

# MORE THAN HUMAN RIGHTS

An Ecology of Law, Thought and  
Narrative for Earthly Flourishing

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# *Los Cedros Case:* **Social Movements, Judges, and the Rights of Nature**

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Human rights has traditionally centered on human subjects. Today, social movements, policymakers, judges, and other actors are disrupting human rights' anthropocentric framework and institutional architecture, bringing the rights of nature to the fore. In this chapter, I will reflect on these efforts, drawing on my experience as a judge in the Ecuadorian Constitutional Court's *Los Cedros* case.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Constitutional Court of Ecuador (rapporteur judge Agustín Grijalva Jiménez), Judgment for case no. 1149–19-JP/20, Constitutional Court of Ecuador, Quito D.M., November 10, 2021, <http://celdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Los-Cedros-Decision-ENGLISH-Final.pdf>.

To begin, we must understand the rights of nature to be multi-dimensional rights. This means that they are intercultural, interdisciplinary, and systemic, and that they have the potential to intersect with and transform the field of human rights.

In this chapter I focus on this relationship between rights of nature and human rights, a relationship embodied in a convergence of support for rights of nature by diverse groups of participants. I will examine the biocentric understandings and actions of these participants, whose ranks include social movements and organizations, Indigenous peoples, farmers, scientists, local governments, artists, and others.<sup>2</sup> The *Los Cedros* case provides an instance of this convergence of diverse actors, who in this case contributed to the constitutional judges' deliberation on protecting the rights of nature.

## Facts and Rights in the Case

The *Los Cedros* case has attracted a good deal of attention in Ecuador and worldwide for several years, as it embodies some of the major contradictions and tensions between biodiversity and extractive activities, specifically large-scale metals mining. The case resulted in the declaration of the rights of Los Cedros, a cloud forest in Ecuador.

In the Ecuadorian Constitution, nature has rights. A forest, a river, a mangrove, a lagoon, a moor are ecosystems, and the constitution recognizes their rights to preserve their existence and their structure, to reproduce their natural cycles and functions, and to conserve their plant and animal life as well as their biotic and abiotic components.

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2 Sussex Sustainability Research Program, "Paraecologists for the Rights of Nature," August 30, 2022, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSDrFXTGrC4>.

In the case of Los Cedros Forest, the Ecuadorian Constitutional Court disallowed large-scale mining concessions granted in 2017 by the Ecuadorian government to the National Mining Company (Empresa Nacional Minera, or ENAMI), a public mining company, and Cornerstone, a private Canadian mining company, for violating the rights of nature. Specifically, the court found that the companies violated the cloud forest's rights, as well as the right to water, the human right to a healthy environment, and the surrounding communities' right to environmental consultation.

Such is the biodiversity of Los Cedros Forest that there is still no complete scientific knowledge of all of its species. The cloud forest is located at the confluence of the tropical Andes and the Andean Chocó in the northern highlands of Ecuador. Los Cedros is a megadiverse area inhabited by at least 178 different species of animals and plants at high risk of extinction, including the spectacled bear; the spider monkey, one of the world's rarest primates; and glass frogs, whose transparent skin allows you to see the inside of their bodies.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Los Cedros, by its cloud character, is the source of four rivers that provide clean water for human consumption, crops, and livestock for the farmers living near the forest.

The initial mining concessions overlapped 68 percent of the forest area. In August 2019, a letter to the Ecuadorian state signed by 1,200 scientists from around the world highlighted the biological

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3 Constitutional Court of Ecuador (rapporteur judge Agustín Grijalva Jiménez), Judgment for case no. 1149-19-JP/20, paragraph 117. Aurélie Chopard and William Sacher, "Megaminería y agua en Íntag: una evaluación independiente. Análisis preliminar de los potenciales impactos en el agua por la explotación de cobre a cielo abierto en Junín, zona de íntag, Ecuador," DECOIN, June 2017, DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.32663.27043. See also "Los Cedros Documentary," D. N., posted June 21, 2020, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Kd5ukLuyL4&t=45s>; and Los Cedros's website, <https://reservaloscedros.org/>.

