



From Domination to Care: A Moral-Legal Framework for Sustainable Environmental Development

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Keywords:

Earth as Other, Ethics of Care, Sustainable Development, Environmental Ethics, Intergenerational Justice .

Abstract

Prevailing theories and development policies have historically framed nature primarily as a resource or instrument for fulfilling human needs. This orientation—even within the discourse of sustainable development—often sustains an anthropocentric and extractive relationship with the natural world. Drawing on the framework of *care ethics*, this article reconsiders the human–nature relationship by conceptualizing the Earth as an “other.” In this reframing, nature is understood not as a mere object or commodity, but as a moral entity—vulnerable, intrinsically valuable, and deserving of attentive care. Such an ethical shift has significant implications for legal and customary approaches to environmental responsibility. It redefines the foundation of liability, moving from reaction to actual harm toward proactive care and the prevention of conditions likely to produce future harm. Sustainable development, in this view, necessitates an ethical reorientation that privileges care, mutual interdependence, and moral attentiveness over purely utilitarian or instrumental considerations. Employing a descriptive–analytical methodology and drawing on extensive library-based research, this study explores the theoretical underpinnings of this care-centered perspective, as well as its broader environmental, legal, and societal implications.

Received:

23/Sep/2025

Revised:

14/Oct/2025

Accepted:

18/Nov/2025

How to cite this article:

Jafari, D., & Jafari, Z. (2025) From Domination to Care: A Moral-Legal Framework for Sustainable Environmental Development. *Green Development Management Studies*, 4(Special Issue), 252-262. <https://doi.org/10.22077/jgdms.2025.10140.1356>





Introduction

Within the dominant Western tradition, nature has often been construed as existing primarily for human benefit, with theological narratives historically granting humanity divinely sanctioned dominion over the natural world. Under this paradigm, nature is accorded no intrinsic value unless its degradation directly impinges upon human well-being (Singer, 2007, p. 143). Ethical discourse in this tradition has typically centered on human beings as rational agents, limiting the moral community to sentient entities. Humanity, positioned as the sovereign inheritor of nature, has thus been deemed free to manipulate environmental systems in pursuit of its own prosperity.

In recent decades, however, escalating environmental crises—including global warming, biodiversity loss, water and air pollution, and widespread habitat destruction—have posed severe threats not only to human health but also to the survival and welfare of future generations. In response, the notion of *green development* has emerged as an attempt to reconcile economic progress with ecological preservation, achieving prominence in legal and policy frameworks at both national and international levels. Nevertheless, prevailing approaches to green development often remain anchored in an instrumental understanding of nature, treating it as a “resource” for extraction and consumption rather than as an “ethical other” meriting care and coexistence (Dryzek, 2005, p. 86).

This conceptual distinction carries significant ethical implications. Entities recognized as possessing intrinsic value are generally regarded as inherently good, thereby imposing an immediate moral obligation upon ethical agents to protect them, or at the very least, to refrain from inflicting harm (Jamieson, 2002, p. 28). For economic actors—particularly commercial enterprises—environmental preservation may appear at odds with the primary objective of profit maximization. The effective integration of green strategies into corporate practice, and the cultivation of *green intellectual capital* among management and employees, thus necessitate the institutionalization of a care-based ethic toward the Earth (Farghani & Salehi, 2024, p. 250).

The modern framework of environmental law began to take shape in the mid-twentieth century, marked by landmark international instruments such as the Stockholm Declaration (1972) and the Rio Declaration (1992). These initiatives sought to curb environmental degradation and promote sustainability, yet have largely been grounded in classical legal concepts including civil liability predicated on harm, property rights, and the right to development (Birnie & Redgwell, 2009, p. 110). Such traditional structures have often proved insufficient when confronting humanity’s preemptive and ethical duties toward nature. In the Iranian context, statutory provisions regarding environmental protection have not been assessed as particularly effective, with enforcement through legal and criminal mechanisms failing to deliver substantial results (Gholamian Hossein Abadi & Ghaznavi Ghasooni, 2022, p. 103).

