainable forest risk commodity supply chains (i.e. industries with deforestation embedded in their supply chains) and forestry resource management, unjustly expose non-human nature to the market whilst simultaneously placing forest communities at risk of injustice through weak commitments to sustainability in international environmental governance. Section 3 identifies a potential synergy between the ongoing global campaign to 'build back better' and environmental regulation, concluding that law and policymakers must prioritise an eco-centric recovery based on Wild Law that reconnects humans with non-human nature. It puts forward the recommendation that a post-pandemic economic recovery must align with a greater commitment within

environmental law and governance to accommodate the human experience as a part of the wider whole of the non-human natural world.

1. The Neoliberal Environmental Project: A Mode of Disconnect

Over recent decades, scholars have attempted to define neoliberalism and its existence as an identity, ideology, systemic process, and modern project (Bourdieu, 1998; Larner, 2000; Peck, 2001; Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010; Hall, 2011; Fine and Saad-Filho, 2017), as well as its relationship to capitalist society (Jessop, 2002). Capturing the full scope of neoliberal ideology is beyond the remit of this article. However, there are key characteristics that are relevant to this discussion which make neoliberalism distinct from other approaches to capitalism.

Neoliberal discourse is based on a morally devoid, socio-political approach that requires the subordination of society and nature to the laws of the market and market mechanisms (Polanyi, 2001). As such, the core of the ideology centres upon an antagonism towards state regulation of economic activity, and a commitment to the process of disembedding the 'self-regulating market' from society (Polanyi, 2001). Effectively, the theoretical vision of neoliberalism is to "disembed capital" from social and political constraints, as well as state regulation and ownership of profitable economic industries (Harvey, 2005, p. 11). However, in practice, neoliberalism relies on the state to regulate in line with the market economy and is thus "produced and reproduced through institutional forms and political action" to the point neoliberalism becomes variegated and 'actually existing' (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p. 383).

Central to the success of the neoliberal project is a belief in free market fundamentalism as a means of solving the world's problems. The full scope depends on the analyst, and for the purposes of this article, the neoliberal doctrine is to be understood as encompassing the following characteristics: differing forms of regulation in aim of capital accumulation,

commodification, marketisation, privatisation, trade liberalisation, and competition. These elements of state-led policy set neoliberalism apart from other capitalist modes of governance.

In a neoliberal world, perception has a powerful influence on connectivity. Research has shown that a significant portion of humans in western countries (i.e., the Global North) have developed a perceived separation of self from nature (Vining et al., 2008). Human activity over the last century has had such significant consequences for the Earth System that it has ushered in a new geological epoch known as the Anthropocene. The defining feature of the Anthropocene is what Moore (2017) refers to as 'Green Arithmetic' in which nature is treated as a variable, shaping our binary conceptualisation of the planetary crisis and categorically treating "humanity and nature as separate first, connected second" (Moore, 2017, p. 595). If the Anthropocene is treated as 'rupture' (Hamilton, 2016), then it is arguable that there has been a congruent rupture in the connection between humans and the natural world, as nature has increasingly become treated as an object separate from and to be mastered by humans. Therefore, this fracturing of the Earth System and consequent ecological crisis is perhaps better represented as the 'Capitalocene' epoch due to its emergence from the paradigmatic rupture caused by the Industrial Revolution, Fordist drive for growth and the resultant expansion of capitalism and modernity in the Global North throughout the 20th Century (Moore, 2017; Adelman, 2020).

Neoliberal capitalism has furthered this disconnect over the last four decades in a way that has negatively impacted non-human nature. Capitalism itself is grounded on the 'metabolism of nature' in which human labour and production fundamentally change the intrinsic value of and alienates humans from nature (Foster, 2000). The metabolism of nature through capitalist patterns of production and consumption has come to be a defining aspect of the socio-natural relationship (Brand and Wissen, 2013, pp. 690-691). This metabolic process is exacerbated by the globalised

neoliberal model and the ecologically unequal exchange relationship between the Global North's unsustainable resource consumption and the Global South, which is treated as a 'supply depot' (Jorgenson, 2010). It is now evident that this model of capitalist accumulation has placed extreme pressure on ecosystems and advanced the rate of environmental degradation. Moreover, the globalised neoliberal model has placed further pressure upon the socio-natural relationship. It has allowed exploitative market access on the supply side in the Global South to control for the negative environmental externalities of neoliberal capitalism.