richness of Los Cedros and requested its protection.<sup>4</sup> In November 2018, Cotacachi, a town municipality close to the forest, sued the Ministry of Environment for violating the rights of nature as well as the rights to a healthy environment, water, and environmental consultation by granting permission for the initial mining exploration. A first judge denied the action; then in June 2019, a court of appeals, the Imbabura Provincial Court, accepted the lawsuit because the farmers who would be affected by the mining activity had not been asked, a violation of their constitutional right to consultation.<sup>5</sup>

Since the provincial court did not rule on the violations of nature's rights established in the Ecuadorian Constitution and raised in the lawsuit, the Constitutional Court in May 2020 selected the case to issue binding jurisprudence on nature's rights. The constitutional court issued its ruling on November 10, 2012.<sup>6</sup>

The court's ruling declares that no permits can be granted to mining or any other extractive activity in this fragile ecosystem, as this would violate the rights of nature and, therefore, this forest and numerous endangered endemic species. The ruling recognizes this ecosystem and these species as inherently valuable and therefore that they deserve constitutional protection.

The *Los Cedros* ruling also highlights that nature's rights (including the right to a healthy environment and specifically to water) and the human right to participation (as with environmental consultation) are related and complementary. As the case illustrates, the preservation of an ecosystem directly affects people's water supply

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4 Marianne Brooker, "Scientists back protection of Los Cedros Reserve," *Ecologist*, August 24, 2020, <https://theecologist.org/2020/aug/24/scientists-back-protection-los-cedros-reserve>.

5 Constitutional Court of Ecuador (rapporteur judge Agustín Grijalva Jiménez), Judgment for case no. 1149-19-JP/20, paragraphs 17 to 20.

6 Constitutional Court of Ecuador (rapporteur judge Agustín Grijalva Jiménez), Judgment for case no. 1149-19-JP/20.

and the agricultural work of human communities that depend on this water source.

Additionally, this ruling applies the precautionary principle, established in article 73 of the Ecuadorian Constitution in the section on the rights of nature. According to this principle, extractive activities in Los Cedros Forest must be prohibited as a proportionate and appropriate measurement, considering the high risk of serious and irreversible damage that could lead to the extinction of species and the destruction of the ecosystem.

In summary, in this ruling, the constitutional court upholds the position of Cotacachi's mayor's office, numerous biologists from Ecuador and worldwide, Ecuadorian and international ecological organizations, farmers' organizations, artists, and opinion leaders, who for about twenty years have defended this forest as a site of immense biodiversity and a water source for surrounding communities.

The *Los Cedros* case has since then been invoked as a precedent in subsequent anti-mining lawsuits. The forest is located in the Intag Valley, where other species of animals and plants at risk of extinction have been found—including unknown or new species, such as the frogs *arlequín hocicuda* and *cobeta confusa*. These species were believed to be extinct and were rediscovered in the area in September 2020, just as another anti-mining lawsuit was taking place.<sup>7</sup> However, other mining concessions have been granted in the area, permitting activity that would destroy the habitat of these species and therefore the species themselves. In response to this situation, ecological and human rights organizations have submitted constitutional lawsuits drawing upon the precedent of *Los Cedros* case.<sup>8</sup>

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7 “International and Local Conservation Groups Condemn Ecuadorian Court’s Decision to Allow Copper Mining in Intag Valley Cloud Forests,” Amphibian Survival Alliance, March 22, 2022, <https://www.amphibians.org/news/intag-valley-harlequin-toad-rocket-frog/>.

