ON SOLID GROUND:
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE, ECOLOGY, AND EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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by

John A. Di Tillo

John Paul Lederach, Director

Graduate Program in Peace Studies
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Abstract

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Changes in Earth’s climate fuel increasingly heated debate in many fields, including Peace Studies, as the 21st century poses challenges that are unprecedented and unpredictable for the planet and its peoples. The “environment” is seen as both “threat multiplier” and “threat minimizer”, but global changes are always experienced locally, and analytical squabbles among scholars and high-level policymakers tend to obfuscate, distort, and eclipse human and ecological realities on the ground.

This thesis explores obstacles and opportunities for building a durable peace that aligns with Johan Galtung’s holistic vision: more than an absence of war, positive peace is marked by the presence of flourishing communities, both human and more-than-human. Peace, as an abstract, ideal state, can never be “achieved” by nations or the so-called Global Village. Peace, as a process and lived experience, can be only be embodied by communities – by places, inhabitants, and their interrelationships.
Rooted in the tradition of community-based research, this paper is the result of collaborations that bridge the world of academia and the “real” world. It asks questions about destruction and alienation, healing and reconnection, and seeks to address them through two case studies: (1) a land-based learning program at a K-Jr. High Montessori School, and (2) an expeditionary leadership program at Outward Bound Peacebuilding. By lifting up the voices of participants – children and adults – this project aims to listen and learn from initiatives that operate at the nexus of peacebuilding and the natural world, and to illuminate the promise they hold for meeting the challenges of the third millennium.
This is for Joe Joe.
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“There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places.”

– Wendell Berry

“But man is a part of nature,
and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself.”

– Rachel Carson

“If salvation and help are to come, it is from the child.”

– Maria Montessori, M.D.

“Plus est en vous” [There is more in you than you think]

– Kurt Hahn
Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

“What does working on a farm or hiking through a forest have to do with peace?” The answer(s) to this question will vary, naturally, depending on whom you ask and just what kind of farm, forest, and peace you are talking about. This paper presupposes that humans will not find another Earth-like planet to colonize anytime soon, which means we will have to figure out ways of making the most of life on this one. In a 2007 volume of essays entitled The Future of Nature and selected by Barry Lopez, the various authors grapple with the problem of finding pathways to a “livable future” for both humans and the Earth. Peter Sauer sums it up:

“There is a relationship between the toxicity of the continent we live on, the prison system we maintain, and the price of a bushel of corn (less than Corn Flakes) or the price of gas (less than bottled water). What’s haywire in America [sic], this increasingly farmless “supermarket to the world,” is not merely our relationship to the land, but to each other and to the rest of the world.” (1999, p. 13)

Might Sauer be onto something? If so, the implications for peacebuilding research and practice are not few: the global and local are interconnected; social concerns and issues of the land, air, and water (i.e. the “environment”) are interrelated; and the crux lies in
how people interact – in relationships. Of course, there is no one way to “do” peace.

Like a flock of birds in flight, efforts at building peace take many forms (Lederach, 2005, p.32). Any attempt at understanding just what is haywire in the US and beyond, however, must begin by asking hard questions about roots, relationships, structures, and transformation – questions as old as the hills: Where are we? How did we get here? Where are we going?

1.2 Background

This paper takes its origin in conversations with children and youth in rural and urban educational spaces in North America and the Caribbean, colleagues in a Peace Studies degree program at a Midwestern university, and peacebuilders from all over the world. These exchanges, though different, are unified in unanswered questions: What if systems-thinking, an emerging lens in Peace Studies (Lederach, 1997, 2005; Ricigliano, 2012; Schirch, 2013), is expanded to include ecosystems? What if more than a relatively small cadre of credentialed practitioners were to consider themselves peacebuilders? What does the field of education have to learn from peacebuilding, and vice versa? This line of inquiry involves engagement with a wide range of material, from academic scholarship, blogs, journalism, and films, to work “in the field” and the fields themselves. Indeed, it might not be a “line” at all, but rather a thread that weaves together a series of spheres.

I am not the first to wonder about the human-Earth nexus. Discussions on the overlap of social and environmental issues are increasingly common – and contested –
in the public and private domains and in between. There are at least three common assumptions, implicit and pervasive, that I am not comfortable with and aim to problematize. They are:

- The current planetary “ecological crisis” is plain to see, so it is only a matter of raising awareness and finding (and agreeing!) on the right solution(s).

- The problems of the 21st century can best be solved by “experts” through narrow foci and a linear, step-by-step approach. Of course, these experts are all adults.

- Faster is better. More is always more. Impatience is a virtue.

In the pages that follow, I seek to challenge these assumptions, the reader, and myself. My aim is to follow foundational peace scholar Johan Galtung’s (1990) advice to avoid the mistake of doing peace-related research with a sole focus on “war avoidance studies”, and instead to try to understand the challenges of building a durable peace (p. 293). Such a project will require a journey of sorts, a tracing of relationships through complex and messy terrain. It is, in large part, an attempt to facilitate uncommon conversations among perspectives on peace, ecology,¹ and education.

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¹ A note on word choice. “Environment” is an abstract term meaning “environs”, which can refer to the surroundings of someone or something, but has come to signify the global biosphere. “Ecology”, on the other hand, indicates the “branch of science dealing with the relationship of living things to their environments.” The term was coined by German zoologist Ernst Haeckel and is derived from the Greek oikos, “house, dwelling place, habitation,” and logia, “study of.” Ecology is more apt for the purposes of this paper due to its precision in dealing with the interactions of particular people, plants, animals, and landscapes.
1.3 Plan

This paper is organized into four chapters followed by two case studies based on original research. The first chapter, “Peace and Nature”, asks *Where are we?* and explores the role of the natural world in peace scholarship and in on-the-ground peacebuilding work. Sections on natural resources, climate change, and environmental peacebuilding demonstrate how nature has been understood as both boon and bane for building peace. The second chapter, “Structures and Violence”, asks *How did we get here?* It interrogates the dominant models for building peace and identifies forms of violence that are often obscured by the status quo. Drawing from stories and research in both the Global North and the Global South,² I consider what is at stake when the health of local communities and ecosystems is missing from frameworks for peace and “development.” The third chapter, “Reconnecting,” asks *Where are we going?* In this chapter, I lift up work that examines human-nature interconnectivity and re-places and redefines “progress” in terms of social and ecological justice at the local and “trans-local” levels. The fourth chapter, “Education and Peace,” asks *How might we get there?* and considers the central role of education – including schooling, training, and alternative modes of teaching/learning – in the formation of ways of seeing and being in the world.

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² Most “developed” countries are located in the Northern Hemisphere, whereas the majority of “underdeveloped” countries are located in the South. These are loose geographic distinctions, whereas “Western” refers to nation-states and institutions that derive from Europe and its cultures. The terms Global North and Western are used more-or-less interchangeably in the literature and throughout this paper.
The case studies represent original community-based field research, where the process and findings are designed to contribute toward the liberating work of people who live in the real, breath-and-blood world. Inspired by a humanizing research framework (Winn & Paris, 2014), both case studies explore programs that implement experiential methods of education. The first case entails an analysis of surveys and in-depth interviews of adult participants in a ten-day expeditionary conflict resolution and leadership training program with Outward Bound Peacebuilding in Costa Rica. The second case study focuses on participant-observation with the land-based learning component at an urban Pre K – Jr. High Montessori School in the US. I also document a focus group conversation among the school’s alumni in order to glean their views on the program and what they learned from it.

A final, concluding chapter endeavors to take stock and synthesize the chapters and case studies that make up this thesis project. This offers an opportunity to look back over traversed terrain and point toward potential new directions for the taking.
Chapter 2:
PEACE AND NATURE – WHERE ARE WE?

2.1 Introduction

“Peace” and “nature” are two highly contested topics (Allan & Keller, 2006; Roach, 2003; Crist, 2004), which rely on “different normative, political, cultural and religious assumptions, values, and contexts” (Oswald Spring, Brauch, & Tidball, 2014, p. 2). In other words, people cannot seem to agree on what these words mean. Conca and Wallace (2009) point out that “the environment is not usually viewed as the most important problem in war-torn societies” notwithstanding the fact that warfare causes great damage to the natural environment, and human suffering and security issues have a “strong, immediate ecological component as people struggle for clean water, sanitation, food, and fuel” (p. 485). Early calls for increased emphasis on ecology in peace research have gone largely unheeded (Gjessing, 1967), drowned out by other issues such as rule of law, emergency “aid”, etc. The International Peace Research Association’s (IPRA) Ecology and Peace Commission states: “neither within peace research nor environmental studies have the manifold linkages between peace and ecology been systematically explored” (Oswald Spring, Brauch, & Tidball, p. 8). But the early years of the 21st century have seen wells dry up, earthquakes bring cities down,
and unprecedented tropical storms awaken many humans to the hard realities of their interrelationship with the planet they co-inhabit.

Peace and conflict scholars have made forays into considering the centrality of linkages between warfare and ecological degradation on both the micro and macro scale, citing “significant, indeed potentially catastrophic, impacts on local, regional and global environments” (Francis & Krishnamurthy, 2014, p. 854). The linkage receiving the most attention, however, has been that of human usage of certain elements of the ecosphere, i.e. “natural resources,” and the ways in which those resources may be managed or mismanaged (Conca & Wallace, 2009). Such a utilitarian view of the natural world endeavors to fit it into a conflict assessment framework as factors that are “drivers and mitigators” or “connectors and dividers” of conflict (Schirch, 2013, p. 68, 84). The following sections explore the ways in which the natural environment can drive or mitigate violent conflict.

2.2 Natural Resources: Blessing or Curse?

A 2009 report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) considers the role of “the environment” in conflict and peacebuilding: “While most acknowledge that numerous conflicts have been fuelled by natural resources, UN Member States are divided on how to address the linkages” (Matthew, Brown, & Jensen, 2009, p. 4). Contested issues include national sovereignty over land usage and the international free-flow of investment capital to meet increased demands of a booming human population. The UNEP report demonstrates how “the environment” may promote or
inhibit “security,” depending on how natural resources like minerals, water, and oil are managed by humans, with an emphasis on the “international community” helping “local communities” to “develop.” It fails, however, to account for the role of the international community in causing poverty and environmental degradation in the first place. The executive summary concludes: “Integrating environment and natural resources into peacebuilding is no longer an option – it is a security imperative” (p. 5). However, who makes decisions concerning complexities of the human-nature relationship and how they are to be integrated remain up in the air.

Literature on security, governance, and development has highlighted natural resource abundance as a bane contributing to crime, corruption, and conflict. Some call this the “resource curse” (Bannon & Collier, 2003; Humphreys, Sachs, & Stieglitz, 2007). Sierre Leone’s “blood diamonds” and the Democratic Republic of Congo’s “conflict minerals” are two classic examples.³ The basic argument holds that “natural resources foster recurring cycles of armed conflict because they provide a revenue base for belligerents, increase claims for secession, and perpetuate state fragility through incentives for corruption and mismanagement” (Wennmann, 2011, p. 265). Certification schemes like the Kimberley Process have been put in place to interrupt these cycles by ensuring a “conflict-clean” supply chain in the jewelry business. However, some of the Kimberley’s founding members have withdrawn, citing gaps and oversights that cause

³ The DRC is home to many mines for Coltan, a dull black metallic ore used in computers, phones, and most other electronics devices.
the Process to fall far short of stopping the worst violence and human rights abuses (Eligon, 2011; Rhode, 2014).

Just as with resource abundance, peace and conflict researchers have cited resource scarcity as a driver of conflict. Homer-Dixon and Percival (1998) identify three types of scarcity: supply-induced, demand-induced, and structural. Structural scarcity occurs when a marginalized or disadvantaged group is denied access to a vital resource, such as in the West Bank and Gaza, where the vast majority of water from underground aquifers is allocated to Israeli settlements for domestic use and commerce. This leaves Palestinians with very little – less than enough – safe water for drinking or pursuing their livelihoods (Homer-Dixon, 1994; Feldinger, 2013). It is clear who will suffer first and most if the aquifers dry up.

2.3 Changing Climates

Environmental changes, both human- and non-human-induced, have become a hot topic in the field of peace and conflict studies. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), comprised of thousands of leading scientists from around the world, cites unprecedented changes in global climate data:

“Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased.” (IPCC, 2013, p. 4)
Human activity, particularly the burning of nonrenewable fossil fuels and industrial land-use practices (including farming), represents a key contributing factor to atmospheric changes. But while the IPCC (2013) forecasts a likely global rise in temperature of 2 degrees Celsius (about 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) by the year 2100 (p. 20), the precise impacts of a warmer world are unpredictable and will undoubtedly vary from continent to continent, region to region, and place to place. The scientific community agrees, however, that a warmer planet will have severe side effects, including “droughts, floods, forest fires, hurricanes, and mass extinctions” (McArthur, 2013, p. 174). These are already in process. Additional anthropogenic (human-caused) environmental changes include “deforestation, soil nutrient depletion, and the exhaustion of fisheries across the globe” (ibid). To ignore these changes, scholars argue with growing vehemence, is to neglect a critical driver of conflict in the coming decades.

In *Climate Wars: What People Will Be Killed For in the 21st Century*, Welzer (2012) claims that “in a not so distant future, it will no longer be possible to distinguish between war refugees and environmental refugees” (p. 5). The book paints a bleak picture for peacebuilding and for humanity in general, arguing that “new wars will be environmentally driven and cause people to flee from violence, and, since they will have to settle somewhere, further sources of violence will arise” (ibid). The author forecasts a future that is unimaginably bad. Facing as-yet unforeseeable environmental threats, people will “tend towards radical solutions that they never dreamed of before” (Welzer, p. 181).
Whereas Welzer all but heralds an imminent doomsday, other scholarship suggests that overall human violence is actually on the decline (Goldstein, 2011; Pinker, 2011) and “the pessimistic view may not be warranted in the short to medium run” (Gleditsch, 2012, p. 7). The Human Security Report Project (HSRP) is an independent research center based in Canada that focuses on this debate. At a peace studies conference in 2014, Andrew Mack, Director of the HSRP and keynote speaker, responded to a question about climate-conflict issues by pointing to the theory that future technological innovations may decrease fossil fuel dependence and, as a result, take the leaden foot off the gas pedal driving environmental degradation – essentially, “we’ll just invent our way out of it” (Mack, 2014). Others disagree: solutions that hinge on a “technofix” or a “third technology revolution” do not consider “the fact that the first [industrial] and second [digital] are the cause of today’s problems” (Welzer, 2013, p. 14; Huesemann & Huesemann, 2011). In any case, current technologies and the existing legal framework in which they are wielded have failed to curb macro-level environmental concerns; instead, “business-as-usual” policies prevail (Francis & Krishnamurthy, 2014, pp. 856-7; Brauch, 2014, p. 33, 37).

So far there is a lack of agreement both within national governments and among international leaders how – or whether – to respond to the IPCC’s projections. However, there is a growing consensus among peacebuilders that “the pursuit of peace depends on our ability to understand and overcome environmental challenges in the coming decades” (McArthur, 2013, p. 174). Peacebuilders, it seems, will benefit from having knowledge of the lay of the land in their toolboxes.
2.4 Environmental Peacebuilding

While a conflict’s environs pose challenges, they may also present opportunities. Ecological concerns and environmental changes in particular have been conceptualized as a “threat minimizer” (Oswald Spring, Brauch, & Tidball, 2014, p. 21). Recent scholarship offers insights into past and present efforts to integrate “environmental change” and “natural resources” into peace research and programming (Zelizer, 2013; Rustad & Lujala, 2013). Matthew (2013) highlights four points of convergence between the environment and peace: socio-economic recovery, politics and governance, security and rule of law, and human rights (p. 91). McArthur (2013) describes “environmental peacebuilding” as efforts that recognize the potential of environmental factors to “contribute to peace” (p. 182). More specifically:

Environmental peacebuilding convenes the parties in conflict to address a common environmental challenge through working toward superordinate goals, with the intent of fostering a sense of common purpose, as well as mutual understanding and concern, and providing all parties a reason to improve their communications and working relationships.” (McArthur, p. 182)

Examples that incorporate principles from the above frameworks occur at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Wangari Maathai’s work began at the local level in rural Kenya, but the impacts of her peace-oriented environmental activism continue to demonstrate regional, national, and global impacts. She sparked the Green Belt Movement, which planted over 47 million trees in her lifetime, thus meeting “myriad problems” arising from a destructive (both socially and ecologically) dictatorship by preserving soil health and
providing sustainable livelihoods (“Wangari,” 2011). That Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 – the first African woman to do so – reflects a growing awareness of potential for “building peace through environmental cooperation” (Conca, Carius, & Dabelko, 2005, p. 150). That she was the first woman to earn a PhD in East Africa (she held degrees in biological sciences and veterinary medicine) is a testament to her character and commitment. In an interview in 2004, Maathai articulated the ecology-peace connection: “We created a movement that was not only taking action to save the environment, but also education itself about the responsibility we have as citizens to change the Government and demand better governance” (Quoted in MacDonald, 2004). Wangari Maathai passed away in 2011, but her work and legacy live on as an example of environmental peacebuilding par excellence.

The vast majority of armed conflicts in recent decades have intra-national as well as international dimensions (Lederach & Appleby, 2010, p. 26). Wennmann (2011) makes the case that “investment in natural resources can become an opportunity for peacemaking and contribute to conflict transformation by tackling economic conflict drivers and setting out new orders that govern a post-conflict peace” (p. 265). In this vein, Milburn (2011) conducted a case study of the DRC – the fifth-richest country in the world in terms of biodiversity – where internal warfare spanning more than two decades has taken a toll of over five million human lives (p. 872). Ongoing conflict also wreaks ecological devastation as refugees, rebel groups, and the government turn to poaching for food and illegal logging for income from trade in charcoal (Milburn, p. 875).
Yet “while war is bad for biodiversity, peace can be even worse” according to McNeely (2002), because “market forces may be more destructive than military forces” (p. 45). Milburn calls for a shift away from an oppositional conservation-or-development dichotomy (p. 872), and proffers several areas where the goals of peacebuilding, conservation, and development converge: mountain gorilla conservation in tandem with ecotourism,\(^4\) small farming, large-scale plantations to reduce deforestation and create carbon sinks,\(^5\) and sustainable forestry (as opposed to the disastrous practice of clear-cutting) (pp. 877-885). As part of a larger, multidimensional process, this sort of environmental peacebuilding disrupts conflict drivers and provides an integrative human-ecological connector – a “pillar, not a panacea” for peacebuilding initiatives at the national level (Milburn, p. 885).

Environmental peacebuilding at the international level is as promising as it is problematic. Good Water Neighbors (GWN) Middle East, a joint project among Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli communities, has experienced astounding success in the Jordan River region. GWN won *Time* magazine’s “Heroes of the Environment” award in 2008 for its efforts in forming a network of mayors and other public stakeholders from around the Dead Sea area (McArthur, 2013). But continued violence in summer 2014 between Israelis and Palestinians hit GWN communities on both sides of the Green

\(^4\) Ecotourism is an example of a “solution” that can create new problems, such as displacing Indigenous people. In Uganda, the Batwa – a forest-dwelling group native to the same area as mountain gorillas – were evicted from their ancestral home when Bwindi National Park was founded.

\(^5\) A carbon sink is a natural or artificial reservoir that removes carbon from the atmosphere and stores it for an indefinite period of time.
Line, and water remains a controversial issue in the intractable conflict ("Gaza," n.d.). Water is vital everywhere. A 2014 report by the Strategic Foresight Group uplifts data that show “any two countries engaged in active water cooperation do not go to war for any reason whatsoever” ("Water," pp. 2-3). The flipside of this trend is that there is a positive correlation between the lack of cooperative water agreements – which is the case for many border-sharing countries in the Middle East – and armed conflict.

In South America, cooperative conservation measures helped end a border dispute that had erupted into armed conflict between Ecuador and Peru in 1995. A joint agreement that included Indigenous communities as well as local and international governments resulted in the creation of the Condor-Kutuku Conservation Corridor in 2004, which served as “one of the earliest models for the international peace park movement and evidenced the potential success of such a mechanism” (McArthur, 2013, p. 190; Ali, 2007). There are now hundreds of Transboundary Protected Areas worldwide (Lyensko, Besanço, & Savy, 2007). Nelson Mandela was famously supportive of the Peace Parks Foundation in Southern Africa, but some scholars scrutinize the peace park model as an unproven tool that may be used for good or ill (van Amerom & Büscher, 2005, p. 10). Environmental peacebuilding is certainly not a “magic bullet” at the international level – nothing is – but if 21st-century peace processes fail to take the importance of conservation, ecology, and the rising role of water into account, they may well be doomed to drown.
2.5 Conclusion

Despite environmental peacebuilding efforts in Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, and elsewhere, gaps remain. Fisher and Zamina (2009) point to a “particular gap between peace and environmental groups, neither of whom seem as yet to fully realise how their respective work is mutually dependent” (p. 26). There are a few key obstacles to closing these gaps. For example: “Power imbalances between developed and developing countries have severely undermined efforts to approach these problems cooperatively” (McArthur, 2013 p. 187). This unbalanced international political system espouses human rights – to land, resources, and livelihoods for those adversely affected by environmental changes – but at the same time, it under-emphasizes human duties – on the part of those polluters who are most responsible (McArthur, 2013 p. 188).

