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The sociocultural constructions of Nature and Environment: preliminary outcomes of a systematic literature review

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The recognition of Nature and the Environment as sociocultural constructions is key to enhance a transformational socio–ecological change. That means understanding the production of their different socio–cultural meanings, how societies tackle them, and to what extent different understandings can condition the implementation of a deep socio–ecological change. To the authors' knowledge, no studies have systematized the evidence regarding this diversity of perceptions. Therefore, a systematic literature review was conducted according to the PRISMA guidelines, through the combination of “Nature”, “Environment”, “Representation”, “Definition”, “Understanding” and “Perception” keywords with no restrictions on publication date, scientific field, or document type and language. In the first approach, the Web of Science database was selected, and 27266 results were identified. By assessing the full–text articles for eligibility, 298 results meet the inclusion criteria. A preliminary analysis reveals that most of the studies were conducted in Anglo–Saxon countries, and mainly in the scientific fields of Geography, Psychology, and Sociology.

Besides, Nature and Environment concepts are often used as synonymous, and a bibliometric analysis unveils that the keyword “Environment” is used before “Nature”. The concepts of ecofeminism, environmental justice, colonialism, and capitalism emerged in the studies reviewed, revealing that different representations and ways that society relates to Nature have been historically influenced by these social processes: from a wild Nature that should be controlled by humans to meet their needs and desires, to a Nature that integrates everything, such as human culture, where all species are influenced by its dynamics and cycles. This preliminary analysis may pave the way to, first, understand the diversity of social perceptions and representations towards Nature and Environment concepts in a systematic way and, second, identify the main drivers and resistances that the implementation of a socioecological transformation change may face in different sociocultural contexts.

Keywords: Society–Nature relations; Nature representations; Environment representations; Systematic literature review