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IN THIS ISSUE

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Palabras del presidente

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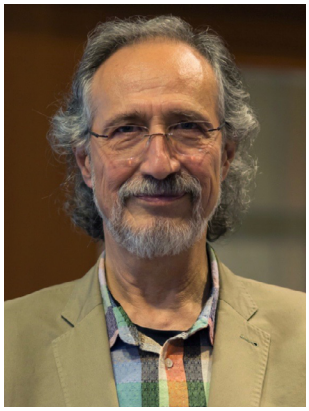
Durante los últimos meses, todas las personas que integramos el consejo ejecutivo (CE) de LASA hemos estado pendientes sobre la evolución de la pandemia. Entre otras cosas, teníamos que decidir si seguir adelante con el plan de tener nuestro congreso LASA2022 en San Francisco en forma híbrida, tanto presencial como simultáneamente virtual. En la última reunión del Comité de "Ways and Means" (presidente, expresidente, vicepresidente, tesorera y directora ejecutiva), cada integrante del comité expresó sus opiniones, algunas con grandes ambivalencias. Decidimos compartir estos pensamientos con el CE para que éste tomara la decisión de si seguir con el plan de congreso híbrido o hacerlo exclusivamente virtual. Para que se entienda nuestra decisión, voy a reproducir las consideraciones para tomar la decisión. Para eliminar el misterio de entrada, les adelanto que lamentablemente tomamos la decisión de cancelar la parte presencial del congreso de 2022 y nos limitaremos a hacerlo virtual.

Consideraciones en contra de hacer el congreso híbrido, y en favor de limitarlo a la modalidad virtual:

- Mucha gente de Latinoamérica puede estar vacunada con marcas de vacunas no aprobadas para entrar a los Estados Unidos (EEUU). Entonces, la parte presencial del congreso sería fundamentalmente para las gentes de ese país, Canadá, y tal vez algunas de Europa.
- El costo de las pruebas de COVID es muy alto y ahora se necesita tener tal prueba válida 24 horas antes del viaje hacia y desde los EEUU. En caso de que la prueba sea positiva antes del regreso, habría que gastar en hospedaje y alimentos durante 14 días.



- El Estado de California requiere que para eventos masivos todas las personas que participen presenten su registro de vacunación.
- El costo de hacer el congreso híbrido —uniendo lo presencial y lo virtual— es más alto que hacerlo sólo virtual. Con esta última modalidad se podría reducir los precios de inscripción o registro.
- Si cambiamos de la modalidad híbrida a la virtual, le evitaremos a la membresía la necesidad de comprar pasajes y hacer reservaciones de hotel.

Dadas estas consideraciones, la mayoría del Consejo Ejecutivo votó por cambiar la modalidad del congreso LASA2022 a virtual. Huelga decir que ha sido una decisión difícil e inclusive dolorosa. Pero la realidad es que entre los aspectos positivos que se consideraron para seguir adelante con la modalidad híbrida, algunos de ellos eran puramente especulativos —no tenemos forma de anticipar si las cosas estarán mejor en mayo de 2022 o no. Por lo pronto, las cosas están mal y empeorando: estamos viendo la saturación de los hospitales en muchas ciudades y países. Por tanto, consideramos que hacer un congreso virtual es la decisión más responsable.

Puesto que ya hemos tenido amplia experiencia con la virtualidad, a través de nuestra docencia y aprendizaje, con los dos congresos anteriores, etc., nuestro congreso LASA2022 puede ser tan exitoso como lo han sido los dos anteriores. Mi

experiencia personal en LASA2021 fue más que satisfactoria. Creo que asistí a más paneles de los que había asistido en congresos presenciales anteriores. Claro, estoy tratando de resaltar lo positivo de la experiencia, pues no nos queda de otra: “al mal tiempo, buena cara”. Hay que tratar de sacarle el mayor jugo a una situación difícil. Para LASA2022 tendremos menos gastos al no tener que viajar y podremos participar en todos los paneles que nos interesen desde la comodidad de nuestras casas u oficinas. Y nos quedamos con la esperanza de volver a ver a las amistades y colegas en LASA2023.

Mis mejores deseos para un 2022 con salud, esperanza y alegría. //

"Don't Look Up": Political Ecology and the Denials of Environmental Governance

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Political ecology, the encounter between the tradition of Latin American critical thought and the vast experiences and strategies of grassroots communities and Indigenous peoples in the face of plunder and despoliation, questions the established order and the institutions of this order. The study of power relations, crossing the socio-environmental field, has emerged in Latin America as a central interdisciplinary field for thinking about society/environment relations. Latin American critical thinking, which had as a reference a productivist vision of development and modernity, has opened up to the vast plurality of popular movements in search of autonomy and enhancement of rights, and to the unique and constitutive relationship that communities have with their local natures and territories. It implies a critical look at the rationality of state forms and their forms of internal colonialism; primitive accumulation; forms of subordination of the working class around the mining, extraction, and plantation economy; and at the appropriation of agro-biodiversity and ancestral knowledge by the "knowledge society." How do contestations between knowledge systems and ways of being in the world come together with questions of environmental justice and injustice, class, race, and social costs to future generations when industrial production, infrastructure, and consumption destroy the very basis of urban and rural livelihoods: water, forests, and biodiversity? How does political ecology integrate the challenges posed by the new rivalry in the global economy?

A lineage of critical thinkers has forged political ecology in Latin America, from Mariátegui's (1971) Latin American Marxism, intended to root socialism in the traditions of Indigenous peoples, including restoration of their community life and productive organization, to the liberation pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970) and the eco-pedagogy of Leonardo Boff (1997) (Leff 2015, 46). Eduardo Galeano (1971) recounted in *The Open Veins of Latin America* the history of exploitative colonialism. He brought to light the production of poverty generated through exploitation of the earth's wealth, "with feverish extraction of gold and silver over centuries, so rapacious that it had seemingly exhausted the hitherto abundant supply of metals in the crust of Latin American territories" (Bryant 2015, 45), while oppressing and displacing traditionally resident populations. This exploitative form of capitalism has a recent and fiercely contested reinstatement in the technologically advanced mineral and oil extraction enterprises in the region (Alimonda 2015). The extractive economies are buttressed by a multitude of international and bilateral trade and investment treaties. If they don't want to end up in front of dispute-settlement bodies that are beyond national jurisdiction, progressive governments are obliged to tone down environmental measures that would have restrained international mining operations. Likewise, poverty that was produced in the old agricultural latifundia (large agricultural estates)—for example, rubber in Brazil, sugarcane in Cuba, bananas in Ecuador and Colombia—reappears today with land grabbing as well as with new transgenic crops, biofuels, and other so-called ecological forms of capitalism (Bryant 2015).

The recurring focus in political ecology is on unequal power relations—between rich and poor, North and South, men and women—and owes much to dependency literature (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Robbins 2012) challenging mainstream thinking about environmental crises as a product of a Third World population "bomb" or the "tragedy of the commons" (e.g., Ehrlich 1968; Hardin 1968). Latin American political ecology has nurtured the continent's turn to the political left experienced during the 2000s, motivating a series of internal debates and rearrangements, which arise from a problematic relationship with "progressive" governments and their economic policies. Whether in Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, or Brazil, political ecologists were supporting left-wing movements, and now confront the revival of extractivism implemented by governments, some of which were initially elected for their critical view of this development model (see the preceding *LASA Forum* 52, no. 4). The return of extractive or neo-extractive economies, radical opposition to some Latin American governments, and increasing criminalization of activists challenges political ecology. It is not easy to assess the effects of this divorce between an intellectual movement that saw the environmental question as key to a renewal of politics in the region (Foyer and Dumoulin 2013), and governments that quickly relegated these allies, useful for the initial conquest of power, to the rank of an embarrassment, accused of making the bed of the enemy by pointing out the environmental contradictions of "progressivism."