Indeed, “bottom-up” work led by grassroots civil society leaders – like the Green Belt Movement and GWN – are often limited by top-down structures, such as high-level negotiations, United Nations (UN) protocols, and international economic policies (Lederach, 1997, p. 39). There is inertia to the long-term approach of environmental initiatives (you cannot grow a tree in one day, or even a year) in a system in which prevailing attitudes among staffers in influential institutions like the UN consider integrating climate change “an additional cost unlikely to produce quick benefits” (Matthew, 2013, p. 89). When it comes to environmental changes and conflict in the future, much remains to be seen. From a peacebuilding perspective, however, to focus on “climate change” is to risk missing the point.
The next chapter of this paper moves beyond notions of the environment as minimizer/maximizer of conflict in order to unpack and investigate underlying assumptions about nature and peace. What are the ways in which the dominance of a Western industrial worldview\(^6\) shapes peace processes and discourses on “development”? What blind spots inhere in this worldview, and at what cost? These questions lead to a consideration of the structural dimensions of violence.

\(^6\) Everyone – painters, presidents, children, neuroscientists – has a worldview. It is a person’s way of seeing the world and her or his place in it. Paradigm is a close synonym for worldview. It means “a particular way or model of seeing and doing things.”
Chapter 3:

STRUCTURES AND VIOLENCE – HOW DID WE GET HERE?

3.1 Introduction

“Hot” violence – direct, physical violence that spills blood through beatings, blades, bullets, bombs – is not the only form of violence that people endure. In the initial issue of the *Journal of Peace Research*, Johan Galtung (1964) distinguished between *negative peace* – the absence of war – and *positive peace* – the absence of exploitation as well as the presence of cooperation and “integration of human society” (Weigert, 2008, p. 2005). Understood in this way, positive peace is more than “no war.”

Harm occurs “invisibly” when is not practical or practicable to identify an individual who is causing the harm. In these cases, the violence is “built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances” (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). Structural violence exists wherever there is injustice, repression, or obstacles to flourishing. Unlike hot violence, however, structural violence is often hidden from view. This is due, in part, to what Galtung (1990) terms *cultural violence*: “those aspects of culture...that can be used to justify or legitimate violence” (p. 191). A lynch mob or guillotiner doing their “duty” in a convivial atmosphere is an extreme example, where “cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel,
right” (ibid). In this way, violence remains hidden in plain sight. A structural violence lens brings otherwise opaque manifestations of violence into sharp focus.

3.2 A (Neo)liberal Peace

The liberal peace framework is both a structural and cultural project. It is the model of establishing peace proffered by the UN and other Western institutions and governments, and it has dominated the international scene since the end of the Cold War. Richmond (2011) outlines “liberal peace” as “a model through which Western-led agency, epistemology, and institutions, have attempted to unite the world under a hegemonic system that replicates liberal institutions, norms, and political, social, and economic systems” (p. 1). Liberal, here, does not indicate a particular political party, but rather the form of economics called “free trade”, marked by “open markets,” and enforced by supranational institutions like the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Many peace researchers have criticized the liberal peace agenda. Tadjbakhsh (2007) problematizes the economic model that underpins the liberal peace as inherently problematic: “A presumed method for reaching peace, which by itself can potentially be

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7 Authors use both “Neoliberalism” and “liberalism” to describe more or less the same thing: economic processes and policies that reduce constraints to foreign investment in a capitalist system.

8 Epistemology relates to theories of knowledge: what counts as knowledge, and how we can claim to know something to be factual, or true, or not.

9 The WTO has been criticized for lack of transparency, undermining democracy, and institutionalizing biases that benefit rich countries and communities at the expense of poorer ones.
conflict inducing, may be as ironic as imposing democracy through military interventions” (p. 15). The liberal peace model imposes structures – such as agreements on trade, taxes, tariffs, etc. – on national governments across the globe, thus bringing them into the dominant “free market” system. These structures are purported to lay the foundation for peace, but Tadjbakhaha (2009) argues that they often benefit private lobbies and interests in wealthy nations like the US and elites in poorer countries at the expense of most people in the world: “Political and economic reforms have to be seen as means to the well-being of people and not ends in themselves” (2009, p. 648).

In Whose Peace, Pugh, Cooper, and Turner (2008) argue that a one-size-fits-all approach confounds ends and means; their book attempts to “interrogate and critique the necromancy of the supposedly ‘a-political’ economic technicians who favour war-torn societies with pre-existing formulas for recovery and standard panaceas” (p. 3). They argue that a paradigm in which global economics is paramount constitutes a false-start for working toward peace. Instead, the authors favor a conceptual shift from “securitization” to “emancipation,” which encompasses the “individual, community, the biosphere and planetary environment” and rejects quick fixes that take liberalism as “the only normative construct” (Pugh, Cooper, & Turner, p. 394). In this view, the nation-state is not taken as the level at which peace ought to be measured, and liberal economics is not the only standard by which to measure it. The authors argue that such a limited approach has, by now, a proven track record of inefficacy: “Such an approach – ignoring the limitations of reform within the status quo – is ultimately doomed to failure” (Ibid, p. 395).
A volume edited by Smith & Verdeja (2013) explores multiple cases in which the global economy and the neoliberal model of “development” are experienced as violent by communities across the globe. Rather than emancipate people from poverty, it can reinforce hegemonic and oppressive forces (Smith & Verdeja, pp. 236-239). The (neo)liberal peace model is presumed by many world leaders to be a good framework, or at least the best one available. But it systematically produces “unfreedoms” for many people (Bolten, 2014, p. 161), as well as ecological havoc, particularly in former European colonies. Why is that? And how did this come to be a palatable norm? Or, how did we get here?

3.3 Imperialism, Industrialism, and the Human-Nature Disconnect

Humans’ dysfunctional relationship with the natural world has a long and (in)glorious tradition in the Western world and North America especially. A (very) brief historical overview might begin in October 1492. A pivotal point in the Eurocentric colonial project, the crews of the Niña, Pinta, and Santa María “discovered” the New World – and all the people who lived there. Then the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 solidified the current international power structure, which takes sovereign nation-states as the unit of social, political, and economic legitimacy. From Europe, this paradigm spread to global dominance.

Citing historian Kenneth Pomeranz, Wolfgang Sachs (2013) points out that “access to biotic resources from colonies and fossil resources from the crust of the earth was essential to the rise to supremacy of the Euro-Atlantic civilization” (p. 26). This is a
story, first and foremost, of exploitation. “Biotic resources” ought to be understood to include elements of the ecosphere, like coal, as well as human lives: imperialism, and the Triangle Trade upon which the wealth of the Western world was built, would have been impossible without the commodification of human beings. Of course, imperial powers were only able to lay claim to biotic resources they had “discovered” in the New World by robbing, displacing, and killing the Indigenous peoples who already called the landscape home by many other names.

The so-called Age of Enlightenment in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries, with its emphasis on reductionist reason, defined progress as the “domination of nature through science and technology” that found its fullest expression in the exploitative and oppressive practices of colonialism (McLaughlin, 1993, p. 1). Mulligan (2010) explains: “Liberal ideas and revolutions owe their emergence and endurance to ecological abundance, particularly in the form of immense stores of solar energy in fossil fuels: such fuels have literally powered the modern liberal project” (p. 137). Fossil fuels include coal, oil, and natural gas and are, of course, formed from organic life forms: decaying plants and animals compressed over millions or hundreds of millions of years.

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10 Colonial trade routes ran roughly in a triangle from Europe, to Africa to collect slaves, to the colonies in the New World to deposit slaves at plantations and stock ships with the fruits of their labors (sugar, tobacco, cotton, spices), then back to Europe to sell the goods.

11 Reductionism involves trying to understand things by dissecting them and breaking them down into smaller and smaller pieces. Unlike “systems” thinking, which studies relationships, dynamic processes, and wholes, reductionism presumes that knowledge and truth can be accumulated through deductive reasoning, atomization, and abstraction. It is characterized by a positivist approach: that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical and mathematical proof.
Coal fueled the furnaces of the Industrial Revolution in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Meanwhile, Charles Darwin’s (1859) influential evolutionary theory in \textit{On the Origin of Species} helped to concretize the Western view of industrial progress in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century as “survival of the fittest.” Dominant interpretations of Darwin’s work held that cut-throat competition in human enterprise – via individualism, avarice, mechanization, and haste – would be tantamount to a rising tide that lifts all boats. This is a dangerous ontology. It normalizes opposition and schism among people and between people and the natural world. Likewise, it ignores the effects of a rising tide on those who have no boat. Shiva (2009) considers the implications: “industrialization has... become a cultural paradigm for measuring human progress” (p. 23). Thus agrarian life became backwards, and urbanity the way forward. Whoever came up with the “rising tide” metaphor had clearly never experienced a flood: a few do benefit as the tide rises, many others are submerged, and wreckage is left in the wake when the tide inevitably recedes.

Darwin’s theories were old news by the early 1900s, and the World Wars bore witness – in Auschwitz, Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki – to the heinousness of social Darwinism and the horrors of scientific and technological “advances.” The Soviet Union and USA then emerged as superpowers. They waged the Cold War, characterized by espionage, proxy wars, and constant threat of nuclear annihilation as each vied for economic supremacy. Common to both communism and capitalism, however, was the ethos of industrialism. Sachs (2013) elaborates: “In this respect, the [contemporary] development discourse is an outcome of the post-War era of fossil-fuel based triumphalism, undergirded by colonial perceptions and the legacy of Western
rationalism” (p. 26). European empires officially fell in a wave of decolonization mid-century, and then the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, signaling the coronation of a particular form of capitalist technological industrialism: liberalism. The measuring stick for “progress” in this, the global world order of today is gross domestic product (GDP), with industrialized, “developed” countries at the apex.

In the first decades of the third millennium, colonialism’s legacy lives on in economic, geographic, and psychological dimensions. World maps were redrawn in the 20th century, but borders are blurred in the 21st: “The economic globalization that creates flows of capital and workforces underscores the artificiality of maps and mocks pretensions to sovereignty” (Lederach & Appleby, 2010, p. 22). A colonization of the mind persists and undergirds current social and economic policies:

“Decolonization of the imagination has not occurred. Quite the reverse: across the world, hopes for the future are fixed on rich people’s patterns of production and consumption... [and] neither the planet nor the people of the world can any longer afford its predominance.” (W. Sachs, 2013, p. 25)

The current planetary costs of techno-industrial globalization are seen in the mainstream as regrettable but unavoidable. They include: soil erosion and degradation, deforestation, mountaintop removal, the worst mass extinction of species in 65 million years,12 water contamination, and air pollution.

12 Right now, the Earth is experiencing the most drastic die-off of species since the time of the dinosaurs. Human activity threatens 99% of endangered species with the severity of an asteroid or volcano, although human health has and always will rely on biodiversity (Chivian & Bernstein, 2008).
And as Burdon (2010) points out in *Wild Law*, the forests, atmosphere, rivers, oceans, and species suffering from mass extinction have no rights in a Western legal framework. Further, there is disagreement over the *legal* right of future generations to a clean and healthy environment (Weston, 2012). Climate change is *a* problem, not *the* problem. The problem is a particular way of thinking and being in the world.

Industrialism functions insofar as the universe is understood to be comprised of “objects to be used” and not “subjects to be communed with” (Burdon, p. 62). Western jurisprudence is based on positivism, meaning that it “identifies and defines law through ‘abstract’ categories or doctrines, which it posits as authoritative rules” and considers “external factors such as the natural world” to be “remote, inappropriate, and unnecessary to the operation of law” (Burdon, p. 63). The “abstract” problems of global environmental changes, however, are always experienced concretely and locally – but not always immediately.

Just as with the dominant legal system, the field of international relations is marked by a myopic lack of humility:

“Our liberal reverence for the effectiveness of human reason, along with the expectation that our inventiveness can overcome virtually any ecological constraints, undermines our ability to understand that human beings are creatures of the earth – natural (as well as political) animals.” (Mulligan, 2010, p. 155)
The human-nature disconnect may be as ingrained in the Western psyche as language itself. This narrow worldview represents a fundamentally fragmented way of seeing and being, one that is not shared by all the world’s peoples. But it is presumed by many in the West to be at the “forefront of social evolution”, which makes it not merely incomplete but also dangerous:

“This way of constructing the world order has revealed itself to be not only obsolete, but also mortally dangerous. Assigning the Euro-Atlantic model of civilization to a vanguard position either along the course of history or across the social ranking order has by now lost any legitimacy: it is proven to be incompatible with the planet.” (W. Sachs, 2013, p. 26)

What are peacebuilders to make of this? In an article entitled “Just Wasting our Time?” Fisher and Zimina (2009) point out several oversights in peace scholarship, including the fact that many pieces of peace research produced in the Global North “address the causes of war far away from their shores without seriously drawing attention to the unprecedented militarising role played by their own countries as preservers of global economic and political order in their own image” (p. 19).

Industrialism is entrenched in North America, but the ramifications are not always apparent. The following section seeks to identify some of the often-obscured costs of violent structures in both the Global North and the Global South. Subsequent sections try to trace the ties between the two.

\[13\] In Spell of the Sensuous, David Abram (1996) vividly illustrates the role of language in creating the perception of a disconnection from the rest of the natural world, despite humans’ daily and innumerable connections with the biosphere.
3.4 The “Developed” World? Environmental Injustice in North America

Right now, the USA is #1 in GDP, but it is also top-ranked worldwide in food and energy waste.\(^{14}\) Why such waste? Environmental justice scholarship and activism provides pushback against dominant notions of “development” by exploring the imbalanced way that environmental degradation is shared between groups of people. The bulk of the burden invariably falls to the most marginalized members of society; in particular, low-income communities and racial and ethnic minorities. These subsections explore cases of environmental justice work spanning the urban and the rural landscapes of North America, as well as the roadways that connect them.

3.4.1 Urban

Cases from the Midwest, East Coast, and West Coast show salient themes. Shrader-Frechette (2007) explains that South Side Chicago has virtually unbreathable air because “wealthier regions ‘truck out’ their garbage, to be burned in the neighborhoods of the poor” (p. 115). Some critics deny the notion of an unjust pollution burden, claiming that if people work in dangerous jobs or live in hazardous zones it is because they “choose to do so.” Unsurprisingly, these claims tend to come from people who do not live in these zones: “social-scientific data show that people often live or work in dangerous places, against their wills, because they have no other options” (p. 122). The

\(^{14}\) US Americans throw away 40\% of edibles: 33 million tons, the equivalent of $165 billion (that’s billion, with a “b”) per year (Flatlow, 2012). The country’s energy efficiency is 42\%, meaning that 58\% of all energy generated is wasted. The dollar value assigned to this squandered power is estimated at around $130 billion annually (Savitz, 2013).
poorest people have least socioeconomic clout, and therefore “compensation” by
government or businesses for suffering in the name of the common good “is limited or
nonexistent” (p. 123). Furthermore, “If alleged compensation were genuine,” Shrader-
Frechette argues, “other people would willingly move into dirty areas or dirty jobs, just
to receive the alleged housing, pay, or tax ‘breaks’” (p. 122).

Majora Carter (2007) lifts up a strikingly similar scenario in the South Bronx. Her
neighborhood, home to four of New York’s major power plants, waste dumps for 40% of
the city’s trash, sewage treatment facilities, and other industrial enterprises, endures
the invasion of over 60,000 diesel truck trips per week. It also has one of the lowest
parks-to-people ratios in the city. Environmental justice, Carter explains, posits that “no
community should be saddled with more environmental burdens and less
environmental benefits than any other” (2007). Yet top-down land use decisions made
outside of the local community structure exposure to risk. The price for New York City’s
industrial lifeway – a “developed” city by most metrics – is paid by those who live in
neighborhoods like Carter’s in the form of obesity, diabetes, asthma, and other
pollution-induced illnesses.

Ron Finley, a gardener in South Central Los Angeles, faces many of the same
issues as Carter. Finley – along with 23.5 million other US Americans – lives in a food
desert: an area located more than a mile from a grocery store (Shute, 2013). His
neighborhood is known as a gang haven and characterized by liquor stores, fast food
joints, and vacant lots. But, Finley points out, “the drive thrus are killing more people
than the drive-bys” (2013). This is not hyperbole. There is, for example, a five-times
greater incidence of obesity in South Central LA than in nearby Beverly Hills, although
denizens of Beverly Hills – only a few miles away – may remain unaware of Finley and
his neighbors’ struggles. Finley recognizes that injustices in his hometown are the
product of larger social issues related to the industrial food system: when people are
denied access to nutritious foods and other fundamental human needs, other problems
proliferate.

What makes the examples of Chicago, the Bronx, and LA remarkable is not their
rarity, but rather their prevalence in North America. These are the rule, not the
exception. And they are far from unrelated to rural areas.

3.4.2 Rural

Those who live in close relationship with the rural landscape have noted many
changes in the past few generations. Farmers have written eloquently about the
violence-agriculture connection in the USA: bigger and bigger farms means fewer and
fewer farmers – from 6 million in the 1930s to about 2 million today\(^{15}\) – who are forced
to rely on suppliers in the “corporate kingdoms of agripower” for expensive, fossil fuel-
dependent, industrial-mechanical methods to “boost production” (Jackson, 2011, pp.
156-157; Berry, 1996). This trend, along with the concomitant spread of chemical-
dependent monocultures of annual crops\(^ {16}\) and concentrated animal feeding operations

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\(^{15}\) There are more people living in prisons today in the US than owning and living on farms.

\(^ {16}\) Annual crops, unlike perennials, must be replanted each growing season. Seed companies have
begun to take out patents on bioengineered seeds, which enables them to require farmers to buy new
seed each year (rather than save seeds) or undergo threat of litigation and foreclosure.
(CAFOs)\(^{17}\) (Robin, 2010), has resulted in multiple pathologies. These include untraceable food products\(^{18}\) and the systematic destruction of rural communities across the country (Berry, 1993, p. 8), in addition to forest clear-cutting, soil loss, water waste,\(^{19}\) air and waterway pollution, and the usurpation of small farms and communal lands by transnational agribusiness corporations worldwide (Bourne, 2014).

Indeed, it would be remiss to talk about non-industrialized rural life without mentioning its rapid disappearance. The trend in the US reflects a global one (UN, 2014), but the notion that urbanization is inevitable and integral to “development” is part of the pervasive progress myth. Myriad factors including discrimination, bigotry, and hot violence have pushed people toward cities, and the promises of industrialism have pulled them. In North America, most notably during the Great Migrations of African-Americans from agrarian South to the urban North in the 1920s and 1940s, migrants found cities unwelcoming and their freedoms limited — a loathsome legacy that persists until today, and which has been the topic of much scholarship and debate (Lipsitz, 2007; Alexander, 2010, Wilson, 2010; Coates, 2014). Less attention has been given to the

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\(^{17}\) CAFOs are where most meat consumed in the Global North is grown. These facilities “concentrate” hundreds or thousands of livestock in close quarters on just a few acres. Pollution in the form of urine, excrement, and gastrointestinal gases is a ubiquitous byproduct.

\(^{18}\) Many of the products that line the shelves of grocery stores are not “food” per se, but what Pollan (2008) terms “edible food-like substances” (p. 1). It is very difficult for consumers to ascertain where the things they eat come from -- stores and suppliers often do not know, and the time, energy, and resources required for an investigation are impossible for nearly everyone (Harris, 2009).

\(^{19}\) A single pound of beef requires 660 gallons of water for its production, and livestock production accounts for 51% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide (Gooding, 2009).
violent schism that occurs within and among people forced to leave the rural landscape for the city.

Separation from nature is a fundamental form of violence that both dehumanizes (Wright, 1988), and undermines resistance to dehumanization. bell hooks, a writer who grew up in rural Kentucky before becoming a professor in urban California, explores these themes in her collection of autobiographical essays entitled *Belonging: A Culture of Place*. Through storytelling, hooks (2009) reveals how “this estrangement meant that the organic spiritual renewal generated by direct engagement with the natural world was no longer a given in the daily life of ordinary black folks” (pp. 62-63). She contends that people of all colors and geographies cannot be fully healthy, or fully free, when they are deprived of a sense of belonging to a place.

Struggles against the human-nature rupture as described by hooks are poignantly embodied by Native American Indian communities. The 310 Reservations within the borders of the US are, of course, the product of the systematic expulsion and extermination that began five hundred twenty-three years ago, but Westward Expansion was not a one-time historical event. Today, the Indigenous peoples of North America continue their struggle against imperialism in new forms: economic

20 Some Native communities have adopted the name “Indian” as they navigate two worlds: the traditional and the modern. Others reject this term and prefer to be called by their Tribe or village of origin (since they are not from India and their ancestors lived on the North American continent long before Amerigo Vespucci commenced a career in cartography). Non-Natives may respectfully employ the terms Tribal, Indigenous, or First Nations to refer to Native groups, but the truth is, as MariJo Moore (2003) points out: “Today, American Indian blood courses through the veins of many races, many cultures, and in many unknown places” (p.1)
“development”, environmental destruction, militarization, and social marginalization (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). There are many Native activists who continue to fight for Tribal rights, and Winona LaDuke is among the most prolific. Laduke is a member of the Anishinabe from the Makwa Dodaem (White Bear) clan of the Mississippi Band of the White Earth Reservation. She is an author, activist, and Harvard graduate who works to protect Native lands from deforestation, invasive recreation, mining, pollution from tar sands (oil) pipelines, weapons testing, and radioactive waste dumping (Grinde & Johansen, 1995; LaDuke 1999: Laduke & Cruz, 2013). LaDuke (2000) remarks that “wherever Indigenous peoples still remain, there is also a corresponding enclave of biodiversity”, which industrial interests are naturally eager to exploit and extract (p. 34).

