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# Editorial: Decolonizing human and non-human coexistence

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## Editorial on the Research Topic

### Decolonizing human and non-human coexistence

Sustainability concerns focus on conserving and managing natural resources and cultural landscapes. Measures related to policy, risk reduction, knowledge building, and environmental awareness could arguably be described as ecological colonization of places, land, and territory. While some actions face little debate, others spark discussions about the justification for decisions that affect local livelihoods, including evictions under the guise of habitat protection. This Research Topic explored how the restoration and preservation of nature intersect with social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions in the Anthropocene. This call was made against the understanding that this intertwinement must be critically explored since nature plays “critical role in providing food and feed, energy, medicines and genetic resources and a variety of materials fundamental for people’s physical well-being and for maintaining culture” (IPBES, 2019, p. 10), while also being immensely important to the cultural identities and cosmologies of people living in environments impacted by socioecological change (Corvin et al., 2023).

As highlighted in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a recurrent theme in environmental anthropology (e.g., Brosius et al., 2005; Kopnina and Shoreman-Ouimet, 2013; McDermott and Nic Craith, 2024), restoring and preserving nature is complex. The decline of pollinators like honeybees, vital for food production, underscores how socioecological change exacerbates habitat destruction, disease, and climate change (Ramos-Jiliberto et al., 2020). Recent research links biodiversity loss to increased zoonotic diseases (Keesing and Ostfeld, 2021) and highlights its role in poverty, malnutrition, and food insecurity (Simón Gutiérrez, 2020; Norgaard, 2019; Whitmee et al., 2015). However, efforts to address biodiversity decline can also have unintended cultural consequences, such as the loss of heritage and ontological insecurity (Giddens, 1993), where indigenous groups face displacement due to infrastructure projects like dams, mines, and national parks. Social justice movements are increasingly advocating for cultural rights, food sovereignty, and environmental justice, including respecting the rights of Indigenous and local people (Dhillon, 2022; NDN Collective, 2021).

The contributions to this Research Topic explore how restoring and preserving nature intersects with social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions in the Anthropocene.

The six articles cover topics such as collaborative governance in Sweden to amplify diverse voices (Lopez-Angarita et al.), using music folklore to raise awareness of socioecological change in the Colombian Caribbean (Lopez-Angarita et al.), the role of social relations and justice in legitimizing large carnivore conservation (Larsson et al.), spiritual connections through river restoration in a U.S. Indian Tribe Reservation (Stoffle et al.), conflicts between Sámi Indigenous people and environmentalists in Finland (Nyyssönen et al.), and the displacement of the Chenchu people in India due to tiger conservation (Nyyssönen et al.). These articles examine the complex relationship between humans and nature, emphasizing the global and local dimensions of coexistence. Empirical evidence and ethnographies describe lived lifelong social learning processes in well-being and coping with adversity. The contributions draw important attention to the comforting, contradictory, disturbing, or supportive dimensions of the actions, strategies, policies, and the ideological, experience-based, and worldview-shaped conceptual frames that embed the co-existence of humans and non-humans. While restoration and re-wilding can be potential solutions for ecosystem conservation that may lead to increased biodiversity and increased ecosystem function, we simultaneously see a need for critical debate regarding their implementation. These should aim to achieve greater resilience - positive adaptability and transformability - alongside the more traditional aspects of cultural heritage conservation and management (Rajabi, 2025). The contributors argue that environmental communication can guide sustainable decisions and shift the focus from human-wildlife conflict to coexistence (Fiasco and Massarella, 2022; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2022).

The contributions in this Research Topic explore how people perceive and interact with nature, considering both human interactions and relationships with the environment. This context shapes our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. Achieving meaningful and just change depends on inclusively incorporating diverse values, whether instrumental (to achieve

human goals), intrinsic (inherent to nature), or a combination of both (van Ripper et al., 2019). Understanding the perspectives of concerned actors is crucial to channel attention to environmental perils and the communicative aspects of change and existence.

## Author contributions

AS-L: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. RS: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. KV: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. IM: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

## Conflict of interest

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