



## Full Length Article



# Emotional healing as part of environmental and climate justice processes: Frameworks and community-based experiences in times of environmental suffering

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## ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to discuss the political role of healing practices in the context of climate and environmental justice struggles. We rely on literature and practices that have identified healing as a means for liberation from structural oppression and physical and symbolic violence, to humans, non-humans and nature – namely emotional political ecologies, transformative and healing justice and communitarian feminism. We also briefly discuss the experience of three collectives in Mexico, Colombia, and Spain who develop healing strategies as a way to emotionally support local communities exposed to territorial, environmental, and climate impacts and injustice. We argue that by further addressing the political dimensions of healing in environmental and climate justice, researchers, activists, and practitioners could expand the conceptualisation of (a) the spatial and temporal scales of climate justice by further engaging with the inter- and intra-generational emotional implications of environmental injustice, and (b) environmental and climate justice as a multidimensional and nonlinear collective emotional process.

## 1. Introduction

“When I look around in nature and at other non-human beings, my body is full of pain and sorrow ... I realise how I am full of contradictions, but I also know I am alive thanks to nature” (participant of an open forum in Madrid, Spain, 2018).

This opening quote of one of the vignettes we will present below exemplifies how an increasing number of people experience intense emotional burdens when they embody, witness, or suffer the impacts of environmental and climate change and injustices in their everyday life. Climate change hurts – not just physically, but also emotionally. The recent popularisation of the term “eco-anxiety” in the media of the Global North, defined as the “extreme worry about current and future harm to the environment caused by human activity and climate

change”<sup>1</sup> echoes the “emotional turn” in academic, practitioner and activist forums, increasingly interested in analysing and denouncing the emotional, unequal impacts of environmental and climate change (González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2020). This increasing attention is to be welcomed, since emotional and psycho-social health issues related to climate change tend to be less visible to scholars and practitioners than physical ones (Ingle & Mikulewicz, 2020), even if several authors have reported how floods, fires, and droughts generate infinitely different ways of experiencing loss, distress, and trauma (see for example the review by Tschakert et al., 2019), and how these tend to be especially hard to bear precisely for those communities less responsible for climate change (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014). In fact, feeling harmed by the transformation of the environment is not new, invisible, or intangible, especially in colonised territories (Ferdinand, 2016), and in those which

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<sup>1</sup> <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2019/>, last access May 2021.

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have been historically configured as sacrifice zones (Lerner, 2012) or extractivized territories that supply the economies of the Global North and global capitalist elites (Martinez-Alier & Walter, 2016). Evidence of the emotional impacts of environmental dispossession, contamination and the development paradigm imposed on to Indigenous, subaltern, poor and racialised communities are numerous (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018; González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2017; Gravante & Poma, 2016; Nightingale, 2013; Sultana, 2011; Tschakert, 2012; Woodbury, 2019). Figures also confirm this: from the over 3700 cases of environmental conflicts registered in the Global Atlas of Environmental Justice (EJAtlas)<sup>2</sup> by July 2022, 30% of the cases include impacts such as stress, depression and suicide from communities. Such emotional suffering adds to the high levels of violence and material injustices that land and environmental defenders bear in their daily life (Del Bene et al., 2018; Scheidel et al., 2020).

Considering the “one thousand ways to experience loss” (Tschakert et al., 2019), this paper seeks to discuss how individuals, communities and movements struggle to cope, manage and emotionally heal those losses and environmental injustices. We first define healing as a political process in environmental justice, through the lenses of emotional political ecologies, transformative and healing justice, and communitarian feminism. These literatures help us define emotional healing in environmental justice as a multidimensional, structural, and embodied process. We then engage with three different healing experiences in Indigenous territories in Mexico, rural areas in Colombia, and in urban Spain – each exposed to long-lasting environmental and climate inequalities. These experiences are examples of how – in spite of the brutal unequal material impacts of climate and environmental injustice – Indigenous, peasant, and urban communities and movements struggle to defend their lives, neighbourhoods and territories, while confronting present as well as inter-generational ecological traumas (González-Hidalgo, 2020; Middleton, 2010). The community-based experiences lead by collectives in Mexico, Colombia and Spain highlight how engaging with healing practices as multidimensional, structural and embodied provides a more nuanced understanding of climate justice across time and space; and how focusing on healing as an ambivalent process can help us to further consider environmental and climate justice as a multidimensional and non-linear collective emotional process. We discuss how this perspective contributes to an emerging field of research that focuses on the transformative potential of environmental and climate justice struggles (see Scheidel et al., 2018; Temper & Del Bene, 2016; Asara et al., 2015).

Our focus in emotional healing as connected to environmental and climate justice struggles reveals how emotional implications related to environmental and climate justice have material, land, cultural and language consequences, but also emotional implications, which also need to be considered in research and activist agendas. By connecting the recent interest among political ecologists in exploring the political role of emotion and affect in environmental struggles with environmental and climate justice literatures (González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2020), we also contribute to the exploration of synergies and cross fertilisations between (transformative) environmental justice and political ecology, as recently suggested by Svarstad and Benjaminsen (2020). We also hope to encourage political geographers to further engage with the role of emotions and processes of healing as key political and geographical experiences. In fact, while health and therapeutic experiences are analysed as defining relationships between humans and non-human natures (see for example Hausermann, 2020; Williams, 2010), there is still a lack of discussion of how these healing experiences can potentially facilitate, influence or generate (eco-)political processes of transformation at the interface of private and public spaces (Painter, 2008).

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we review the

literature on environmental justice through the lens of emotional political ecologies, transformative and healing justice and communitarian feminism, and define emotional healing as a political process in environmental and climate justice scenarios. Section 3 describes our methods and positionality. Section 4 presents three short vignettes of healing experiences which we have observed, participated in, or facilitated in Mexico, Colombia and Spain. The vignettes illustrate diverse ways that local communities seek to foster emotional healing processes in contexts of environmental, climatic and territorial injustice: dealing with individual and collective traumas associated with structural violence in the context of social mobilisation (as in the case of Edupaz in Chiapas, Mexico), by engaging with the bodily and emotional impacts of climate and environmental injustice and seeking specific practices to improve collective well-being (as in the case of Ríos Vivos in rural Colombia), or by directly engaging with the emotional implications of opposed visions and responsibilities regarding climate change (as in the case of Altekio in Madrid, Spain). Section 5 discusses our findings around how healing practices may contribute to environmental and climate justice, and its spatial and political implications. Section 6 concludes by describing the main lessons learned to further inquiries into environmental and climate justice.