8 See, for example, Lena Koehn, “Judicial Backlash against the Rights of

## The Role of Local Communities

The Intag Valley is located in northwestern Ecuador and covers an area of 1,489 square kilometers with altitudes ranging from four hundred to three thousand meters, providing great biodiversity and numerous water sources. The valley is inhabited by small and medium-sized farmers and ranchers who have formed numerous producers' organizations. The Intag Valley has a long history of social struggle dating back thirty years against medium- and large-scale mining concessions granted to transnational companies. The rural communities here, including those closest to Los Cedros, have been defending the remnants of cloud forest in this valley for many years. Through their community practices and drawing on their relationship with nature, these farmers and villagers have redefined several human rights, questioning their anthropocentric basis.

Further, by asserting the rights of nature through social protest and judicial actions, these communities have redefined the very notion of nature, as well as the human right to a healthy environment. In these ways, they have also developed an ecologically centered vision of other human rights, such as the rights to water, health, work, and participation. Initially, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Intag Valley was a colonization zone for agricultural settlers seeking their own land. At this time, national policies and legislation demanded the deforestation of the forests in order for settlers to occupy them and integrate them into agricultural production. When mining exploration first began in the Intag Valley in the 1990s, these activities were rejected by many local farmers. They decried the potential

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Nature in Ecuador,” *Verfassungsblog on Matters Constitutional*, April 27, 2023, <https://verfassungsblog.de/judicial-backlash-against-the-rights-of-nature-in-ecuador/>; and Karina Sotalin, “Intag apelará fallo que negó acción para consulta minera,” *El Comercio* (Quito), February 14, 2022, <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/politica/intag-fallo-consulta-mineria-corte.html>.



damage mining could cause: the possible contamination of water, soil erosion, and the displacement of entire communities from their territories.

It should be pointed out that the farmers' resistance in Intag Valley has entailed not only opposition to mining but also proposals for productive and employment alternatives for those who live in the area, as well as forest restoration activities. It was during the initial process of resistance to mining by the valley's farmers in the 1990s that local ecological organizations emerged. These groups, in partnership with national and international organizations, proposed productive projects adapted to Intag Valley's ecosystems, including agroecological initiatives, particularly coffee and bean production, cattle raising, ecotourism, and handicrafts. All these activities are tailored to the area's ecosystems and are perceived by most of the inhabitants as imperiled by mining development and resulting deforestation and water contamination. Local organizations have also developed environmental education processes, as well as social movements and legal actions against the mining concessions.

Several studies in anthropology and political ecology have analyzed how many Intag Valley farmers have transformed their views and practices—originally grounded in the deforestation of the valley's forests—and adopted a focus on agroecology and other biocentric practices. Conservation has become part of Intag Valley's tradition and culture, as some generations have learned from others both to restore nature and to mobilize to defend it. It is remarkable that farmers who a few years ago deforested to build their farms now protect and plant trees to help restore native species and protect the area's ecosystems.

Despite being one of the most isolated areas in the Intag Valley, Los Cedros Forest had to endure problems of deforestation and illegal logging even after being declared a protected forest in 1994. But socioenvironmental conflicts became even more acute in 2017 with the granting of mining concessions and environmental permits

precisely over most of the cloud forest area. For this reason, as stated above, the mayor's office of Cotacachi submitted in 2018 an action, known as "acción de protección," to local judges against the Ministry of Environment and mining companies alleging violation of nature, environmental, water, and participation rights.

The constant and active participation of Intag Valley's communities and organizations over the years and before the different judges who heard this and other constitutional action should be highlighted. Their mobilizations were crucial to making the constitutional litigation visible, first to the Provincial Court of Imbabura and then to the Ecuadorian Constitutional Court.

This process, however, was not free of tensions and conflicts. As in Intag Valley, in other areas of Ecuador, the granting of mining concessions has led to the splitting of local communities, their organizations, and even entire families. While some inhabitants oppose mining, other local people support it because mining companies employ some members of the community, including some community leaders, and provide some services or social assistance programs.