The work of LaDuke and other advocates of environmental justice for Indigenous peoples is a reminder that the genocide of the colonial era was incomplete. Each of the 562 Tribes and 4.12 million Native Americans leads a unique path today – there is no single story. And what about Tribes who have no Reservation, or people whose Tribe was wiped out? Many whose sacred homeland was paved, turned into a park, or “developed” with skyscrapers resist a persisting “genocide of the mind”; they defy cultural and spiritual annihilation by preserving and evolving traditions in urban settings (moore, 2003, p. xv). Grijalva & Gogal (2010) describe the ongoing dynamics of dispossession faced by Native people today on and off Reservations: “the degradation of

21 Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie posits that each culture is composed of many overlapping stories, and warns of “the danger of a single story” (2009). See “National Congress” in the References section for a detailed list of recognized Tribes.
environmental quality directly affects not only the public health of indigenous communities but, quite often, their very identity and survival as distinct peoples and cultures” (p. 1). Violence bound up in separation from and destruction of the landscape does not compute in the dominant industrial/imperial worldview, which would commoditize the Earth by compensating for ecological devastation with money. Meanwhile, the US – both its government and the citizens who elect government officials to represent them – continues to break treaties it made in 1851 and earlier. Honoring these treaties – not through compensation but rather restitution – would represent a turning point toward dismantling the ongoing structural violence that takes place on Tribal lands (Huey, 2010).

3.4.3 Roads

There may be no more ubiquitous or invisible structure in the US than its roadways. Although cars kill about as many people as guns every year in North America, there has been little talk of banning automobiles. Roads themselves pose problems. The Interstate Highway system that forms the veins and arteries of the USA changed the face of the continent’s landscape. Initiated in 1956, it has been celebrated as “the best investment a nation ever made” (Cox & Love, 1996), and “an essential part of our lives and an unquestionable contribution to our quality of life” (Eley, 2006). But precisely who is the “our” in this case is unclear. The interstates have contributed to [22] Motor vehicle accidents caused 30,800 fatalities in 2012, compared to 11,078 homicides by firearm in 2011, which is less than loss of life from firearms used in self-inflicted injury (suicide): 21,175 (“National,” 2013; Hoyert & Jiaquan, 2012).
economic “growth” and improved mobility and comfort – for some. But many others have paid a heavy price.

The 46,500-mile network of roads was built by destroying neighborhoods; specifically, poor urban neighborhoods of ethnic and racial minorities (Mohl, 2002). Furthermore, it helped quash mass transit systems nationwide, creating increased dependence on cars and petroleum. Deakin (2006) shows how interstates are a “dominant technology” that “have decreased access and mobility by undermining the viability of alternative modes of transport”, and many communities “never have recovered from highway construction and are subjected to interstate-related noise and emissions” (p. 16). Interstates helped fuel suburban “development”, but most people whose communities were paved for the building of highways were unable to benefit from this “so-called progress” by moving to the suburbs (Wise, 2006). Freedom of movement proffered by highways, for example, is predicated on the ability to amass wealth and own a (reliable) car. And alternatives to car travel do not currently exist in many places, which actually limits people’s freedom of choice. In this way, the Interstate Highway system has eroded, not enhanced, the quality of life for many US Americans. This erosion is hidden in plain sight in asphalt all across the country, as well as oil dependence and pollution – it is a concrete case of structural violence. Motorists contribute to it without thinking about it, simply by driving. Many lament pollution but consider it a necessary evil. This is cultural violence at work.
3.5 Beyond Environmental Justice

An environmental justice lens sheds light on violence built into the structures of cities, rural communities, and roadways; however, not only the poor and marginalized suffer from “development” in North America. Industrialization relies on commoditization, consumption, and obsolescence. Yet recent scientific studies corroborate the timeless wisdom of the world’s great spiritual traditions: there is a directly inverse relationship between materialistic focus (beyond fulfilling basic and universal human needs) and well-being. That is to say, “people’s well-being improves as they place relatively less importance on materialistic goals and values, whereas orienting toward materialistic goals relatively more is associated with decreases in well-being over time” (Kasser et al., 2013, p. 1). Since 1957, US Americans are, on average, “twice as rich but no happier” (Myers, 2000, p. 61). There has been an unprecedented accumulation of material wealth in the USA in the past half-century, but there is an ever-widening gulf between the richest and the rest.23 Craving for more and more material possessions corrodes our well-being, but “growth” demands it.

The dangers of industrialism are also hidden right under our noses, within our very bodies. Consider the top three causes of death in the US: diseases of the heart, malignant neoplasms (cancer), and chronic lower respiratory diseases (Hoyert & Jiaquan, 2012). These “diseases of civilization” ought to be understood not as inevitable,

23 The vast majority of economic gains are concentrated in the top 0.1% -- that’s one-tenth of one percent -- of people (Coy, 2013). And the wealth gap between middle- and upper-income households is at its widest ever (Lee, 2014).
but as industrial. In a compelling and controversial talk, Michael Gregor, M.D. (2013) cites an exhaustive review of medical literature in enumerating the interrelated aspects of the medical and food industries and deadly disease. It turns out that morbidity rates for 15 major disease clusters (including cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, respiratory, neurological, and digestive diseases, as well as depression and anxiety) decrease as green space near to living space increases (Maas et al., 2009). Thus the top threats in the USA are patently ecological: they are related to the way we interact (eat, move, live) with the ecosystems we inhabit. Seemingly simple solutions – eat better, get outside, breathe – are in reality extremely complex. How does one eat well when living with no car in a food desert? How does one exercise when there are no parks or time between jobs, shopping, and household duties? How does one breathe freely when the very air is compromised? And what if one’s pursuance of these ideals leads to decreased opportunities for others to pursue them, both nearby and far away?

3.6 Disasters: Distance, Data, and Doxa

Structures limit possibility – not only what we can do, but also what we can see. The industrial lifeway can blind us to the ways in which we contribute to violent structures. This holds true for peacebuilding organizations (Fisher & Zamina, 2009, p.19). As reflective practitioners, peacebuilders must interrogate their own theories-in-action (Schon, 1987). Examples from my own work as a researcher (who, as a human, must also eat and move, etc.) illustrate this point.
When I ignite my car engine to go to the market downtown, I may not feel personally culpable for the 50,000 gallons of crude oil that spilled into the Yellowstone River when a pipeline burst in January of this year (Schweber, 2015). I may have forgotten about the 134 million gallons of oil that spilled into the Gulf of Mexico over 87 days in 2010, or the 11 workers killed when the BP’s Deepwater Horizon drilling rig burst (Moskowitz, 2014). Perhaps I have not heard of the Exxon Valdez tanker that spilled 10 million gallons when it crashed in Prince William Sound off the coast of Alaska in 1989, or the dozens of major oil spills in the US since then (Neuhauser, 2014). On the other hand, if I spilled an ounce or two of oil on my living room rug, concern for my soon-to-be-crawling child and fear of righteous indignation from his mother would motivate me to prevent a reoccurrence, and to avoid the circumstances that led to that spill in the first place.

When I draft research reports in my home office and fuel my prefrontal cortex with caffeine, I may not consider the fact that the “disposable” cup I toss into the waste bin will still be sitting in a landfill five hundred years from now, because I do not have to. Nor am I obligated to consider the communities who live near landfills where my waste ends up. Most US Americans have no idea where the tons of trash they make goes, or the natural resources and fossil fuels required to extract, manufacture, deliver, and whisk away that trash (N. Sachs, 2014). We do not experience the impacts of our actions, but that does not mean that they do not exist. They are simply felt far away. In this way, structural violence is exercised – and awareness of it erased – across distance.
When I enjoy temperature-regulated institutional facilities or refrigerated beverages, perhaps I do not know where the electricity that makes the radiators and fridges hum comes from. If I have the compulsion or the time, I might undertake an investigation to discover that electric power for this area of northern Indiana is coal-generated in the southern part of the state, hundreds of miles away. Pike, Posey, Warrick, and Dubois counties – places I had never been to or heard of – are home to some of the largest coal-powered plants in the world; they are also home to the region’s “allergy belt.” Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations purported to protect the health of the local citizenry are incomplete, measuring some pollutants but not others, with monitors located up to 27 miles from the source they are supposed to measure or completely nonexistent (Rudolf, 2014).

A local pediatrician, Norma Kreilein, joined a coalition of clean-air activists after documenting years of astronomically high rates of chronic respiratory issues among her patients. She and her colleagues have, in turn, been labeled “radicals” by those who see their activism for breathable air as a threat to the region’s heavy industry and economic prosperity. Kreilein is quick to quip: “I’m not a tree-hugger, I’m a kid-hugger” (Rudolf, 2014). Digging deeper into the mechanism of the region’s powerhouses, however, reveals that the forces that threaten the lungs of Krelein’s patients also raze forests – even entire mountaintops. The coal extraction process known as mountaintop mining (MTM) pollutes groundwater and air and devastates entire ecosystems in the Central Appalachian Region by leveling mountaintops with heavy machinery. Communities living in close proximity to MTM also exhibit abnormally high rates of total poverty (MTM only
creates short-term jobs for a dozen or so machine operators), child poverty, and mortality (Hendryx, 2011). But chances are that I will not think of Dr. Kreilein, her asthmatic kiddos, or Appalachian communities – much less mountaintops in one of the oldest ranges in the world – when winter storms hit and I crank up the heat.

In the above examples, I encounter what Pierre Bourdieu calls doxa: “that which goes without saying because it comes without saying” (Dirks, Eley, & Ortner 1994: 163). The waste disposal and transportation systems, along with the electrical grid, are structures that one must navigate in order to participate in everyday life in the industrialized world. They are by nature opaque. In this way, the status quo of waste and fossil fuel consumption in the US is built on ignorance and learned blindness. An increasingly urbanized society lives under the illusion of inhabiting an “azoic” environment (Rabinowitch, quoted in Schumacher, 1999, p. 82), where they cannot see the environmental impacts of their choices – or, more importantly, cannot feel them. That is what makes doxa so dangerous: you can run hard up against it without ever feeling the awakening shock of hitting a wall.

Does political will exist to change the status quo? Shrader-Frechette (2007), writing on the factors that allow environmental injustice to persist, argues that perhaps “data have not played a role in [people’s] thinking about pollution” (p. 124). Most people source information from personal experience, mass media, social media, and word of mouth. In an age of 24-hour Infotainment and nonstop “tweeting”, environmental justice is but one of many issues covered on any given day – if it is covered at all – and far outnumbered by the uncountable advertisements that bombard
us and entice us to buy the latest car, computer, or whatever. Even when there is coverage of “environmental” issues, statistics are always contested. Pundits pre-form opinions. Issues are framed within an industrial economic paradigm, weighing the need for jobs and “development” against ecosystem damages and public health concerns. This either/or framing is not simply counter-productive; it is false. For, humans – as long as they require air, food, water, and shelter – are inseparable from their “environment.” But someone who has not experienced environmental injustice is set up by structures not to know or “believe” it is a problem. Doxa trumps data every time.

3.7 North-South Interconnectivity

The preceding sections show that when “progress” is sacrosanct, both people and ecosystems suffer. Farmer and philosopher Wendell Berry (1993) states the problem, clear as running water: “The industrial revolution has thus made universal the colonialist principle that has proved to be ruinous beyond measure: the assumption that it is permissible to ruin one place or culture for the sake of another” (p. 128). US Americans consume and waste more than any other people on the planet and call it “growth.” As a member of the G7 (formerly G8) and G20,24 moreover, the US plays a leading role in shaping the international community’s “development” policies and

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24 The Group of 7 or G7 is a governmental forum of leading “industrialized countries” and “advanced economies” throughout the world. It was the G8 until Russia was recently suspended. The G20 is a forum for the governments and “central bank governors” from major economies. Summit meetings of these groups determine what will fly, economically speaking, and what will not in the international community.
practices. The implications for building peace in the 21st century are manifold, and all peacebuilders must confront a tough question: will they be technical experts who seek to incorporate “developing” nations into the neoliberal industrial world order through discrete, short-term projects? Or will they work for lasting transformation? If transformation is the goal, it becomes essential to identify, investigate, and disentangle the ties that bind structural violence in the Global North to the Global South, where most international peacebuilding work takes place. In the following sections, I seek to delineate connections between the industrialized world and non-industrialized communities and the lessons they hold for peacebuilders.

Whereas “underdevelopment” is an oft-cited culprit for the problems of poor countries (based on GDP), these are places where the hidden costs of industrial development tend to accumulate: “Worldwide, the destruction of the key ecosystem services, pollution of air, water and soil, land use change and anthropogenically-induced extreme events is creating new threats for Earth and humankind, especially for the most vulnerable in poor countries” (Oswald Spring, Brauch, & Tidball, 2014, p. 15). But to focus solely on cataclysmic meteorological phenomena is to miss a pivotal point. Communities across the globe experience “development” in the neoliberal model not as the solution to but rather as the cause of violence. This is achieved through reinforcing social/political/economic exclusion (Smith & Verdeja, p. 240) and producing “unfreedoms” that are endemic rather than anomalous (Bolten, 2013, p. 242). Cases in the contexts of Asia, Africa, and the Americas reveal direct North-South links of structural violence.
3.7.1 Ladakh

When Helena Norberg-Hodge first visited the Ladakhi people in the Himalayan highlands in the 1970s, their lifeway was much as it had been for countless generations. Ladakhis drank a beer-like homebrew and danced as young and old planted barley together in a festive atmosphere in the short summers, kept warm with yak dung fires in the long winters, and exuded an “irrepressible joie de vivre” year round (Norberg-Hodge, 2009, p. 83). Ladakh was characterized by “close ties between people...[who] belong to their place on earth” (p. 85). The remote, “underdeveloped” community thrived at an altitude of 12,000 feet such that denizen Tsewang Paljor was able to say, in 1975: “We don’t have any poverty here” (p. 101). But the next ten years brought sweeping changes. “Development” came to Ladakh, which Norberg-Hodge defines as “‘modernization,’ ‘Westernization,’ and ‘industrialization’...too often a euphemism for exploitation, a new colonialism” (p. 149). Centralization (imposition of control by powers in political and economic capitals hundreds of miles away), consumerism, and commodification took sway, with stark effects.

Radio has replaced communal singing and storytelling. Economic competition has replaced agrarian cooperation. Individualism rooted in possessing material things has replaced interdependence rooted in communal sharing and familial ties. Gaps have grown where none existed before: “between old and young, male and female, rich and poor, Buddhist and Muslim. The newly created division between modern, educated expert and illiterate, backward farmer is perhaps the biggest of all” (Norberg-Hodge, 2009, p. 125). This process destabilizes and divides; it exacerbates and even creates
enmity and, ultimately, violence: bloodshed broke out between groups of Buddhists and Muslims that had coexisted peacefully for generations (pp. 128-130). By 1983, Paljor’s views had shifted: “If you could only help us Ladakhis, we’re so poor” (p. 101).

The neoliberal paradigm promises that the “underdeveloped” world can enjoy the affluence, opulence, and comfort of the “developed” world if they will simply follow the footsteps of industrialized countries like the US. But this is an illusion. First, it is impossible for the global population to match the rates of consumption upon which the industrial lifeway of the Global North depends: it would exhaust the capacity of more than five Earth-like planets to do so (Wackernagel & Rees, 1996). Second, the improvement is always promised vaguely for “the common good” and delayed for the indeterminate future. This is what Norberg-Hodge refers to as “the development hoax” (2009, p. 141).

Of course, traditional society never was perfect (no society is). Norberg-Hodge realizes this: “Despite the very real problems in the traditional society and the equally real improvements brought about by development, things look different when one examines the important relationships: to the land, to one another, and to oneself” (2009, p. 136). The arrival of “development” in Ladakh eroded communities, personal well-being, and the landscape, doing away with practices that had adapted “in dialogue” with the land over millennia in the nature-based society (p. 137). It did away with much

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25 This estimate was for the year 2000. Since then, consumption and population levels have increased. But we still just have the one Earth.
of the good in the traditional lifeway, and, for many Ladakhis, brought little good in its place.

3.7.2 Farms and Dams

Two separate but interrelated facets – farms and dams – demonstrate how “development” is experienced as violent by marginalized communities on the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere.

From the 1970s to 1990s, agricultural production in Asia (and Latin America) underwent a revolution in technology. Known ironically as the “Green Revolution,” this process involved importing newly-bred high-yield crop varieties, inputs of chemical non-organic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, and mechanized irrigation and cultivation methods from the West. The results, according to Hazell (2002), included a dramatic increase in crop yields over the short-term and secondary impacts of increased per capita income and decreased malnourishment on a national scale. But there were other side-effects as well. Small farmers and landless laborers, many of whom were unable to exploit capital-heavy innovations, were pushed off the land and in some cases robbed of the right to use their own seeds (Shiva, 2002, pp. 242, 257). Many displaced farmers had to flee to already-overpopulated cities. Furthermore, the “Green Revolution” came with great environmental costs, including polluted waterways, poisoned agricultural workers, and beneficial insects and other wildlife being wiped out (Hazell, 2002).

More recently, Shiva (2009) has been a staunch critic of throwing farmers into competition on the “global market”, citing the imposition of economic structures by the
WTO and World Bank, which enforce a neoliberal paradigm and undermine local sovereignty. Forcing industrial methods on farmers has led to a loss of local crop variety and biodiversity, therefore forcing the importation of foodstuffs from thousands of miles away. These, argues Shiva, are “ecological crimes” (2009, p. 22). India has not recovered from the “Green Revolution’s” reliance on irrigation, which led to salt buildup and ruination of farmland, as well as depletion of natural aquifers (Hazell, 2002).

Despite the efforts of Shiva and others to raise awareness about the ravages of industrial monocultures on ecosystems and the vulnerability of small farming communities due to the vicissitudes of the “global market,” the Big Ag model has turned toward Africa as the next potential “breadbasket” (Bourne, 2014). The voices of small famers like Fatima Alex, whose half-acre garden supported her and her young children until it was bulldozed without her consent by a large, multinational agricultural firm, are often lost in debates about the best way to feed the nine billion Earthlings expected by the year 2050 (ibid). As sprawling soybean farms erase diversified communities inhabited by people like Fatima from the map, Indigenous knowledge is destroyed so that livestock will have plenty to eat in time to fatten up for the meat market.

The loss of homesteads like Fatima’s and the massive amounts of water it takes to grow soybeans (for animal fodder) and cows (sold as beef miles or continents away, which Fatima cannot afford anyway) are seen as sad but unavoidable costs of progress, if they are seen at all. Author and activist Arundhati Roy provides an alternative perspective as she speaks out incisively on water issues, industrialism, and neocolonialism in her native India. Roy’s (2001) essay The Greater Common Good
exposes the social and environmental price of the dam-building projects in her homeland: “Their reservoirs displace huge populations of people, leaving them homeless and destitute. Ecologically, they’re in the doghouse. They lay the earth to waste.” India is not alone. Dams have caused violence to millions of people – especially to Indigenous populations, the poor, women, and the elderly – for the purported good of the many in Haiti (Farmer, 1997), China (Aird, 2001), and 138 other countries (Leslie, 2006). Roy estimates that no fewer than 33 million people were displaced in India in the name of “development” by the year 2000. Or, as she quite clearly and caustically puts it: “sacrificed...at the altars of ‘national progress.’”

3.7.3 Oaxaca and Washington

In *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*, medical anthropologist Seth Holmes recounts his travels among Indigenous Triqui migrant workers from their home in the mountains of Oaxaca (pronounced “wahaka”), Mexico, to the berry fields of Washington State. Their work is grueling. They labor for long hours, picking with the ambidextrous deftness of a skilled craftsperson at a frantic pace from predawn until the field is completed (for up to twelve hours, usually with no breaks, seven days a week during picking season), often undergoing derision and racist insults from crew bosses. They are exposed to chemicals sprayed on the crops and stress injuries – such as chronic knee, back, and hip pain – from prolonged postures in bent or kneeling positions that their task demands. Further,

26 Washington state law sets the minimum wage at $7.16 per hour. Since pickers are considered “contract workers” and are paid by weight not wage, they must pick around fifty pounds every hour, at 14 cents per pound, in order to keep their jobs. This often precludes activities like bathroom breaks.
they live in substandard barracks and are barred from less strenuous, salaried jobs on the farm, courses in English language, and adequate medical care due to their status as undocumented workers (Holmes, 2013, pp. 72-78; 152-154). Holmes spent a mere two days per week picking with his Triqui companions and describes the work as “pure torture” (p. 74).

Holmes cautions against blaming the farm owners for the Triqui Mexicans’ plight, though. Farm executives claimed in interviews that treating their workers well is a priority, but due to unpredictable weather patterns and the uncertain flux of global economic variables, they cannot afford to improve working and living conditions without bankrupting the farm (Holmes, p. 52). If picking fruit in the Pacific Northwest is so torturous, why do migrant workers risk death and deportation in the desert on their way to the fields?