## 2. Defining healing as a political process in environmental justice: emotional political ecologies, healing and transformative justice, communitarian feminism

Environmental justice scholarship has increasingly aimed to address the role of emotions in the creation and experience of environmental injustice and violence (Kojola & Pellow, 2021). However, topics associated with human well-being began to be explicitly considered in environmental justice literature only once a fourth dimension, capabilities, was added to the three well-established and largely-discussed dimensions of environmental justice: distribution, participation, and recognition (Agyeman et al., 2016; Schlosberg, 2009). The capabilities principle, inspired by the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, emphasises the capacities necessary for people to function fully in the lives they choose for themselves, focusing not just on the distribution of goods they need to flourish, but also on the processes they depend on for that flourishing to occur (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010). Importantly, Sen’s understanding of capabilities includes the possibility to feel and experience emotions: “in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger” (Sen, 2000: 78–80, 2006a: 76–8, cited in Schlosberg, 2009: 31–32). The climate justice movement has helped to make more explicit this concern for well-being (Edwards et al., 2016), highlighting the importance of “living well” within a community, which includes, for example, legal rights for species and ecological systems (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). Similarly, the emerging field of transformative environmental justice points at conflicts as transformative forces towards sustainability across scales: global, collective, and individual actions have cognitive, affective, and relational impacts which might eventually lead to radical societal transformations, stronger social bonds, and community identity (Kothari, 2014; Scheidel et al., 2018; Temper et al., 2018). Socio-environmental conflicts can thus represent the context in which communities and movements defend their foundational or sacred principles of living together, but also eradicate the original causes of inequities, and at the same time transform and shape new spaces and new agreements of coexistence among individuals, families, communities and non-human entities. Hernández-Saca and Cannon recently defined healing as “a life-long process of becoming aware of one’s pain, broadly defined, and entering into a relationship with that pain in order to transform from that pain into some sense of internal and external reconciliation and transcendence” (2019: 244). But, how would we define healing in the context of environmental and climate injustice?

While several works in environmental justice studies mention the need of communities affected by environmental harm to “heal” (see for

<sup>2</sup> See <https://ejatlas.org/>, last access July 2022.

example incipient texts by Bullard and Wright (1990)), healing as a political process tends to be under-explored in the literature of political geography in general and environmental justice in particular, and there are therefore limited discussions around the specific ways in which we can learn to (politically) heal such pains. However, as Westoby et al. (2021) point out, Indigenous, Black and feminist epistemologies and practices increasingly offer key aspects and strategies to (emotionally) survive in the face of climate change. We therefore engage with some of these conceptual frameworks, experiences and practices developed within social movements, environmental justice organisations, and activist research, in which healing is increasingly being identified as an urgent and transversal need across cultures and historical legacies, with a political understanding of healing as a means for liberation of structural oppressions and physical and symbolic violence. In the next three subsections we engage with three of these legacies from which environmental and climate justice literature could learn: emotional political ecologies, transformative and healing justice, and communitarian feminism. Following this, we briefly highlight some key aspects that these literatures and practices bring to define healing as a political process: multidimensionality, structurality, and embodiment.

### 2.1. Healing as a multidimensional process: emotional political ecologies

Recent work on “emotional political ecologies” has drawn attention to the conceptual, methodological, and political implications of emotions in environmental conflicts and mobilisations (Sultana, 2015; González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2020). Several works have reported how environmental degradation, conflicts, and mobilisation generate emotional suffering, fear, and anger among local communities unequally exposed to environmental harms (see for example Sultana, 2011; Auyero & Swistun, 2009; González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2017). The literature has also pointed out how engagement with nature and more-than-human entities can be a source of relief in such contexts (Dallman et al., 2013; Singh, 2013). Intense emotions, however, can also result in individual and collective burnout and internal conflicts among environmental movements (Gravante & Poma, 2016).

Some emotional political ecologists have explicitly discussed the possibilities of healing in the context of historic and present environmental violence. Middleton (2010), for instance, discusses how the intergenerational trauma of colonisation shows that “historical grief remains unresolved, and children experience similar trauma responses as their parents, even though they did not directly experience the trauma their parents did” (p. 9). Middleton discusses how Indigenous communities’ mobilisation in order to defend their own land governance from extractivism and land grabbing, was both evidence of the impacts of colonial legacies as well as a source of healing from them. Other authors have analysed the ways and methodologies in which environmental activists engage with the search for spaces of emotional expression in their movements, such as a collective engagement with performance (Brown & Pickerill, 2009); and how Indigenous, political-spiritual rituals facilitate the expression of collective emotions of grief and anger (González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2017). These papers show how the collective expression of emotions helps activists or land defenders to maintain everyday environmental and land struggles, against disciplining technologies of the State and private capital in their territories.

Following the work of González-Hidalgo and Zografos (2020), who highlight five dimensions in the emotional processes in which individuals and collectives build environmental justice, healing in climate and environmental injustice can be considered as a multidimensional process: 1) the *psychological dimension* refers to the concrete ways and methodologies in which individuals and communities seek to handle the impacts of climate trauma in their minds, bodies and spirits; 2) the *more-than-human* refers to the nurturing role of daily affective engagements with non-human natures as key for healing; 3) the *collective* refers to the shared and relational spaces for healing environmental injustice by means of collective action; 4) the *geographical* refers to how emotional

attachment to one’s place or territory acts as a driver for collective healing; 5) the *personal-political* refers to the acknowledgment of power inequalities in which all these feelings and everyday experiences are embedded.