This polarization escalated in the case of another mining concession in Intag Valley, close to those granted in Los Cedros. This is the case of Llurimagua, a mining concession of large copper reserves granted to the companies Copper National Corporation of Chile (CODELCO) and ENAMI, which is in an advanced exploration phase and proximate to the Junín Community Reserve, which would imply the opening of a large-scale open-pit mine. Llurimagua was granted in concession in the 1990s to several foreign companies.<sup>9</sup> These companies have since been forced to abandon the concession because of opposition from the majority of Intag Valley's

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9 Carlos Zorrilla, "Ecuador's Ecuador's Problematic Llurimagua Mining Project," DECOIN, April 12, 2021, <https://www.decoin.org/2021/04/ecuadors-ecuadors-problematic-llurimagua-mining-project/>.

residents. The current concession holder is the Chilean company CODELCO and the public company ENAMI.

The Llurimagua project has led to confrontations, including violent ones; criminalization of social protest; and serious irregularities in the environmental impact study that have been observed by the Comptroller General of the State. Additionally, environmental consultation with potentially affected communities has not been adequately carried out, as mandated by the Constitution and Ecuadorian law.

The experience of Intag Valley demonstrates that, in rural areas, human communities can develop a nonutilitarian experience and view of nature. Such a framework requires a shift from an anthropocentric approach to a biocentric one in which communities see themselves as part of, and integrated into, the ecosystems in which they live. From this perspective, their forms of economic organization not only provide human sustenance, but they also simultaneously respect and adapt to the cycles and processes of nature. The forms of economic organization mentioned above explain how it has been possible for these communities to resist the offers of an accelerated and intense “development” by the state and the mining companies, particularly as these companies have even provided some jobs and services to some residents.

More importantly, however, for these communities, the protection of nature is not a matter of altruism; it is linked to the protection of their own lifestyle, their economic activities, and their physical and mental health. They therefore consider metallic mining a serious threat. These communities have proposed an alternative to development understood as mere economic growth: good living, which requires the search for harmony between human beings and nature, so that human rights and the rights of nature converge in a complementary relationship.

## Local Organizations’ and Local Governments’ Role

Intag Valley has a dense and strong network of community organizations. The Toisan Corporation, for example, brings together eleven community organizations of small and medium-sized farmers who live in the valley and are associated in each case as organizations of producers of coffee, honey, milk, beans, and other products, as well as economic initiatives of women and people dedicated to ecotourism or agroecology. This network of organizations has been able to communicate with parish councils, water boards, and other local governments, which, because of their proximity to the communities and the ecosystems at risk or affected, generally have greater knowledge, interest, sensitivity, and environmental commitment than the national authorities.

In Los Cedros, these community organizations actively supported the constitutional lawsuit filed by the mayor’s office of Cotacachi in 2008 against the Ministry of Environment and the mining companies, which resulted in the constitutional court’s ruling. Cotacachi is the closest town to Los Cedros Forest and is an intercultural community known for its important experiences in community organization and for being home to a number of Indigenous authorities. In 2008 the municipality of Cotacachi declared the Intag Valley a natural reserve, recognizing its biodiversity and hydric value. This area was expanded on April 18, 2019, institutionalizing a network of water management boards that extends over 129,967 hectares.<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that this convergence of social organizations and public institutions at the local level has also received support

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10 “Área de Conservación y Uso Sustentable - Municipal Íntag Toisán (ACUS - MIT); ACUSMIT, accessed September 11, 2023, <https://acusmit.wixsite.com/acusmit>.

from national and international environmental and human rights organizations. For instance, in the case of *Los Cedros*, the entire process was supported by numerous nongovernmental organizations, which made the conflict visible in Ecuador and at the international level. This campaign was also carried out through the media and social networks, both locally and internationally.

The presence of endangered species in *Los Cedros* undoubtedly helped to garner the support of this coalition of national and international organizations, making it possible to widely divulge the risks of mining concessions, scientific information, the position of the affected communities and of the government and mining companies, and the legal proceedings underway. During the court hearing, public participation was allowed and different positions on the issue were presented.