This is where violent structures come invisibly into play. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the US and Mexico outlaws economic “barriers” like tariffs, but not subsidies. Since wealthier countries (like the US) can afford massive subsidies and poorer ones (like Mexico) cannot, the result is an effectual reverse-tariff against crops in poorer countries. In communities like Oaxaca, genetically engineered, corporately grown corn from the Midwestern USA undersells local, family-grown corn. Small farmers cannot make a living and must migrate in order to survive. “Risking” the arid borderland trek, capture by armed border patrol agents, and brutal work on Washington farms is actually less risky than staying in Oaxaca, where their traditional livelihoods are no longer viable, there are no job prospects, and many suffer
from hunger (Holmes, 2013, p. 76, 91-92). The hidden costs of a “cheap” quart of strawberry ice cream in supermarkets far from Oaxaca and Washington accrue in the bodies of migrant workers, who are forced from their homes across deserts and into fields to pick berries that they cannot eat.

3.7.4 Oil

If it is difficult for Northern consumers to know where the berries they buy come from, it is perhaps even more difficult to ascertain the derivation of petroleum-based products like gasoline. Oil giants Chevron and Shell have profited from extraction in Ecuador and Nigeria, respectively. They have also been the target of much criticism and litigation.

A twenty-years-long legal battle continues to rage between 30,000 Indigenous Amazonians and environmental advocacy groups against Texaco’s parent company, Chevron, over alleged pollution during twenty years of crude oil extraction in the Ecuadorian rainforest from the 1970s to 1990s. The Indigenous groups claim that 16 million gallons of oil and an additional 20 billion gallons of carcinogenic waste were dumped into 17,000 acres of forest habitat, causing irreparable ecological harm and destroying the land-based livelihoods of the people (Burdon, 2010, p. 64). Chevron, on the other hand, maintains that there is no causal link between pollution and cancer

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27 In addition to profits of $93 billion in 2014, the Big Five oil companies also benefit from tax breaks and the absence of pollution limits on petroleum and natural gas refinement (Weiss & Peterson, 2014).
rates, and that Texaco adequately cleaned up the spills that inevitably come with oil drilling. An original ruling in favor of the plaintiffs imposed a $19 billion dollar fine on Chevron, but a recent appeal reversed the decision. The judge acknowledged that pollution had in fact occurred, but found that fraudulent evidence had been provided by the defendants’ lawyer. Further appeals are expected (Krauss, 2014).

This example brings the Western rights-based framework into question. The legal process is “working” in this case, according to abstract principles. Justice for Chevron takes the form of increased stock values for its shareholders. But what would justice look like for the Indigenous peoples and the forest they call home? The 19 billion-dollar fine is an example of the limits of operating with a Western paradigm of commodification and compensation. No amount of money can unspill oil.

Another infamous case of the oil-violence connection is that of the Shell Oil Company and the Ogoni people of the Niger Delta. Many minds more apt than mine have tried to tackle the task of explaining the intertwined roles of multinational corporations, the Nigerian national government and military, self-organized militias, private police forces, and the nonviolent Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). It is an ongoing crisis with economic, environmental, and community-identity elements. This is “one of the trickiest, most emotional issues in both contemporary Africa and current human rights debates” (Welch, 1995).

There is insufficient space here to tell the story in its entirety. A shorter version begins in 1958 when Shell began drilling in Ogoniland, an area of fertile soils, abundant water, and home to several hundred thousand primarily pastoral people. Extraction of
oil – profits from the sale of which local communities saw next to none – resulted in ecological devastation: oil spills, waste dumping, soot from unceasing burning of gas flares, and digging of pipelines through prime farmlands (Cayford, 1996). The Nigerian government blames Shell, Shell blames the government and militia groups, militia groups blame the national military and Shell, and ultimately the villages and communities of Ogoniland suffer. Structural violence gives rise to hot violence in attacks on pipelines, refineries, and villages. Investigative journalist Peter Maass (2009) describes the dynamics in *Crude World: The Violent Twilight of Oil*:

“Foreign companies fed the conflict by providing funds to both sides: the military was paid to protect wells; the militias were paid not to attack them. The combatants were incentivised for combat. I visited Nigeria to learn how oil had turned a once healthy country, and the people who lived there, into a specimen of rot.” (pp.53-54).

Ken Saro-Wiwa, a leader of MOSOP, brought the environmental issues to the attention of the international media. Saro-Wiwa referred to Shell’s activity as an “ecological war,” and was executed after a spurious extra-judicial tribunal in 1995 declared that he had turned from non-violent to violent means of resistance (Nwagbara, 2011, p. 284).

Today, the struggle continues. A 2011 UNEP report estimated that oil spills in Ogoniland will take 30 more years to clean up, but according to human rights watchdog group Amnesty International, Royal Dutch Shell’s Nigerian subsidiary and the Nigerian government have taken “almost no meaningful action” toward implementing protocols outlined by the UNEP (“Shell”, 2014). Instead, they continue to lay the blame on local vandals (Vidal, 2011).
What is a peacebuilder – or anyone – to learn from this harrowing story? It certainly leads to more questions than answers. And the questions are undoubtedly complex and bewildering, although perhaps not as bewildering as is an oil-flooded field to a small farmer. But structural violence thrives – in the invisible links between the forests of the Amazon, the fields of Ogoniland, and the gas tanks of cars everywhere – when the hard questions go unasked.

3.8 On Community

The above examples of structural violence, from LA to Ladakh, are merely illustrative and by no means exhaustive. Despite their geographic, social, cultural, and political differences, they are also convergent: all of these cases are tied to the dual exploitation of land and communities as a direct or indirect result of a neoliberal industrial worldview. Community, both as an analytical category and a reality in people’s lives, emerges as core to a transformational project.

June Nash’s work with Bolivian tin miners in the 1970s elucidates this point. After living in the mining communities and descending into the mines, Nash realized that Marx might have missed something in his critique of capitalism. He pointed to three sources of alienation in capitalist society: “(1) separation of producers from the product...(2) separation of the producers from the means of production...and (3)

28 It is possible to cite cases in Cambodia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Timor Leste (Richmond, 2011, pp. 66-91), as well as Iraq, Afghanistan, and the rest of the Greater Middle East (Bacevich, 2014), and everywhere else.
separation of the producers from the sense of meaningful self-involvement in the work process” (Nash, 1993, p. 325). Nash proposes a fourth form of alienation: “the separation of the worker from the sense of identity with a community” (ibid). Based on the earlier analysis of structural violence, it becomes possible to identify a fifth form of alienation: the separation of producers (and consumers) from the landscapes they live in and rely on – the ecosphere that sustains all life.

In Home Economics, Wendell Berry (1986) underlines the commonalities between communities in the Global North and the Global South vis-à-vis colonial practices and their relationship to land:

“The exploitive interest is absent from the countryside exactly as if the countryside were a foreign colony. The result of this separation is that the true costs of production are not paid by the exploitive interest but only suffered by the exploited land and people. The colony, whether foreign or domestic, becomes unstable, both as an ecosystem and as a community because colonialism does not permit the development of strong local economies.” (p. 186)

Thus the “hidden” or true costs of industrial “development” might be accurately counted in communities exploited, corroded, and crushed. The global trend is one of sacrifice on the part of the most marginalized for the benefit of those positioned – geographically and politically – closest to centers of power (A. Sachs, 1995, pp. 23-33). Furthermore, the dominant discourse on global economics, along with media and advertisements, show only the bright side of “development”: fast food, fast cars, fantastic salaries, glamour, gadgets, etc. These tell the global poor “what to be: modern, civilized, and rich” (Norberg-Hodge, 2009, p. 156). They do not tell anything of the true
costs of such a way of being in the world: pollution, waste, community disintegration, diseases of the heart, disorders of the mind, injustice, stress, and alienation.

Perhaps this paints a dismal picture. But alternative metrics can change the frame and focus, and a defiantly hopeful image emerges.

For example, Hazel Henderson (1995) argues that mainstream economic models miss roughly 50% of the valuable products in industrial society: “one of the most critical errors of economic theory has been the omission of the informal, unpaid sectors from its modeling... what I refer to as the “love economy” (p. 101). Exchanges in the Love Economy include parenting, volunteering, caring for the young, old, and sick, household management, do-it-yourself projects, mutual aid, food-growing, bartering, and community service. This work – the work that holds communities together – is not valued or even considered “work” at all by the World Bank, Wall Street, or the statisticians and political analysts of the “global free market.” It never shows up in GDP. According to an estimate by United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), the Love Economy amounts to about $16 trillion – that is, $16,000,000,000,000 – per year, or more than 10 times the total of global military spending (Henderson cited in Schumacher, 1999, p. 41; Young, 2014). All over the world, in uncountable communities, the combined contributions of daily acts of love and care are blowing war out of the water.
3.9 Conclusion

There will be no equity, no justice, and no peace without ecology in the 21st century (W. Sachs, 2013). Johan Galtung (1990) knew that peacebuilders simply cannot ignore humans’ interrelationship with “Nature, the sine qua non for human existence” (p. 292). He continues:

“‘Ecological balance’ is probably the most frequently found term used for environment system maintenance. If this is not satisfied, the result is ecological degradation, breakdown, imbalance. Eco-balance corresponds to survival + well-being + freedom + identity for human basic maintenance. If not satisfied, the result is human degradation. The sum of all five, for all, will define ‘peace.’” (Ibid)

This sense of balance is conspicuously absent from the vast majority of peace research and practice. Peacebuilding, if it is to be transformative, must embrace a paradigm that champions ecology and refuses to reify a myopic worldview that reinforces violent structures. To be sure, stopping killing and establishing “negative” peace is a vital task. But efforts to build a durable positive peace must avoid re-creating the conditions that give rise to violence in the first place; they must consider whose peace is being built and cannot afford to omit the natural world. Further, “sustainable development” as defined by political and corporate leaders – who promote technological improvements for improved “eco-efficiency” but remain mute on the need to consume and waste less – serves to undergird the status quo (Huesemann, 2003). Quick fixes (like the Kimberley Process) and technical mends (like more “efficient” fridges and the EPA’s pollution monitors) are not enough. As scholar-practitioner Rob Ricigliano (2012) so aptly stated: “solutions are not the answer” (p. 59).
The field of peacebuilding must take the long view in addressing both “hot” and structural forms of violence experienced by communities, or fail (Lederach, 2005; Smith & Verdeja, 2013, pp. 240-241). Short-term, discrete interventions are inadequate to engage with cycles of violence as war loops or systems and fall short of achieving peace that lasts (Ricigliano, 2012). A full view of positive peace, then, includes overcoming cultural violence that may prevent us from recognizing humans’ reciprocal relationships with ecosystems. Lisa Schirch (2013) sums it up:

“Industrial cultures tend to treat the environment as a resource for humans to use in pursuit of economic growth. Indigenous cultures tend to see the environment endowed with spiritual dimensions and interdependent with the survival of human beings. These two paradigms lead to different approaches to land, food, economic, social, and political systems. Changing the paradigm of thinking of land as an endless resource versus an interdependent part of humanity would create significant system change.” (pp. 186-187, emphasis added)

A change is in order, but how? Where to begin?
Chapter 4:

RECONNECTING – WHERE ARE WE GOING?

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter describes what might be best understood as dysfunctional relationships, rooted in a particular worldview. Relationships are central to building peace (Lederach, 2005, p. 34). A view that justifies the destroying of one place or people for the benefit of another is both product and purveyor of a fundamental relational disconnect. Humans do not – and cannot – exist apart from the natural world. Perhaps it goes without saying that we can live for weeks without food, days without water, and minutes without air. Yet violent structures can blind us to the fact that 1) humans are organisms, and 2) “organisms function only in relation to other organisms” (Paracer & Ahmadjian, 2000, p. 13). Symbiosis – the mutually beneficial interaction of two or more living things – is the only viable option for a durable human-Earth relationship (Peacock, 2011). To presuppose that this is irrelevant to peacebuilding makes no sense. We cannot have either peace or healthy ecosystems. It becomes clear that we need to take a both/and approach to building peace (Lederach, 1997, pp. 121-122). This chapter highlights ongoing efforts to bolster both human communities and the ecosystems they inhabit. In other words: to reconnect.
4.2 Healing

The natural world is a partial answer to one of the fundamental questions of peacebuilding: “How do we help heal broken humanity?” (Lederach & Appleby, 2010, p. 28). Recent scholarship has corroborated ancient wisdom regarding humans’ integral interrelationship with their more-than-human environment. This section explores examples of nature in healing that range from the personal to the communal, from pine boughs to soil bacteria, from the intimacy of a community garden in Uganda to the vastness of the Canadian Rockies.

4.2.1 Whole Persons

Evidence is piling up as increasing studies in the scientific community demonstrate strong outcomes for “nature contact” over a range of health issues, including coping with the stresses of modern life. And it goes deeper than physical fitness.

The emerging field of Ecopsychology integrates ecology with psychology, the study of the human psyche, or soul (Fisher, 2002, p. 4). This approach acknowledges that humans have not evolved in a vacuum, but rather co-grow with other plants and animals, along with rivers, clouds, rocks, etc. Ecopsychologist Andy Fisher suggests that we ought to “regard urban-industrial society to be at the root of much of the suffering (grief, despair and anxiety) in modern times, since our culture dismisses ecological instincts deeply rooted in the human psyche” (Fisher, cited in Westlund, 2014, p. 39). Just as disconnection from our “natural home” underlies much of today’s suffering,
reconnecting with the natural environment has proven, again and again, to be profoundly beneficial.

In a breakthrough study, Ulrich (1984) observed that surgical patients whose rooms offered view of trees did some strange things: they left the hospital sooner, required less medication, and experienced fewer complications during convalescence than patients with windows looking onto a brick wall. In a similar study, prison inmates who had views of farm fields from their rooms made less demands on prison health care services than those with a view of a concrete courtyard (Moore, 1982). What about digital representations of nature? A 2008 study found that a view of a “nature scene” through a glass wall provided more restorative physiological effects than a blank wall, and a real-time view of a nature scene piped onto a HDTV plasma screen demonstrated no difference from staring at a blank wall (Kahn Jr. et al., p. 192). Taken together, these studies suggest that beholding the “real” natural environment can be restorative, but an unreal – or “technologically mediated” – view is not.

More recently, the journal Social Science & Medicine published a study measuring the impacts of living in proximity to green space (within 3km) on people who are coping with stress. Across “age, gender, income, education level, and level of urbanity” the results supported the notion that “green space can provide a buffer against the negative health impact of stressful life events” (van den Berg, Maas, Verheij, & Broenewegen, 2010, p. 1203). In other words, the natural world provides a locus of resistance to suffering. This is particularly true of children. Kids who live in “high-nature” conditions cope better and suffer less psychological distress from life’s stresses than
kids in “low-nature” conditions, and the “protective impact of nearby nature is strongest for the most vulnerable children – those experiencing the highest levels of stressful life events” (Wells & Evans, 2003, p. 311). When it comes to resilience, the more opportunities to interact with nature, the better.

Interacting with natural environments holds a host of other cognitive benefits as well, including enhanced attention (Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008), decreased irritability (Kaplan, 1995), and lower frustration and increased positive emotional mindsets (happiness) (Aspinall et al., 2013). Berman and colleagues discovered that “top-down” directed-attention, such as that used by someone to avoid being hit by a car during rush-hour traffic, wears us out, whereas “bottom-up” attention to stimuli in nature, such as cloud formations, rustling leaves, or falling snow can replenish our cognitive capacities (p. 1207). Likewise, Kaplan contends that extended “linear” attention demanded of humans in the modern world, such as working on a task in front of a computer screen, would have made our ancestors easy targets for the likes of saber-toothed cats and other predators. Aspinall’s research team demonstrated that a simple stroll in green space can be soothing for urban dwellers. All of these point to the natural environment’s powers of restoration.

Finally, and not least relevant to peacebuilding, a study by Weinstein, Pryzbylski, and Ryan (2009) suggested that “full contact with nature can have humanizing effects, fostering greater authenticity and connectedness and, in turn, other versus self-orientation that enhance valuing of and generosity toward others” (p. 1328). The study also found that intrinsic aspirations (i.e. development of close relationships and
community contributions) tend to increase while extrinsic aspirations (i.e. wealth and
fame) decrease with nature contact, and “the effects of nature experiences may be
especially robust when individuals are immersed in these environments” (p. 1315). In
other words, the more immersed we are in the natural environment, the more we are
humanized and the more we aspire toward treating others humanely.

The scientific reports mentioned here, by no means an exhaustive list, offer
quantifiable evidence for what many people know intuitively to be true. Data are not
necessary to prove to someone who has walked in the desert that water and greenery
are restorative. And bell hooks does not need a study to tell her that the hills and forests
of rural Kentucky provided a “buffer” against the harsh realities of bigotry and
repression as a young Black girl in the Jim Crow South. The health benefits of interacting
with nature, though many, are not always quantifiable, nor are they limited to a merely
clinical sense. Ecopsychology posits that humans, as humans, take the natural world as
our home. For many denizens of the hyper-urbanized 21st century, this may feel far from
the case. Given the malaises that result from a cut-off lifeway, moreover, the human-
nature disconnect might well be understood as a form of alienation from place, or
displacement. The stories that follow indicate the good that can come from re-placing
ourselves in relationship with the more-than-human world. Nature returns us to
ourselves, and to one another.
4.2.2 War-Torn People: Veterans in North America

Stephanie Westlund (2014) chronicles the stories of veterans in the US and Canada who have found interaction with nature helpful in healing when traditional counseling and pharmaceutical therapies have been incomplete or ineffective. In *Field Exercises: How Veterans are Healing Themselves through Farming and Outdoor Activities*, Westlund explains that post-traumatic stress injuries are a reality for many soldiers. Enemy fire is not the only danger, and war wounds are not always visible: “Since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan [in 2001], more US military personnel have died by suicide than in combat”, and the rate is even higher among veterans: 22 former military personnel took their own lives every day in 2010, totaling about 8,000 per year (Westlund, pp. 20-21). Veterans also comprise roughly 25% of the homeless population in the US and the UK (p. 10). These staggering statistics signal a great need for healing among servicemen and women, during and after war. But this group is not a block. Veterans enlist for many reasons, often chief among them is a “strong desire to serve their communities” (p. 9). Many return home disillusioned. An Iraq War veteran interviewed by Westlund stated: “I feel like I served Big Oil. I think, for myself and for a lot of other veterans, we are just looking for meaningful ways to serve” (p. 53).

In small farms and gardens across North America, veterans are finding a meaningful way to serve. Rather than taking life, gardening gives an opportunity to be a

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29 Post-traumatic stress is increasingly considered an “appropriate response to trauma” (not a “disorder”) within the medical community and veterans groups. Not all veterans experience post-traumatic stress, but it is common enough that the Canadian Armed Forces have adopted the term “operational stress injury” for invisible wounds incurred during military service (p. 15).
part of the nurturing and cultivating of life. Small-scale farming, and permaculture in particular,\(^{30}\) are growing in popularity among self-organized veterans groups who appreciate working toward the common goal of meeting a fundamental human need (food), in cooperation with the natural environment (soil, sun, water, air).

Gardening is a way for veterans to both serve their communities and cope effectively with personal struggles: “individual body-mind balance and community support are two great benefits that come out of small-scale farming” (Westlund, 2014, p. 107). For example, many veterans have chronic sleep troubles. One veteran told Westlund in an interview that after he works outdoors with a shovel in hand for 10 or 12 hours, and “especially doing it as a labor of love...sleep comes real easy” (p. 54). This he knows. He may not know about *Mycobacterium vaccae*, a microscopic organism (bacteria) that lives in most soil types, which scientists are beginning to realize has antidepressant effects, may increase creativity, and has even been shown to improve the quality of life of terminal cancer patients (pp. 42-43). Of course, gardening is not for everyone; it is not a “magic bullet” or a panacea. And it is not a mystery: “It’s just real basic stuff”, explains one former soldier and current gardener, “moving your body and eating good food. Often it’s the most overlooked” (p. 54)

Indeed, there has been tremendous inertia when it comes to mainstreaming garden work and other forms of “green care” alongside drugs and traditional counseling

\(^{30}\) Permaculture, a term coined by Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, is a method of landscape design that works with (not against) nature to cultivate agricultural ecosystems that are self-sustaining and self-sufficient.
for veterans. Peace scholar and former National Guard infantry officer Keith Tidball explains: “Within the military community, there’s also resistance to gardening, which can be seen as too ‘frou-frou’, despite the fact...[that] many hardcore front-of-the-battle warrior types get a lot of benefit out of gardening” (Quoted in Westlund, 2014, p. 48).

Among the benefits of gardening for veterans, for whom interacting with others can be a source of severe anxiety, is the element of cooperation without conversation. Rather than talk about their struggles and stresses, gardening allows veterans to literally work through them: “It is not-talking” (p. 160).

And gardening is not the only beneficial outdoor activity. When dealing with other humans is unpleasant, unhelpful, or undoable, many veterans find transformative power in interaction with animals. An uncannily playful horse helped one former serviceman face and overcome his fear of rejection (Westlund, 2014, p. 167). Others find catharsis in hiking, canoeing, fishing, and camping. Traditional group therapy typically takes place in a room with four walls and a ceiling. “This isn’t always helpful,” explained a former soldier who had served on peacekeeping missions in Yugoslavia and Uganda, who found his anger only worsened after “sitting with a group of guys that are angry in a room with nowhere for all that energy to go” (p. 78). Sitting around a campfire under the stars allows pent-up energy to be released skyward with the sparks and the smoke.