Decolonial and Indigenous environmental justice perspectives weave all these dimensions together in that the individual is a unity of mind, body and spirit; inter-exists with non-human kin; merges with the collective; has profound roots in its territory; and transcends generations. In fact, what appears to be environmental and climate justice struggles against specific polluting or destructive projects also includes broader claims such as the historical reclamation of land, sovereignty, Indigenous languages and cosmologies and, among others, educational and health systems as collective self-determination for advancing peoples’ aspirations and resistance to oppression (Whyte, 2020). Indigenous knowledge systems also transcend species and temporal boundaries in that environmental and climate justice imply healing our relationship with the Earth, with all living beings, and more-than-human relatives, as well as with the spiritual world and our ancestors (McGregor, 2018). This multidimensional understanding of healing is eloquently expressed by Ladonna Brave Bull, one of the community leaders of the Standing Rock camp in Indigenous Dakota land: “We want every last oil and gas pipe removed from her [Mother Earth’s] body. We want healing. We want clean water. We want to determine our own future”. Defending the sacred water acquires a profound meaning rooted in the colonial history of the United States: “To save our water, we have to break the cycle of colonial trauma”.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.2. Healing as a response to structural violence: transformative and healing justice

Recent work in critical geography (Pulido & De Lara, 2018; Ranganathan & Bratman, 2021) has put forward an “abolitionist climate justice” that centres historical racism, intersecting drivers of trauma beyond those associated with climate, and an ethics of care and healing for those most at risk by climate change. In other words, this literature seeks to connect climate harm with healing from historical trauma. Abolitionist theories criticise liberal approaches that rely on juridical and distributive justice models and link environmental justice to the Black radical tradition to address forms of freedom that are not dependent on recognition by the liberal state (Pulido & De Lara, 2018). They imagine new ways of finding accountability on behalf of survivors of violence, building a society where it is possible to address harm without relying on structural forms of oppression (racism, sexism, classism, ableism, etc) or the violent systems that sustain them (i.e. the prison industrial complex). In this sense, abolition is a “structural analysis of oppression, a practical organising strategy, and a political vision of a restructured society in a world where we have everything we need: food, shelter, education, health, art, beauty, clean water and more things that are foundational to our personal and community safety” (Kaba, 2021: 2). Transformative and healing justice are two frameworks closely linked to abolition since both are concerned with addressing and finding accountability for communities that do not rely on the state and that place collective healing at the centre.

Transformative justice aims at transforming the social conditions that allowed the harm to occur (Generation Five, 2017).<sup>4</sup> It works to actively resist the state’s criminal injustice system and interventions that perpetuate violence and oppression (Mingus, 2015). Transformative justice departs from the idea that what happens in interpersonal

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.yesmagazine.org/orphan/2017/02/04/to-save-the-water-we-must-break-the-cycle-of-colonial-trauma>, last access May 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Transformative justice has been used in contexts of child sexual abuse (see <http://www.generationfive.org>), sexual assault (<https://www.phillystandsup.org>), women of colour who survive sexual or domestic violence (see <https://incite-national.org/>). Last access May 2021.

relationships is mirrored and reinforced by the larger systems of oppression and that by focusing on this interplay, the conditions that led to the interpersonal harm and violence can be transformed (Kaba, 2021). Therefore, this framework can only be applied in relation to the specific context in which it is being practiced, including and responding to the specific experiences of the community (Generation Five, 2017; Kaba, 2021). Transformative justice seeks accountability from individuals who cause harm, while engaging community members in creating the conditions that invite and demand real accountability and change (Generation Five, 2017). According to Kaba (2021), the relationship between accountability processes and healing is not straightforward, as accountability processes are not intended for healing; rather, they tackle and process harm and emotions associated with it, such as fear, anger and vengeance, though healing can at times happen in their wake.

Inspired by transformative justice, healing justice was coined in 2007 in the US and has been expanded in the past decade by other Black, Brown, and Indigenous queer, trans, and disabled social movements (Peck, 2020). Healing justice is both a framework and a set of practices that entail reviving ancestral healing practices and building new ones,<sup>5</sup> emphasising how embodied, contemplative and interpersonal healing work can transform historical trauma, systemic violence, and internalised oppression (Peck, 2020). It emerged as a reaction to the co-optation and appropriation of traditional healing practices by the white middle class which tend to disregard the emotional privileges and impacts associated to colonialism, racism and ableism. It is also a response to social movements that fail to consider healing as a serious issue and a political need (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2016). In this view, healing does not draw on ableist notions of wellbeing that see individuals falling on a binary of being sick or healthy, where a cure is always seen as the primary goal (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2016). Rather, it is invested in cultivating relationships with the emotional and psychological selves that foster joy, tenderness, and liberation (Peck, 2020).

### 2.3. Healing as an embodied process: communitarian feminisms

Communitarian feminism is a school of thought, practice, and movement based on the ancestral principles of Indigenous communities from Latin America. It recognises that historically pre-colonial patriarchy and present-day Western patriarchy interlocked in such a way that Indigenous voices are often not heard and are now struggling to finally emerge. This perspective has been key in Latin American political ecology (and beyond) to show how the bodies of impoverished women – among others – are usually considered as spaces of dispossession in extractivist contexts, and how feminist, territorial activism seeks to transform such relations through daily, political activities where life occupies a central place (Ulloa, 2018).

One of the key concepts and practices generated by communitarian feminists is *cuero-territorio*. *Cuero-territorio* (in English, body-territory) is a key concept and healing practice with a long tradition, especially in Indigenous and feminist groups engaged in territorial defence in Latin America and the Caribbean (Cabnal, 2017; Cruz-Hernández, 2016; Zaragocin & Caretta, 2020). The central idea of *cuero-territorio* is based on feminist understandings of the inseparable and co-dependent relationships of (human) bodies and territory, especially relevant in extractivist contexts where women's groups would claim that "my body is my territory" or that "neither women nor land are territories to be conquered" as a way to show their resistance (Cruz-Hernández, 2016). Body-territory implies an Indigenous and decolonised perspective to better understand "embodiment" (see review by Zaragocin & Caretta,

2020), as our lived experiences associated with our emotional attachments to place. In practice, working to understand our bodies-territories implies participatory methodologies such as body mapping to connect what happens in the territories we inhabit with what we perceive in our bodies and emotions, and vice versa. Such methodologies, in the context of environmental injustice, have shown how women's bodies (sometimes silently) endure the emotional and embodied impacts caused by the lack of or the contamination of water, as well as by state-, community-, and gender-based violence. In practice, *cuero-territorio* thus implies a "feminist means to diagnose territorial conflicts and to initiate healing of bodies and territories" (Zaragocin & Caretta, 2020: 6). The aim of such collective mapping is, on the one hand, to create a safe environment for participants to recognise, share, and listen to and support each other's suffering as well as their own sources of healing and well-being, beyond Western health frameworks. It also helps to denounce such impacts to organise women and those who usually do not count, in the defence of their territories. As Lorena Cabnal notes, these are personal-political practices, which "prompt us to recover time for the body to vindicate joy and – without losing indignation and in the middle of the complex world – celebrate life, resistance, and plural wisdom, as well as being alive and embodied" (Cabnal, 2017: 103, own translation).