This issue of the *LASA Forum* brings together perspectives from the recent political ecology of and strategic developments in five Latin American countries: Brazil, Nicaragua, Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. The focus is on the mechanisms of governance in the face of increasing internal contestation and ambivalent global connections that continue to extract while calling for compliance with international environmental and climate conventions. It highlights the irrationalities of current economic policies justifying business as usual through denial, lies, and the legalization of illegal practices. Current "bipolar transitions" (Bonelli, Weinberg, and Ampuero, this issue) continue the mania of capitalist extraction and confront climate change with more production, more cars, more energy consumption, and more economic growth, meanwhile destroying the environment, depleting precious water resources, and closing the horizon for future life on Earth.

Susanna Hecht's article discusses the current accelerated deforestation of Amazonia, which has become a net emitter of CO2 due to tremendous forest fires, menacing the climate and in particular the rainfall in the entire Southern Cone and presaging a Southern Cone dust bowl in the decades to come. "Amazonia is not just a key element in the global carbon system but also functions as a kind of land-to-atmosphere water pump, the source of South America's atmospheric rivers." Hecht shows how the destruction of this ecosystem can perversely become a source of revenue as Amazonia is held hostage in climate negotiations waiting to be "ransomed" by climate funding for reducing deforestation. The reaction of the Bolsonaro government was to stage a "let's pretend moment" at the climate conference in Glasgow in 2021 promising to abolish illegal logging. As his government reclassifies protected areas, illegal logging becomes legal and achieves "a tremendous, planetarily horrible paradox: the decline of illegality even as deforestation soars."

Deforestation has also accelerated in Nicaragua under the successive Ortega governments. Since 2007, illegal logging has been systematic on the Atlantic Coast, where most of the primary forest cover has now given way to pastures and recently oil palm plantations. While in the 1980s, half of the country was covered in forests, the agricultural frontier has reached the Atlantic Ocean. The former liberation fighter Daniel Ortega has literally opened the veins of the country offering a concession to a Chinese company to build a canal across the country that would have sacrificed the biggest freshwater lake in Central America. Although the canal project proved unfeasible and seems to have been abandoned, Law 840 has not been abrogated and still surrenders part of the national sovereignty to the Chinese company (Baltodano 2020; Müller 2019). Birgit Schmook, Claudia Radel, and Lindsey

Carte's essay demonstrates how the surge in mining concessions for foreign companies and the accelerated extraction and deforestation impoverishes the population and leads to emigration and a heightened dependency on remittances. The strong, organized opposition in Nicaragua has remained most of the time under the radar of international attention. In 2018, the fire in the last intact biosphere reserve, Indio Maíz, and expropriations in the canal zone sparked protests that converged with several months of protests against social security reform and for political freedom (OACNUDH 2018). More than five hundred protestors were killed, opposition leaders were incarcerated, and Ortega was confirmed in power after he rigged the elections in 2021 (Baltodano 2021). Ortega's promise of catapulting the country into the range of "developed" nations has turned into a nightmare.

Broken promises also motivated the Second March of Indigenous Peoples in Bolivia in 2021 against the extractive policies of the successive "Indigenous" and "progressive" governments of Evo Morales Ayma (2006–2019), Jeanine Áñez Chávez (2019–220), and Luis Arce Catacora (2020–). As Derrick Hindery, José Antonio Martínez Montaño, and Zulma Villegas Gomez show in "¿Qué se pierde cuando se pierde el bosque?," to fulfill the promise of nationalizing natural resources, the Bolivian state bought up the shares of foreign companies in a "hostile takeover" but then proceeded to act itself like a corporation continuing to extract. Direct victims of this policy were the forests that Indigenous peoples depend on for their livelihoods and whose biological diversity is the source of their knowledge and cultural diversity. But the consequences of deforestation are much larger. Similar to Amazonia, deforestation in Bolivia causes climate disruption elsewhere. Cities become hotter and drier, water cycles are disrupted, less carbon is sequestered, and less oxygen is produced. Paralleling climate chaos elsewhere in the tropics, torrential rains and floods cause runoff and erosion. Abnormal periods of intense cold, hail in Andean valleys, and hurricane-force winds are increasingly common. The authors argue that protecting Bolivia's forest should thus be a concern for all beyond national boundaries. "In an interrelated world marked by climate catastrophe and devastating biodiversity loss, protecting the rights of Bolivia's indigenous peoples and the forests where they live is a vital step in safeguarding the well-being of the planet."

Why is this not happening? What makes corporations or entrepreneurs and governments continue business as usual and ignore the urgency of climate change, toxic pollution and freshwater loss? A hint is provided by the economic rationale of medium-sized Argentinian soy farmers, which Pablo Lapegna and Johana Kunin analyze in "Rethinking Environmental Polarization and Pesticide Use in Argentina." Embedded in rural communities and considered the local elite, these farmers are supported in their belief that there are few alternatives to cultivating soy and using pesticides by the state policies of neoliberal and neo-developmentalist governments, encouraged by transnational companies and pressured by international financial institutions. The farmers that Lapegna and Kunin study make moral sense of the universe of agrochemical-based agriculture by expressing doubts about the risks of agrochemical exposure using their own bodies as evidence of the nonexistence of danger. They claim that they "cannot produce without pesticides." Agrochemicals are thought of as a "positive and morally charged solution" to world hunger, a means to "feed the world" and meet global population growth, and a way to combat climate change by using herbicides instead of ploughing the soil.

These convictions are systematically reinforced by transnational companies that create chains of financial and personal dependencies that reach from the global to the local level (Skill and Grinberg 2014). Four corporations, ADM (Archer-Daniels-Midland), Bunge, Cargill, and Dreyfus control the global grain market. Abstract and intimidating on the global scale, they rely nevertheless at the local level on relations of proximity, trust, and reciprocity that their employees establish with the producers, including through family links and friendships (Wesz 2016). Chemical corporations such as

Bayer Crop Science and Syngenta, bought by ChemChina, bank on sophisticated promotion strategies which involve the local farmers and offer them complete legitimating discourses for their agricultural practices (Bayer Crop Science 2021; Müller 2021). Farmers, bureaucrats, and corporate actors can thus render invisible the evidence of toxic exposure by refusing to observe and understand the material consequences of the economic and technological system they operate in. Denial dissipates the traces and invisible effects of the catastrophe (Müller and Naepels 2021). It is a powerful weapon that allows normalization of a toxic situation in a seemingly rational way while producing what Donna Haraway, following Hannah Arendt, calls "a deep surrender" to the "evil of thoughtlessness." It is an inability to "track the lines of living and dying" (Haraway 2016, 36).