The Stockholm Declaration, adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, is widely regarded as a foundational document of both international environmental law and sustainable development. Principle 1 of the Declaration affirms every individual’s right to live in a healthy environment, stating:

“Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality, and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations. In this respect, policies promoting or perpetuating apartheid, racial segregation, discrimination, colonial, and other forms of oppression and foreign domination stand condemned and must be eliminated.”

The anthropocentric orientation is clearly reflected in the Stockholm Declaration. Principle 1 has served as the foundation for numerous subsequent environmental treaties and agreements, embedding the pivotal idea that environmental protection constitutes not only an ecological imperative but also a fundamental



human right. Nonetheless, this framing has been met with criticism. Historically, humanity has interpreted the world primarily through the prism of its own interests, positioning itself as the dominant force over nature. Environmental ethics aims to transform humanity's role from conqueror of the Earth to its citizen and guardian (Mohammadi Ashnani *et al.*, 2008, p. 63), requiring a reconceptualization of the planet as an entity with rights rather than a commodity to be exploited and discarded.

As Jafaripour and Al-Bouyeh (2023, p. 32) note, many environmental challenges may be mitigated through a shift in humanity's attitudes toward nature, with ethical reasoning serving as a critical pathway forward. While humanity is only one component of the biosphere—a “plain biotic citizen” in Fogg's (2000, p. 206) words—it wields a disproportionate ability to alter and dominate ecological systems. This power demands ethical restraint, premised on the recognition that other entities within the ecosystem possess the inherent right to exist. As a branch of bioethics, environmental ethics systematically explores the relationship between humans and nature, delineating the moral obligations and restrictions that should guide human conduct toward the environment.

Within this ethical discourse, the *ethics of care* offers a compelling contemporary framework for reimagining the legal and philosophical underpinnings of green development and environmental protection. This school of thought—originating in feminist ethics through the pioneering work of Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nel Noddings (1984)—centers moral value not in abstract universal principles or consequentialist calculations, but in relationships, interdependence, vulnerability, and mutual care (Held, 2006, p. 10). Such a perspective proves particularly pertinent in complex decision-making arenas, including environmental governance (Donovan, 2016, p. 41).

From this care-based standpoint emerges the construct of the *Earth as the other*, a reframing that positions nature not as a passive object or mere resource, but as an ethical subject—a “moral other” worthy of genuine moral consideration. In this view, nature becomes not merely an object of technical management but a partner in a reciprocal ethical relationship with humanity.

Many contemporary environmental challenges—such as the protection of endangered species, sustainable management of natural resources, the use of genetically modified organisms, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, population growth, and the mitigation of chemical pollution—are as fundamentally *ethical* in nature as they are economic or legal in scope. As Palmer *et al.* (2015, p. 3) argue, the assessment of policies and practices in these domains must incorporate not only considerations of efficiency or expediency, but also judgments about what is morally right and good.

Against this backdrop, the present study interrogates a central research question: In what ways can the ethics of care reshape the legal foundations of environmental responsibility, and what implications would such a transformation hold for the normative and institutional framework of green development?

Materials and Method

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology, utilizing extensive library-based resources—including philosophical treatises, scholarship in environmental ethics, and key international legal instruments—to examine the conceptualization of the *Earth as the other* and the application of the *ethics of care* within the normative and institutional framework of sustainable development.

A Critique of the Exploitative View of Nature in Development Discourse

The paradigm of *Human Exceptionalism* describes a worldview in which humans are regarded as fundamentally distinct from, and superior to, other living beings and the natural environment. Rooted in long-standing philosophical and religious traditions, this perspective holds that humans—by virtue of their rationality, culture, language, and technological capacity—possess the legitimate right to dominate nature and exploit its resources for their own benefit (Fanaei & Behrouzi, 2019, p. 122). Within environmental



ethics, however, this paradigm has been the subject of sustained critique for fostering injustice, driving large-scale ecological degradation, and disregarding humanity's inherent interconnectedness with the broader biosphere (Naess, 1989, p. 151).