Our reading of these three frameworks inspire us to discuss how healing needs to be considered as a political process in the search for environmental and climate justice. The emphasis of these frameworks in the several dimensions related to healing, and its material/structural and embodied origins and manifestations provides us with a lens to explore how three community-based experiences that we have met or participated in Mexico, Colombia and Spain operationalize emotional healing in relation to environmental and climate justice.

### 3. Methods and positionality

This paper is the result of our shared reading, reflections, and discussions around a topic that challenges us as researchers and members or companions of social-environmental movements. It was constituted by an open-ended process of continuous learning, which started around ten years ago when our shared interests around environmental justice brought us together. While each of us have been involved in different research projects, contexts, and institutions, through our informal talks we soon realised how environmental justice and political ecology studies tend to under-explore the role of emotions in conflicts and mobilisations, while, in our interactions with members of local communities and social movements, we perceived how these emotions have a central role. For example, in these forums we have frequently listened to expressions such as "heal our suffering", "holding our pain", "processing our anger". We also learned how movements and communities involved in environmental and climate justice struggles are increasingly engaging in emotional work. However, these significant experiences are often neglected in academic fora. We see this paper as a way to share what we have learned about emotional work while being part of or supporting caring collectives.

Regarding our positionality as researchers, we are all young adults, cis white women, middle class, Mediterranean researchers affiliated with European universities or organisations that pay our salaries, that is, with relatively good economic conditions – though in precarity given the fixed-term nature of our contracts. This is a highly privileged position in contrast with some of the areas where we have done research, not only in structural terms, but also because we can reflect, discuss, and write about the emotional toll of environmental injustice without usually experiencing the same devastating emotional impacts in our daily lives.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these practices used in the US Social Forum Healing Justice Practice Space ranges from reiki, to acupressure, acupuncture and sound and somatic therapy (see <https://incite-national.org/2010/08/05/reflections-from-detroit-transforming-wellness-wholeness/>, last access May 2021).



While our aim is to use this privilege to reflect upon what it means to heal environmental injustice, it is also important to notice that it is not *because* of our structural privileges that we can reflect upon emotional issues: as we have learnt with local communities, grassroots and movements, looking for ways of emotional healing is not the result of privilege, but a key strategy for individual and collective survival (see Max-Neef et al., 1992).

It is important for us to acknowledge our partial perspective (Harding, 2004), and it is therefore not our aim to appropriate these literatures and experiences. On the contrary, our aim is to open new questions and spaces for discussion around healing across disciplines, recognising its political potential to transform a narrow understanding of environmental and climate justice. It is also our aim to honour and respect the knowledge and experience of such collectives, and we see this paper as a small step toward learning about such experiences on personal, academic, and political levels. Therefore, we do not aim to develop an in-depth and critical analysis of each case, but to highlight the political significance of three community-based experiences of healing promoted by local activists in very diverse contexts: in Indigenous and peasant territories in southern Mexico, rural Colombia, and urban Madrid, Spain. This allows us to discuss the political role of healing practices as part of environmental and climate injustice processes and struggles.

In the vignettes, we briefly present key aspects of each context, as well as key modalities through which healing is framed and pursued by members of these communities and grassroots movements. We have a long history of collaboration or participation in the experiences presented in the first and third vignettes, and more details can be found in our own publications (see González-Hidalgo, 2017 and Piñeiro, 2019; Piñeiro et al., 2021, respectively) as well as in publications by research allies (see Altekio, 2019 for Vignette 3). The second vignette, based on the work by Rios Vivos/SETAA, is based on a preliminary interview with the facilitator of the workshops and member of the movement. We have written these vignettes with the permission and collaboration of key informants of those collectives.

#### 4. Healing experiences in Mexico, Colombia and Spain

##### 4.1. Vignette 1: “healing the heart” of activist Chiapas, Mexico: the therapeutic work of Edupaz

The uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in 1994 brought to international attention the abuses that rural, peasant, and especially Indigenous communities – Tojolabal (in the Border Region, near Guatemala) and Tzotzil and Tzeltal (in the highlands) – had historically faced in Chiapas. Civil human rights organisations reported that in the period of 1995–2000, violent state and paramilitary counter-insurgency responses to the uprising caused more than 150 deaths and displaced nearly 10,000 people in Chiapas (FRAYBA, 2005). The consequences of this conflict were also manifested in psychosocial terms: communities reported fear, worry, fatigue, anger, sadness, discouragement, and increased internal confrontations (Pérez-Sales et al., 2002). Today 77% of the population in Chiapas lives in poverty or extreme poverty (SEDESOL, 2021). Besides challenges to their livelihood, peasant and Indigenous communities in Chiapas also face threats to their territorial sovereignty due to several environmental conflicts from mining, hydroelectric projects, privatisation of land and water,

deforestation, and tourism (Otros Mundos Chiapas, 2015).<sup>6</sup> Many communities mobilised against these projects, seeking to gain sovereignty over the collective management of their common resources. However, resisting extraction takes a big toll; local leaders and activists have been threatened, murdered, or have had their rights violated (FRAYBA, 2005).

A small collective, Edupaz (Education for Peace) was first created in 1998 in Comitán de Domínguez, initially to support migrant communities escaping the armed conflict in Guatemala. Edupaz aimed to enhance communities’ self-determination and resistance by combining liberation theology and liberation psychology.<sup>7</sup> One of the founding members of Edupaz, trained as a Gestalt therapist,<sup>8</sup> co-organised intensive workshops entitled “SAT Maya-Healing the heart” from 2004 to 2014, with a total of over 300 participants. They were inspired by Claudio Naranjo’s “Seekers of Truth” (SAT) program and mainly involved peasant and Indigenous leaders: Zapatistas, individuals linked to peasant organisations such as the Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata (OCEZ) and Indigenous community members associated with the Autochthonous/Liberation Church. The workshops aimed to promote self-knowledge of the attendees in physical, emotional and mental terms through the use of various tools inspired by Gestalt therapy, such as body movement and music, personality analysis (via enneagram), mutual therapies, and family constellations (Naranjo, 2013; Keck, 2015), in combination with Mayan healing ceremonies. According to one of the founding members of Edupaz: “The aim of these interventions is to face the incoherencies of organisations, especially those related to the difficulties of community representatives to take care of themselves and their families, to hear and attend community demands ... related to health issues and in relation to uneven gender relationships” so that they can “see our [their] own heart and realise how we alone are enslaving ourselves ... and see that the villain is not only outside, but also inside, in the way they treat their wives, sons and daughters, in the way they choose their leaders” (González-Hidalgo, 2017: 58). For Edupaz, developing these workshops also implied democratising access to psychotherapy, beyond psychiatric or class categories.

