

CHANGING THE RULES, CHANGING THE SYSTEM

WRITER: HANA BEGOVIC, EARTH ADVOCACY YOUTH

WHY IS IT TIME TO CHANGE THE RULES?

In many countries and human cultures around the world, non-human living systems and entities are seen as human-owned objects whose reason for existence is to be commodified, exploited and used for human benefit and economic profit. This is today's dominant narrative and permeates almost all spaces in which economic power is fostered and decision-making occurs. It expresses human authority over other life on Earth and does not provide the rest of the natural world with any legal standing in a human court of law.

This is concerning because by maintaining this dichotomy in governance systems built upon anthropocentric violence against other life on Earth, humanity is contributing to the irreversible collapse of countless ecosystems. Additionally, today's dominant narrative expresses and confirms a human authority which defies the natural laws that govern the planet's living systems. These destructive structures only benefit the few, jeopardize the rights to life, dignity and respect of the many, and unmercifully destroys the preconditions for life.

A pillar within this narrative is how "Nature" is often spoken about, through an insidious lens of a dichotomy that not only separates "human" from "Nature" but also, arrogantly enough, fundamentally suggests that humans are somehow superior to and therefore "masters" of "Nature". I call this a cognitive separation, which portrays "Nature" as something that exists outside of ourselves. As if it is something external from us. Disconnected from humans.

This way of looking at ourselves and the world around us is contributing to the collapse of ecosystems across the planet. Ecosystems that also deserve to exist and thrive in and of themselves as well as to enable human existence, through the interconnected and crisscrossing relationships that make up the complex web of life on this planet.

The Ecocide Law movement which calls for the introduction of an international law of ecocide is a growing global movement. It aims to stop widespread, systematic, and severe mass damage and destruction of ecosystems by making the large scale destruction of ecosystems a crime.

In my 26 years of existence, I can say that I have witnessed how human activity is severely damaging the global commons such as the oceans and the Earth's living systems. What this movement is working successfully towards is a law that, as Polly Higgins said in 2015, "has a higher moral authority, [...], starts from first do no harm, stops this dangerous game and takes us to a place of safety". If passed, this law would recognise ecocide as an international crime, more specifically the fifth international Crime against Peace. It would join the existing four crimes of the international criminal court: Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes, and Crimes of Aggression.

No matter where the systemic damage of an ecosystem occurs, it would hold individuals and companies liable under international law. This jurisdiction would stand above all other jurisdictions and the individuals who are responsible for funding, permitting or causing this harm would be subject to criminal prosecution by the International Criminal Court.

Having this law in place would make a significant difference, firstly because it would be clear in no uncertain terms that the large scale destruction of non-human living systems is a moral crime. Secondly, activities that are defined as being criminal would not be able to access legitimate insurance or investment.



For me, "Nature" is a process I am intrinsically part of. It is the web of life composed of interactive and reciprocal relationships that connect every organism on Earth into one planetary and complex interdependent ecosystem. Nature is not an object nor a collection of objects, but a process of crisscrossing interconnected relationships.

I believe we as a human society must understand that we are Nature too. Nature lives within us and around us because we as humans are Nature too. In which ways am I so intrinsically interlinked? Here's one: At this moment, I carry 1.5 kgs of air, "non-human" Nature in me. Without it, I die. Let's throw in a second example. A 2018 study found that human cells make up only 43 percent of the body's total cell count and what remains are microscopic creatures. If this is true, where does "microbe" within me end and "human" begin?

What is my point? I cannot separate myself from the water I drink, the food I eat, or the air I breathe.

The Earth system as a whole is facing an onslaught that is currently taking it beyond its capacity to self-heal and that affects each and every one of us, including future generations who have an intrinsic right to live in a healthy world that is richly diverse in species and life.

There is hope. Human society must change the rules to protect all of Nature and when I say Nature, I mean to protect the natural world that we are essentially part of.

To support the campaign for an international law of Ecocide, to change the rules for all of Nature, please sign the international petition and sign up as an Earth Protector today:

<https://www.stopecocide.earth/become>

THANK YOU FOR READING,

Hana Begovic

Director at Earth Advocacy Youth

www.earthadvocacy-youth.org

Proud Earth Protector