The ecological rationale of the world economy still set on growth seems to be in the thralls of irrationality and wishful thinking which borders on delusion or mental illness. In "El litio, un (des) estabilizador de transiciones bipolares," Cristóbal Bonelli, Marina Weinberg, and Pablo Ampuero diagnose a bipolar world disorder, an oscillation between mania in the centers of capitalism and depression in the centers of extraction. Even within the same country, Chile, these manic and depressive moods coexist, steeped in geopolitical dynamics. Mania overestimates the power of the subject and loses touch with reality, whereas depression makes subjects unable to act. The dream of the "Eden of carbon neutrality" in the rich countries is founded on the extraction of lithium in the deserts of Chile, where every ounce of lithium extracted consumes and contaminates phenomenal amounts of fresh water. The global processes of carbon reduction and energy accumulation irrupt thus locally to destroy any perspective for a livable future where there is no water left. With the concept of "bipolar transitions," building on a mental health terminology, the authors develop a diagnosis *about* capitalism without offering ready-made solutions that might lead *beyond* capitalism. This is particularly important as the situation in Chile cannot be understood without considering geopolitical dynamics including, for instance, the investment of Chinese capital and labor. The diagnosis then allows envisaging the possibility of an experimental and always open "cure."

As I write in December 2021, a new government has been elected in Chile on the promise of an economic revival, the beginning of a "process of economic transition towards a new development model that overcomes the excessive focus on GDP growth and prioritizes the well-being of society and the sustainability of life" (Boric 2021a, 58). The incoming president, Gabriel Boric, wants to create a national lithium company that will develop a new national industry for this strategic resource, adding value to production and insuring the participation of the local communities affected by extraction. However, the electoral program also announces that his government will not unilaterally leave *any* trade and investment treaty. His intention is to update the investment chapters of the multiple trade and investment agreements that Chile is part of, pull out from investor-state settlement procedures, and ensure that new foreign investments generate linkages with the local productive fabric (Boric 2021b, 95). It remains to be seen at what cost the new government could succeed in renegotiating investor-state settlement clauses that previous governments have signed, and that are extremely favorable to the corporations of countries wanting to mine Chilean resources. In the race to accelerate extraction before losing power, the outgoing government of Sebastián Piñera opened competitive tenders for the national and international public to "boost" the lithium market through exploration, exploitation, and commercialization of new lithium deposits that would commit the new government.[1] In addition, new constraining environmental measures that would restrict mining and water use are likely

[1] "Se reactiva polémica por licitación del litio: Giorgio Jackson llama al Gobierno a posponer proceso 'para un debido análisis,'" *El Mostrador*, December 31, 2021, https://www.elmostrador.cl/mercados/2021/12/31/se-reactiva-polemica-por-licitacion-del-litio-giorgio-jackson-llama-al-gobierno-a-posponer-proceso-para-un-debido-analisis/.

to bring the country in front of investor-state arbitration committees that may penalize it with billions of dollars.

We are all in this together! Despite the recent recognition of the realities of the Anthropocene, of climate change and countless toxic processes, including the destruction of biodiversity, this reality is still massively and persistently denied by most. What characterizes our time in many ways is this tangle of often contradictory denials. It is only through "looking up,"[2] in a concerted effort of critical thinking at all scales of governance, from the local to the global and across national boundaries, that we might be able to curb what Judith Butler, following Freud, calls the "death drive" of our civilization (Butler 2020, 160). We need to retool international trade and investment law, render corporate environmental responsibility legally binding, and make ecocide a crime that can be prosecuted in international criminal courts. "The ideal condition would be one in which every member of a community exercises self-restraint, and does so precisely by recognizing that the preservation of life is itself a good to be valued in common" (Butler 2020, 177). This, however, is unlikely to happen smoothly as the human psyche is full of ambivalence. Only one part of our organic nature wills us to overthrow the forces of destruction. A "cultural process" is needed that allows us to develop a revulsion against destruction itself and to understand that the various forms of organic life are "connected through relations of dependency that extend throughout the living world" (Butler 2020, 180). What if environmental movements in Latin America were to join with those fighting for labor rights and dignity in China, for example? The negative power of hatred itself can then become refocused as an aggressive stance against destruction, turning against the world leaders who insist that obedience to the logic of growth, accumulation, and extraction is obligatory.

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[2] The title of this introduction is taken from *Don't Look Up!,* a 2021 American science fiction film by Adam McKay that satirizes government and media indifference to the climate crisis.

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"A Storm Is Blowing in from Paradise": Political Ecologies in Latin America and Why They Matter Now

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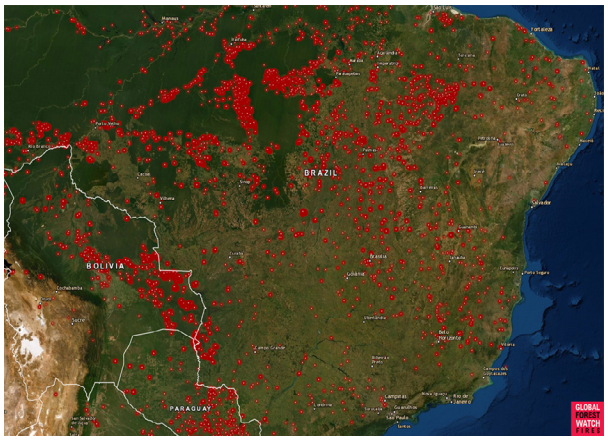
With the announcement at COP26 that deforestation everywhere in the world would be zeroed by 2030, a project that 130 nations agreed to, it's a good time to review the political ecology of this topic and its dynamics in Latin America, and especially Amazonia, the current champion of deforestation. The Amazonian forest teeters on a tipping point where deforestation will change it so much that it will no longer function ecologically or climatologically as a tropical forest and shift into a savanna woodland. Amazonia is not just a key element in the global carbon system but also acts as a kind of living land-to-atmosphere water pump, the source of South America's atmospheric rivers. These nourish the millions of hectares of rain-fed agriculture in the Brazilian Cerrado, in Paraguay and Argentina, the export agro-industrial engines (and in many ways economic salvation) of these areas. Loss of the mechanisms that feed Andean snows and South America's rains that replenish its major rivers also implies drastic shipping, transport, hydropower, fishing, and urban problems, such as we see at this moment in the Paraná/Plata River basin.[1] Right now, the "southern cone dust bowl" involves crushing drought that is strangling water supplies to South American cities, including Buenos Aires and the megacity of São Paulo. Of the five key tipping points in global climate change, two are polar—the Antarctic ice sheet and Greenland ice sheet—and two are oceanic/atmospheric: the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC), which will dramatically alter the Atlantic gulf stream and change Europe's weather patterns, and El Niño and the southern oscillation that arises in the Pacific and profoundly affects monsoons and drought patterns globally. Of these key climate triggers, Amazonia is the only place that is actually inhabited, by more than 30 million people. Thus it is one of the areas in the world where direct actions can have profound effects.

Figure 1. Fires in Brazilian Amazonia from remote sensing, 2021. Global Forest Watch.



The title of this *Forum* article comes from a description by Walter Benjamin about the drawing *Angelus Novo* by Paul Klee. The drawing was one of Benjamin's most prized possessions and was with him when he committed suicide in Spain, fleeing the Nazis. Benjamin wrote:

[1] Daniel Politi, "An Economic Lifeline in South America, the Paraná River, Is Shriveling," *New York Times*, September 4, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/04/world/americas/drought-argentina-parana-river.html.