As conceptual alternatives, biocentrism and ecocentrism ascribe intrinsic value to all living beings and, in the latter case, to entire ecosystems. These normative frameworks situate humans within an ethical community that extends beyond their species, emphasizing responsibility, solidarity, and care rather than domination (Taylor, 1981, p. 198). Collectively, they have laid the conceptual foundation for an *environmental ethics of care*, which prioritizes empathy, attentiveness, and stewardship, and redefines humans not as masters of the Earth but as responsible members of the biotic community.

The severity of contemporary environmental crises—including climate change, biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, resource depletion, and pervasive pollution—reveals challenges that are existential for modern civilization. Such crises cannot be reduced solely to technical or economic problems; rather, they signify a deeper rupture in human–nature relations, one in which nature is persistently cast as a passive, lifeless reservoir for human exploitation (Merchant, 1980, p. 1). Even ostensibly progressive frameworks such as *sustainable development* frequently retain anthropocentric assumptions. Within these models, nature is framed as a “resource” or “environment” to be conserved for optimal human use, rather than as an entity possessing inherent worth or moral standing (Dryzek, 2013, p. 25). This replicates the foundational logic of classical development paradigms, which—shaped by Enlightenment-era ideologies—view humans as active subjects and nature as inert matter subservient to human ends (Merchant, 1980, p. 2).

This instrumentalist perspective is likewise reinforced within dominant economic theories of development, where the environment is reduced to a “factor of production” or “natural capital” stripped of independent moral value. In such frameworks, development is equated with maximizing resource productivity and pursuing quantitative growth (Karadjova & Dichevska, 2019, p. 30). Even modern sustainability agendas often privilege the *long-term exploitation capacity* of nature over preservation as an intrinsic good. Although sustainable development is nominally defined as balancing economic, social, and environmental needs—as in the Brundtland Report's (1987) formulation that it is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”—a critical question remains: Is nature valuable only for its utility to humans? Does its worth begin and end with its function as a provider?

Ultimately, instrumentalist approaches, whether embedded in traditional economic growth models or reframed through sustainability policies, fail to confront the ethical foundations of ecological crises. By denying nature any inherent moral status, they perpetuate a worldview that severs the possibility of an ethical bond between humans and the more-than-human world.

Ethics of Care: From Individualism to Relation-Centered Approach

As noted in the preceding discussion, several environmental theorists—notably Aldo Leopold in his seminal *Land Ethic*—have critiqued exploitative approaches to land and called for an ethical vision of nature founded on human membership within the biotic community (Leopold, 1949, p. 203). Leopold asserts that humans should be regarded not as conquerors of the land, but as its members and caretakers. From his perspective, actions are morally right when they contribute to the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community, and wrong when they undermine these qualities (Leopold, 1949, p. 203).

Leopold further observed that “many of the world's most penetrating minds have regarded our so-called *inanimate nature* as a living thing, and probably many of us who have neither the time nor the ability to reason out conclusions on such matters by logical processes have felt intuitively that there existed between man and the earth a closer relation than would necessarily follow the mechanistic conception of the earth as our physical provider and abiding place” (Leopold, 1979, p. 139).



Yet, despite the philosophical depth of these insights, Leopold did not formulate a systematic ethical theory to underpin his environmental vision. This omission presents both a challenge and an opportunity for moral theorists: Can a coherent ethical framework be articulated that justifies the imperative to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biosphere?

One promising response is found in the *ethics of care*, which emerged from Carol Gilligan's "different voice" and is rooted in feminist moral philosophy. This approach shifts the focus of ethics from abstract principles and impersonal utility toward interpersonal relationships, attentiveness to vulnerability, and the mutual responsibilities that arise within such relationships (Held, 2006, p. 12). Entering the discourse of environmental ethics in the 1990s, the care perspective introduced novel ways of addressing environmental crises—solutions often neglected within traditional deontological or utilitarian frameworks.