In its arguments, the mining industry emphasized legal certainty, the particular nature of *Los Cedros*, and the absence of a precedent in the constitutional court's ruling; the environmental organizations, on the other hand, compared *Los Cedros* not only with other protected forests in the Intag Valley but also with protected forests throughout the country, in many of which there are currently overlapping mining concessions.

It should be noted that the central government's position, in the *Los Cedros* case as in other mining conflicts in Intag Valley, was contradictory in many respects. First, and paradoxically, the Ministry of Environment itself, whose official aim is to protect biodiversity, does not acknowledge the importance of the biodiversity present in *Los Cedros* and other protected forests and limits itself to reproducing the arguments of the mining companies: that they have complied with all legal and regulatory requirements and procedures, and therefore stopping the mining activity would be a violation of legal certainty. The central government is simply ignoring nature in order to formulate a discourse on social rights, in particular the right to have a job, devoid of any ecological concern. In this process,

it also ignores productive alternatives, the social consequences of mining, and their relationship with human rights.

Secondly, the central state is failing to meet its obligations to guarantee the rights of nature and water, as well as the right to a healthy environment and to environmental consultation. This situation is especially alarming because, according to the Ecuadorian Constitution, the state is obliged to respect and enforce the rights enshrined in it, including the rights of nature.

A final serious outcome to consider is the potential delegitimization of the state resulting from its inaction or complicity in rights violations. The disruption or destruction of ecosystems demonstrates a clear lack of state control over the territory—a violation of the rights of nature that also contributes, as I have argued in this chapter, to the violation of related human rights.

## **The Role of Scientists**

From an orthodox legal and scientific perspective, the rights of nature have been criticized as a sort of throwback, a primitive and animist view of nature, a view incompatible with modern Western science and rational thinking. One reason for this probably is the high ontological and cognitive value that rights of nature give to Indigenous peoples' knowledge about nature. In fact, the rights of nature implies an intercultural perspective in the sense that it includes not only Western perspectives of nature but also the views of Indigenous and traditional communities around the world.

In contrast to the view of rights of nature as a sort of throwback, I argue that the rights of nature constitute, in fact, a more updated legal paradigm that draws on the most advanced developments in ecology, different branches of biology, critical geography, and several fields of social sciences and humanities. This interdisciplinary approach can greatly enhance our grasp of the relational

character of the human being, along with the systemic character of diverse natural phenomena. Nature's rights necessarily require a convergence of disciplines, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of ecosystems and processes.

The *Los Cedros* ruling clearly demonstrates both the contribution and the limits of Western science when it comes to knowledge and protection of ecosystems, as well as its role concerning public policies and judicial decisions. Western science has made a valuable legal contribution through its recognition of the complexity, richness, fragility, and nonnegotiable value of certain ecosystems, and of life in general. But the *Los Cedros* ruling also states, through the application of the precautionary principle to biodiversity, the limits of this knowledge. The ruling speaks to our ignorance about unknown species and highly complex biological processes in fragile ecosystems, as well as the risk of serious and irreversible damage as a result of uninformed extractive activities in this kind of ecosystem.

Yet *Los Cedros* also demonstrates that the defense of nature's rights requires scientists to play an active role in the courts, and in general, in order to provide information and analysis on biodiversity or species at risk—to judges and other public authorities, but also to the inhabitants, grassroots social organizations, companies, and the general public. Dozens of specialized scientists from several countries who over the years had conducted research in Los Cedros contributed to this case; their testimony allowed the court to understand the enormous biological richness of this forest, its species, and the systemic relationships that they maintain.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, 1,200 scientists from around the world signed a letter addressed to the

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11 See for instance reaction of world-known biologist Jane Goodall about Los Cedros ruling: Jane Goodall, "Jane Goodall Speaks in Support of the Los Cedros Protected Forest in Ecuador," Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature - GARN, posted December 15, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8rCvQs5GL4&t=4s>.