For most attendees, the workshops constituted the first opportunity to collectively reflect upon their own individual and community life stories. Through a combination of emotional and bodily individual and collective exercises, the workshops facilitated the expression of silenced individualised traumas, such as those associated with family and gender violence within the community; they also facilitated reflexivity and insights around collective disappointments and conflicts regarding collective action, encouraging individual and collective reflection on leadership roles. As some participants reported to us, these workshops helped some of them in the long term to be able to better communicate in collective meetings, to better handle their anger and fear, or to better understand others when collective actions did not result in the way that they expected. However, the workshops did not engage explicitly with the analysis of how the structural, political context impacted the everyday life of participants (see González-Hidalgo, 2017). Healing the emotional impacts associated with environmental injustice, in this case, meant having the opportunity to stop and reflect upon one’s own role in community and household spaces and how this was informed by diverse life experiences, as well as listening to those of others – generating a more emphatic sense of a collective *we* (see Fig. 1).

<sup>6</sup> See also <https://ejatlas.org/country/mexico>, last access May 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Liberation theology is a Christian theological curriculum born in Latin America in the 1960s which emphasises that Gospel requires the preferential option for the poor. Liberation psychology defends that psychological knowledge must be put at the service of those who have less.

<sup>8</sup> Gestalt Therapy is a current of humanistic psychology, which places emphasis on gaining awareness of the present moment and context and on taking responsibility (understood as capacity to respond, rather than blame) for own interactions with the world.



Fig. 1. Group work in Huixtán, Chiapas, Mexico. Credits: Edupaz. Distributed with permission.

#### 4.2. Vignette 2: emotions and self-care as transformative forces: the construction of autonomy and healing the territory in anti-dam struggles, Colombia

Environmental and climate justice movements in Colombia seek justice for affected communities by the dramatic advancement of extractive projects (Pérez-Rincón et al., 2018), increasing climate injustice due to both fossil fuel extraction (see Cardoso, 2015) and so-called renewables (see Duarte-Abadía, Boelens, & Roa-Avendaño, 2015), and extreme climate events in a backdrop of violence caused by internal armed conflict.<sup>9</sup>

The *Movimiento Ríos Vivos en Defensa de los Territorios y Afectados por Represas* (in English, Living Rivers Movement in Defence of Territories and Affected by Dams, hereafter, Ríos Vivos) has worked since 2006 as a nationwide movement to oppose mega dams and other extractive projects and to promote transition to renewable or alternative energy. The *Comunidades Sembradores de Territorios, Agua y Autonomía* (in English, Communities Sowing Territories, Water and Autonomy, hereafter, Comunidades SETAA) started their work in 2007 analysing the territorial impacts of the Hidroituango project in the Río Cauca canyon. Comunidades SETAA are part of Ríos Vivos and their work focuses on autonomy as a way to create dignified conditions for remaining in the potentially affected territories. In their perspective, autonomy is enhanced by means of the alternative provision and management of, among others, food, water, energy, and health services, building alternative paths of *Buen Vivir* (Chuji et al., 2018). The challenges, however, are many, including impoverished economies, internal armed conflict, displacement, social disruption, and increasing rates of sexual abuses due to extractive industries or climate injustice.

Members of Ríos Vivos and Comunidades SETAA have been holding workshops on self-care and self-healing since 2018 called “*Autocuidado y Bienestar para la Vida Digna y la Permanencia en los Territorios*” (Self-Care and Wellbeing for a Dignified Life and for Remaining in our Territories, own translation) in peasant, afro-descendent, fishing, and other riverine communities affected or displaced by dams. The workshops have been taking place in the provinces and regions (*departamentos* and *subregiones*) where the movement operates, such as Bajo Sinu (affected by the Urrá 1 dam), Huila (Quimbo dam), Cauca (La Salvajina dam), Antioquia (Hidroituango dam) and Santander (Hidrosogamoso dam). The workshops revolved around two main axes. First, the connection between the causes of climate and environmental injustices and the disconnection from people’s territory and autonomy. In the words of one organiser of

the workshops, “People affected by dams feel uprooted and disconnected from their territories, lose the capacity of self-care while, at the same time, feelings of envy, anxiety, fear and rage undermine coexistence”. Ríos Vivos and Comunidades SETAA also witness how forced displacements lead to people losing their livelihoods, desire to live, and their collective memories rooted in the territory. This disconnection is understood by Ríos Vivos and Comunidades SETAA as the cause of body illnesses and strongly affects the emotional and mental sphere as well.

The second axis was centred on health autonomy and emotional awareness as a way to heal oneself and reconnect with the community and the territory. In the words of the main creator of the workshops, trained as a holistic therapist: “What we do to our waters and other more-than-human living creatures reflects what we do to ourselves and our people. How can we reclaim justice from the state or government, if we don’t act with justice with ourselves, with our own community and family, with our own territory? We have to be aware of our inner wounds as a first step toward healing them”. According to their approach, community and family bonds need to be healed together with the psychological and emotional dimensions of individual members. Only then can mutual trust and intergenerational cooperation, which are foundational preconditions for rebuilding and regenerating the territory (*retejer nuestro territorio*), be regained.

The workshops were structured around three main aspects of human harmony: the prevention of illness, treatment of symptoms, and support for restoring health. To do so, the workshops included simple exercises that alleviate common bodily symptoms such as headache or stiffness when these do not require specialised medical attention. The aim of such exercises was to foster individual and collective autonomy and responsibility to listen to him/herself and act over physical symptoms without conferring decision-making power over one’s health to third parties. Meditation practises were also adopted as a tool for creating the silence necessary for listening to oneself and connecting with one’s imagination and deep self. The participants were invited to reconnect body, mind, emotions, and spirit to heal the bonds with each other and with the space they inhabit (see Fig. 2).

The workshops also invited reflexive dialogues between participants as exercises to explore the way one thinks, acts, and reacts in life and gain awareness of the emotions that inform such thinking and actions. Such exercises helped participants to understand how an emotion of fear or anger can backfire at some point while a gentle attitude of solidarity could benefit both parties. In this context, healing climate injustice starts with being aware of one’s emotions, and consciously transforming and directing them towards a constructive attitude for the community. According to the trainer, “one of the biggest achievements was to see long-standing feelings of envy and revenge within families being healed and



Fig. 2. Workshop in Antioquia, Colombia, facilitated by Ríos Vivos. Credits: Diana Marcela Giraldo Sierra. Distributed with permission.