Within this paradigm, nature is understood not as a passive resource but as a vulnerable partner in a reciprocal relationship with humanity, necessitating ethical care and responsiveness. By centering the values of relationship and care, this framework offers a pathway toward diminishing patterns of human domination over nature and fostering mutual respect between the human and non-human components of the biosphere.

In the environmental context, the ethics of care places particular emphasis on *solidarity* and *interdependence* among all living beings. Such mutual interdependence calls for ethical responsibilities that extend beyond individualistic or anthropocentric frameworks (Roberts & Nelson, 2014, p. 178). Care ethics thus lays the groundwork for an ethical–biological relationship with non-human beings—one premised not on domination, but on attentiveness, coexistence, and responsibility (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 13). Building on this foundation, Nel Noddings, in her influential work *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), systematically developed care ethics into a comprehensive theoretical framework. Rejecting the model of autonomous moral agents, Noddings centers her account on the "ethical relation between carer and cared-for," contending that morality emerges from concrete practices embedded in interdependent relationships rather than abstract, universal principles (Noddings, 1984, p. 21).

In Virginia Held's synthesis, care ethics rests on four core pillars: (1) responsiveness to the needs of others, (2) empathetic understanding from the perspective of others, (3) relational connectedness, and (4) rejection of domination (Held, 2006, pp. 14–16). These elements resonate powerfully within environmental ethics, particularly through María Puig de la Bellacasa's notion of *ethical doing*, which reconfigures human–nonhuman relations from a paradigm of domination toward one of attentive coexistence (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 13).

By foregrounding continuous care, sensitivity to vulnerability, and the importance of reciprocal relationships, the ethics of care offers both an ethical and a practical framework for addressing environmental crises and informing sustainable development policies. Unlike instrumentalist perspectives, it situates humans and nature within a dialectical, caring relationship, fostering an ethos of mutual respect and responsibility.

The Capacities of the Ethics of Care in Reconstructing Environmental Legal Concepts

In conventional theories of environmental law, the human–nature relationship is typically framed through paradigms of control, the safeguarding of present generations' interests, or the deterrence of environmental harm (Boyle & Redgwell, 2009, p. 122). Within such frameworks, nature is frequently conceptualized as a form of public asset or national capital. By contrast, the *ethics of care* advances a fundamentally different perspective: nature is not merely a resource for extraction or economic utility, but a vulnerable entity deserving of ethical attention, sensitivity, and responsibility (Tronto, 1993, p. 103).

Viewed through this lens, several foundational legal concepts are subject to transformation. For example, environmental civil and criminal liability, as conventionally defined, is largely reactive—triggered



once harm has been caused. Under a care-based framework, responsibility becomes preventive and collaborative, grounded in attentiveness to ecological vulnerability and in proactive stewardship. This reconceptualization allows nature to be recognized as a *moral subject* endowed with legal rights, thereby shifting legal protection from an anthropocentric calculus to an ethical recognition of non-human claims (Boyd *et al.*, 2016, p.101). Care's inherently future-oriented dimension further amplifies its intergenerational scope: unlike profit-driven legal approaches, it demands accountability not only toward present human interests but also toward future generations and non-human entities (Palmer, 2010, p. 88). In this way, the ethics of care opens pathways for legal frameworks that are participatory, localized, and ecologically grounded, reducing hierarchical and domineering structures over nature.

Green development is commonly defined as economic growth achieved in tandem with protecting natural resources and mitigating adverse environmental effects (OECD, 2011, p. 20). Yet, this concept has been subject to significant criticism. Scholars contend that green development is often compromised by *legal greenwashing*, wherein extractive growth models persist under the rhetorical and regulatory guise of sustainability (Latouche, 2009, p. 15). From the standpoint of care ethics, the evaluation of development cannot rest exclusively on economic indicators or technological advances. A care-based approach mandates that development processes embody respect, attentiveness, and ethical responsibility toward both ecosystems and vulnerable communities (Tronto, 2013, p. 144). In doing so, it confronts the instrumentalist economic view of nature and calls for a re-design of development law into an institutional architecture committed simultaneously to ecological integrity, social justice, and intergenerational equity.