Westlund (2014), in her opening and concluding chapters, overviews the historical record alongside cutting-edge research on human-nature connections and healing, from biblical prophets seeking God in the wilderness to modern city parks, and
from biomedicine to sociology and neuroscience (pp. 4-5, 35-48). In sum, there are three common benefits: “1. improved mood, self-esteem, and self-efficacy...as well as reduced anger, confusion, depression and tension 2. better physical health 3. enhanced social connections and ability to bond with others” (p. 170).

Outdoor activity and interrelating with the natural world is not a cure-all for post-traumatic stress, or even a cure. But it has shown promise for rebuilding lives and communities where other promises have failed. Westlund quotes Tidball, who asserts: “Almost across the board, in every case, nature contact matters” (p. 187).

4.2.3 War-Torn Communities

Connections between nature and peace go well beyond “natural resource management.” The stories shared by veterans in North America resonate with experiences in war-torn communities across the globe where, in the direst of times and most difficult of places, hope springs defiant up out of the ground.

Lederach & Lederach (2010) tell a story about former child soldiers who have resettled in the West African nation of Ghana, where the Buduburam Refugee Camp was set up by the United Nations Refugee Agency in 1990 after devastating violence had swept across Liberia. Children saw their villages raided by rebel groups, their homes destroyed, their families killed. They had nowhere to go. Many were abducted and inculcated by the rebels, told that they could fight for peace by attacking government troops and villages, even their own. The alternative to fighting was death.
Although the war ended in 2003, Buduburam is still populated by more than 30,000 refugees who fled violence and atrocities in Liberia during the fighting. Many were child soldiers like Morris, a former commander who finally escaped the rebel groups and now, after a life of so much death, wrestles daily with unimaginable guilt and the crushing weight of images of blood he had spilt in order to survive. But Morris is working hard for healing and change: “I know I can transform and maybe people will begin to accept me, to forgive me” (Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 19).

Today, Morris is leading an army of 200 former child combatants – not in fighting, but in farming. They have come together to try to give back to the community: “They grow fruits and vegetables. They work the land. They create and nurture new life” (ibid). Through this gardening work, Morris met Jake, who was among the first Liberians displaced over 20 years before. Jake found the camp sparse and stark: “there was nothing when we first arrived here. You had to fight for food, if you didn’t fight, you wouldn’t eat” (Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 20). Jake sought alternatives to violence. He planted a garden and a coconut tree instead, and founded a cultural center where the “traditional Liberian practices of drumming and dancing create a link to connect lost children and their lost childhoods to their homeland. They learn the languages, tribes, and traditional dancing from Libera. They learn the songs of their grandmothers” (p. 21).

Drums and gardens create space for healing and transformation in Buduburam and other places the world over. In Greening in the Red Zone, a volume edited by Tidball and Krasny, the authors explore many places – from Afghanistan to South Korea, New Orleans, Berlin, and beyond – where “post-catastrophe, community-based stewardship
of nature...serve[s] as a source of social-ecological resilience in the face of severe hardship” (2013, p. 3). One of the most striking stories they recount is that of the Soweto Mountain in South Africa.

The mountain rises above a vast expanse of townships outside Johannesburg. It was once a dangerous place, a site of muggings and murders, and stood above the slums as a symbol of the hatred and violence of apartheid. Since the end of apartheid, the mountain’s meaning has changed. Community leaders work together with local residents to plant vegetable gardens, create artistic monuments, and hold drumming circles. Together, they have been able to “transform the hill into a site for renewal – renewal of the residents, of the community, and of the landscape” (Tidball & Krasny, 2013, p. 4). The mountain is now known as the Soweto Mountain of Hope.

The stories from Ghana and South Africa describe a natural environment deeply interconnected with human hope, an interrelationship where resiliency, resistance, restoration, and revival become possible. On an individual level, nature contact engages humans as whole persons through the senses. Schirch (2005) reminds us that conflict is, invariably, a sensual and emotional experience of both body and mind: “humans see, hear, touch, taste and feel the world around them” (p. 42); and in conflict, “people perspire, their heart beats faster, blood rushes to their face, and knees knock” (p. 44). The sensual experience, so central to conflict, may also be part of its transformation.

Just as nature can be a part of personal healing, it is rich with possibilities for what Lederach & Lederach (2010) call social healing: “an intermediary phenomenon located between micro-individual healing and wider collective reconciliation” which
emphasizes “lived experience and place[s] particular importance on local communities” (p. 6, 9). Social healing “creates and rises from a fragile though dynamic space with a seed-like quality that simultaneously is both birth and fruit” (p. 12). In order for a seed to grow, it requires a few things: air, light, and water, in proper proportions. It also needs fertile soil in which to grow. What happens when peace processes take this metaphor to be true and acknowledge the role of the land – of particular places on the Earth?

4.3 Peace and Place

When peacebuilder, scholar, and teacher John Paul Lederach (2005) presented an integrated framework for peacebuilding at a training session in Guatemala in the 1990s, a Mayan traditional priest approached him at lunchtime to ask about “an overarching element” that seemed to be missing (p. 140). Lederach wondered what political, economic, or historical piece might be absent, but it was none of these. The priest explained:

“Your framework is missing the earth and skies, the winds and rocks. It does not say where you are located. In a traditional Mayan view, if there is a problem in the community, the first thing we would ask is: Did you greet the sun today? Did you thank the earth for the corn? It is not the only thing, but it is the first. We always must know where, [in] what place and time, we are located.” (ibid)

Inspired by this view, Lederach expanded the integrated framework to include ways in which peacebuilders might go about repairing the temporal dimension of conflict, from “time immemorial” in narrative to the “past that lies before us” in a desired future (pp.
More recently, Westlund (2010) has taken up the question of place, noting that “scholars often re-tell and analyze peacebuilding stories as independent of locale, as though place does not matter” (p. 297). Likewise, Lisa Schirch (2005) points out that “there is relatively little documented information on the importance of physical context in peacebuilding processes” (p. 68). The result can be a kind of placelessness in peace studies and practice. If positive peace is the goal, and if indeed ecology is to be a part of it, then place must become central, including a more-than-utilitarian view of the landscape. The elements of peacebuilding that are in danger of being disoriented from the cosmos may need to be re-placed.

One way to go about this is in deepening our thinking about space and place. Schirch (2005) argues that “space matters” in peacebuilding because “everything— including conflict, humans, ideas, and language – exists in ecological relationship” (p. 65). She urges peace practitioners to take time, location, architecture, objects, smells, tastes and sounds into consideration when designing mediation platforms (pp. 70-71). In particular, creating an “oasis for peace” involves a spatial dimension where people are removed “out of everyday social structures that often fuel the flames of conflict” and come together in a safe space to deal constructively with conflict (p. 76). The studies and stories in the previous section suggest that natural environments hold great potential as peace “oases”, and, further, that these oases might be cultivated within communities as they work through times of conflict.

Lederach & Lederach (2010) deal with loss of place as a result of violent conflict, and they consider place to be a key in the journey of restoration. The authors contend
that “literally and figuratively violence displaces people” (p. 58). Refugees and internally
displaced persons (IDPs) lose their homes and homelands, and also the sense of
belonging or feeling at home. The linear approach and “sequential phases and stages” of
top-down peace processes exhibit the same shortcoming as an economic paradigm
predicated on “growth”: they largely disregard the deeply human experience of well-
being that is part of being in ecological relationship. A place-aware approach to building
peace moves toward “images of depth, rootedness, and even cyclical, season-like
processes tied to location and land” (Lederach & Lederach, p. 62). This would require,
among other things, listening to (not ignoring or denying) the rhythms of the Earth.

Efforts to re-place peace practice in this way might take bioregions – areas
defined by the living landscape rather than lines on a map – as a framework for peace
initiatives. Kyrou (2007) posits a theoretical framework for Peace Ecology, which
embraces bioregional awareness and envisions “the transformed society we are aiming
to create through our work… a society capable of dealing with change constructively
and non-violently; one that sustains positive peace over time; that exists as a fully
integrated component of an ecologically healthy environment” (pp. 88-89). This means
that a peacebuilding assessment would include the ecological, as well as the cultural and
socio-political context. In other words, there would be an emphasis on locating conflict
in time and place, within the seasons and watersheds.

There is a common refrain to “think globally and act locally” in order to meet the
challenges of life in the third millennium. Of course, we must also think locally – and
strategically. Peacebuilders must ask: What potential for change exists in the place
where I am? Where is change already happening, and how can I help to grow it? In this vein, there already exists a movement, scattered but gaining momentum, away from the displacement-prone globalization and toward localization in communities the world over.

4.4 Localization and Trans-Locality

The need to find viable alternatives to the untenable, inherently crisis prone, “hyper-globalized” status quo is “urgent” (Posey, 2011, p. 299, 311). These already exist, and they are imbued with a strong sense of place. Indigenous groups and communities that have become native to their place (Jackson, 2011) maintain human-Earth relationships based on responsibility and reciprocity rather than expediency and exploitation. This wisdom and knowledge are indispensable for building durable peace in the 21st century. E.F. Schumacher, writing in the 1970s, was one of the luminaries in this area, and his Small is Beautiful: Economics As if People Mattered has inspired dozens of organizations and initiatives that are resisting placelessness and redefining “development.” Revisiting a few examples from the earlier discussion of the human-Nature disconnect reveals ways in which vital connections are being restored.

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31 In this section, I expand on an idea inspired by the term “trans-local” used originally by activists quoted in Jackie Smith, Rebecca Burns, and Rachel Miller’s chapter “The World Social Forums as Transformative Peacebuilding.”

32 To name a few: the E.F. Schumacher Society, Schumacher College, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, Rocky Mountain Institute, Resurgence magazine, Soil Association, the Land Institute, International Society for Ecology and Culture.
4.4.1 Ladakh Revisited

Helena Norberg-Hodge proposes a “counter-development” approach to revitalize communities, which champions decentralization and cross-cultural exchange (2009, p. 157). Counter-development adopts human-scale technologies that can be sourced locally and operated indefinitely with little or no dependence on imported “experts” or fossil fuels. At the same time, it values cross-fertilization as important to both cultural diversity and biodiversity. At the Ladakh Project, Norberg-Hodge and her colleagues seek to build a movement that promotes the “small scale on a large scale” through localization: “Localizing economies is the most strategic way to heal both people and the planet – reweaving our interdependence with one another and with the natural world to which we belong” (Norberg-Hodge, 2009, p. 212). The goal is self-sufficiency and simplicity first. Then, healthy communities are nurtured and refreshed through trans-local trade of ideas and cultural wealth.

Like Norberg-Hodge, Vandana Shiva (2009) works for localization in India and also shares a message with the rest of the world: we must “re-imbed our eating and drinking, our moving and working, into our local ecosystems and local cultures, enriching our lives while lowering our consumption without impoverishing others” (p. 22). In this way, many of the true costs of industrialism would be reduced or eradicated. There are great implications for measuring progress toward an ecological peace: “Renewable [energy] and biodiversity redefine progress. They redefine development. They redefine ‘developed,’ ‘developing,’ and ‘underdeveloped’” (Shiva, 2009, p. 23).
Changing the meaning of “development” involves a simultaneous shift in what it means to “invest.” The Slow Money movement is a robust example of pairing divestment from far-off industries, whose pecuniary returns are infused with structural violence, with investment in local communities. Investing in the soil – buying from a small agricultural enterprise near you, one that improves rather than degrades soil, water, and air quality – might be considered an investment in peace (Tasch, 2014). A reexamination of dynamics in the South Bronx and South Los Angeles further illustrates this point by revealing opportunities in the challenges of environmental injustice.

4.4.2 Honeybees & Food Forests

Majora Carter has been an eloquent and active advocate for community-led environmental revitalization projects that maintain an atypical view of “progress.” As host of the public radio show The Promised Land, Carter adopts what she calls a “hometown security” approach to working toward environmental justice in the Bronx and other communities through identifying and investing in “eco-entrepreneurship … local jobs and smart infrastructure” (Carter, 2011). Eco-entrepreneurship focuses on replacing environmentally and socially hazardous, gigantic, short-term-gain “development” projects (like building stadiums and paving parking lots) with long-term, human-scaled, mutually beneficial initiatives. Examples include: reforestation for water conservation, which obviates the need for high-energy pumping in Southern California;
beekeeping, which radically reduces rates of recidivism for former inmates in Chicago,\(^{33}\) and wind energy, which replaces mountaintop removal in West Virginia (Carter, 2011).

Likewise, Ron Finley and his community group, LA Green Grounds, adopt a homegrown approach to dismantling violence that is bound up in the industrial food system, globalization, and ghettoization. Structural violence manifests itself in the form of decreased life chances, gang violence, and increased risk for preventable diseases in Finley’s neighborhood. Known as the Guerrilla Gardener, Finley works alongside community members to plant food forests on land deemed worthless by the dominant system. The health of human bodies, of the community, and of the soil is mutually enhanced. Finley explains: “Gardening is the most therapeutic and defiant act you can do, especially in the inner-city. Plus, you get strawberries…” (2013). He speaks with poise and purpose about a simple way to grow change, but Ron Finley values talk less than action. “If you want to meet with me,” says Finley, “come to the garden with your shovel, so we can plant some shit!” (2013).

These examples are but a few indications of how “investment” and “development” are being redefined. It is important to note that localization of economies toward self-sufficiency is not about romanticizing the local or discounting the global. It is about untying the binds of industrial gigantism and hegemony that currently dominate global “trade.” This is not isolationism, but rather a kind of rootedness in

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\(^{33}\) Less than 4% of the young men who participated in an eco-entrepreneurial beekeeping program ended up returning to prison. Compare this to the average recidivism rate of 75% in the US (“Recidivism,” 2015).
place paired with an acknowledgement and embrace of mutual interconnectedness with other places. This is trans-localization.

Trans-local networks embody John Paul Lederach’s “web-making” approach to peacebuilding because they are “smart-flexible” and adept at linking communities that, while geographically distant, are connected in terms of “social geography” (2005, pp. 75-86). For example, food and climate change stand as two clear, though complex, cases of “global” issues that are always experience locally. La Vía Campesina unites millions of peasants, small farmers, Indigenous groups, women farmers, and landless and migrant workers from all over the world. The movement’s goal is to “defend small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity” (“La Via,” 2011). Similarly, the “Detroit to Dakar” initiative sent delegates from Michigan to Senegal in order to learn about their mutual food struggles, including organized resistance to land grabs by transnational corporations that displace people from their homes and farms. These are trans-local networks of communities challenging the domination of the world economic order by transforming food from a commodity to human right (Smith, Burns, & Miller, 2013, p. 223). The discourse is shifted from “food security” to “food sovereignty”:

“Food sovereignty’ thus challenges the globalized food industry by stressing the importance of locally produced and ecologically sustainable food sources that emancipate local populations from exploitative outside markets, energy-intensive global distribution networks, and expensive agricultural technologies and their industrial complexes.” (Smith, Burns, & Miller, p. 221)
These technologies and their complexes, here seen to threaten food sovereignty, are also implicated in conversations around climate change. The World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held in Bolivia in 2010, represents one such conversation on a grand scale: over 35,000 people came together to address the failure of the United Nations and other world leaders to (a) achieve meaningful agreements or action toward ending ecological destruction (b) include the voices of grassroots groups who have been marginalized from global summits on curbing the causes of climate change. The conference sought to lift up the voices of the world’s poor, often silenced in the dominant discourse, in order to realize a future where humans of all places and the Earth will flourish (Schipani & Vidal, 2010).

4.5 Conclusion

Ladakh and LA are about as far apart as is geographically possible, but the lessons they provide are parallel. Trans-localization cultivates both biological diversity and cultural diversity, and it fosters synergistic cross-fertilization. Personal, social, and ecological healing become possible. This runs counter to the dominant global industrial monoculture, which, as we have seen, is reinforced by a particular worldview and legal framework. Patricia Mische, peace scholar and international law expert, argued two decades ago: “ultimately, without the development of a global culture of ecological responsibility, it is unlikely that international law can be enforced or effective” (1993, p. 59). Mische continues:
“We need a transformation in worldviews, by which we come to see that the Earth is like a single cell in the universe; that the human is not over the cell, but a part of it; and that we will live or die as this single cell lives or dies. Without such a fundamental change of mind, it is likely that an emerging global civilization will simply extend existing paradigms and problematics to new global levels of danger.” (p. 60).

The examples of healing and trans-locality considered above suggest stirrings in the direction of a culture of ecological responsibility. At least a couple of big obstacles remain, however, in industrialism’s fourth and fifth forms of alienation: separation from a sense of community, and (seeming) separation from the natural world. These form a feedback loop that leads to further environmental degradation and further disconnect. How to interrupt these cycles of alienation? How to cultivate the mindsets and capacities necessary for a flourishing trans-local world? This leads to further questions about worldviews, how they form and transform.
5.1 Introduction

Education, in its formal and non-formal forms, plays an underlying role in shaping consciousness and capacities – ways of seeing and being in the world. There is a burgeoning field of peace education, which is “generally defined as educational policy, planning, pedagogy, and practice that can provide learners – in any setting – with the skills and values to work toward comprehensive peace” (Bajaj, 2008, p. 1). Despite the fact that peace education and peacebuilding share the common goal of a positive peace, they tend to operate (in scholarship and practice) as if they existed in separate spheres. In this chapter and the case studies that follow, I attempt to bring the two into an open conversation and make the case that efforts aimed at promoting peace may benefit greatly from including education – as fundamental obstacle, or as central element – for building on solid ground.

5.2 Education as Obstacle

Leading thinkers and doers in theology, ecology, and localization identify education in the dominant Western (and, increasingly, global) model as a root cause of the current crisis in unawareness. Geologian (geologist and theologian) Thomas Berry
argues that the prevailing purpose of education is “to enable persons to be ‘productive’ within the context of the industrial society” by “exploiting the Earth” and people for profit (1999, p. 64). “Education” in the Eurocentric model trains children to become “narrow specialists” and technical experts; it focuses on “faraway facts and figures, a universal knowledge” and at the same time devalues local knowledge, resources, and cultures, acting “almost as a blindfold, preventing children from seeing the context in which they live” (Norberg-Hodge, 1999, pp. 110-111). E.F. Schumacher argues that education is “the most vital of all resources”, but in its present form serves as “an agent of destruction, in accordance with the principle corruptio optimi pessima” (1999, p. 79).

It is significant that Berry, Norberg-Hodge, and Schumacher (among many others) did not begin their careers in education. Through efforts at building thriving, healthy communities in other fields they came to realize that both the ends and means of the dominant education model pose serious problems. Ken Robinson, a prominent personality in modern education system reform, concurs: “We have a system of education that is modeled on the interests of industrialism and in the image of it” (2010). Automated alarm bells, conveyor belt-like curricular tracks, batches of students arranged by age (date of manufacture), specialization by subjects, numerical metrics for aptitude, and standardized testing (drill-and-kill) – all of these constitute a “factory model” of education that seldom meets the needs of communities or students, and often breeds mediocrity, laziness, disorder, delinquency, academic underachievement, and even violence (Noguera, 2007, pp. 205-206).
This “factory” form of education functions as a “promulgation of a very specific model for human possibility as marketized, commodified and reducible to some of the more dismal proclivities of economic scientificity/sophistry” (Burke, Collier, & McKenna, 2013, p. 2). Kids from Kindergarten -12th grade to university and doctoral programs are conditioned to accept “neoliberal policies of privatization and marketization” as the norm – the only possible norm (Apple, 2012, xii; p. 7). This model of education recreates the dominant world order. In short, learners consume educational products and thereby become products of education, so that they might then be producers and consumers in a competitive “global economy.”

Several pathologies seem to inhere to the this model: (1) Millions of young people are dehumanized and alienated (Irizarry & Brown, 2014, p. 63); (2) Divergent thinking – creativity noticeable in 98% of kindergarteners at the genius level – is reduced throughout adolescence and almost disappears by adulthood as a result of being “educated” (Robinson, 2011); (3) A “school-to-prison pipeline” entangles children from poor communities, and African American and Latino youth in particular, who “learn that their lives are disposable and that detention centers, jails, and prisons have somehow become an expected part of their life cycle” (Winn & Behizadeh, 2011, p. 167); (4) A disconnected state – of not knowing where our food and electricity come from, where our waste goes – is arrived at through a process that “initiate[s] our children into an economic order based on exploitation of the natural life systems of the planet. To achieve this attitude we must first make our children unfeeling in their relation with the natural world” (T. Berry, 1999, p. 15). These have all co-occurred with a stark rise in
diagnoses of obesity, diabetes, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders in kids. Thus the potential represented by the nation’s youth becomes another waste byproduct of an industrial system.

5.3 Education as Emancipatory

If the dominant form of education is in many ways a barrier to peace, alternative forms can provide different paths. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) articulated this vision in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which he described the difference between the “banking model”, where information is deposited into the presumably empty and disembodied heads of learners, and conscientizacao (or “consciousness-raising”), where learners “read the world” and their own embodied experience-as-text, thereby “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 77, 17). Thus education can reinforce the status quo, or it can be a catalyst for transformation. But “it is impossible for education to be neutral” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 104).

Freire’s “critical pedagogy” approach, enacted initially in literacy and enfranchisement campaigns among adults in poor rural and urban communities in his native Brazil – work for which he was banished for fifteen years of exile after a military coup in 1964 and subsequent dictatorship – has inspired a trans-local movement of “ecopedagogy”\(^3\) in schools, from early childhood to university (Antunes & Gadotti, 2004).