To achieve the full realisation of the neoliberal project, the aforementioned characteristics of neoliberalism are implemented through a "process of reforms and ideological transformations" (Bakker, 2015, p. 447) known as neoliberalisation (Peck and Tickell, 2002). As opposed to other neoliberal projects (e.g. austerity) detrimentally impacting the environment, the increasing commodification of socio-natural environments occurs as a means to introduce novel systems of active capital accumulation and the corporate globalisation of "ecological fixes", otherwise known as "environmental externalities" (Bakker, 2015, p. 449). This process is broadly referred as the 'neoliberalisation of nature' (McCarthy and Prudham, 2004; Castree, 2006; Heyen et al., 2007; Castree, 2008; Bakker, 2010). The neoliberalisation of nature is predicated on a reshaped notion of environmental law and governance, a transformative process distinct from the impact of the capitalist neoliberal ideology on the non-human nature. As the state regulates both society and nature in support of the utopian hegemonic market, it uses its regulatory power and expert knowledge to influence socio-natural relationships (Duit et al., 2016). As Braun (2008) critically summarises, socio-natural relationships between human and non-human nature shape the capitalist landscape as they influence the human desire to commodify biological processes in specific ways. Following McCarthy and Prudham's (2004) delineation of neoliberalism as the

"discursive rebirth of capital as citizen" (p. 276), this argument asserts that the modern neoliberal project, facilitated by the desire to commodify biological processes, has rebirthed *capital as nature* whilst congruently reinforcing a human-nature dichotomy.

As a process, the neoliberalisation of nature is premised on the severance of the intrinsic connection between humans and non-human nature. As the state regulates the socio-natural domain in line with the principles of the market economy, the market becomes the organising point of socio-natural relations. Diverse non-human natural assemblages are removed from the broader, ontological, and epistemic 'Earth Community' in which they exist and are transformed into tradeable market commodities. Disadvantaged groups are also impacted by this human-nature dualism as their environmental identities, connectivity with non-human nature and place as a part of the Earth Community (rather than separate from it) are severed in favour of commodification, privatisation, and marketisation.

2. 'Sustainable' Development

> *Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

The dominant interpretation of sustainability in relation to 'sustainable development' is premised on the foundation of three aspirational, intersecting goals: societal, environmental, and economic sustainability (Purvis, Mao, and Robinson, 2019). Therefore, it follows that sustainable development requires development that takes into account the needs of both current and future generations by striking a balance between these pillars. As opposed to operating as a legal framework, sustainable development is a normative concept that provides an interstitial framework for the interpretation and implementation of laws and institutions (Lowe, 1999;

Dernbach and Cheever, 2015). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are useful for this analysis as they aim to make the normative pillars of sustainable development a reality by 2030. The SDGs aim to balance the need to reduce global poverty with economic growth, improve social well-being through health and education, and combat both climate change and environmental degradation (United Nations, 2015).

However, in practice, the tripartite sustainable development framework and the SDGs have historically favoured economic growth as the principal economic objective through the indifferent, independent accumulation of capital stock, a form of weak sustainability (Ekins, 1993; Ekins et al., 2003; Ross, 2009). As a result, market-driven, capitalist growth in the West under globalised neoliberalism has parasitically expanded the economic pillar at the expense of the environmental and social domains, indicating that the imperative of economic development is incompatible with socio-natural sustainability (Tulloch, 2013; Tulloch and Neilson, 2014; Spaiser et al., 2017). This is especially important for the current analysis of human-nature dualism because, as Tulloch and Neilson (2014) highlight, "once the natural environment is defined in terms of neoliberal discourse it becomes subject to its economic premises" (p. 35). As the neoliberalisation process is based on dysconnectivity through the hierarchical restructuring of the pillars of sustainable development, *sustained* economic growth (SDG 8) inevitably becomes the guiding principle in sustainability projects rather than the socio-natural dimension.

The neoliberalisation of environmental governance has also catalysed a process of environmental reductionism, which Bosselmann (2011) notes occurs when complex ecological systems are viewed as no more than the sum of smaller, interacting parts. It is an atomistic concept, premised on a materialistic, anthropocentric view of the environment, which is separated from human society, subjected to economic analysis, and treated as the 'other' (see further: Bosselmann, 2010). In effect, neoliberalisation

drives a human-nature dualism in order to sustain the market. The COVID-19 recovery presents a unique opportunity to evaluate this dualism in relation to the effectiveness and equity of existing sustainable development initiatives. To illustrate these interconnected issues, the following analysis utilises the example of sustainable development and the SDGs in relation to deforestation in supply chains.