<sup>9</sup> See also <https://ejatlas.org/country/colombia>, last access May 2021.



thus probably lots of violence being avoided”.

#### 4.3. Vignette 3: meaningful conversations about climate change in Madrid: connecting with our emotions and processing them

As a capital and a big city in the Global North, Madrid is a large consumer of materials and resources from Spain and beyond. For example, the total energy consumption by the municipality of Madrid was 9.6 million tonnes of oil equivalent, while the energy production in the region amounted to 179,000 tonnes of oil equivalent (Comunidad de Madrid, 2016). The difference, obviously, comes from countries that are oil producers, generating environmental inequalities and conflicts in and beyond the territorial space of Madrid. Recently, the city council has embarked on a plan for the city to become carbon neutral by 2050. However, this plan will be difficult to achieve given present inequalities. According to a recent study, Madrid is the European city with the most deaths caused by nitrogen dioxide<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, the city is experiencing the impacts of climate change across economic inequalities: regarding heat waves, the south and centre districts are highly vulnerable, due to high percentage of dwellings with 20 m<sup>2</sup> or less per inhabitant, higher rates of residents on a low income or without employment, among other indicators (see Tapia et al., 2015).

Altekio, a social cooperative working on ecosocial transformation since 2008, together with climate activists engaged in facilitation activities, noticed there was a lack of spaces where emotions in relation to climate change could be expressed. However, burnout, sadness, depression, anger, agony, and fear were very present in activist circles. The acknowledgment of these feelings led to the pilot project “Process Work for the Environmental or Sociological Crisis in Public, Collective or Group Settings”, which consisted in its first stage of five open forums about climate change. The open forum is a methodology based on group dialogue that aims to hear all voices and experiences in relation to a topic as a way to work through power dynamics, emotions, and diversities (that is, to “process” them, see Mindell, 2002).<sup>11</sup>

During 2017 and 2018, five Open Forums (OPs) were organised under the umbrella of welcoming questions such as “How do we live with climate change?” (OP1), “How do we collaborate in the scenario of climate change in cities to make them more sustainable?” (OP2), “How does climate change affect (me)?” (OP3), “How are we acting or not, or how would we like to face the socio-ecological crisis?” (OP4), “How do we relate to climate change and how does this affect our relations with ourselves and others?” (OP5). While invitations were open for anyone interested in exploring environmental topics, attendees or participants in these forums were mostly activists, scientists, entrepreneurs, social workers, public workers, policymakers, migrants and/or refugees, facilitators and citizens. Between 20 and more than 50 people attended each OP, with a duration of around 2 h each. In contrast to the two other vignettes, OPs create a temporal community among people who may not know each other beforehand, although unexpected connections can take place through the workshop. Participants of the workshops have reported that the OPs were learning experiences in terms of: i) raising awareness about power dynamics embedded in climate change, such as colonialism, racism and classism and taking personal responsibility for its implications in the past, the present and the future; ii) deepening understanding of own and diverse participants’ experiences and emotions created by conflicting views when facing climate change; iii)

<sup>10</sup> See <https://isglobalranking.org/city/madrid-metropolitan-area/>, last access May 2021.

<sup>11</sup> As part of this project, Altekio also worked with a specific activist group, using a similar methodology, called “group process”: a process-oriented facilitation structure designed to draw on the diversity in groups, which helps with seeing the power dynamics in groups beyond only one voice. It is useful for working with complex situations like long-term conflicts and enables the development of fluidity between different roles (see Emslie, 2014).

seeing climate change as something personal and relational and therefore better understanding, experiencing relief about and/or utility for feelings such as anger, loneliness, sadness, pain, iv) connecting with nature as a force and source of inspiration during these conversations (see Piñeiro, 2019; Piñeiro et al., 2021).

In these facilitation experiences, the forum started with the sharing of different experiences that addressed the question (whereby at least 3 or 4 people start showing diversity of viewpoints, backgrounds, emotions, etc.). This led to a dialogue in which more people could share experiences, connect with emotions on the spot, and unravel what these emotions reveal about personal and collective relations to climate change and climate (in)justice. Participants were invited to express their inner diversity, that is, to check in on themselves if they realised that they are experiencing several emotions and needs at the same time (for example hope, anger, and fear when thinking about climate change). By sharing these feelings, a meaningful conversation about the embodied impacts of the climate crisis arose. For example, some racialised participants expressed their frustration (among other emotions like sadness, anger, surprise, or shock) about how “intense consumerism in Madrid does not let people realise and connect with the real and everyday implications that the climate crisis has had and continues to have for migrated peoples”. One white male participant expressed his “helplessness and intense anger seeing how governments and private capital ignored the climate crisis”. Throughout the dialogue, participants and facilitators gained awareness about power dynamics in the moment while interacting. These conversations were also a way to address structures of disempowerment (racism, classism, etc.) and connect with injustice as well as possibilities of radical transformation through specific actions. This was supported by practices of facilitation, such as slowing down the conversation, framing power dynamics, encouraging everyone to speak, noticing body postures, emotions and naming them, etc (see Fig. 3).

In several OPs, it was often mentioned that those who cause less emissions are also suffering faster and greater consequences of those emissions – a dynamic also taking place at the scale of the city of Madrid. Conversations led to taking responsibility/accountability about this fact and to relate as humans with pain and suffering and also to acknowledge so much power and love in the stories shared. In this context, healing the emotional consequences of climate injustice implied first by collectively dealing with emotions and embodied experiences in relation to climate change, and then by facing conflicts that arise in the conversation, acknowledging privileges and power dynamics, taking responsibility for them, feeling empathy among participants and explicitly mentioning the unequal structural dynamics of climate change. As the OPs were only temporary communities and short sessions, there was a limited impact on the possibilities of transformation, especially regarding the follow-up of learning, support and related actions. In addition, some dimensions



Fig. 3. A moment at the Open Forum 2, part of Sustainable Development Goals Lab, Madrid, Spain. Source: Altekio. Distributed with permission.

were not addressed directly, such as emotional attachment to place.