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\(^3\) Freire was in the midst of writing a book on ecopedagogy at the time of his death in 1997. Parts of this were published posthumously in the (2004) *Pedagogy of Indignation.*
Ecopedagogy, an Earth-based approach to education, is part of a larger body of work that emphasizes the role of education in promoting ecological awareness and sustainable lifeways. The following sections explore this transformative framework for education and learning, both in schools and beyond.

5.4 Space and Place in Education

Although environmental and outdoor education are no longer uncommon across North America and Europe, an ethos of stewardship remains far from the norm in Western culture. It seems the “message of personal responsibility, involvement, and action... has not been widely received and understood” (Potter, 2010, p. 25). What qualifies as “environmental” education, anyway? David Orr (2007) points out: “We often forget that all education is environmental education — by what we include or exclude, we teach the young that they are part of or apart from the natural world.” Many of the obstacles to what Orr (1992) has termed “ecological literacy” are hidden in plain sight, in the everyday spaces we move through and the places we inhabit. Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) explains that the built environment has an educative function: it hands down traditions, “clarifies social roles and relations”, and presents a “view of reality” (p. 112, 106). In other words, “architecture teaches” – it shapes our understanding of the universe and our role in it (Tuan, 1977, p. 102).

So, environmental educators are up against the walls: the malls, skyscrapers, schools, parking lots, homes, restaurants and roads of the human-made world teach kids daily that they are somehow separate from the natural world. Furthermore, the
fact that kids spend only about 10% of their waking life between birth and age 18 at school in the US (Koski & Levin, 2002), along with the simultaneous “evaporation of kids’ space in the social life of” increasingly urbanized environments (Nespor, 1997, p. 117), suggest that no school operates in isolation. Rather, each is part of a “web of... complex systems beginning and ending outside the school” (Nespor, 1997, p. xiii). These systems include landscapes, both built and natural, and neighborhoods, both human and more-than-human.

Some educators (and even entire school districts) are shifting away from the “factory” model and toward alternative modes of education as a way of redressing young people’s alienation from the ecosystems and human communities in which they live. Smith & Sobel (2010) argue in favor of programming where education is rooted in place – the creek behind the school, city council meetings, homeless shelters, cemeteries – and which “prepare[s] children to become participants in the local-problem solving that... must become increasingly common as humanity adjusts to the consequences of climate change, economic globalization, and resource extraction” (p. viii). Their book, Place- and Community- based Education in Schools, describes programs that bridge the boundaries between classrooms and neighborhoods, collaborating with community members and taking kids out to explore and learn from the (social, cultural, and natural) environment. Kids “read” their lived experiences and the real-world-as-text to ask concrete questions; for example: “Why is the air quality worse in this neighborhood than the richer neighborhoods?” (2010, p. 9). Young people lead research projects and activities in all disciplines (social studies, math, science, language, music,
art…) and become “co-creators of knowledge” whose work has a positive impact on their community – bathrooms, parks, parking lots, neighborhoods, and homes (2010, p. 12, 18). The ultimate goal is not higher test scores (though these are common), but rather enhanced relationships.

Place-based education is antithetical to alienation. Students learn to connect their local experience with global issues, and to act accordingly – but not all in one leap. David Sobel’s (1999) research on children and stewardship ethics reveals a real risk in environmental education: ecophobia. When “environmental” issues are presented at too young an age and in abstract terms, in videos, websites, textbooks, lectures, it can actually disempower learners and induce fear – of acid rain, rainforest destruction, or simply going outside – and despondency.35 Students must be given chances to connect to their environment in meaningful ways, often, and over time. Sobel argues, for example, that the water cycle is best taught over six to eight years and, while different activities are appropriate for different age groups,36 the emphasis is always on experience: “wet sneakers and muddy clothes were prerequisites for understanding the water cycle” (1999, p. 9).

This approach involves a paradigmatic shift from technology to tactility. On average, kids spend about six minutes outdoors and two to seven hours of “screen time” in North America each day (Flom, Johnson, Hubbard, & Redit, 2011). This “sensory

35 This tendency holds true for adults as well (Wapner, 2011).

36 Sobel identifies three periods: approximately 3-6, 7-11, and 12-15, with the middle range being “critical...for bonding with the earth” (1999, p. 7).
deprivation” results in a loss of alternative “ways of knowing,” and technology becomes an end in itself rather than a means to gain knowledge (Boulding, 1990, p. 77, 93). Despite a flood of research in favor of green schoolyards and interaction with nature for children’s cognitive and physical development and wellbeing (Crain, 2001; Wells & Evans, 2003; Dyment & Bell, 2007; Kuo & Faber Taylor, 2004, 2009; Johnson, 2013), the dominant model of education prioritizes technology at the same time that it cuts recess time and funding for outdoor activities. It purports computers as a mechanism to empower young people, but ignores the programmer – the “hidden pedagogue” – who sets the parameters of the box in which students are allowed to think (Monke, 2005, p. 201). On over-emphasis on “virtual” learning dangerously curtails student opportunities to cultivate empathy, imagination, a sense of belonging, value for hard work, patience, perseverance, and embodied experiences of interconnection.37 Thus students learn virtually nothing about “the qualities of responsibility and reverence that are the foundation of belonging to real human or biological communities” (Monke, 2005, p. 200).

Place-based education encourages kids to unplug in order to reconnect. It seeks to cultivate what Barry Lopez calls querencia: a term he borrows from Spanish that denotes an “abiding love for a place that leads to its care and stewardship as well as a desire to assure its beauty and integrity for generations to come” (Cited in Smith &

37 A web-based program on pollution in Earth’s atmosphere, for example, belies the fact that digital technology and its infrastructure are a huge electricity drain and therefore contribute massively -- about 1/10 of the world’s total energy use -- to the problems of energy consumption, pollution, and waste (Walsh, 2013).
Sobel, 2010, p. 37). _Querencia_ suggests a relationship between people and place that is characterized by reciprocity and empathy rather than exploitation and objectification. And, like all relationships, it requires the opportunity to _relate_. Sobel concludes: “If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it.” (1999, pp. 11-12).

Education that is based in a place is not about ignoring other places. As learners enter adolescence and young adulthood, they begin to connect their home context to global patterns and systems: “Conscious of what is happening globally, people at the local level need to be able to invent solutions to their own dilemmas while remaining in conversation with people from other locales about their inventions and experiments” (Smith & Sobel, 2010, p. 40). Here, the authors highlight the potential role of education in cultivating critical consciousness and bridging geographic divides to address common, trans-local concerns.

A place-based approach as outlined above aligns with what David Gruenewald (2003) refers to as a “critical pedagogy of place.” Although the traditions of place-based education and critical pedagogies have much to offer a conversation about promoting positive peace, each of these on its own is not automatically transformative from a peacebuilding perspective. Too often, critical pedagogies have focused solely on social justice and ignored the reality that all human societies are rooted in ecosystems; place-based education, on the other hand, has tended to focus on ecology as if environmental issues exist in isolation from cultural conflicts in urban society. A critical pedagogy of place brings the two together. The goal is twofold: decolonization and reinhabitation
(Gruenewald, 2003, p. 9). Decolonization is a process of recognizing and resisting domination, exploitation, and violence in both its physical and structural forms. Reinhabitation involves identifying, reclaiming, creating, and nurturing cultural knowledge and ways of being that enable both people and places to thrive.

To pursue this point further, one might consider some the differences between colonizers, residents, and inhabitants. Colonizers exploit places and people with aloof, technical expertise. Residents fall into a couple of groups. Some residents (a) struggle to survive amid violence and “unfreedoms” that may preclude them from putting down roots, cultivating ecological awareness, or knowing whether or from where their next meal will come (Bolten, 2013); other residents (b) are “temporary occupant[s]” who choose to put down few roots and who invest, know, and care little about their environs (or anywhere else) beyond their personal comfort or gratification (Orr, 1992, p. 130). The “factory” model of education is good at producing colonizers and residents. Unlike these, inhabitants “dwell” in a place: they invest and enter into an intimate relationship with the human community and the natural landscape (ibid). Critical pedagogy of place is a theoretical framework that encourages teachers and students to think about becoming inhabitants who “pursue the kind of social action that improves the social and ecological life of places, near and far, now and in the future” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7).

5.5 Flexible Foundations

A place-aware approach to education will vary in its implementation, as places and cultures vary. Though they may face similar (violent, global) structural challenges,
what works for inhabitants in temperate prairies may not work for inhabitants of tropical forests, alpine mountains, deserts, river deltas, urban jungles. After all: “The effects of global phenomena like climate change, shifting populations, economic disruption and so on, are always experienced locally” (Brown & Wattchow, 2011, p. xv).

Dynamic challenges demand dynamic approaches. Accordingly, Brantmeier’s (2013) synthesis of literature on peace education for sustainability calls for “flexible approaches” rather than blueprints, for a “holistic education, rooted in human connections with the... natural world” (pp. 252-253). Such approaches include courses and units housed within schools and universities (Brantmeier, 2013; Lum, 2014; Nett, 2010), as well as online organizations and alternative educational spaces (Sliwka, 2008; O’Brien, 2009). The focus may be on inner transformation (Lin & Oxford, 2011), community-level change (Verhagen, 2014), or overhauling entrenched regional, national, and global systems (Kahn, 2010; Gadotti, 2010). Each of these various approaches takes a somewhat nuanced angle. Nonetheless, it is possible to distill salient themes and elements that characterize critical pedagogies of place and help move from theoretical frameworks to questions of practicality:

- Direct Earth experiences: embodied interaction with the natural world
- *Conscientizacao*: critical reflection on oneself and one’s role in human and ecological communities
- Transdisciplinary approach and multimodal learning: visual, aural, tactile, olfactory, and taste dimensions
- Openness to intercultural perspectives and approaches
• Peace values (compassion, equity, solidarity, respect, responsibility, trust, nonviolence) are both implicit and explicit

• Challenges and opportunities to overcome them

• Group/team work in tandem with individual reflection

• Joyful, spontaneous, “crazy” experiences

• Actionable toolkits: practical ways to meaningfully engage in one’s home

These nine elements signify a flexible foundation upon which distinct initiatives may be built in situated contexts. Page (2008) explains that there is no absolute formulation of peace education and emphasizes “how one teaches is just as important as what one teaches” (p. 2). Pedagogies that aim to inspire care must teach with care. Earth-based pedagogies take their place in the cosmos – the very “earth and skies, the winds and rocks” – as starting point (Lederach, 2005, p. 140). What about transformative education? What does this look like? The case studies that follow this chapter explore two different yet convergent examples of transformative praxis: neither program is “eco-pedagogical” in name, but both operate at the intersection of the natural world, learning, and peace. To learn more about these programs, I will lift up the voices of participants – a perspective that is oddly missing from much research on education (Noguera, 2007), and which holds valuable insights for peacebuilding scholarship and practice. But first, a little background.

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38 “Crazy” in this case does not signify dangerous, reckless, or feckless behavior, but activities that may not seem obviously “productive”, or “sensible.” For example: stopping and stooping to watch the wind blow through weeds. Of course, “weed” is a human-delineated category, a cultural distinction that means “unwanted plant.” Recognizing the worth of weeds in and of themselves, in terms of techno-industrial Western culture, does not make sense (Naess, 2000, p. 54).
5.6 A New Education?

Maria Montessori and Kurt Hahn were innovative educators in turbulent 20th-century Europe whose practices built on ancient wisdom and whose impacts continue to resonate across the world. Both contributed to what has been called the “New Education Movement”, which championed education for social change – redirecting the arc of humanity away from warfare and toward peace – and is broadly characterized, according to Boyd and Rowson (1965), by two precepts: “First, in all education the personality of the child is an essential concern; second, education must make for human betterment, that is for a New Era” (cited in Cameron & Moss, 2011). Both Hahn and Montessori were exiled from their homelands by fascist regimes. Both upheld the centrality of lived experience and the importance of nurturing young people’s natural drive to learn through holistic (cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual) education. Neither wrote much theory, but both lectured widely, and these have been published and translated into many languages.

Their bodies of work converge in their emphases on the natural world and transformation: they align with cutting-edge research on the ecological dimension of human development (Lillard, 2005; Aspinall et al., 2013), and at the same time they reflect the age-old wisdom of Indigenous cultures that take a nature-centered approach, where the natural world is the primary educator (Cajete, 2010). Hahn’s and

39 Though Hahn and Montessori each shared much with John Dewey, a key figure in the pantheon of experiential education theory, the question of the human soul was one upon which they differed (Duckworth, 2006).
Montessori’s approaches were quite different, yet complementary, and they remain relevant – and revolutionary – today.

5.6.1 Dr. Maria Montessori

In 1896, Montessori became one of the very first female physicians in Italy, and it was through her pediatric work that she entered into the field of education. She started in a Roman slum with one Casa dei Bambini (Children’s Home) of youngsters who had been considered uneducable. Her “scientific” method of observing children’s natural learning processes and allowing them to freely develop helped the kids in the tenements to thrive (Montessori, 1912/2008). In time, it grew into one of the most widely-replicated educational methods worldwide: there are currently over 20,000 Montessori schools in 110 countries (Durakoglu, 2014). But she never claimed to have “invented” a method; she said that she had simply “discovered the child” (Montessori, 1967).

The Montessori Method is characterized by two factors: (a) a prepared environment with appropriate, attractive, hands-on materials (b) upon which the child may freely act (Montessori, 1949/1972, p. 91). These allow the child’s “absorbent mind” to pursue its potential unimpeded (Montessori, 1949/1984). It is a child-centered approach. The teacher is a keen observer who guides when necessary, and the

40 Some scholars argue that Montessori would enjoy even greater acclaim in education theory were it not for pervasive sexist, xenophobic, and religious prejudices in the US at the time her method was introduced (Thayer-Bacon, 2012). The Montessori name is not copyrighted, so there can be considerable variation from one Montessori school to the next.
environment itself educates (OWP, Cannon Design, & Mau, 2010). Montessori classrooms are multi-age with child-sized furniture, uninterrupted time blocks, and no testing or numerical grading. Freedom to choose, move, and work in groups is encouraged. Dr. Montessori (1967) argued that education in which a student is “artificially made as silent as a mute and as motionless as paralytics” stifles the inherent, joyful drive to learn and alienates the learner: “such a one is not disciplined but annihilated” (p. 49).

The natural world figures centrally in Dr. Montessori’s method. Kids cultivate gardens, tend animals, and undertake manual labor along with “the intelligent contemplation of nature”, and this is often their favorite work (Montessori, 1912/2008, p. 115; 1967, p. 72). Montessori introduced ecology as a vehicle for interdisciplinary projects at a time when it was still a relatively nascent branch of science: “In this way, the interrelatedness of natural phenomena would become apparent to the children” (M.M. Montessori, 1976, p. 70). But academic study was not the ultimate point: “a child needs to live naturally and not simply have a knowledge of nature... [for] when children come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength” (Montessori, 1967, p. 67, 69). Taking this observation as a starting point, Montessori envisioned a “cosmic education,” in which learners are fundamentally a part of – not apart from – the cosmos, who learn in nature as well as from nature about how to be good stewards of creation: “The world was not created for us to enjoy, but we are created to evolve the cosmos” (1955, p. 27).

For Montessori, such a cosmic education is ultimately oriented toward building peace. Some of the greatest obstacles to peace, she found, are adults’ prejudices, fears,
and alienation from the natural world: “we readily give up our own freedom and have ended up loving our prison and passing it on to our children” (1967, p. 67). Dr. Montessori was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times, and her work predated and anticipated Galtung’s (1969) notion of positive peace: “Inherent in the very meaning of the word peace is the positive notion of constructive social reform” (Montessori, 1949/1972, p. xi). Education, in Montessori’s view, is fundamental to such construction: “all politics can do is keep us out of war... establishing a lasting peace is the work of education” (ibid, p. viii).

In Education for a New World (1946), Montessori extolls education that liberates – and even follows – children rather than limits them: “If education were to continue along the old lines of mere transmission of knowledge, the problem [of war] would be insoluble and there would be no hope for the world” (p. 1). Such insights may be even more relevant today than they were a century ago, as the most up-to-date analyses show that Montessori’s “major ideas... are supported by a strong body of evidence in developmental psychology (Lillard, 2005, p. viii). Yet she saw her “discovery” of the inherent powers of children as a point of departure – far from the end of the work to be done: “Constructive education for peace must not be limited to the teaching in schools” (Montessori, 1949/1972, p. 27).

5.6.2 Kurt Hahn

Hahn was born in 1886 in Berlin to Jewish parents. He co-founded the Schule Schloss Salem with Prince Max von Baden and served as the school’s headmaster during
Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in Germany. After speaking out against the Nazi party, Hahn was imprisoned for five days, subsequently fled to Britain, and settled in Scotland. Hahn would go on to found several institutions, including the Gordonstoun school – which, like Salem, incorporates activities like running, farming, metalwork, and outdoor expeditions – Round Square schools, the first United World College, and a program that takes its name from the nautical term for a ship sailing out to sea from the safety of its pier: Outward Bound. Hahn’s contributions continue to inspire and influence outdoor and experiential educators in many countries (Veevers & Allison, 2011).

The impetus for Hahn’s work in education came from his diagnosis of the great malaises of his era, and his faith in the promise of the young: “Every child possesses an inherent spirituality and moral code that can keep them right but which is eroded by the wily ways of modern life” (Quoted in Tarran, 2010, p. 10). Hahn identified six declines in youth in the 20th century:

1. Decline of Fitness due to modern methods of locomotion [moving about].

2. Decline of Initiative and Enterprise due to the widespread disease of spectatoritis.

3. Decline of Memory and Imagination due to the confused restlessness of modern life.

4. Decline of Skill and Care due to the weakened tradition of craftsmanship.

5. Decline of Self-discipline due to the ever-present availability of stimulants and [tranquilizers]
6. Decline of Compassion due to the unseemly haste with which modern life is conducted.” (ibid).

For these societal ills, Hahn prescribed an experiential methodology of education that was at once innovative and ancient – at least as old as the Chinese philosopher Confucius (ca. 551-479 B.C.), who is famously attributed with the aphorism: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

Since Outward Bound’s beginnings in the 1930s and ‘40s, experiential learning theory has been honed and expanded (Warren, Sakofs, & Hunt, 1995; Warren, Mitten, & Loeffler, 2008). But the core elements of the expeditionary program have remained the same: a unique/neutral (outdoor) environment, groups of learners that share a common goal, “adaptive dissonance” arising from problem-solving tasks (rafting, rock-climbing, route-finding, etc.), and eventual mastery over those tasks (Walsh & Golins, 1976, p. 10). The instructor plays a key role, wears many hats, and is an exemplar for the learners on the expedition (ibid). The experience is designed to be transformational: facing and overcoming challenging, meaningful tasks can facilitate personal growth, as well as interpersonal, intergroup, and intragroup acceptance (Hertz- Lazarowitz & Miller, 1992, p. 274).

In a 1936 address entitled “Education and Peace: The Foundations of Modern Society”, Hahn compared building peace among groups or nations in conflict without cultivating “goodwill” between them to erecting a dam on crumbling stone: “And education can help to build this bedrock of goodwill as a foundation of the society to be” (Kahn, 1936, p.1). Further, he elucidated the importance of learning by experience
to help young people discover their inner capacities: “Jumping develops decision; throwing, strength; running, the power to tap one's hidden reserves” (Hahn, 1936, p. 3). Nearly thirty years later, at age 77, he found that the general decline in physical fitness and compassion had worsened: “The Western world [is] confronted by progressive inhumanity of the society in which we live” (Hahn, 1965, p. 5). Outward Bound courses “can have a transforming effect in a good number of cases,” Hahn observed, but the inspiration is “apt to evaporate... unless the Outward Bounders...will translate it into action” (1965, p. 6).

Today there are some 40 Outward Bound schools in over 30 countries across the world, serving people of many ages and walks of life. Outward Bound takes people out – outdoors, into direct engagement with the natural landscape – who may not have the chance to do so otherwise. Founder Kurt Hahn recognized the organization’s ability to provide a spark, illuminating hidden possibilities. He also knew that no organization could achieve the “society to be” alone: “Outward Bound can ignite – that is all – it is for others to keep the flame alive” (Hahn, 1965, p. 9).
Chapter 6:

CASE STUDIES

6.1 Introduction

So far, this paper has dealt primarily with cycles of violence that alienate people from one another and from the living landscapes they inhabit. The lens of structural violence has shown how this alienation harms people, places, and communities: ill health, corroded wellbeing, decreased life chances, ecological ruination, and social marginalization abound in the dominant model of “progress.” Furthermore, proximate and daily choices (what people eat, how they move about) have distant and long-lasting ramifications in berry and oil fields miles or oceans away. In this chapter, I consider two programs that are striving to interrupt cycles of violence by reconnecting humans to the natural world and to one another, and by creating space for positive change.

The form and function of the pages that follow are inspired by Winn & Paris’s (2013) vision of a Humanizing Research framework, which involves “the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants... such a research stance and its processes [involve] reciprocity and respect” (p. xvi). I seek to keep an undercurrent of researcher not as a “miner” of information, but as a human. This chapter draws from the tradition of community-based
research, and both case studies are the fruit of collaborative work with community partners that “validates multiple sources of knowledge” and has social change as its goal (Strand et al., 2003, p. 8). In this view, the embodied experiences of individuals and groups become indispensable “data” that, along with statistics and quantitative research, can shape and inform policies and – as in the cases explored here – grow new possibilities from the ground up.