> This is how one pictures the Angel of History. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

The question proposed for this *Forum* is how one makes sense of the rampant destruction that is now afoot, in light of Latin America's history and its future. I would argue that the COP26 pledges in Glasgow on deforestation most certainly need to be taken with a grain of salt, and a jaundiced eye cast on the general fatuousness of what has been called development for Latin America's tropics. The events at COP26 were largely performative for the big global deforesters. Perhaps Indonesia, one of the top global forest destroyers and a country whose forest concessions for palm oil conversion, coal mining, and land clearing have been rife with corruption and human rights abuses, put it best: "Stopping deforestation at the expense of development would be unfair." This statement has an ironic tinge, coming as it does from representatives of a country whose capital, Jakarta, is now sinking beneath the waves, an imperial ruin if there ever was one. It is a flooded future that many tropical cities can look forward to, especially those like the Amazon cities of Belém, Manaus, and Iquitos. There are certainly ways to make sense of the destruction and to imagine how legal clearing could decline while deforestation surged. Brazilian rulers are well-schooled in contradiction, and there is a clear mechanism now for how to do this. It has to do with the language of legal versus illegal deforestation. The idea at Glasgow was perhaps to step up enforcement of environmental crimes. The real strategy was to decriminalize them.

Figure 2. Forest burning near Porto Velho. Mongabay.

Brazil had the largest national delegation at the meeting (497), second only to fossil fuel lobbyists, so perhaps it is not surprising that the question of Amazonian deforestation loomed quite large in the negotiations, since EU states had begun to question the terms of the yet-to-be-ratified Mercosur trade agreements. Supply chain politics for meat and leather were increasingly scrutinized not only by activist organizations like Greenpeace, but by national leaders like France's president, Emmanuel Macron. In spite of cries of disbelief and a certain amount of scoffing by social movements, environmental organizations, scientists, and the delegations of native populations about the mendacity of Brazil's position to halt deforestation (no doubt with winks and nods all around among the diplomats), there was a "let's pretend" moment in the solemn ratification. Brazil's deforestation rate in 2021 reached a 15-year high, 22 percent above the previous year, incinerating some 13,235 square kilometers just in this burning season. This does not include how much forest was degraded in this process, a number usually taken to be equal or higher than the land actually cleared and thus a greater contributor to greenhouse gases. Amazonia has been a net CO2 emitter for some time. Looking at the numbers on their phone calculators, one could imagine the faces of some Brazilian representatives wreathed in smiles at the billions being bandied about for "protection money" of tropical landscapes, through offsets and payment for environmental services on private lands. Much of Brazil's deforestation in areas like the Cerrado and the dry forest known as the Caatinga is on private land, so a new

positional rent is emerging that looks like it could be locked into a financial regime under the rubric of conservation.

In essence, Amazonia could be in a "hostage situation," waiting to be "ransomed" by climate funding for reducing deforestation, promoting land recuperation, and so forth. What we know from the Green Municipio projects—new ideas of governance and funds for land recuperation and intensification—in the Brazilian state of Pará is that the beneficiaries are often the most wealthy or politically connected locals. Despite these interventions, Pará still has one of the top rates of deforestation in Amazonia.

REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) also remains controversial. Designed with social justice content, especially REDD+, its performance has been uneven (Sunderlin et al. 2017). In addition, many large landholders have significant forest areas for which they could collect handsome checks for carbon offsets, or apply them to development transfer credits (brisk business these days), or use to fund oil palm and pulp plantations (these are trees, after all) in lieu of diverse, high carbon standing forests. Another widely discussed intervention in deforestation control was the idea of environmentally clean commodities through deforestation-free soy and cattle moratoria. In many cases, however, the agro-industrial sector, especially livestock producers, showed what one might call a flair for evading regulation. In any case, the largest market, the Chinese, was/is indifferent to deforestation. Middle Eastern and Soviet markets are also not particularly well known for their environmental attentiveness.

As with much of the writing on hopeful solutions articulated before Bolsonaro's time in Brazil (beginning in 2019), the deforestation pledge has a charmingly optimistic air belied by the current clearing dynamics, which have increased dramatically every year of Bolsonaro's reign. On one level, the posture is a "hangover" from the socio-environmental[2] times, when deforestation rates dropped by over 70 percent between 2004 and 2014, although deforestation in non-Amazon and non-Brazilian biomes continued apace. In that period, which corresponds with Lula da Silva's mandate, a complex tool box of institutional innovation and governance was deployed for Amazonian protection. These measures included massive designation of new protected areas, expanded forms of local governance, and new jurisdictional forms of policy development. The well-funded (by Germany and Norway) Amazon Pilot Project invested in alternate technologies and monitoring and enforcement of environmental laws. A more general expansion of new forms of governance, including deforestation moratoria, increased support for social movements and rural associations for land as well as recognition and protection of collective holdings. All these were oriented to mobilization for Green markets, green environmentalism, and green governance more generally.

Complex institutionalities were invoked at multiple scales and were successful, but were largely unique to the iconically and ecologically important Amazon and did not apply to the Cerrado, Argentine Chaco, or Bolivian Chiquitania, where forests were falling at accelerating rates. This widely cheered Amazonian eco-dynamic diverted attention away from a newer, environmentally indifferent power dimension: the increasing political expansion and institutional capture of Congress and relevant government agencies by agro-industrial, infrastructural, and mining interests, and an accelerating dependence of the Brazilian market on the global and especially Chinese hunger for Latin American raw materials and agricultural exports like soy. It also masked, for all Amazonian countries, erosion of manufacturing and greater precarity in the service sectors, which was offset by guaranteed wages and anti-poverty initiatives like the

[2] This refers to the forms of development approaches that incorporate equity and environmental sensibility, sustainability, and resilience. It is a much broader concept, however, embracing ideas of environmental justice, distributional issues, ideas like the rights of nature and ontological positions about the unity of beings including nonhumans, and epistemic questions about ways of knowing.

conditional cash transfer known as Bolsa Família, widely imitated throughout Latin America (Layton, Donaghy, and Rennó 2017).

The development discourse from the mid-twentieth century until its end relied on the idea of progress and an urban industrial future. As Marx would put it, and Rostow would echo, the less developed world would see its future as urban and industrial. But the quickest way to foreign exchange after the end of the authoritarian time and the period of neoliberal opening was the reconfiguration of development in the classic form of natural resource and agro exports, since China has made so many of the industrial dreams of the earlier import-substitution period obsolete. Brazil had largely configured itself in natural resources trade for five hundred years, so the embedded skills and institutions were there to be tapped, while its industrial coterie was not up to the task of international competition with the Asian tigers.

The Alchemy of Amazonian Ambiguity

What was missed in the earlier cheering about declining Amazonian deforestation was a hidden dynamic linked to forms of accumulation and a much broader scope for the fungible nature of the "legal." While neoliberal policies have been part of the story in the transition from authoritarian to various liberal and illiberal democracies in the late twentieth century, the role of the state has remained central to the ecopolitics[3] of transformation throughout the twenty-first century. The state did not disappear but enhanced its importance through large-scale infrastructure construction, sectoral investment, export promotion, and land policies. National states nourished particular coteries for reasons of cronyism and for their roles in the emerging global economies with limited interests in forests except to plunder timber and clear them for other forms of accumulation.