Legal Implications of the Ethics of Care for Green Development

If the ethics of care is adopted as the normative foundation for green development policymaking, it could lead to profound transformations in the principles and institutions of environmental and development law. The following outlines key implications:

A) Transformation of Perspectives in Environmental Policymaking

Within the ethics-of-care paradigm, policymakers are required to move beyond viewing nature as an economic asset, a repository of extractable resources, or an object of instrumental management. Instead, the Earth is understood as a *moral subject* possessing inherent rights that demand continuous care, respect, and protection (Brennan & Lo, 2016, p.234). Adopting this shift in normative orientation reframes environmental governance so that policy objectives prioritize the sustained safeguarding and nurturing of ecosystems rather than merely regulating their exploitation. Under such a framework, environmental justice becomes embedded in the equitable distribution of ecological benefits and burdens, future generations' rights are explicitly integrated into policy deliberation, and commitments to biodiversity preservation and holistic ecological health are fortified.

This reconceptualization also requires redefining development success metrics: moving away from GDP-centric measures toward multi-dimensional indicators encompassing quality of life, biodiversity resilience, and ecosystem vitality. In turn, development programs would be designed to institutionalize *continuous care* for the planet, embedding both organizational and societal cultures grounded in attentiveness, interdependence, and mutual responsibility toward all living systems.

B) Strengthening the Concept of Care-Based Legal Responsibility

In Western legal traditions, the foundations of environmental civil and criminal liability rest predominantly on the demonstration of *harm*: liability is not triggered unless measurable injury to the environment or human interests can be proven (Birnie *et al.*, 2009, p. 140). By contrast, the *ethics of care* advances a fundamentally preventive conception of responsibility—one in which the mere failure to exercise due care, or the presence of deliberate negligence, constitutes a legally actionable breach. This normative shift reframes environmental obligations not as contingent upon post-harm evidence, but as



inherent duties of vigilance, attentiveness, and sustained stewardship. Such a perspective would require a doctrinal re-evaluation of “environmental negligence” standards in Iranian law and comparable jurisdictions, expanding them to encompass omissions, inaction, and disregard for ecological vulnerability before damage occurs. In practical terms, it transforms environmental governance from a reactive liability system into a proactive architecture of care, capable of addressing risk and preventing harm at its inception.

C) *Expanding the Scope of Stakeholders and Rights-Holders*

The *ethics of care* rejects the anthropocentric limitation of rights to rational, adult humans, instead affirming the rights and intrinsic dignity of other living beings and entire ecosystems (Palmer, 2010, p. 91). Within this normative paradigm, the concept of *standing* in environmental litigation expands well beyond individuals who have suffered direct and demonstrable harm. It encompasses all potential stakeholders whose interests may be affected by future environmental degradation, thereby introducing precautionary and intergenerational dimensions to legal access. From this perspective, *green development* requires institutional mechanisms designed not merely to prevent or mitigate harm to nature, but to actively uphold and enforce the rights of nature as a legal subject. This reorientation embeds ecological integrity into the core of developmental policymaking, ensuring that nature is protected for its own sake and for the well-being of all interconnected life systems.

D) *Emphasis on Intergenerational Justice and Long-Term Legal Responsibility*

Human ethical responsibility toward the Earth extends beyond the present generation, encompassing obligations to protect the interests and ecological rights of future ones (Gardiner, 2006, p. 393). Within this framework, *green development* policies must embed long-term sustainability criteria into both planning and implementation, ensuring that natural resources and ecosystem services remain accessible and viable for those yet to come. This requires the establishment of transparent, accountable, and verifiable mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating environmental performance over extended time horizons.