Case study methodology is a form of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2013), and it is an apt method for asking how and why questions (Yin, 2003). The cases under consideration in this paper are two programs: (a) an expeditionary training program at Outward Bound Peacebuilding in Costa Rica, and (b) the land-based learning component of a Pre K - Jr. High Montessori School in northern Indiana, USA. The aim is to interrogate the programs’ respective theories of change. That is, their “explanation for how and why a set of activities will bring about the changes a project’s designers seek to achieve” (Culbertson, Neufeldt, & Lederach, 2007, p. 25, emphasis added). In other words: What do they do? Why? How does it work?

There are many ways to go about seeking answers to these questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I take the stance that a researcher, or anyone, might learn much through the sharing of stories (Stake, 1995, p. 1). This is a process that prioritizes listening to the input of those who have the most at stake – students and participants (Noguera, 2007). It affirms their embodied experience as a form of knowledge, recognizing that “they are the world’s authority on their own experience and [that] you need to value that” as a starting point; from there, the challenge becomes working together as co-learners and
“going beyond the knowledge that the people bring” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 149). Collaboration with students/participants such that “their voices, ideas, and lived experiences can be heard” is an under-emphasized catalyst for transformation – in education and everywhere else – from structures of violence to positive peace (Winn & Behizadeh, 2011, p. 167).

My purpose as researcher, gatherer, and steward of stories is to lift up participants’ and students’ voices: to listen, to learn, and, ultimately, to contribute to ongoing conversations about change.

6.2 Case Study #1: OB Peacebuilding

6.2.1 Methods & Issues

This case study emerges from conversations that I had during June - August 2014 with participants in Outward Bound (OB) Peacebuilding’s Practicum on Experiential Peacebuilding (PEP). Launched in 2012, the PEP is an expeditionary program that integrates conflict resolution with leadership training by bringing together working professionals and students from all over the world for a ten-day journey in the Costa Rican cloud forest. In addition to a homestay, waterfall rappel, and “Solo” experience, the participants hike and camp together and undertake a joint program at the UN-mandated University for Peace.

41 PEP participants ranged in age from 22 to 46 and hailed from five continents: Europe, Africa, Australia, South America, and North America.
OB Peacebuilding offers its outdoor methodology as a transformative tool for building peace. Their explicit theory of change involves “learning by doing” and “people power” – investing in local leaders to build support for peace processes (“Theory,” 2014). Too often, top-level peace treaties fall short of achieving lasting change because (a) they do not bridge the gap between “elite levels of decision making” and local communities (Lederach & Appleby, 2010, p. 33), and (b) the “human dimension of conflict” is not made central (Saunders, 1999, p. xvii). Prominent peace scholars and practitioners have emphasized the vital role of creating spaces, including “oases” for peace, that reach, rehumanize, and engage people through all five senses and “multiple ways of learning and knowing” in order to bridge this gap (Lederach, 1997, p. 127; Schirch, 2005, pp. 164-165).

In this case study I glean the perspectives of participants of the 2012 and 2013 iterations of the PEP to learn from their views on how they were – and continue to be – impacted by their experience. In other words: how did change happen, if it happened? Research methods consisted of an online questionnaire with discrete and open-ended questions, as well as in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted via Skype or other online video interface. Herein lies a basic tension of this project: in order to do a follow-up study on a program premised on having its participants unplugged, we needed to be plugged-in. But since the “natural setting” of past participants’ daily lives – now one or two years and many miles removed from the expedition – requires them to be electronically engaged much of the time, web-based communication proved to be an
appropriate, if problematic, medium. The four sections of this case study are arranged into a series of vignettes, which, when read collectively, form a mosaic of the PEP experience.

6.2.2 Vignette A: *La Casa de Díaz*

Three thousand miles from her home, and a full day of hiking from last night’s campsite, the thirty year-old peer mentoring program manager made her way, step by step, amid the tropical forest of Costa Rica. Her car, phone, and job title were far behind. Ahead, a path unfolded along rough and beautiful terrain, through one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet, and into the unknown. The rain fell.

Moira was not alone, but one among a group of some dozen professionals and students from diverse fields, drawn to the Central American isthmus by a practicum on building peace. Some had travelled even further than she – four, eleven, thirteen thousand miles – to find themselves drenched, worn out, weighted with gear and moving together toward a goal that lay out of sight.

They talked as they trekked. With several mother tongues among them, much of the communication was nonverbal. Exchanges ranged from the light-hearted to the difficult and the deep, running into silence for long stretches. After several days in the

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42 Creswell (2013) warns that qualitative research conducted away from the “natural setting” may lead to false findings (p. 17). My research question concerns participants’ current views on a past experience; therefore, the natural setting is not the cloud forest, but their present living and working environment. The trouble with computer-based data collection relates to the fact that digital technology and its support infrastructure (i.e. electricity used by digital devices and the servers that hold up “the cloud”) drain massive amounts of nonrenewable energy (Walsh, 2013).

43 All names of individuals have been changed to preserve their anonymity.
forest together they were no longer strangers. They had shared stories, experiences, and challenges. Just as the dark of evening began to close in around them they caught sight of a homestead. It was the Casa de Díaz, the home of the Costa Rican family who would host them for the night and following day.

Moira later reflected on the feeling she had of being disconnected yet connected while at the casa:

“[Being unplugged] allowed me to appreciate things I don’t think I would’ve appreciated or been able to see if I had been plugged in constantly. For example...we had made it there [to the casa] and it was one of our longer days of hiking, and it was a pretty rough day, and I woke up the next morning to, I could hear the sound of Spanish music playing. I could smell breakfast being made, and I was on the top floor of an open porch canopy, so I could see outside right from my bed into the hills of the rainforest. This huge hill covered in leaves, this giant cloud of fog that’s just hugging the hillside, and then the sunlight is kind of coming through. I got all of that just as I woke up, and...it was the most calming, peaceful thing I have ever felt in my life. But it was so simple.”

Upon rising, she would discover the particularities of the place: their hosts grow their own food, make cane sugar by hand, collect rainwater for sinks and drinking, feed table scraps to chickens and eat the eggs they lay. They waste little and laugh much. In Costa Rica they call this pura vida: pure life.

6.2.3 Vignette B: The Falls

Near the end of the expedition, the participants stood, one by one, on the brink: a waterfall gathered the rain of the forest that enveloped them, in which they had journeyed and made their home for the last week, and sent it cascading to the rocks one
hundred feet below. The drop was vertiginous. Adrenaline pumped. In this moment they came face to face with gravity, fear, themselves.

Harnessed to ropes anchored by a skilled Outward Bound facilitator, with another facilitator and the group waiting in welcome below, down they went. For some the fear of falling was almost overwhelming. For others the descent was exhilarating. For few was it altogether as smooth, easy, or graceful as they might have hoped. And for all the rappel was full of meaning:

“The waterfall is a symbol of my life...I struggled...but I am working on cutting myself some slack...It was truly wondrous, and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I’m proud of myself for being here on this trip and taking advantage of the challenges and adventures.”

“The water rappel was also very powerful. Because it was more about nature pushing you and then you trying to stick to the waterfall, you know, and for me it was really symbolic. Okay, I’m ready to go, I’m strong enough to come down. So everything was very symbolic.”

At the bottom, banged up and bruised but whole, the participants planted their feet back on solid ground. The group embraced. Looking up into the spray flowing from above, they could see how far they had come.

6.2.4 Vignette C: Solo

Finally, each participant found him or herself alone in the tropical forest. No clocks, engines, iPads or ads, and no one else around. What to do? Participants could read, meditate, breathe, or – overcome with exhaustion – sleep. It was an opportunity to reflect on the trek and prepare for the journey to come upon reemerging into the
“real world.” Yet there seemed to be something about being in that place that was profoundly “real,” though each had her or his own unique experience of it.

For some, solitude created space for stillness: “The Solo allowed me to just listen to myself think. I could not ‘run’ from anything; there was no distractions. It was one of the best conversations I had in a long time.” Others encountered a feeling that was a mixture of bad and good:

“I just fell asleep, listened to the rain, woke up and it was really early in the morning, and it was foggy. And I saw these sparkly things, but they weren’t stars, they were fireflies. There was a little bird on the line. I felt, this is great. I felt so good. The sun came up. I put my stuff away. I felt bad about that I didn’t do [the waterfall] as well as I wanted to, but then it was over, so your body is responding to that physicality so you’re tired. I did it. It happened….Others had ants or trees fall on them. Everyone got the experience they needed that night.”

And for many of the participants, words seemed to come short: “It just kind of felt like a sanctuary...It’s kind of hard to explain.”

6.2.5 Vignette D: Self, Others, Nature

At some point during each of the interviews, I posed participants the following question: What does hiking in a forest have to do with peace? Or, how would you describe the PEP to someone who is not familiar with Outward Bound or the field of peacebuilding? Here are some illustrative responses that they gave:

“[It is] an awesome experience where, over ten days, [you] are stretched to your limits in the outdoors, hiking, while learning about conflict resolution and putting it into practice...with people from all over the world, not only in theory but in a very practical sense.”
“This weeklong experience where we got the bonus of hiking through Costa Rica, but really it was to bring people from different backgrounds and different professional fields together to essentially learn from each other...that way those people can take what they learned back home with them and hopefully apply it to their day-to-day lives”

“[Building peace is] a much more active process. Which is what this course does. They make it active: you have to frickin’ move. You literally have to keep going or else that’s it. It’s a physical embodiment of what [building] peace should actually be.”

“That’s how I would describe what the program is about: how we empathize and relate to people, regardless of where they’re from....you have something in common with everybody, and when you’re in nature, it’s easier to find what really makes you you and what makes them them, and finding similarities.”

Unlike most conventional training programs, the PEP seems to impact participants, to differing degrees, both professionally and personally: 16 of 17 survey respondents attested that the experience was “transformational” or that it “enhanced/reinforced” their capacities and commitments to building peace. The interviews further revealed shifts in at least three dimensions: ways of seeing and relating with (a) oneself, (b) others, and (c) the natural world.

(a) Self:

- “It was helpful for developing myself as a person, about the compassion and the communication skills, and getting to know all those different people, different backgrounds also, made me see things and people differently. And that is making me a better person.”

- “It was good to do that much personal reflection too, and then to also meet the other people on that course. It was mind-blowing.”

- “To build peace is first of all to allow people to be themselves. To accept themselves. Once a person has accepted who he or she is, has been
aware of his weaknesses, strengths, opportunities, this person is able to build peace. That is the beginning. Peacebuilding starts from within.”

(b) Others:

- “I was able to pull from someone else’s perspective, see where I was coming from, and almost form a new perspective....It seems most of my takeaways happen to be how I interact with other people.”

- “That’s what I was kind of afraid with the course...that it was going to be, you know, ‘everyone needs to just love everyone else’ and blah blah blah. And it wasn’t that. You don’t have to love everybody. You have to see that everybody is a person that has some legitimacy.”

(c) The natural world

- “I have a greater love for the outdoors than ever before, and I understand and value the strong impact that nature can have on human relations.”

- “When people come into the presence of people that are connected, it leaves you thinking and wondering: ‘What would my life look like if I gave the Earth, or nature, the respect that these people [do]?’ Because they ooze happiness, contentment, satisfaction.”

Of course, these three dimensions can be separated conceptually, but they are always inextricably interwoven in experience. PEP’s experiential methodology brings them together into an integrated whole:

“My relationship with myself, with the environment, and with the people I live with: do I live harmoniously with my colleagues? With myself? How am I connected with the environment I am living in? Those are three important parts of transformation in my personal growth.”

None of the elements of the program stands alone. When asked “what was the best part?” of the PEP, participants often struggled to name just one activity or aspect, proffering instead: “It was the whole experience.” And each person’s embodied
experience was, naturally, unique: “We were ten people, but each person had something to learn from the same place.”

Nonetheless, in all of the conversations I shared with PEP participants, the themes of relationships and challenges emerged again and again. PEP enabled participants to form a “special bond” with one another, a “fellowship” of “support, strength, and safety.” PEP also provided an opportunity to “push boundaries,” to “dig deep,” and to risk moving beyond one’s “comfort zone” by “stretching yourself” physically, mentally, and spiritually. OB Peacebuilding’s facilitators played an instrumental role in guiding the group members to face fears, rise to the occasion, and help each other discover plus est en vous (“Our mission”, 2014).44

Thus challenges – and the opportunity to overcome those challenges – seem to create space for both friction and growth: for a creative spark to ignite. The question becomes: How to keep the flame alive once the expedition is over? 16 of 17 participants attested to using methods, techniques, or ideas they learned on the PEP in their current work or studies. One participant, the director of a community organization in Ethiopia, said that she now holds meetings outdoors, “under a tree or in a field”, where

“Once we start the discussion, it makes people so informal...even the leader of the local administration. Once he sits on a stone, he feels like he’s part of the community. Because there’s no table, there’s no big chair in front of the women or anything, it makes the communication possible.”

44 A common refrain of OB founder Kurt Hahn. Translated loosely from French: “There is more in you [than you think].”

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The practicum in Costa Rica inspired her to incorporate the natural world as a way of transforming communication in her home context, and, she writes: “IT WORKS!”

But you cannot tweet a stone, text a tree, or send yourself down a waterfall via email. In interviews, 100% of PEP participants emphasized “nature”, “the outdoors,” or “the natural environment” as an essential element of the program. Several participants felt that web-based social media hubs were inadequate to sustain the “personal, close, intimate kind of communication” that they had shared in the forest. Keeping in touch, now that they are scattered across the globe, has been tough: “We made a list of things we were going to do, and then life happens.” They offered several ideas about how OB Peacebuilding could bolster the network (webinars; online interactive workshops or guest speakers; an evolving document/booklet of experiences, lessons, and questions), but recognized that the onus to keep the fire going falls on the participants themselves.

6.2.6 Discussion

Perhaps the most important aspects of the PEP – or any program – cannot be quantified. The passion with which participants spoke about still-vivid memories of their experiences does not come across in black words on a white page. Nonetheless, their perspectives reveal how and why the PEP worked for them, and they offer valuable insights for peacebuilding programs that seek to bridge gaps in the field.

OB Peacebuilding’s experiential methodology, with its focus on challenging participants to move beyond their comfort zone, may hold particular relevance for the field of Strategic Peacebuilding: “Strategic peacebuilding is interdependent...this often
means that we must develop processes that link and relate dissimilar concerns and activities and that forge relationships between people who are not like-minded” (Lederach & Appleby, 2010, p. 40). It is scary to speak openly with someone who disagrees with you; so is rappelling down a 100-foot waterfall.

Likewise, Lederach (2005) argues that without a central focus on relationships, space for acts of creativity, and willingness to risk, peacebuilding would be impossible (pp. 34-39). Although bringing leaders from contexts of protracted violent conflict to hike together through the forest is certainly not an automatic solution (nothing is), PEP’s integration of the natural world into peace processes inspires some creative questions:

- What is lost when the natural world is excluded from policies and initiatives intended to promote peace?
- What can be gained in insight and imagination from bringing together people from different places, of differing ages and backgrounds, to explore their lived histories and the living landscape?
- Why not waste less, laugh more, and unplug?

Not everyone will have the chance to visit the cloud forests of Costa Rica. But PEP participant perspectives demonstrate that peacebuilders – and all those by any other name who seek to rehumanize and build flourishing communities – can create space for pura vida wherever they are, through cultivating (re)connections with oneself, others, and the Earth.
6.3 Case Study #2: Good Shepherd Montessori School

6.3.1 Methods & Issues

Good Shepherd Montessori School (GSMS) serves children aged 3-14 and has integrated land-based learning into its curriculum since the school’s doors first opened in downtown South Bend, Indiana in 2002. The farm component’s purpose is not necessarily to prepare students for careers in agriculture, but to create an opportunity for them to “develop a true respect for earth and all living things, and understand themselves to be a part of creation in a very real way” (“Farm,” n.d.). Ultimately, the school seeks to “foster peace in a socio-economically, racially, and ethnically diverse environment” and offers scholarships to about one-third of the student body (“History,” n.d.). Beginning in late summer and throughout autumn 2014, I accompanied elementary-aged students during the two hours they spent on the farm every week.45

As both intern and researcher, my role was that of a participant-observer (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Key issues under investigation during my time in the field(s) with GSMS students and staff centered on kids’ role in carrying out the program’s theory of change: what is the nature of their activity, and why? How does it work? Some of the kids welcomed me immediately, eager to show me around and

45I also attended an academic conference put on by the Jr. High students on “SustainABILITY” in Spring 2014, which rivaled any conference I have seen at a major university for professionalism, rigor, interest, and organization – and the food was way better (muffins handmade by students with locally-sourced ingredients).
curious about what I was jotting down in my pocket notebook. Others were intent on
the tasks in which they were engaged and carried on in their work without deviating.46

As a newcomer to a Montessori system, I arrived with a vague understanding
that the adults’ job entails removing obstacles to learning. I noticed that the teachers –
referred to as “guides” – spend little time at the front of the room or the center of
attention, and much time guiding small groups and individual students as they explore
the materials in the learning environment. So my modus operandi consisted of silent
observation and occasional question-posing while simultaneously ensuring that my
presence presented no impediment to the kids’ explorations. On my first visit to the
school, for example, I was watching kids run up a small hill and roll down it over and
over during recess when a boy of six or seven grabbed my hand and dragged me to a
tree, where another boy crouched in tears. When I asked what was the matter, the
friend answered that a girl in a striped blue shirt had done some mean thing. I said:
“What do you want to do?” We three stood in silence for a moment, until the friend
said: “Do you want to go look for bugs?” The crying boy nodded and off they ran.

Later, I asked the assistant guide about the incident. He told me that the girl in
the striped shirt and the boy had brought the issue to the attention of the guide, who
invited them to add their concern to their class’s daily community meeting agenda. They
said yes and thus were able, as individuals and as a classroom community, to work

46 GSMS students are accustomed to visitors, and so they were undaunted by the presence of an
ethnographer conducting anthropological social science research in their midst. They simply knew me as
“Mr. John” and introduced me to the class pet rabbit, “Mr. Nibbles.”
through the conflict nonviolently and arrive at a mutually agreeable resolution. This experience taught me to see my own compulsion to “swoop in” and solve kids’ problems for them as a potential barrier to learning. I was reminded of Paulo Freire, who attested to learning much as a parent that informed his professional work: “Every time it was possible for children, without risking their lives, to learn by doing, I preferred that they do this” (1990, p. 139).

During the next several months, I observed GSMS students doing much learning-by-doing as I worked alongside them at the school’s two partner farms. The Lower Elementary classrooms (ages 7-9) carpool south of town with parent volunteer-drivers for weekly excursions to Prairie Winds Nature Farm: an educational farm based on permaculture principles and situated on 85 acres of restored prairie, woods, wetlands, and fenced pastures. The Upper Elementary classrooms (ages 10-12) head just across the Michigan state line to Bertrand Farm, Inc.: an educational farm that focuses on sustainability and spans nearly eleven acres of barnyards, organic vegetable production, and perennial fruit trees. In addition to participant-observation with “Lower and Upper El,” I also convened an alumni reunion in late fall 2014 and facilitated a focus group conversation among them. The following sections are again organized into vignettes. Each of the three sections chronicles one of the student groups and sheds light from a different angle on the overall farm experience.
6.3.2 Vignette A: Frogs & Breeze

A swarm of some two dozen seven-to-nine year-old girls and boys bursts from parked minivans and disappears, galloping and hollering with glee among the copse of evergreens and the tall prairie grasses of Prairie Winds Nature Farm. They reappear, eyes bright, knees grass-stained, and brows beading with sweat. Panting they exclaim: “Hey, I’m a cheetah!”; “Look, I found a nest, I think it’s wasps!”; “Mr. B is a zombie!”; “Come see the cabin we built!”; “Frogs, frogs!” The guide, assistant guide, farmer, and I look on as the young ones engage kinetically with the landscape.

After thirty minutes or so someone rings the cowbell. Upon the sound, everyone scurries and gathers in a circle in the grass in the shade of a leafy tree, some fidgeting and gazing at pine cones or puffy clouds, a few peering into hands cupped around squirming amphibians. Today’s interaction with the frog forms the foundation for tomorrow’s biology lesson: external body parts for the first-year students, internal anatomy for the second-years, and the food web and ecosystem for third-years.

The guide models proper posture and lays out a plan for the day. Then the frogs are released, the circle breaks up, and the guide and I accompany a group to the woods while the assistant guide and farmer head with the rest toward the barn. As we traverse the trail, kids point out all sorts of things to me: toads, critter tracks, burrows, bugs. The path emerges into the sunlight and the prairie, where the guide halts the group and invites everyone to listen. “What do you hear?” Birds, buzzing insects, breeze rustling stalks and stems. One child hears his own heart beating. The guide points out various flowers and encourages students to find them, pick them, pull them apart, examine the
seeds and save them for later study (concerning invasive species and restoration of native habitats) and potential re-planting.

Then the groups switch. In the barnyard we interact with animals: kids feed and water chickens and geese, hold hares, brush horses, lead the calf and recalcitrant goats on tethers. All are welcome to take a turn gamboling in the hay loft, and most do (ethnographer included).

Clang goes the cow bell again. We circle up, waiting for everyone to join the group and sing together our thanks: “We are truly thankful for this day at the farm.” On the ride back to campus, I ask the parent-volunteer driver her thoughts on the land-based learning program. She says that her son used to have difficulty reading, following directions, and paying attention. But in the time since he started going to the farm with his class, he willingly reads silently at home sometimes and can even follow multi-step instructions: pick up your socks, go put them in your room, then take a shower. She beams: “I love it.”