In Amazonian countries, the states themselves retain considerable control over subsurface resources in the allocation of concessions of multiple types and the ability to assign land titles and organize investment and settlements. While the role of the state is generally ambiguous and its presence and policies erratic, it has been the explicit territorial owner and enabler of settlement and exploitation of resources, regardless of other forms of legal or illegal interventions in Amazonian worlds. Its presence or absence is often strategic, and the forms that this presence takes have huge implications for land, water, and now, of course, air.

The central part of the COP26 agreement on the Brazilian side is that *illegal* deforestation would be controlled by 2030. The alchemy of what is legal and illegal is highly mutable in Amazonian land politics and has been since Brazil's beginnings. But legality is the name of the game in the politics of carbon and carbon markets. In Amazonia writ large what is decided as legal and illegal is no longer particularly based on precedent or even settled law and is always available for reconfiguration. Who gets to decide what is legal and illegal can involve a broad cast of characters at multiple levels in the deadly theatre known as Amazonian land and resource law. They can range from a gunslinger or disgruntled rancher to the offices of local states and the Congress itself. Under the magic of this state and its informal and formal actors, it is entirely possible to control "illegal" deforestation even as forest clearing rates soar.

What unfolds in Amazonia now—and this cannot be completely described in a short communique like this—is basically a "natural experiment" that pivots on the idea of the legal. What happens when what had been illegal becomes legal through changing the parameters of what can be done? What happens when what had been understood as a "forever" designation (like a national park) simply changes definition?

[3] By ecopolitics I mean political with ecological implications.

Figure 3. Demonstration against deforestation. Mauro Pimentel, Getty Images.

For many *originarios*, *quilombolas*, and other traditional peoples, Amazonia has been the realm of practical utopias, spaces of autonomy and of livelihood support (Florentino and Amantino 2012; Yabeta and Gomes 2013). These are also places imbued with spiritual power and highly meaningful physical and ecological markers of ethnic, spiritual, and social histories and homage to the nonhuman. Biotic and social histories meld into one and are enshrined in the recognition of the rights to historical territories. Research for decades has shown that forest clearance is far higher outside the holdings of traditional peoples, and it's a reality that holds at a planetary level. Protecting these holdings reduces deforestation.

Bolsonaro, however, vowed to not recognize a single Indigenous territory during his time in power, despite the 237 Indigenous territories already in the process of being demarcated and still not officially recognized. Bolsonaro lies about many things, but in this he has been true to his word. Indigenous and traditional territorial holdings have been the consistent sites of threat, clearing, and de facto expropriation, and at least a million hectares of such lands are under siege (Nogueira et al. 2018; Diele-Viegas and Rocha 2020).[4] To be a forest protector these days is to be a target of more dangers than labor leaders face, which tells you something about the national economies and the importance of natural resources in the current development scenarios.

The New Legality

Those concerned about protected areas—whether inhabited or in full protection—are justifiably upset. Protected areas that had been sites of new deforestation frontiers are now regularly degazetted—that is, stripped of their legal protections as protected areas—and thus the clearing that occurred there no longer carries sanctions. In a dazzling Catch-22, cleared areas no longer retain their conservation values, so these lands should simply be handed over to the deforesters. Should forests stand in the way of any infrastructural projects (Bernard, Penna, and Araújo 2014; Arima 2016), or even near them in the case of roads, the projects currently proceed without or with only minimal environmental impact reports, in the case of formal roads, and with no constraint at all for informal roads. Because most Amazonian deforestation occurs within 5 kilometers of roads, the damaging impacts of the most widespread infrastructure investments are largely ignored.

Many conservation areas and collective lands were designated by local states rather than federal edict. If local potentates have other uses for such forests rather than as extractive reserves or national forests, they can also rename and redefine the legal context of these systems, whether local judges claim the action legal or otherwise.[5] Invasion of national forests, protected areas, and parks is now rampant, with up to 93 percent of clearing qualifying as illegal, even as considerable amnesty is shown to deforesters. Titles are transferred and holdings reconfigured as legal. Thus, through "Amazonian alchemy," the illegal becomes legal and serves as an example for all to keep clearing.

[4] Amazon Geo-Referenced Socio-Environmental Information Network (RAISG), https://www.amazoniasocioambiental.org/en/.

[5] Daniel Camargos, "Half of the State Representatives Who Approved the Reduction of Protected Areas in Rondônia Are Cattle Ranchers or Were Financed by Rural Landowners," *Repórter Brasil*, May 20, 2021, https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2021/05/half-of-the-state-representatives-who-approved-the-reduction-of-protected-areas-in-rondonia-are-cattle-ranchers-or-were-financed-by-rural-landowners/.

While there are still laws, to a degree, the environmental enforcement agency Ibama has been so weakened and so demoralized with massive budget cuts that forest lands and public lands as well as collective holdings have in many contexts become an open commons for plunder. A pathetic letter from Ibama employees about the undermining of the institution that they had been devoted to in the name of protecting the Brazilian patrimony speaks to an extraordinary level of demoralization within key institutions.[6] This dynamic only increased in the time of COVID, when environmental actions were largely abandoned. This process has been increasing throughout the Bolsonaro mandate, and there is no evidence of its slowing down.[7] Indeed, most recently, the remote sensing institution INPE (National Institute for Space Research) is largely being defunded, and will no longer track even Cerrado clearing.[8]

There are many other dynamics that an article of this size cannot explore, but merely the legal ledger of reclassification of land, regardless of the specific logics of clearing (and there are many), has the capacity to achieve a tremendous, planetarily horrible paradox: the decline of illegality even as deforestation soars. This is the source of the storms that will be blowing out of Paradise, as rivers dry and forests die, and via an Amazonia where we turn our back to the future.

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[6] Ernesto Londoño and Letícia Casado, "With Amazon on Fire, Environmental Officials in Open Revolt against Bolsonaro," *New York Times*, August 28, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/28/world/americas/amazon-fires-brazil.html.

[7] Rhett A. Butler, "How the Pandemic Impacted Rainforests in 2020: A Year in Review," *Mongabay*, December 29, 2020, https://news.mongabay.com/2020/12/how-the-pandemic-impacted-rainforests-in-2020/.

[8] Jake Spring and Stephen Eisenhammer, "Exclusive: As Fires Race through Amazon, Brazil's Bolsonaro Weakens Environment Agency," *Reuters*, August 28, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-environment-ibama-exclusive/exclusive-as-fires-race-through-amazon-brazils-bolsonaro-weakens-environment-agency-idUSKCN1VI14I.

Migration as a Survival Strategy for Smallholder Farmers Facing an Authoritarian Extractivist Regime in Nicaragua

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After a fraudulent election on November 7, 2021,[1] Nicaragua is facing another term with President Daniel Ortega, who after an extraordinary "metamorphosis from rebel to ruler, from comandante to caudillo,"[2] has been "perfecting" his authoritarian and increasingly kleptocratic regime over the last decade. After losing the elections in 1990 and again in 2001, Ortega came back to power in 2007 along with a swing across Latin America to populist leadership with leftist overtones. During this period and since, Latin America also has experienced continued expansion of the resource extractivist model for national economic growth. Most of the new populist leaders tended toward a more distributional politics but never challenged the neoliberal hegemony. We argue here that the neoliberal development model in Nicaragua, which rests on intensive resource extraction, is destroying smallholder farmers, especially when combined with climate change. In the increasingly difficult context in which poorer, small-scale farming families struggle to persist, international out-migration is a survival strategy.