Ecuadorian Constitutional Court supporting the conservation of Los Cedros Forest stopping mining concessions.<sup>12</sup>

The role of the scientific community in the case of *Los Cedros*, in fact, partly compensated for the absence of objective technical information from a public government entity. It became evident that the Ministry of the Environment, as a body dependent on the executive branch, did not have biological information on Los Cedros or did not want to present it before the Court. Several judges noted their surprise that this ministry (and certainly the mining companies) did not say a word about the biological diversity of this forest. This serious deficiency shows the institutional need for independent and technical public environmental agencies to provide objective and sufficient information on the biological biodiversity at risk from extractive activities.

Thanks to this contribution from the scientific community in *Los Cedros*, the court had no doubts as to the high intrinsic value of the biodiversity of this protected forest. This scientific information substantiated the claim that the rights of species and ecosystems to live and maintain their cycles had been violated. The court was therefore able to issue a ruling that developed the content of these rights of nature.

However, the value and necessity of scientific information on specific ecosystems also implies a challenge and even a limitation for local communities and organizations that do not have it or cannot obtain it. It should be considered, for example, that many constitutional actions do not have the wide scientific support that was available in *Los Cedros*. In fact, just a few months after the *Los Cedros* ruling, a judge in the southern province of Loja denied a constitutional action filed by members of the Gualiel community against four mining concessions, arguing that the appellants had

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12 See The Ecologist, 24 August 2020: <https://theecologist.org/2020/aug/24/scientists-back-protection-los-cedros-reserve>



not demonstrated that endemic or endangered species existed in the corresponding area.<sup>13</sup>

The scientific community must therefore develop strategies to provide this information to local and environmental communities, Indigenous groups, and human rights organizations that seek to protect the rights of nature. Public institutions also need to be able to provide this independent scientific information.

In fact, a major problem in socioenvironmental conflicts, and when these conflicts are brought before the court, is the generation of biased scientific information by the state and mining companies. In Ecuador, for example, many environmental impact studies of mining projects in more advanced stages than those in Los Cedros do not achieve minimum technical standards and serve to legitimize mining activity rather than provide accurate information on its effects.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, it is also necessary to recognize the limits of scientific knowledge since it is not inherently neutral. There are also other types of know-how that are very important in the protection of nature, such as the knowledge, practices, and values of Indigenous peoples, peasants, fishermen, and ancestral communities. In the *Los Cedros* ruling, scientific knowledge was treated as complementary to these other types of knowledge. The ruling includes and analyzes the knowledge of researchers and academics, especially biologists, as well as those of the people living near the forest.

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13 Doménica Montaña, “El caso Fierro Urco, explicado,” GK, June 2, 2022, <https://gk.city/2022/06/02/caso-fierro-urco-explicado-estrella-hidrica-sur-mineria/>.

14 See for instance Francisco Miguel dos Santos Venes, “Revisión crítica del Estudio de Impacto Ambiental para la fase de exploración avanzada del proyecto de minería metálica Llurimagua” (master’s thesis, Flacso Ecuador, Quito, Ecuador, 2014), [https://www.flacsoandes.edu.ec/sites/default/files/%25f/agora/files/francisco\\_dos\\_santos\\_venes\\_-\\_revisi%C3%B3n\\_cr%C3%ADtica\\_llurimagua.pdf](https://www.flacsoandes.edu.ec/sites/default/files/%25f/agora/files/francisco_dos_santos_venes_-_revisi%C3%B3n_cr%C3%ADtica_llurimagua.pdf).

In fact, the appreciation of this community knowledge is one of the several reasons to consult, and not only to inform those communities that may be affected by the environmental impacts of productive projects. It is these communities, due to their daily coexistence with the ecosystems, who can and should also provide input on the needs, possible damages, adaptations, regulations, and prohibitions associated with productive projects in these ecosystems.