6.3.3 Vignette B: Mucking

Twenty miles as the crow flies to the north, on a brisk and chilly Wednesday morning some weeks later, an Upper El class convenes at Bertrand Farm. Seventeen boys and girls aged nine to twelve disperse in pairs or groups of three to tend the chickens, goat, sheep, turkeys, pigs, rabbits, and cats. After all animal chores are done we reconvene in one of the barns, sitting in a circle on wooden crates as the farmer explains that the work for the day is a pivotal project in the life of the farm. She situates
the chore – mucking out the animals’ stalls – within the year’s overarching curricular focus on the micro-, meso-, and macroscopic organisms (bacteria, lichens, earthworms, etc.) that make up the food web in healthy soil.

Some of us walk, others run to the barn. It is hard work. The farmer models proper pitchfork handling while the guide drives the tractor, taking full loads to add to the compost pile. As we labor the farmer explains that manure and straw make valuable contributions to compost, which requires proper ratios of green (nitrogen) and brown (carbon) matter in order to make optimal fertilizer for crops in the spring. Some of the kids take to mucking with gusto; others complain about the smell and the cold. “Well imagine if you don’t like the smell, you’ll want to do this work so the animals are okay throughout the winter. And besides,” the farmer says between heaves, “the harder you work the warmer you’ll be.”

When the floor of the “animal barn” has been cleared and a fresh layer of straw is laid down, the group enters into the warmth of the farm’s “kitchen barn” for a lesson on preserving foodstuffs. Today the students make sauerkraut, smashing cabbage that they helped to plant, tend, and harvest, and stashing it in a crock with some salt to ferment. The kids tell me about some of their other favorite recipes from the farm’s kitchen: zucchini bread, berry jam, and pies they bake with pumpkins fresh-picked from the patch.

On warmer days, they eat the midday meal outside on picnic tables, followed by a half-hour of unstructured time when students twirl on tire swings, socialize with the animals, roam among the crop fields and flower gardens, play tag, or sit and chat in the
grass. During the wintry months, the farmer comes to GSMS with seed catalogs so the students can participate in planning and preparing for the spring. Today, the bitter wind has everyone huddling inside, joking and jostling over lunch boxes until the hour comes to return to campus downtown.

Before departing, I ask the guide if she notices any differences in her students on weekly farm days versus non-farm days. She replies that Thursdays tend to be the most “settled, productive, fruitful” days of the week in her classroom, and she believes this phenomenon is directly related to farm activity on Wednesday.

6.3.4 Vignette C: Cosmic Education

GSMS leadership, farm staff, and I collaborated to host a reunion and focus group session at Bertrand Farm in late fall 2014 with seventeen former GSMS students. The youngest in attendance had only graduated from Jr. High the year before, and the oldest were now eighteen and attending college. The reunion served the trifold purposes of: (a) bolstering the GSMS alumni network, (b) creating space for collecting qualitative data, and (c) providing a chance for the students, now entering young adulthood, to have fun on the farm and catch up with old friends. After carrying out the usual animal chores and helping the farmer unbind, drag, and stack Christmas trees for sale, we met inside around a wooden kitchen table over warm food and hot cider. I had prepared open-ended questions to guide the semi-structured conversation, beginning with: What does the farm have to do with building peace?
Responses ranged from the lighthearted to the profound: “Cheese is the definition of peace!”; “We kind of need a planet that is functional in order for us to live. We don’t want to turn our planet into Mars. We can’t live on Mars.” As the conversation circled around the table, several common themes emerged: hands-on experience, connection/relationships, and meaningful work.

(a) Hands-On Experience:

- “The farm, it fosters relationships between people and the Earth, and then, also allows, uh, helps children see self-importance and ability, and then is another way to learn about the world and where your food comes from and be self-aware.”

- “It’s a hands-on experience, and we learn community, and hard work, and time management, and I guess it’s just like, you get to experience nature a lot more.”

(b) Connection/Relationships:

- “You’re at the farm. It’s your farm, too. You’re an active part of it….There’s a fundamental connection with what you’re doing in your work.”

- “I think that you can’t really be at peace with the rest of the world and other people until you have a certain amount of peace in yourself, and you can’t really have peace in yourself until you are grounded in a sort of, a strong foundation, and I think the farm helps connect you to the Earth and it helps connect you to the rest of the cosmos, and it really gives you a strong universal foundation with the rest of the world.”

(c) Meaningful Work

- “There’s a lot of meaning to work, and I think it’s good for kids to see things grow, like, that they planted with their hands, or harvest the harvest of that….And then also getting to cook in the kitchen out there. That’s, like, life skills that just carry with you.”

- “The farm teaches us that we have to take care of the world in a way that I didn’t think about before. It’s like everything here depends on the
students that are coming to take care of them, to grow properly, um, and so the sustainability part of it.”

Notably, these themes overlap with one another and resonate with the nine elements that form “flexible foundations” for transformative ecopedagogy, especially direct Earth experiences (See Section 5.5 above). The alumni’s reflections are not abstract; they are rooted in lived, shared experiences of the farm. However, each individual maintains a unique perspective on particular moments and places. They gave varied images, for example, when I asked them each to describe a vivid memory from their years on the farm. Several emphasized the element of fun:

“So I remember one time I got stuck with mucking the horse stable two weeks in a row....and it was like, coming here was more fun than being in school for me, so I was like, I guess I’ll muck the horse stable again.”

“It really is amazing what a bunch of fifth graders could get done in an hour. I mean, you should’ve seen how much manure I could haul.”

“We had a humanities project where we all built our own, like, civilizations. We split off into different groups, and each group would make their own shelter. And then we established trading routes....that was one of the first times that I realized that learning could be fun.”

Other alumni recalled interacting with the animals: holding kittens, collecting eggs, feeding and trying to ride pigs (and falling in the mud and getting in trouble), witnessing the birth of rabbits and the death of a beloved horse – for many, their first conscious encounters with the full cycle of life. One former student commented that he was annoyed at first by “the dirt and the animals” but now he can “stand it a little bit
better. I really got used to it.” Thus the farm program helped students expand their zone of comfort, and to enjoy themselves in the process.

Situating the focus group discussion within the larger theoretical framework of this paper, it is possible to pick out a couple of crux points. (1) The farm experience is an iterative process that provides tangible, organic opportunities for cultivating a sense of personal calm, centeredness, or peace. (2) It creates space for the generation of knowledge that may enable students to disrupt structural violence. Two quotations from former GSMS students illustrate these points:

1. “One of the things I remember best was Farm Intensive, specifically one morning where we all woke up to go on the sunrise walk....it was just, like such peacefulness, you know, and I felt very removed from the busy, crazy things that are happening off the farm.”

2. “The farm teaches us how to live actively and how to be conscious of where our food’s coming from, and what we’re doing and how, sort of, how the world works, and that we can actively change how we live our lives just by being conscious of what’s going on at this farm.”

From a place of peacefulness, these young people face the hard, gritty work of engaging with a messy world as human beings who are cognizant of the fact that their choices have consequences far beyond themselves. While the alumni who shared these views may not have been aware of the value that their insights hold for professional peacebuilders and policymakers, the message is no less resonant. Still, and significantly, most of them are still kids.

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47 Farm Intensive is a four-day immersion in the life of the farm at the start of the academic year, culminating in a campfire, sing-along, and overnight campout.
It is fitting to close this vignette with one of the final phrases from the reunion conversation. One alumnus, who is on the autism spectrum and who had remained silent throughout the gathering, finally spoke up after a former classmate asked him if he had anything to add. He then stepped forward and said: “Well, it’s been a long, long time. I have lots of great memories from here [pause]... I have remembered so few. I’m just so glad to spend time with my friends. That’s one great thing we share.”

6.3.5 Discussion

At both Bertrand and Prairie Winds, it is nearly impossible to tell where play ends and work begins. But to assume, therefore, that the work that takes place there is not of serious import would be a gross miscalculation. GSMS students actively participate in reducing and eradicating some of the noxious true costs of the dominant model of “growth” by getting their hands dirty and boots muddy. The implications are both proximate and global in scope.

At the level of embodied experience, the land-based learning program described here interrupts the prevailing cycle of alienation from the natural world in the West. Contact with the natural world is vital for helping children to develop as whole persons. Interacting in and with green spaces provides children with a locus for resilience in the face of life’s stressful events (Wells & Evans, 2003), cognitive and physical restoration (Aspinall et al., 2013), and resistance to dehumanization: they become free to be themselves (hooks, 2009).
GSMS students’ farm experience also stands in stark contrast to the pathologies of the dominant “factory” model of education, which tends to alienate students from their communities, nature, and one another by inculcating them into a narrow paradigm of commodification and competition (Noguera, 2007; Burke, Collier, & McKenna, 2013). The pastures, barnyards, crop fields, and wooded trails of the farms create space for hands-on experience, the realization of interconnected relationships, and meaningful work – and the disorders and dysfunctions of the mainstream model disappear. Farm work requires the students to cooperate toward shared goals. It limits screen time and opens kids up to alternative “ways of knowing” (Boulding, 1990). It provides a chance for them to learn and love a little place on the Earth.

The value of such a love is not to be underestimated. While working alongside the children, I did not hear many conversations about rainforest destruction, CAFOS, waste dumps in the Bronx, food deserts in LA, berry fields in Washington, oil fields in Africa, corporate farms in Asia, or other industries that exploit both land and people on this planet. On the other hand, I did witness the kids learning sustainable (non-fossil fuel intensive) farming practices as they cultivated crops that they ate in-season or preserved. And after helping raise chicks, piglets, and calves into marketable meat, many of the students chose to adopt a vegetarian diet. In this way, they disentangle themselves from and undermine structural violence that operates at the global level. When young people are given the chance to love the Earth, they learn to care for it (Sobel, 1999). They may then work to keep the biosphere healthy – not out of fear or an abstract sense of responsibility – but for the sheer joy of it.

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In sum, the farm program at GSMS, Bertrand, and Prairie Winds constitutes a solid example of an integrated Earth Connections Curriculum for kids (Brantmeier, 2013). It synergistically combines Lederach’s (2005) emphasis on the centrality of relationships in peacebuilding with Tasch’s (2014) observation that an investment in the health of nearby soil is an investment in peace. And while no educational initiative is an automatic “antidote” to the pathologies of the dominant system, this case brings some important questions to the fore:

- What is lost when place and peace are omitted from education?
- What can be gained when children’s proclivity for movement, wonder, and exploration become catalysts for peacebuilding?
- Why not reunite work and play?

Land-based learning holds promise for interrupting cycles of alienation by adopting openness to learning from – not merely about – the Earth. Parents, communities, and educators with an interest in experiential methodologies or restoring organic connectivity but without access to a farm need not despair. Every patch of dirt or green space offers a wilderness of soil to be explored and cared for.

6.4 Synthesis

What does hiking through a forest or working on a farm have to do with peace? As spaces of conscientizacao, the two cases under study here offer multiple rejoinders to this question. Hahn saw that Outward Bound could provide a spark. Montessori observed that cosmically-oriented freedom of movement could ensure the opportunity to breathe. Neither of these is a guarantor of change, yet each offers an essential
element: a flame needs heat and oxygen, along with fuel, to ignite and endure. And although the programs diverge in terms of population and location, they converge in experiences of forging relationships, rehumanization, and reconnection.

The PEP is geared toward adults: post-secondary students and working professionals, strangers who journey for ten days together. But the expedition is not just a trek through the Costa Rican cloud forest; it also presents an arena for participants to learn and practice methodologies for building peace by moving through challenging and at times uncertain terrain toward a common goal. The embodied experience of engaging with the trees, waterfalls, rain clouds, plants, animal life, and one another infuses renewed meaning into the importance of place in peace processes (Lederach & Lederach, 2010). Each PEP participant brings a unique perspective to the expedition. As they walk and learn with and from one another, they share trials, ideas, and innovations that may be carried to each of their home contexts. Thus the PEP becomes a space for the synergistic co-creation of knowledge that may be a valuable tool for a trans-local movement to build flourishing communities across the globe (Smith, Burns, & Miller, 2013). Finally, PEP participants experience the transformative power of the natural world, and they emerge from the forest with a shifted or enhanced awareness of self, others, and the Earth.

GSMS works with kids. Young people are usually overlooked as change agents – vital contributors and even leaders in the great struggles facing humans and the planet. Yet the work of children on small farms in Indiana obliterates the assumption that adults retain a monopoly on insight and efficacy. As the girls and boys cultivate the soil, they
also cultivate a strong sense of community and a capacity to deal constructively with conflict. This may seem small in scope, but the little work they do illuminates enormous possibilities for transforming violent structures and for restoring healthy relationships among people and between people and the ecosystems that sustain them.

A synthesis of the two cases reveals an important point: there is no one way to “do” peace, and there are myriad paths to reconnect with the natural world. Expeditionary leadership training and land-based learning are two of these. Both challenge and empower participants. Both encourage the kind of spontaneous, joyful experiences – admiring fireflies in flight and hearkening to breeze in tall grass – that do not compute in the dominant model of “progress”, but which serve to rehumanize and reconnect people to the place they inhabit. Viewed through the lens of Hazel Henderson’s (1995) Love Economy, both of the cases considered in this paper reflect a robust exchange of wisdom and gifts – wealth that, though it may not show up in GDP, accrues to the participants and the landscape and meets the most daunting, stultifying challenges of the “real” world head-on.

In other words, the tropical forests and the temperate fields are bursting with richness. OB Peacebuilding and GSMS teach their participants and their students to notice.
Chapter 7:
CONCLUSION: TOWARD SYMBIOSIS

This paper has dared to ask some simple questions: Where are we? How did we get here? Where are we going? In exploring the themes of destruction and alienation, healing and reconnection, the chapters engage critical perspectives from ecology and education and the lessons they hold for the field of peace studies. A focus on communities and “invisible” forms of violence reveals the critical role of relationships and exposes harm that hides in plain sight, bound up in structures and worldviews. Structural violence functions by “impeding consciousness formation and mobilization, two conditions for effective struggle against exploitation” (Galtung, 1990, p. 294). The case studies in Chapter 6 point toward trans-local mobilization and consciousness-cultivation as transformative responses to human and ecological violence in the third millennium. Many questions remain.

For example, global climatic changes are a growing concern in peace studies and practice, yet there are some tensions that often go un-confronted. Peacebuilders fly frequently to locations all over the world, although waste from jet fuel combustion is a leading contributor to greenhouse gas emissions (pound-for-pound more potent than any other form of mechanized transportation). Similarly, the buffet menu at peace
scholars’ conferences, when it contains meat from CAFOs and/or fresh fruit produced by breaking bodies, may be contributing indirectly to exploitation of both people and places. Peace scholar-practitioners, even as they aim to increase their influence in an increasingly professionalized field, must therefore take a critical lens to the systems that underpin a smooth professional world. How can we Do No Harm (Anderson, 1999), without doing nothing?

In order to understand how best to shift complex, adaptive systems, we need first to understand ourselves. The most effective way to bring about a systemic shift is to “focus on those parts of the system closest to us” (Schirch, 2013, p. 59). If this is indeed true, then peacebuilders cannot afford to ignore the fact that as researchers and practitioners they are also human beings, whose movements and consumption patterns reverberate. Furthermore, if locating oneself within the wider system of conflict requires a “comprehensive vision of the landscape” (Lederach & Appleby, 2010, p. 39), then a truly a comprehensive vision for building positive peace must synthesize the human dimension with the ecological dimension – it must include ecosystems as well as political, social, and economic systems.

The prevailing liberal peace model privileges the economic at the expense of the rest. It has proven to be both product and purveyor of a particularly narrow vision of the Earth and humans’ place on it. While no societal arrangement is without flaws, the neoliberal world order is at least ecologically problematic (Sachs, 2013), often violent (Smith & Verdeja, 2013) and at worst hegemonic (Richmond, 2011). While reforms geared to “green” and promote “sustainability” may make the status quo less bad, quick
fixes are usually a trap (Lederach, 2005, p. 54), and the dominant story of “growth” simply does not hold water when read from the perspective of the oppressed (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014), or those who see that the natural world encompasses all colors. In this view, the neoliberal peace model is a planetary liability. Mohandas Gandhi seemed to foresee this in 1926 when he wrote:

“God forbid that India should ever take to industrialization after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom [Britain] is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.” (Cited in W. Sachs, 2013, p. 27)

Whether or not the remaining years of the 21st century appear bleak is a matter of perspective. In his volume on climate change and conflict, Welzer (2013) predicts that humanity will turn to unimaginably violent “solutions” to its problems. He is right that radical approaches must emerge, but dead wrong about the range of options: kids at GSMS are radically growing peace and hope on small farms, while adults at OB Peacebuilding trek through dense forests toward positive change. Both of these programs imagine new peace-oriented possibilities, and, further, they create space for people to experience new possibilities.

But these “new” ideas are not so new. They are, in many ways, “a rediscovery of values that have existed for thousands of years – values that recognize our place in the natural order, our indissoluble connection to one another and to the earth” (Norberg-Hodge, 2009, p. 192). Indigenous ways of being and knowing represent age-old forms of embodied wisdom that hold great promise for undoing the cycles of violence inherent in
to the dominant model of “progress” in the third millennium. Shiva (2009) puts it clearly: “Those who are being treated as disposable in the dominant system, which is pushing the planet’s ecosystems to collapse and our species to extinction, carry the knowledge and values, the cultures and skills, that give humanity a chance for survival” (p. 22).

While Schirch (2013) invokes Indigenous cultures in her call to transform the peacebuilding paradigm of nature as usable resource to nature as interdependent entity (pp.88-89), such a transformation is not about “going back” to a halcyon past. The very term “building” suggests a sense of something to be made, that we might enter into, but not finish, right now. A post- or non-industrial paradigm for peacebuilding – if it is to avoid the pitfalls that continue to plague the postcolonial era – must define itself by something other than what it is not. Galtung (1990) suggested “Eco-Balance” as a keystone in defining positive peace. Likewise, a Symbiotic approach to building peace would draw on dynamics that enable diverse entities to flourish mutually: a human-Earth relationship characterized by exploitation, devastation, and exhaustion is not durable because “we can’t live on Mars.” Both of these definitions align with the principles of a Strategic Peacebuilding framework,\(^48\) and they also include the cosmos – living landscapes and watersheds – in their visions.

Change can take a long time: “The period of time it takes to accompany a society out of a protracted period of deadly violence, achieve stability, and move toward a

\(^{48}\) Lederach & Appleby (2010) submit that peacebuilding is “strategic” when it is interdependent, architectonic, sustainable, integrative, and comprehensive (p. 40).
justpeace, will be at least as long as it took the conflict to gestate, turn violent, and run its course” (Lederach & Appleby, 2010, p. 25). Applying this long-term view to structural and ecological violence presents a real challenge: it can take a thousand years to restore a few inches of humus – the top layer of soil, made of dead and decaying plants and animals, which gives land its fertility and makes terrestrial life possible. Dire situations (like soil erosion, toxification, and bloodshed) call for measures that meet present needs without undermining future possibilities. We must respond to those who suffer today and also consider how our actions will impact the generations to come. We must not shirk hard questions:

- If a chronic infatuation with fastness has dug the modern model of “development” into a hole, does it really make sense to try to dig it out at warp speed?

- What is lost when the young – as change agents, contributors, and leaders in efforts at building peace – are overlooked? Maria Montessori suggested that herein hides “the key to the riddles of humanity” (1972, p. 31).

- A rising tide lifts boats; it also drowns and must recede. A more holistic model for growth might be like a spring, which renews itself through and with the soil and planetary hydrological cycles. When not overused or abused, it can flow and quench unendingly. Here lies hope in a desert.

E.F. Schumacher argued in the 1970s that any real chance for change “is non-existent as long as there is no idea anywhere of enough being good and more-than-enough being evil” (1999, p. 250), and his point is even more apt today, though we may fail to see it. Fortunately, the status quo is only one model. In other models, knowing where our food comes from would not be unthinkable, and the water in the rivers of North America could be drinkable. There are innumerable ways of seeing and being in
the world, but, as farmer-poet Wendell Berry submits: “we are involved in a profound failure of imagination” (2001, p. 40). It will be a long road if we are to overcome this failure, fraught with confusion. But it is not impossible to imagine taking a first step.

We might, for example, simply recognize that Indigenous cultures continue to survive and to thrive and that knowledge of how to live interdependently with a landscape is of great value to all peoples. However, taking without asking is not an option: such hubris has served in large part to create the current predicament. We cannot ignore the roles that disruption, dispossession, and displacement have played in the past if we hope to avoid them in the future.

We might recall that all kids are geniuses when it comes to creativity. Surrounded as we are by such visionaries, it does not seem terribly risky to ask them their insights and to learn from them.

We might also learn from the Earth. Consider the oceans’ algae and plants of the land: they gather energy from the Sun and provide nourishment for themselves by their internal capacities. The only “waste” from this process is oxygen – the very gas that gives life to all respiring organisms, humans included. And look to the birds: who move individually and yet jointly with grace and purpose, in a “visible, coherent trajectory through a confusing wood” (Lopez, 2007, p. xii).

Taken together, these steps represent a setting-out onto an unknown path. They stand, then, as a beginning...


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