Demand in the Global North and deforestation in forest risk commodity supply chains have driven biodiversity loss, which has brought vulnerable human populations closer to diseases such as malaria (Chaves et al., 2020) and other zoonotic diseases that cause pandemics like COVID-19 (Gillespie et al., 2021; IPBES, 2020; Rohr et al., 2019). Deforestation also poses a significant problem in terms of climate change and biodiversity loss, and combatting tropical deforestation has become a topic of immense importance for ecological sustainability, especially in relation to supply chains. Overall, tree loss in tropical forests account for roughly 8% of global emissions (Gibbs et al., 2018). It is also well evidenced that deforestation and degradation in the tropics pose a distinct threat to forest biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as to the livelihoods of forest communities (Boucher et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2013). As such, a crucial aspect of sustainable development is a concerted global effort to maintain vital forest ecosystems. Within this, sustainable forestry supply chains and management of forests at the supply side are of vital importance. Deforestation is a recognised challenge for the SDGs, particularly the goals under 'Life on Land' (SDG 15), 'Climate Action' (SDG 13), and 'Sustainable Consumption and Production' (SDG 12). The interconnected nature of sustainability also means that 'No poverty' (SDG 1), 'Good Health and Well-Being' (SDG 3), and 'Reduced Inequalities' (SDG 10) are of relevance for maintaining sustainability at all stages of forest risk commodity supply chains. However, whilst these goals (and sustainable development as a process) are commendable at face value, a post-COVID-19, green and just recovery must address how these weak

forms of sustainability have failed to combat deforestation and the human disconnect with nature that drives it.

Deforestation resulting from forest risk commodity supply chains (e.g., soy, timber, beef, palm oil, and biofuels) is a useful example as the supply chain relies on a series of complex horizontal and vertical relationships and are therefore premised on the notion of connectivity, from start (e.g., demand driving the market and the sourcing of 'raw materials', e.g., non-human nature such as timber or cattle) to finish (e.g., delivery of the product, such as paper or beef, to consumers). Connectivity is ruptured when the pillars of sustainability become unbalanced in the favour of economic productivity as the supply chain becomes a means for economic growth rather than a series of interconnected, sustainable processes. Neoliberalisation occurs at each stage of the forest risk commodity supply chain, most notably through the neoliberal practices associated with supply chain trade liberalisation, commodification of forest resources, and the privatisation of forest governance.

As the central objective of the neoliberal paradigm is the economic globalisation of the ideals of the free market society. This requires the removal of restrictions on the flow of goods between states to facilitate market competition and other neoliberal values, often at the expense of justice and ecological wellbeing (Kumi et al., 2014). The opening up of commercial agricultural, timber, and mining industries to global markets has been a significant driver of deforestation across countries in the Global South. Specifically, agriculture is accountable for roughly 80% of global deforestation (Hosonuma et al., 2012). Due to weak commitments to sustainability at the demand and production side of the supply chain, sustainable development initiatives have not been able to effectively integrate and control competing goals under market globalisation and trade liberalisation. On the consumer end of the value chain, the level of demand is so high that it is interfering with "supply-side" efforts to curb deforestation

(Walker et al., 2013). As a result, deforestation has become embedded in international supply chains as a negative externality in the production, trade, and consumption of forest risk commodities (Cuypers et al., 2013; Weatherley-Singh and Gupta, 2018). Over the period 2005-2013, 26% of embodied deforestation for these forest-risk commodity groups was exported, with 87% of deforestation embodied in exports consumed in late or post-transition countries including those in Europe and North America, as well as Russia, China, and India (Pendrill et al., 2019). It is estimated that between 2011 and 2015, the UK's demand for soy, timber, palm oil, beef, and other forest risk commodities required a total land cover of approximately 13.6 million hectares per year (Jennings et al., 2017). Embodied deforestation at the production level of the supply chain, in tandem with the overarching neoliberal aim of market-driven economic growth, has placed immense pressure on the world's complex network of ecosystems and natural resources. Moreover, there is the issue of ecological degradation embedded in trade, beyond that of forests. These resources, including water, land, and carbon are lost in production processes and 'virtually exported' (Johansson et al., 2020; Henders et al., 2015; Johansson et al., 2016).