In 2005, two years before Ortega came back to power, Nicaragua was the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, where 48.3 percent of the population lived below the poverty line and 17.2 percent were affected by extreme poverty.[3] Initially, Ortega embraced a distributional approach to share the economic benefits of extraction in Nicaragua, instituting social programs like "Zero Hunger," the government's flagship program in the fight against poverty. However, since 2017, the Zero Hunger program for poor smallholders has been curtailed. Previously free benefits are now only available through interest-bearing loans.[4] In 2019, the International Foundation for Global Economic Challenges measured change in poverty levels in Nicaragua since 2009, and while poverty dropped over the first years of Ortega's rule, this reversed in 2015. The percent of the population living

[1] Carlos Salinas Maldonado, "América rechaza las elecciones de Nicaragua: No tienen legitimidad democrática," *El País*, November 12, 2021, https://elpais.com/internacional/2021-11-13/america-rechaza-las-elecciones-de-nicaragua-no-tienen-legitimidad-democratica.html.

[2] Will Grant, *Populista: The Rise of Latin America's 21st Century Strongman* (London: Head of Zeus, 2021), Kindle edition.

[3] Tirza Morales, "Five Causes of Poverty in Nicaragua," *The Borgen Project*, July 9, 2020, https://borgenproject.org/tag/hambre-cero/.

[4] "Noticias del mes: Hambre cero," *Revista Digital Envío*, no. 424, July 2017, https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/5363.

below the poverty line in 2009 changed from 44.7 percent, down to 39.0 percent in 2015, and back up to 44.4 percent in 2019. The incidence of extreme poverty also showed a downward trend in the first years of the analysis period and an upward trend from 2015 onward.[5]

Ortega's paternalist politics with handouts to smallholders, even as those handouts diminish, has been accompanied by resource extraction largely to the benefit of the country's connected and wealthy elite. Nicaragua's rural "development" model centers on monoculture cultivation for the export of primary products, the uncontrolled expansion of agricultural frontiers, the destruction of forests to open additional land for ranching, and more and more mining concessions. Rural families confront increasingly difficult climatic conditions for agricultural production, as Nicaragua is among the countries in the world most affected by meteorological events, such as storms, floods, heat waves, and droughts.[6] Along the Pacific coast, some meteorological stations have registered a decrease in precipitation between 6 percent and 10 percent, and increasing temperatures, which severely threaten smallholders' harvests and often cause total crop loss. Much of Nicaragua's corn and bean, staples for feeding its population, are produced by smallholders, and these crops are anticipated to experience severe losses due to climate change.[7]

Deforestation rates have soared. In 2013, Hansen et al. reported that Nicaragua had one of the highest rates of tropical deforestation in Central America.[8] The country continued to experience alarming forest loss as the agricultural frontier moved eastward into protected primary rainforest areas and Indigenous territories along the Atlantic coast.[9] Forests have been cleared by the lumber mafia as well as semi-subsistence farmers seeking adequate lands, and this frontier has since given way to monocultures and cattle ranching. In 2000, 42 percent of national territory was covered in forest and 36 percent was used for agriculture and livestock. By 2010, forest cover had decreased to 31 percent and agricultural use had increased to 50 percent of the territory. By 2015, forest covered 30 percent of the country, or only 39,078 km^2,[10] and, according to the Nicaraguan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, pasture covered around 36 percent, or 42,988 km^2.[11] Between 2015 and 2020 deforestation rates are reported to have been as high as 2.56 percent annually.[12] Twenty-one percent of the deforestation between 2011 and 2018, or 8,150 km^2, occurred in Bosawás and Indio Maíz,[13] the two reserves protecting

[5] Fundación Internacional para el Desafío Económico Global (FIDEG), *Encuesta de hogares para medir la pobreza en Nicaragua: Informe de resultados 2019*, http://fideg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Informe-Pobreza-FIDEG-2019.pdf.

[6] David Eckstein, Marie-Lena Hutfils, and Maik Winges, *Global Climate Risk Index 2019: Who Suffers Most from Extreme Weather Events? Weather-Related Loss Events in 2017 and 1998 to 2017*, Briefing Paper (Bonn, Germany: Germanwatch, 2018).

[7] Sharon Gourdji, Peter Läderach, Armando Martínez Valle, Carlos Zelaya Martínez, and David Lobell, "Historical Climate Trends, Deforestation, and Maize and Bean Yields in Nicaragua," *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology* 200 (2015): 270–281, DOI: 10.1016/j.agrformet.2014.10.002.

[8] M. C. Hansen, P. V. Potapov, R. Moore, et al., "High-Resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change," *Science* 342, no. 6160 (2013): 850–853.

[9] Betts, Joel T., Gerald R. Urquhart, Jareth Román-Heracleo, and Jossely Flores Mc.rea, 2021. "Effects of Deforestation from Cattle Ranching over Time on Protected Rainforest Streams in the Rama-Kriol Territory, Nicaragua," *Hydrobiologia* (2021): https://doi.org/10.1007/s10750-021-04684-w.

[10] Ronnie De Camino Velozo, *Diagnóstico del sector forestal en Nicaragua: Movilizando el Sector Forestal y Atrayendo Inversiones*, Nota Técnica N° IDB-TN-01610 (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2018).

[11] Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA), *Atlas de cobertura forestal y deforestación en Nicaragua 1969-2015,* Estrategia Nacional para la Reducción de Emisiones por Deforestación y Degradación Forestal (ENDE-REDD +) (Managua, Nicaragua: Ministerio del Ambiente y los Recursos Naturales, 2018).

[12] OCCRP, *Nicaragua's Forgotten Deforestation Crisis*, https://www.occrp.org/en/investigations/nicaraguas-forgotten-deforestation-crisis.

[13] Amaru Ruiz Alemán, "La Reserva Biológica Indio Maíz: Un tesoro natural que estamos perdiendo," *Revista Digital Envío*, no. 465 (December 2020), https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/5853.

the largest areas of contiguous forest and with significant Indigenous populations. Much of the deforestation was spearheaded by Alba Forestal, a joint Nicaraguan-Venezuelan logging company[14] and a business in the hands of the governing party's business group.[15] Launched in 2009, ALBA Forestal was supposed to collect and process trees felled by Hurricane Felix in 2007. According to a National Institute of Forestry (INAFOR) report, Felix left some US$320 million worth of felled wood. The company's government backers promised that revenues would be invested into Nicaragua's Caribbean communities. Five years after launching, ALBA Forestal was still operating, but the destination of the wood and associated revenue was unknown.[16]

Today, large areas in the country are dedicated to monocultures. For years, peanuts and African palms were grown as monocultures; new are oranges and pineapples and Robusta coffee.[17] This strategy has been intensified by Ortega as a purported route for addressing rural unemployment and poverty. But it has long been established that the industrialization that accompanies monocultural production, for example in sugarcane, also means mechanization, with fewer and fewer agricultural workers needed. One of the most troublesome consequences of extensive monoculture farming is the elimination of biological diversity, in addition to the well-known human and ecosystem impacts of high agrochemical use, deteriorating soil structure, and intensified water demand.