The concept of the Earth as an “*other*” directs policymakers to the moral imperative of safeguarding the rights and interests of future generations. Intergenerational justice, in this context, demands resource management strategies that preserve ecological capacities, maintain biodiversity, and secure environmental opportunities for posterity (Gardiner, 2006, p. 401). As such, sustainability benchmarks must be institutionalized within laws, policies, and projects, accompanied by systematic review and revision grounded in both ethical principles and the best available science. Crucially, this principle redefines environmental law to include enforceable tools that compel governments and corporations to maintain and protect resources even in the absence of demonstrable or immediate harm (Weiss, 1989, p. 22).

E) *Designing Participatory and Care-Based Institutions in Development Processes*

The *ethics of care* is fundamentally at odds with bureaucratic, top-down institutionalism. For *green development* to be consistent with this framework, it must be reconfigured to include participatory, localized, and inclusive mechanisms that actively amplify marginalized voices. This requires the design of legal structures capable of ensuring the genuine and continuous participation of indigenous communities, minority groups, women, and children (Tronto, 1993, p. 131). Reinterpreting environmental law and green development through the lens of care ethics thus yields a novel, interdisciplinary framework for confronting the complex environmental challenges of the contemporary era. As Virginia Held observes, the ethics of care—anchored in preemptive responsibility, empathy, and relational rationality—demands a redefinition of the legal subject and a transformation in the scope of legal responsibilities (Held, 2006, p. 18). This approach is especially salient in environmental contexts, where non-human entities and ecosystems are inherently more vulnerable and chronically under-represented in legal and policy processes, thereby expanding the domain of justice and deepening the obligations of accountability (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 26).



One of the most significant outcomes of adopting this approach is the enhanced participation of local, indigenous, and minority communities in environmental decision-making. Owing to their sustained, care-based relationships with nature, these communities serve as vital epistemic resources, offering locally embedded knowledge and perspectives indispensable for effective green development policy (Whyte, 2017, p. 105). In practice, this entails the recognition and protection of indigenous rights to land ownership and use; the active inclusion of local communities in every stage of planning and implementation; and the creation of multilevel participatory governance institutions capable of addressing both local and global concerns. Central to successful policy implementation grounded in the concept of the Earth as an “other” is the meaningful incorporation of indigenous and local community participation. Their traditional ecological knowledge, deep cultural ties, and care-based stewardship of the environment make them indispensable actors in any truly sustainable policymaking process (Whyte, 2017, p. 108). Consequently, their land ownership and management rights must be legally guaranteed, their involvement in environmental governance must be strengthened, and governance structures must be explicitly designed to reflect their voices within broad, participatory, and multi-layered decision-making systems.

F) Care-Based Environmental Education

The effective implementation of an *ethics-of-care* framework within environmental policy demands parallel transformations in educational and cultural systems. Environmental education should introduce both students and the broader public to the moral philosophy of care and the significance of reciprocal relationships with the Earth, cultivating an understanding that human well-being is inseparable from ecological health. Such education must intentionally foster skills of empathy, attentiveness, and responsiveness to environmental vulnerabilities, thereby preparing future generations to act as committed stewards of the planet (Orr, 1992, p. 78).

Promoting a societal culture grounded in care ethics requires sustained investment in educational initiatives that transmit the knowledge, attitudes, and competencies essential for preserving and nurturing the Earth (Orr, 1992, p. 85). This entails embedding care ethics across school and university curricula, deploying interactive and participatory pedagogies that instill responsibility and empathy toward non-human entities, and engaging media platforms and community activities to raise public awareness. By normalizing care-based values in education and public discourse, policymakers can strengthen the cultural foundations necessary for the long-term success of environmentally just and ecologically resilient development strategies.