With over 1 billion people in the Global South directly depending on forest resources (Chao, 2012), the upshot of the liberalisation of global commodity markets is that the embedded environmental impacts have significant potential to cause harm to forest-reliant communities who experience increased rates of land clearance and deforestation, which in turn negatively impacts poverty rates and their livelihoods (FAO, 2010; Boafo, 2013; Enbakom et al., 2017; Phumee et al., 2017). However, there is no simple fix under the neoliberal system of trade when market controls are unpredictable, and deforestation is intricately woven into the fabric of the global market. Moreover, efforts to improve the sustainability of these supply chains also rely on existing neoliberal modes of environmental governance and further a human-nature disconnect.

Commodification allows actors to pursue sustainable forest management by allegedly controlling for the negative impacts of economic liberalisation at the demand and production side of the supply chain. Under this model of neoliberalised forest governance, economic measures are introduced to mitigate the alleged externalities of forest protection and community rights (Kopnina, 2016a; Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina, 2016). Relatedly, the de-regulation of the globalised market economy and related processes of privatisation and restructuring have led to a form of hybrid governance in supply chains in which non-state actors are adopting the role of the government in managing supply chain sustainability and deforestation (Delabre et al., 2019). To increase the sustainability of supply chains, these public-private partnerships are embracing commodification and privatisation as a means of mitigating deforestation, including payments for ecosystem services (PES). PES offers incentives for the management of land, in order to produce or maintain ecosystem services (e.g., the benefits humans derive from non-human nature). Voluntary forestry certification schemes and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) are key examples of PES in forest conservation.

The nature of these forms of neoliberal governance carry a high risk of environmental and ecological injustice. Certification schemes utilise market demand to conserve forests and encourage responsible forest management. However, the managerial approaches of voluntary certification schemes often occur 'top-down' and cause injustice through market access, exploitation, and the unequitable distribution of resources (Kopnina, 2016a). Due to states' and supply chain actors' widespread failures in stemming deforestation and the violation of the rights of forest communities, these schemes are often led by private actors, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and the Forest Stewardship Council, and represent a mode of "re-regulation" through a "voluntary, third-party regulatory mechanism" (Klooster, 2010; Byerlee and Rueda, 2015). Yet, communities

are often excluded from the profits of natural 'commodities'; the schemes carry negative social impacts, such as land conflicts and loss of livelihood, and forest plantation certification favour plantations in the Global North over the Global South (Kopnina, 2016a: Klooster, 2010).

Relatedly, Martin et al. (2013) note that whilst PES schemes such as REDD+ offer some incentives to conserve biodiversity, payments are often conditional on local communities adhering to dominant (e.g., neoliberal, capitalist) ways of knowing and conserving nature. This process fails to accommodate the diverse relationships between human and non-human nature and excludes forest communities from full participation in environmental matters that affect them. Moreover, these schemes can be implemented in ways that violate forest peoples' community rights, such as free, prior, and informed consent and the right to participate in environmental matters. This was outlined in a report on REDD+ projects in Indonesia, Mozambique, and Peru, in which communities were denied the full project benefits, were either not consulted or could not give consent, and local knowledge was ignored (Friends of the Earth International, 2014). Effectively, voluntary standards led by private actors cannot make the extreme level of global demand for forest risk commodities "environmentally sustainable or socially equitable" (Klooster, 2010, p. 127; see also Byerlee and Rueda, 2015).

Whilst these activities arguably represent 'sustainable' development, it is debateable as to whether they balance the environmental and social pillars in proportion to the economic. For example, commodification and privatisation are grounded in a disconnect in the relationship between nature with its own intrinsic value, social well-being, and economic growth. Market-based approaches rupture the links between the sustainability pillars by eliminating the intrinsic and finite value of non-human nature through anthropocentric processes of commodification. Moreover, divergent framings of sustainability expressed in contrasting modes of governance by

private actors risk the exclusion of "more sustainable, alternative approaches to governing forests and supply chains" (Delabre et al., 2019, p. 1). Implementation of sustainable development has therefore been irregular due to neoliberalisation. The neoliberalisation of forest risk commodity supply chains and forest conservation under existing modes of sustainable development further a disconnect between human and non-human nature. The intrinsic value of non-human nature is displaced across the supply chain whilst forest communities are treated as separate from their environment and removed from decision-making processes.