## 5. Discussion

In the previous section, we presented short vignettes of healing experiences with a diversity of methodologies, contexts (urban, rural, Global North and South), and actors (Indigenous community members, peasants, urban activists, neighbours), who struggle in different ways in face of the climate crisis. All these experiences show ways in which healing is seen as a key aspect to consider when dealing with environmental and climate injustice. However, they also present diverse perspectives on healing as a political process. Edupaz seeks to facilitate the healing of individuals and communities in the context of a historical territorial conflict by an eclectic array of practices from spiritual and psychological traditions using Gestalt therapy; Ríos Vivos focuses on emotional work and holistic body health perspectives for improving individual health as well as healing local relations among communities affected by the construction of dams; and Altekio promotes facilitation processes as a healing strategy in order to deal with one's own and others' intense – and sometimes opposed or silenced – (emotional) views on the climate crisis. We will now discuss this diversity through the concepts of multidimensionality, structurality, and embodiment to inquire how healing can be identified in contexts of environmental and climate injustice. We will then argue how by further considering emotional healing as part of environmental and climate justice processes, researchers, activists, and practitioners could expand on the conceptualisation of the spatial and temporal scales of climate justice. We suggest these are key aspects to be further explored by environmental and climate justice scholars, and specifically those interested in transformative environmental justice, so that emotional processes are recognised as a foundational condition for radical transformations in the search of environmental and climate justice.

The three vignettes show how the generation of spaces where there is room for expressing emotions opens up opportunities for healing across several dimensions, showing how environmental and climate justice can also be defined as healing in multidimensional, psychosocial/more-than-human/social/geographical/political terms (González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2020). Edupaz's therapeutic exercises and Ríos Vivos' meditation and self-care practices show the possibilities of healing environmental injustice in a *psychosocial dimension*, when individuals and communities seek ways to identify their own emotions and take response-ability for them (understood as the 'capacity to respond', i.e. to individually and collectively define what we can and want to do with what is happening); and heal their individual and collective, present and inter-generational pain and suffering. The efforts of Ríos Vivos to help individuals and communities to affectively reconnect with their territory highlights the *more-than-human dimension* in healing environmental injustice. Edupaz, Ríos Vivos, and Altekio's work showed the *collective dimension* of healing, by means of healing practices that help to build more solid and resilient collective strategies, alternatives, and forms of autonomy. The forums led by Altekio, for example, are a good example of a creation of a collective environment (even if temporal) that could build and deal with one's and others' intense, and sometimes opposed or silenced (emotional), views on the climate crisis. The *geographical dimension* of healing was manifest in the work of Ríos Vivos, since their workshops aimed to help activists to feel better and remain in the territory, therefore re-generating cultural and territorial caring livelihoods. And finally, all experiences show the intimate connection between the personal and the political: while the healing practices of Edupaz, Ríos Vivos and Altekio sought to increase the well-being of individuals and communities, intense emotions around climate change were not "treated" to make them disappear or maximise individual happiness (Ahmed, 2010). On the contrary, to explore them as a way to collectively realise, understand, and decide what to do with them. That is, pursuing the emotional healing of environmental and climate injustice as a collective, political process (and not as an individualised strategy) provided

opportunities for individuals and movements to express their anger and suffering, while seeking relational ways to handle them.

The three vignettes also show how healing the emotional impacts of environmental and climate injustice entails focusing on how interpersonal and community relationships are connected and mirror structural causes of injustice. These experiences sought to transform the conditions that allows harm to occur in communities in a way that builds autonomy and sovereignty. Edupaz sought to deal with the individual and collective traumas associated with structural violence in the context of social mobilisation, trying to eradicate the dissemination of structural violence towards the everyday life of individuals (especially women and children), families, and collectives. Ríos Vivos' search for autonomy in addressing body pain and suffering can be seen as a step towards practices of self-care without depending on exterior structures and institutions. And, in Altekio's facilitation processes, participants engaged and discussed how unequal roles, impacts, and responsibilities in the climate crisis are structured by systems of power. Even with their limitations and differences among them, all three experiences addressed emotional healing as political work: helping activists to map the emotional impacts of land, environmental and climate injustice in their own lives, communities and territories; while also understanding how injustice is reproduced through power imbalances in their everyday life. Although workshops and discussions per se cannot eradicate the material and structural roots of everyday environmental injustice in Mexico, Colombia and Spain, they planted a seed for political transformation by the creation of collective conditions to listen and manage the anger, pain, helplessness and abuses associated to land, environmental and climate injustice, which tend to be silenced or ignored. Collective spaces of emotional healing in environmental and climate struggles, therefore, provide opportunities for communities to gain awareness, stay in the territory and collectively discuss on alternatives and transformations. And finally, the vignettes also help to devise ways in which healing climate justice can be envisioned as an embodied process: all organisations initiated their healing proposals, starting first from a close exploration of their bodies, so that they could detect their pain and suffering and search for emotional causes of it. From the vignettes, Ríos Vivos focused more clearly on this aspect, emphasising emotional work and holistic body health perspectives for improving individual health as well as healing local relations among communities affected by the construction of dams. The three vignettes show how climate and environmental justice also has a bodily scale, in which human bodies seek physical and emotional healing via different methodologies (as pointed out by feminist and decolonial scholars such as Zaragocin & Caretta, 2020); they also show how emotional healing bodies may help to transform the human-nature relationships in those territories.

Considering emotional healing of environmental injustice as a multidimensional, structural and embodied process opens up the discussion about the scale of climate and environmental justice. The spatial scale of environmental struggles for climate justice goes beyond communities and their territories and permeates the intimate spheres of human bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits. As pointed out by Svarstad and Benjaminsen (2020) and as the three vignettes show, the scale of environmental justice is also inter-personal – i.e., communities are not homogeneous groups void of internal power relations – and therefore living in environmental and climate injustice affects the relations between members of organisations and movements. As these authors say,



this needs to be further explored in environmental justice literature in order to avoid idealistic views on movements and communities; engaging with the ambivalent role of emotions in climate struggles can help in that sense (González-Hidalgo, 2020). The vignettes uncover silenced dynamics among/in mobilised communities such as gendered violence and violence against children (Edupez's vignette), revenge between families (Ríos Vivos vignette), and racial prejudices (Altekio's vignette). The healing experiences show how having the space to express such emotions in safer<sup>12</sup> collective environments may open up opportunities for communities to analyse and act upon internal power relations and conflicts. Altekio's vignette also demonstrates how relevant the extended scale is nowadays when the participants of healing practises are not direct victims of one specific destructive industry but confront the broader consequences of cumulative carbon emissions of industrial society: even when feeling privileged, they feel emotionally impacted. More recently, we have seen these examples in the voices of young students in Europe who might not be suffering directly by the melting of the ice or by violent tornadoes but feel they are part of a suffering humanity and demand justice for all. And finally, the vignettes also point to the relevance of the temporal scale when seeking ways for healing climate injustice, where intergenerational traumas in the past (colonial legacies in Mexico, conflict and extractivism in Colombia, class inequalities and colonial dynamics in Madrid) intersect with present, active conflicts as well as in the ways local communities dream and wish to imagine their futures (e.g. voices of youth and future generations in the open forums).