In parallel, mining concessions to international, mostly Canadian companies have flourished and often poisoned surrounding lands. Since 2020, raw gold has been Nicaragua's most important export, ahead of meat, coffee, and sugar. In 2021, the sector expects exports worth $750 million and in 2023, $1 billion. The United States receives more than 45 percent of this gold. This boom is due partly to the rise in gold prices and partly to the growth of mining in Nicaragua. As of April 2021, the concession area for metal mining is 9,236.81 km^2, which is equivalent to 7.76 percent of the national land area; the area requested for gold and silver mining is 19,151.28 km^2, which would be equivalent to 16.09 percent of the national land area.[18] According to the Humboldt Center, in the last two to three years there has been a process of concentration in mining and associated concessions, favoring a single company, the Canadian company Calibre Mining, which owns 72 percent of the concession area.[19]

The controversial Nicaraguan Canal Project is another, more visible example of international concessions driving land expropriation and environmental destruction in the country. In 2013, the Chinese firm Hong Kong Nicaragua Canal Development (HKND), led by billionaire Wang Jin, was granted a 50-year concession to build an interoceanic canal joining the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean, sparking protests by potentially affected farmers and environmental activists. Experts have noted that the project is unviable due to costs and time frame.[20] Land expropriations needed to build the canal

[14] Benjamin Witte-Lebhar, "President Daniel Ortega Sets Sights on Nicaragua's Forestry Resources," University of New México Digital Repository, 2014, https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/10146.

[15] Ruiz Alemán, "La Reserva Biológica Indio Maíz."

[16] Witte-Lebhar, "President Daniel Ortega Sets Sights."

[17] Selmina Flores, "Cambiar Nicaragua pasa por tomar conciencia de la emergencia ambiental y por renunciar a la lógica extractivista del modelo productivo," *Revista Digital Envío*, no. 462 (September 2020), https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/5812.

[18] Néstor M. Avedaño Castellón, *Análisis de la actividad minera en Nicaragua 2015–2020.* (Cámara Minera de Nicaragua/CAMINIC, COSEP y COPADES, 2020).

[19] "Noticias Nicaragua: Auge de la minería de oro," *Revista Digital Envío*, no. 470 (May 2021), https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/5902.

[20] Brad Plumer, "The Fiasco That Is the Nicaragua Canal, Explained," *Vox*, February 26, 2015, https://www.vox.com/2015/2/26/8114151/nicaragua-canal.

could impact up to 30,000 farmers.[21] Under the original agreement,[22] Wang's HKND group was to be handed complete rights to use the land, air, water, maritime spaces, and natural resources in the canal zone and beyond.[23] The corporation would also be able to use assets from the Nicaraguan government and the country's central bank. Although the Nicaraguan government could have revoked the contract with the investor after seven years of inaction, it did not. It also did not revoke the controversial Canal Law 840, and instead inscribed into Nicaragua's constitution the state's power to grant concessions related to the interoceanic canal and therefore to grant the Chinese company the right to undertake whatever investment it wants.[24] The company still exists on paper, and whoever takes possession of it could thus reclaim extensive rights over the Nicaraguan economy and land.[25]

Smallholder farmers, who face the increasing effects of climate change and a highly unequal land distribution, don't see any benefit from the current wave of resource extraction and concession. United States Agency for International Development data indicate that in 2011 the richest 9 percent of landowners held 56 percent of farmland in Nicaragua, while an estimated 38 percent of the rural population owned no land at all.[26] As farming families struggle to survive, some reportedly leave their rural home communities, pushed out, to seek land elsewhere to farm for food. They used to join the agricultural frontier and prepare the land for the cattle ranchers who followed. However, the frontier has reached the Atlantic Ocean and new settlements are no longer possible. Men and women struggle to feed their families in their home villages, and many have turned to temporary labor out-migration.

Our research in Somotillo in 2013–2014, in the country's northwest, uncovered the increasingly difficult climatic conditions faced by smallholder farmers. Somotillo is located within Central America's so-called dry corridor and experienced a significant negative trend in precipitation over the last 50 years. The result has been low harvests, crop loss, and widespread food insecurity for rural farming families. At the time of our research, progressive loss of access to land over the last three decades had resulted in smaller landholdings on average (and even farmers with no land), sometimes with contested or unclear titles. Farmers supplemented their holdings by renting or borrowing additional land. With little access to credit, men and women were making short trips to El Salvador to work as farmhands or domestic workers for cash to finance their farming back home. Others were able to organize longer, more distant trips, for example, to Costa Rica or even the US and Spain. We found that median landholdings in Somotillo were 3.2 hectares for nonmigrant families and 5.2 hectares for migrant families. Many families used migration earnings to make possible semi-subsistence, small-scale agriculture, by using savings from their trips to purchase agricultural inputs and rent land. But even so, many remained food insecure.

[21] John Perry, "Can a Coast-To-Coast Canal Solve Nicaragua's Poverty Problem?," *Thomson Reuters Foundation News*, December 1, 2017, https://news.trust.org/item/20171201092333-6asue; Ramón Villarreal Bello and José Adán Silva, "Canal no hay, lo que hay es expropiación de tierras, según campesinos," *Land Portal*, December 1, 2017, https://landportal.org/pt/node/71166.

[22] Amnesty International, *Danger: Rights for Sale. The Interoceanic Grand Canal Project in Nicaragua and the Erosion of Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International, 2017).

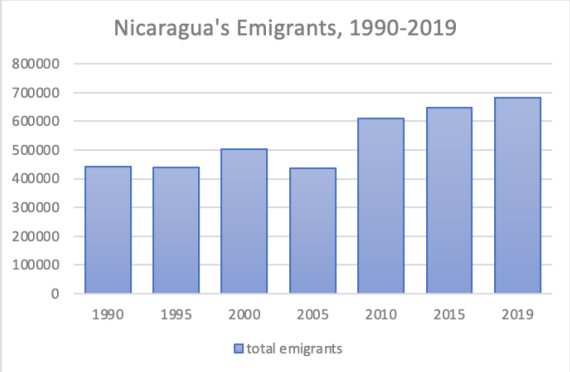
[23] Asamblea Nacional, "Ley N° 840: Ley especial para el desarrollo de infraestructura y transporte nicaragüense atingente a El Canal, zonas de libre comercio e infraestructuras asociadas", *La Gaceta*, Diario Oficial (110), June 14, 2013.

[24] Nicholas Müller, "Nicaragua's Chinese-Financed Canal Project Still in Limbo," *The Diplomat*, August 20, 2019, https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/nicaraguas-chinese-financed-canal-project-still-in-limbo/; Amnesty International, *Danger: Rights for Sale*.

[25] Raquel Carvalho, "Activists Renew Calls for Controversial US$50 Billion Nicaragua Canal Project to Be Cancelled as Chinese Tycoon's Cash Runs Dry," *South China Morning Post*, June 30, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/3016639/activists-renew-calls-controversial-us50-billion-nicaragua.

[26] U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Country Profile: Property Rights and Resources Governance, Nicaragua* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2011).