The above argument indicates that there is a need to reconnect (or more aptly, re-embed) human society and the economy with non-human nature, especially in the context of a global post-COVID-19 recovery. Whilst the COVID-19 lockdowns *temporarily* brought a decline in pollution, GHG emissions, and global travel (Rume and Islam, 2020; Cheval et al., 2020; Yunus et al., 2020; European Environment Agency, 2020), it is unlikely to be sustained in the long-term via the global campaign to 'build back better' (OECD, 2020; Rametsteiner, 2020). There is already evidence of the rebound effect in the energy sector and a high possibility of a rebound in carbon emissions (IEA, 2021; Li and Li, 2021), which threatens a return to 'business as usual' market society.

Restoring the socio-natural connection is fundamental if there is a true commitment to 'building back better' after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this cannot be achieved if there is a continued disconnect through neoliberal processes. A central tenet of 'building back better' is the need to first acknowledge, and then foster, the interconnected and non-binary relationship between human and non-human nature that allow supply chains to exist in the first place. This is a significant task for law and policymakers worldwide. In addition to national and regional 'green' recovery strategies, the UN has released a series of 'recover better' policy documents in relation to a sustainable COVID-19 recovery, such as Policy

Brief no. 88. This brief identifies sustainable forestry management finance as a central component to this recovery (UN DESA, 2020). Whilst it recognises the role forests play in the COVID-19 recovery, the brief continues to frame forests as sources of income, jobs, and services, rather than from a lens of intrinsic value or human-nature connectivity.

Furthermore, economic development and the market economy has often been prioritised at the expense of the health and wellbeing of communities, an imbalance which has been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research into the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that social, health, and environmental inequality (amongst other intersectional inequalities) remains a major issue for communities in both the Global North and the Global South (Chen et al., 2021; Gaynor and Wilson, 2020; Marmot and Allen, 2020). Notwithstanding the fact that this represents an ongoing human-nature dichotomy, it also evidences a fundamental disconnect between the aspirations of international environmental governance and what occurs in practice. As such, COVID-19 has illuminated the impact of the neoliberal economy on how humans experience their environments and also the impact on non-human nature itself. The pandemic has unveiled how market-driven environmental degradation has made disadvantaged human and non-human populations vulnerable to climate change and future pandemics. The intersectional climate, environmental, and public health crises require an equitable recovery that effectively addresses socio-natural inequalities, ecological degradation, and biodiversity loss.

Arguably, the capacity to achieve socio-naturally and economically resilient notions of sustainability requires a turn towards new methods that foster a sense of connectivity between humans, non-humans, and the environment in which these diverse assemblages interact. One way to accomplish this is a reimagination of sustainable development approaches. However, in the aim of a global pandemic recovery, a return to business-as-usual threatens this progress. It is crucial that states continue to ‘maximise

synergies' for connectivity between the SDGs at local, global, and national scales (Griggs et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2018). This integration can be partly achieved through a renewed commitment to the equitable governance of socio-natures in the management forest risk commodity supply chains. However, it also requires a reimagining of what 'sustainability' means to the Global North and Global South and requires an overhaul of the anthropocentricity in existing measures. As Adelman (2018, pp. 30-31) argues, the present conception of the SDGs "hold fast to neoliberalism" and "fail to reconcile the contradiction between growth and sustainability at the core of sustainable development". Business-as-usual forms of weak sustainability are simply a turn back to the prioritisation of economic growth and anthropocentric, reductionist views of poverty reduction and environmental regulation. Sustainable development cannot continue to be presented as a 'win-win' solution in its current form, where there remains a risk of injustice to non-human nature and forest communities and value chain policy measures remain anthropocentric in essence. In reality, a reimagining of the current frameworks of sustainability is likely required to reconcile the competing agendas of economic growth under neoliberal capitalism with equitable protection of human and non-human interests, without compromising one at the expense of the other.