In summary, the role of science in nature's rights contains several tensions. On the one hand, the contribution of scientists is fundamental and necessary, since these rights require an interdisciplinary approach. On the other hand, contrary to what happened in Los Cedros, there is often a lack of or a bias in the scientific information, due to the absence of truly independent public institutions to generate it. Finally, scientific knowledge must be complemented by that of the communities involved, and environmental consultation is one important form their participation can take.

## **Role of the Artists**

Art played an important role in both the constitutional process and the social process of the *Los Cedros* case. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the judges of the Ecuadorian Constitutional Court were not able to visit the forest in person in order to have a hearing with the surrounding communities and directly observe the biodiversity of the forest, as the Provincial Court of Imbabura had previously done. Artists were the ones who, through their creativity and intense activity on social networks, generated various means of representing the ecosystem and raising awareness of the dangers of extractive activities.

The artists showed the biodiversity of the place and its unique character not only to the judges but also to Ecuador and the world. Musicians, filmmakers, photographers, poets, and theater artists

were the eyes that allowed us to see, feel, and gain a better understanding of what was at risk.<sup>15</sup> In fact, this artistic dimension of the campaign for Los Cedros began long before the pandemic and had developed over several years. But its contribution at a moment when nearly the entire jurisdictional process was carried out virtually was remarkable.

Further, these artistic interventions vividly illustrated the confluence of the rights of nature and the human right to a healthy environment. They were able to display both the inherent value of the forest and its species, and the importance of the forest and water to neighboring rural communities. Since Los Cedros is the headwaters of four rivers whose water is vital for the surrounding communities, water constitutes a fundamental link between the forest and the people. Water is a human right as well as a key element in natural cycles, and therefore in the rights of ecosystems. For this reason, the social organizations proposed that “water *is more valuable than gold.*” Artistic interventions constantly highlighted this idea.

Although the sentence in the *Los Cedros* case has already been issued by the Court, the artists are today still contributing to its symbolic projection, transcending borders between countries, disciplines, and cultures. There are currently several documentary projects and theatrical and literary performances taking place in different countries, such as a new book by Robert Macfarlane in the United Kingdom, or its inclusion in a piece by the Theatre of the Anthropocene in Germany.<sup>16</sup>

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15 See, for example, “Yupaychani,” Observatorio Ecuador, posted October 18, 2020, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-mGbJNSdv0>.

16 “Robert MacFarlane, Author of *The Lost Words*, Visits Los Cedros Reserve,” Rainforest Concern, February 2, 2023, <https://www.rainforestconcern.org/news/robert-macfarlane-author-of-the-lost-words-visits-los-cedros-reserve>. See also the Theatre of the Anthropocene, <https://xn--theater-des-anthropozn-15b.de/en/the-theatre/>.

## The Convergence of Knowledge and Actions

In conclusion, the *Los Cedros* case shows how the rights of nature and the right to a healthy environment and other human rights are different but complementary. This complementarity is evident in encounters between the knowledge and community practices of Intag Valley's farmers and those of scientific researchers, environmental and human rights organizations, and local public institutions.

From the perspective of Intag Valley's farmers, it is necessary to ensure nature's rights in order to be able to live in a healthy environment. It is impossible to obtain one without the other. In other words, the health of nature, the balance of its ecosystems, the functioning of its processes, and the survival of its species are essential in order for human beings to have a healthy environment.

Yet human benefit is not the only objective of ecosystem equilibrium. On the contrary, ecological balance can only be obtained when we have a more-than-human perspective, when we go beyond this utilitarian anthropocentrism and understand human beings in a different relationship with nature. That is, humans need a different vision and praxis in relation to themselves. This new ontology therefore also results in a new anthropology. When nature is healthy, human beings can develop productive, sustainable processes that genuinely contribute to the exercise of human rights. This vision ultimately implies a new kind of equality between human beings and nature, equality in which the two are viewed in an integrated and therefore integral way—where human beings rediscover themselves and take responsibility as part of a whole of which they have always been a part.