Discussion and Conclusion

From a legal standpoint, conventional approaches rooted in property rights and reactive, post-harm liability significantly impede the realization of genuinely sustainable and green development (Boyle & Redgwell, 2009, p. 140). The *ethics of care*, however, offers a transformative alternative by expanding the purview of legal responsibilities to a proactive, preventive level and foregrounding the inherent relationality between human societies and the natural world. This paradigm shift creates fertile ground for developing innovative legal frameworks specifically designed to safeguard the rights of nature and ensure robust intergenerational justice (Palmer, 2010, p. 90).

Furthermore, integrating the *ethics of care* with environmental law can substantively bolster participatory institutions and advance the principles of environmental justice (Schlosberg, 2007, p. 152). Consequently, for green development initiatives to succeed in practice, they must transcend the limitations of traditional economic growth models. Instead, they require redefinition through legal and institutional frameworks that unequivocally recognize caring for nature as a fundamental ethical and legal imperative. This integrated approach not only ensures a healthy and just environment for the present generation but also extends these vital provisions to future generations.



The conceptualization of the “Earth as other” provides a compelling framework for guiding technological innovation. This perspective mandates that technological advancements must be grounded in profound respect for ecological systems, prioritizing harm reduction, and actively enhancing environmental quality. Practically, this implies a systemic shift toward technologies that utilize clean energy and renewable resources, incorporate more rigorous and ethically informed environmental impact assessments, and fundamentally integrate circular economy principles such as advanced recycling and waste reduction mechanisms.

This article, centered on the *ethics of care* and the conceptualization of the Earth as an “other,” undertakes a comprehensive philosophical and ethical re-evaluation of the human-nature relationship. It posits that the Earth transcends its conventional understanding as an inanimate resource or an object solely for economic exploitation, instead asserting its status as a vulnerable moral “other” possessing inherent dignity, towards which humanity bears profound ethical responsibilities. The “Earth as other” paradigm thus emerges as a critical ethical, philosophical, and practical framework, holding significant potential for fundamentally redefining the human-environment relationship and for advancing transformative green development policies. This approach is instrumental not only in mitigating persistent environmental crises but also in charting a definitive course towards genuinely sustainable and justice-oriented development pathways.

Crucially, within the domain of green development policymaking, this perspective necessitates a profound reorientation, moving beyond a singular focus on economic growth towards a more humane, ethical, and ecologically sustainable framework. By integrally emphasizing the *ethics of care*, environmental justice, the substantive participation of local and indigenous communities, and robust consideration for the rights and well-being of future generations, this approach fosters a development model where the human-nature relationship is firmly grounded in mutual respect and reciprocal responsibility.

Given the substantial theoretical and practical implications of this topic within the nexus of the *ethics of care* and green development, future research could fruitfully explore the following avenues:

- Developing Frameworks for Preventive Care Responsibility: Designing concrete legal frameworks that enshrine “preventive care responsibility” as a cornerstone of environmental law.
- Establishing Environmental Crimes of Neglect: Investigating the feasibility and operationalization of “environmental crimes based on failure to care” within criminal justice systems.
- Comparative Legal Analysis of Nature Care Obligations: Conducting cross-jurisdictional comparative studies on legal obligations pertaining to nature care across diverse legal systems.
- Legal Personhood for Ecosystems: Analyzing the potential for granting legal personhood to ecosystems from the theoretical and practical perspectives of the *ethics of care*.
- Supervisory Mechanisms for Future Generations’ Rights: Developing robust supervisory and enforcement mechanisms specifically designed to protect the rights and interests of future generations.
- Role of Environmental Courts in Care-Based Responsibilities: Examining how specialized environmental courts can more effectively realize and enforce care-based environmental responsibilities.
- Reconciling Property Rights and Care Responsibilities: Analyzing inherent conflicts between conventional property rights and emergent care responsibilities within local community contexts.
- Reinterpreting the Precautionary Principle: Reinterpreting and augmenting the precautionary principle in international environmental law through the analytical lens of the *ethics of care*.



- International Organizations as Care-Oriented Institutions: Evaluating the transformative role and potential of international organizations to function as genuinely care-oriented institutions in global environmental governance.

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