We argue that this emphasis on healing as a multidimensional, multi-scalar and multi-temporal political process in environmental and climate justice struggles also helps us to nuance conceptualisations around environmental and climate justice. Our work is an invitation to climate and environmental justice researchers and specifically to those interested in transformative environmental justice (Scheidel et al., 2018; Temper et al., 2018), to expand the scope of "transformations". Although this perspective offers insights into how conflicts can lead to a more just political configuration of the society, it hasn't explored in-depth the emotional dimension of socio-ecological or radical transformations. Through the work done by the communities and movements we engaged with, we hoped to show inspiring examples on how engaging in explorative, emotional, healing processes may be as key for the survival of the collective project as are the direct struggles facing the material, structural and distributive aspects of justice. As Blanco-Wells recently put it (2021:2): "the scenarios of severe socio-environmental crises caused by extractive industries and other destructive processes may be conducive to the emergence of new socio-material arrangements and affective dispositions that, through practices of resistance, remediation, and mutual care engender reparatory processes and/or initiatives of transformation of damaged ecologies and communities". True climate justice implies then not only a payback of the climate debt and a major overhaul of political power structures, but also reparations for loss and damage (Turhan, 2021). In that sense, (transformative) environmental justice could be inspired by further engaging with transformative and healing justice practices that focus on addressing violence inside communities as a result of having continuously experienced oppression – complementing the focus on the external dynamics between extractive industries and communities. In the words of the community organiser Mariame Kaba: "if we could see the multiple ways that various forms of

violence shape our lives as a way to understand how deeply enmeshed we are in the very systems that we're organising to transform, then I feel like it's a movement that will allow us to move a step toward transformation and more justice" (Kaba, 2021: 179). By further engaging with the transformative potential of emotions and affect in environmental movements, scholars and activists interested in transformative environmental justice could further explore and help to facilitate the ambivalent role of emotions for those mobilised in territorial and climate struggles (González-Hidalgo, 2020). This could also lead to further analysis and discussion about how healing experiences can be co-opted by States and private sector actors in top-down initiatives which depict emotional healing as fluffy and unconnected to structural, historical, land and resource struggles.

Finally, we argue that by taking seriously into account the needs and attempts of healing by movements, communities, or citizens, we can better understand and nuance the emotional-political implications of climate justice struggles, further conceptualising environmental and climate struggles as *processes*, as we explain below. As is evident, the emotional practices we narrated did not imply an immediate, visible and big transformation of power relations in their contexts; their contributions are subtler, slower and difficult to track, and in some cases also intimate (regarding internal functioning of families and communities). However, they represent a real effort from the side of collectives to connect the personal and the political in climate and environmental injustices, and to democratise and make accessible the right to be emotionally healed in contexts of structural and historical injustice. The transformational power of these exercises in the present and in the future is therefore difficult to track and predict. As Arnold Mindell says (one of the key figures of process work, a framework that inspired open forums and the emotional work by Altekio): "Process is like a special train whose destination cannot always be predicted. The observer follows the signals in his (*sic*) real life or in a fantasy trip as they reveal life to him (*sic*)" (Mindell, 1985: 11). This perspective on process implies the consideration of non-linear movements and contradictions, suggesting environmental justice is a process, not something static nor straight-forward. Considering emotional healing as a process also implies accepting that, given the long history of colonisation, discrimination, dispossession and trauma associated to environmental and climate processes, some wounds are hard to be healed, or never will be healed, as pointed out by transformative healing practitioners.

## 6. Conclusions

In this paper, we sought to address the gap in climate and environmental justice scholarship, which has so far tended to under-explore the needs, knowledges, and experiences of emotional healing of those embodying the unequal impacts of the current environmental and climate crisis. By engaging with literatures of activist-researchers engaged with feminist, Indigenous and Black communities, and our own experiences as engaged researchers in three different contexts in Mexico, Colombia and Spain, we have sought to contribute toward a discussion on the political and transformative role of healing processes for climate and environmental injustice. The experiences we briefly document help us to elaborate emotional healing associated to environmental injustice as a personal-political process that is multidimensional, non-linear, multi-scalar and complex.

Our paper not only illustrates that we need more and more systematic analysis of emotional and psychosocial impacts associated with climate change and environmental conflict, but also that we require further evidence of – and learning from – the processes of emotional restoration that communities exposed to climate change and environmental conflict seek and develop. Environmental justice and political ecology literatures – and practices – need to further engage, recognise and learn from the healing practices, experiences and languages that communities and movements are developing – not as a conceptual exercise, but as a way to survive themselves, while also contributing to

<sup>12</sup> Safer, but not totally safe: as many *trans*-queer and non-white feminists argue, these spaces may never be absolutely safe for everyone due to different lived and intersected experiences (Silvestrini, 2020). We therefore also recognise that there is also the risk for re-traumatisation and increased oppressive dynamics in healing practices. These risks need to be considered when facilitating such spaces, in order to make sure that while engaging into healing practices, participants remember to be mindful of their interaction with others and themselves.

humanity's (and more-than-human) survival. In this paper we have only briefly discussed three of them. Some of these practices are increasingly being implemented in institutional and academic-activist forums (i.e. beyond communitarian dynamics) such as the experience of *cuerpos-territorios* in climate change camps in Germany (Zaragocin & Caretta, 2020) and the forums and facilitation processes at COP25 (in the blue zone) and at the parallel Social Summit (Altekio, 2019). We welcome this recent interest and we hope this paper helps to draw attention to the everyday emotional labour of climate struggles, opening up new spaces to engage with the emotional experiences of those who are putting their bodies, minds, and emotions into environmental, climate and territorial activism.

### Declarations of interest

None.

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### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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