3. Wild Law: A Just (Re)Connection for a Post-COVID World

Arguably, the post-COVID-19 recovery centres on anthropocentric goals such as a 'green' economic recovery and human health rather than overcoming the human-nature disconnect. It is therefore questionable whether existing approaches to environmental law are suitable for rectifying such dysconnectivity, especially as environmental law is in essence, liberalised "development law" (Leane, 1998, p. 21; see also M'Gonigle and Takeda, 2013). Those who are negotiating the legal boundaries of post-COVID-19 recoveries must overcome the challenge highlighted by

Bosselmann (2011) of formulating laws that concomitantly provide sufficient protection for non-human nature, protect present human generations, and prevent irreparable harm to future generations.

This article identifies a key synergy in the field of Wild Law, which merges the legal and ecological domains in aim of Earth justice. As the primacy of social justice excludes the intrinsic value of non-human nature, it is necessary to reconnect the social (i.e., environmental) dimension of justice with ecological justice (e.g., "forest protection for the sake of non-humans") (Kopnina, 2016a, p. 29). Reimagining sustainability in line with the principles of Wild Law is one way to reform international environmental governance whilst facilitating a synergy between human and non-human nature for Earth justice.

Wild Law is premised on the notion of Earth Jurisprudence, which encompasses the intrinsic connection between the human and non-human natural world and recognises the interdependence of the rights of Earth in itself and each human and non-human member of the Earth Community, who exist within the sacred whole of the Earth System (Berry, 1999; Burdon, 2011; Cullinan, 2011a). The central aim of Earth Jurisprudence is to reimagine legality and human-centric governance and bridge the dissonance emanating from dualist notions of 'society' and 'nature.' It follows that Wild Law is premised on (re)connection: it is a means of breaking down the "false dichotomy between 'wild' and 'law', between 'nature' and 'civilisation' that we need to overcome" (Cullinan, 2011a, p. 30). In practice, Wild Law requires ecocentric legislative frameworks that reconnect human "lived-in environments" with natural environments, also known as the "wild" (Rodgers, 2011, p. 185). Prioritising ecocentric laws will be an equitable way of promoting economic recovery whilst dismantling neoliberal processes in environmental governance. As such, a recovery based on Wild Law principles presents the opportunity to transform law from a regulatory mechanism into a useful tool to reconnect humans with the environment.

The anthropocentric notions of nature, society, and the market must be reconnected under this philosophy of Earth Jurisprudence. A Wild Law approach will help foster connectivity between human and non-human nature and the economy by reducing the anthropocentricity of law and policy and by recognising that human society and the SDGs are part of the broader Earth system. The task for lawmakers is to bridge the human/wild (e.g., nature) dichotomy and challenge the laws, conventions, and policies that further this discord. This will likely require both a reimagination of existing laws as well as the creation of new, ecologically holistic frameworks. A Wild Law approach will also require lawmakers take steps towards a socio-environmentally (i.e., human) *and* ecologically (i.e., non-human) just economic recovery, whilst preventing the irreversible consequences of ecological degradation in the future. This is because Earth Jurisprudence is premised on notions of diversity, recognition, and restorative justice, which must be equally accessible to all members of the Earth Community (Cullinan, 2011b, p. 13). Under this approach, any post-COVID-19 recovery plans must strengthen the relationship between all members of the Earth Community and give equitable, legally enforceable weight to the rights and interests of non-human nature, as well as the rights and interests of both the diverse global community and future generations.

4. Conclusion

A post-pandemic recovery that is premised on the anthropocentric neoliberalisation of complex ecosystems with the aim of controlling for the negative externalities of capitalist economic growth will not be sustainable, or just, in the long-term. The neoliberal discourse only serves to deepen the disconnect within sustainable development initiatives and the SDGs, and consequently, the separation between human society and the natural world. Complex and inter-linked issues that occur alongside (and at times as a direct consequence of) market failure, such as poverty, pandemic risk, biodiversity

loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change, show that market-driven means cannot achieve equitable, connected, and just forms of planetary well-being. Moreover, there can be no 'win-wins' if inequality is at the core of the process. The example of sustainable forest risk commodity supply chains shows the crucial need to halt biodiversity loss and reimagine forest governance to avoid furthering an unjust, ontological, and epistemological dualism between human and non-human nature in which humans are separate from and superior to the non-human natural world. Yet, long-term, just sustainability will be dependent on whether decision-makers eliminate market fundamentalism in these frameworks and address long-standing, unsustainable economic growth and consumption patterns, particularly in the Global North. Without a flourishing, (re)connected Earth system that safeguards the rights and interests of *all* members of the Earth Community, human and non-human alike, there can be no 'sustainable' development.

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