

## REPRESENTATIONS AND RIGHTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Attending to the ‘Cry of the Earth’ requires a critical appraisal of how we conceive our relationship with the environment, and a clear vision of how to apprehend it in law and governance.

Addressing questions of participation, responsibility and justice, this collective endeavour includes marginalised and critical voices, featuring contributions by leading practitioners and thinkers in Indigenous law, traditional knowledge, wild law, the rights of nature, theology, public policy and environmental humanities. Such voices invite us to broaden our horizon of meaning and action, modes of knowing and being in the world, and envision the path ahead with a new legal consciousness; they must play a decisive role in comprehending and responding to current global challenges.

A valuable reference for students, researchers and practitioners, this book is one of a series of publications associated with the Earth System Governance Project. For more publications, see [www.cambridge.org/earth-system-governance](http://www.cambridge.org/earth-system-governance).

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The **Earth System Governance Project** was established in 2009 as a core project of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change. Since then, the Project has evolved into the largest social science research network in the area of sustainability and governance. The Earth System Governance Project explores political solutions and novel, more effective governance mechanisms to cope with the current transitions in the socio-ecological systems of our planet. The normative context of this research is sustainable development; earth system governance is not only a question of institutional effectiveness, but also of political legitimacy and social justice.

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# REPRESENTATIONS AND RIGHTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

*Edited by*

SANDY LAMALLE

AND

PETER STOETT



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In memory of those who opened the path before us,  
And for our generation and the next.

‘The Great Peace begins as a seed in our hearts.  
The dream stirs us all to consider our action onto future generations.  
The ‘how’ is revealed in our hoping.’  
*Ven. Dyani Ywahoo (Cherokee Elder)*

With  
Poets and Healers  
We are invoking  
You  
Goddess of Memory  
and the transmission of Knowledge  
Daughter of Earth Gaia and Heaven Ouranos  
Symphony of celestial bodies and divinities  
Inventor of the Words and Language  
Mother of the nine Muses  
O Mnemosyne  
– Help us recollect  
what was left on the side of Time  
Join the pieces of knowledge of our being human  
Remember the diversity of realms and languages  
Ways of knowing and being in the world  
Reconcile meaning and being  
With all our relationships  
Make forms and paths  
For common living  
understanding  
and healing

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## Contributors

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He is also an Expert Member of the Commission on Education and Communication of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

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## Preface

The authors of this remarkable collection offer critical perspectives on some of the most challenging issues of our time, interrogating understandings of rights, representations and environment. They offer a rich discussion that spans cultures, knowledge systems and academic disciplines to explore the intersections of community, representation, nature and law. They champion a more caring vision that affirms life, respect and reverence for nature, solidarity with the poor and marginalised, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Over millennia human societies have forged complex and evolving relationships with their natural surroundings, continuously transforming themselves and the world around them. But today the human presence – our technology, agriculture and industry, our sheer numbers together with those of our domesticated animals – dominates the terrestrial biosphere, increasingly threatening the survival of non-human species and ecosystems. At this critical juncture, where it has become urgent to shift the human development trajectory onto more sustainable lines, it is important to reflect on ideas, beliefs, representations and legal systems, to understand the quandary we confront, consider voices and perspectives which have been silenced, and to explore alternative futures.

The volume is organised into three parts which engage with *challenges* in the current political and legal landscape explore *recollections* of the past and of fields and modes of knowledge, and survey *perspectives* for what might be. The discussion is ambitious, bridging cultures, disciplines and imaginaries and challenging the reader to engage with ideas that they may find novel, difficult or even disconcerting. But such reflection on past and future, which highlights plural ways of being and knowing, is essential to rethink our relationships with one another, and with the non-human natural world. For as we try to develop more just and caring relationships, it is vital to reconsider our activities and habits, goals and beliefs, loyalties and ethics. In that optic, the authors emphasise that how we envision the environment determines how we define environmental problems and

their solutions. And the book proceeds to offer a pragmatic reflection on the shortcomings of modern legal frameworks, on current alternative practices in different countries (notably of the global south), and on possible new pathways in law and governance.

This book has its origins in the Working Group on Representations and Rights of/for the Environment set up through the Taskforce on Conceptual Foundations of Earth System Governance. It illustrates the diversity of scholarship embraced by the Earth System Governance network. And it attests to the enthusiasm of Sandy Lamalle and Peter Stoett who have gathered such distinguished contributors to deal with complex topics that include decolonising the Anthropocene, advancing legal communication and understanding with Indigenous legal traditions and systems, defining environmental justice and democracy, identifying and appraising systems that recognise the rights of nature, and defining effective local and international legal frameworks.

**James Meadowcroft**  
**School of Public Policy**  
**Carleton University**

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Earth  
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Taskforce on Conceptual Foundations



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