Over recent years, a substantial part of migration streams out of Nicaragua have been directed towards wealthier southern countries like Costa Rica and Panama, but also toward El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, given the geographical proximity that makes the journey financially accessible from the country's north and enables regular return to migrants' home villages. The number of emigrants from Nicaragua has risen since the 1990s, but as a percentage of the country's population, out-migration was relatively steady at around 10 percent through 2019.[27] In addition, according to data from the World Bank, personal remittances received as a percent of Nicaraguan GDP increased substantially over the last three decades.[28] It was 0.56 percent of GDP in 1992, 6.27 percent in 2000, 9.42 percent in 2010, and 14.70 percent in 2020. This increasing percentage reflects an increasing reliance of the population on remittances from out-migration, while natural resource extraction has been expanding.



According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, since 2018, when state violence increased, some additional 108,000 Nicaraguans have been forced to leave the country, of whom 85,000 have sought refuge in Costa Rica.[29] Social protests have been criminalized through arbitrary arrests, the filing of criminal charges, threats, harassment, and attacks against people identified as opponents of the government. According to a report from 2019 by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the increase in the number of people leaving Nicaragua for Costa Rica between April and October 2018 is directly related to state repression.[30] But Nicaraguans also try fleeing to the United States, and the BBC has noted that the number of Nicaraguan migrants coming to the US has surged in recent months.[31] In 2021, preliminary reports suggest that migration out of Nicaragua has increased significantly and that, for the first time, the United States, and not neighboring countries, is becoming a primary destination for Nicaraguans. Data about expulsion from the US-Mexico border show that nearly 50,000 Nicaraguans were deported from the border in 2021, more than triple the number the year before. Political and economic instability are said to be driving this migration.[32]

Political ecology contributes to understanding the intersecting environmental and political factors that are driving people out of Nicaragua's rural communities and are impacting communities and landscapes in sending

[27] "Nicaragua: Emigrantes totales," *Expansión*, Datosmacro.com, https://datosmacro.expansion.com/demografia/migracion/emigracion/nicaragua?anio=2019#geo0 (accessed November 12, 2021).

[28] Banco Mundial, "Nicaragua: Transferencias personales y remuneración de empleados, recibidos," Banco Mundial, Indicadores del Desarrollo Mundial, October 28, 2021, https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=NI; Banco Mundial, "Nicaragua: Remesas de trabajadores y compensación de empleados, recibidas," Banco Mundial, Indicadores del Desarrollo Mundial, October 28, 2021, https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=NI.

[29] "La caravana silenciosa de migrantes nicaragüenses," *Expediente Público*, July 15, 2021, https://www.expedientepublico.org/la-caravana-silenciosa-de-migrantes-nicaraguenses/.

[30] Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH), *Migración forzada de personas nicaragüenses a Costa Rica*, OAS/Ser.L/V/II. Doc. 150, 2019, https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/MigracionForzada-Nicaragua-CostaRica.pdf.

[31] "Costa Rica contempla la posibilidad de que las elecciones de Nicaragua puedan generar una migración más intensa," *Europa Press*, November 6, 2021, https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-costa-rica-contempla-posibilidad-elecciones-nicaragua-puedan-generar-migracion-mas-intensa-20211106110054.html.

[32] Adam Isacson, "Weekly U.S.-Mexico Border Update: 2021 Migration Numbers, Caravan in Chiapas, Remain in Mexico, CBP Facebook Group," *WOLA*, October 30, 2021, https://www.wola.org/2021/10/weekly-weekly-u-s-mexico-border-update-2021-migration-numbers-caravan-in-chiapas-remain-in-mexico-cbp-facebook-group.

communities. Our research demonstrates that it is not merely climate change, natural disasters, or the misfortune of owning little land that is causing migration.[33] These factors are inherently political as they are constructed and experienced within a national political economic context. Poor management of natural disasters such as drought and flooding, as well as the destruction of forests and the obstructed access to land are a consequence of government priorities. The Ortega regime has clearly favored extractivist development over the needs of the rural poor. In effect, migration provides a pressure release valve—allowing the state to abdicate responsibility for addressing the crisis in rural livelihoods caused by climate change, land concentration, and neoliberal policy.

Acknowledgment

We thank Birgit Müller for her suggestions, which improved this essay, and especially for her contribution to the section on the interoceanic canal. //

[33] Claudia Radel, Birgit Schmook, Lindsey Carte, and Sofía Mardero, "Toward a Political Ecology of Migration: Land, Labor Migration, and Climate Change in Northwestern Nicaragua," *World Development* 108 (2018): 263–273; Lindsey Carte, Birgit Schmook, Claudia Radel, and Richard Johnson, "The Slow Displacement of Smallholder Farming Families: Land, Hunger, and Labor Migration in Nicaragua and Guatemala," *Land* 8, no. 6 (2019): 89; Lindsey Carte, Claudia Radel, and Birgit Schmook, "Subsistence Migration: Smallholder Food Security and the Maintenance of Agriculture through Mobility in Nicaragua," *Geographical Journal* 185, no. 2 (2019): 180–193.

¿Qué se pierde cuando se pierde el bosque? La lucha por los derechos indígenas y la justicia ambiental en Bolivia

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El 24 de agosto del 2021, indígenas ancianos y líderes históricos del movimiento indígena de las tierras bajas de Bolivia marcharon 540 kilómetros durante 37 días para protestar contra la deforestación, la invasión y avasallamiento de sus territorios por las industrias extractivas, agricultores industriales, ganaderos, colonizadores, madereros y megaproyectos de infraestructura. Marcharon desde la ciudad de Trinidad hacia la ciudad de Santa Cruz. Habían pasado 31 años desde que se manifestaron en la primera gran marcha por "Territorio y Dignidad" en 1990. Esta vez marcharon junto a mujeres, niñas, niños, y caciques, en lo que ellos denominaron, la "Segunda Gran Marcha por Territorio, Identidad y Cultura".

Figura 1. Un camión que transporta troncos extraídos de los bosques de los territorios indígenas pasa junto a la marcha. Foto por Miguel Angel Valdivia Zarco, Secretario del Parlamento de Naciones Indígenas de Bolivia.

Los marchistas denunciaron que los gobiernos de diferentes orientaciones políticas habían cumplido poco con lo que habían luchado y conquistado durante los gobiernos neoliberales represivos de la década de 1990 y principios de la de 2000. Irónicamente, la primera marcha indígena de Bolivia en 1990 presionó con éxito al gobierno de Jaime Paz Zamora para que ratificara el Convenio 169 de la OIT en 1991 (Rivero Guzmán 2007), que requería que el Estado realizara consultas libres, previas e informadas y otorgara una compensación justa a los pueblos indígenas por cualquier daño (Organisation Internationale du Travail and Oficina Regional para America Latina y el Caribe 1991). Incluso durante el denominado "gobierno indígena" de Evo Morales Ayma (2006–2019, Movimiento al Socialismo/MAS), y los posteriores gobiernos de Jeanine Áñez Chávez (2019–2020, Frente de Unidad Nacional) y Luis Arce Catacora (2020–presente, MAS), la deforestación fue desenfrenada en los territorios indígenas y las áreas protegidas. Entre 2019 y 2021 los agricultores industriales, ganaderos y colonizadores cortaron e incendiaron aproximadamente 11,3 millones de hectáreas de los bosques en Bolivia (AFP 2021). Los marchistas denunciaron el financiamiento internacional y el consumismo. Criticaron a entidades extranjeras y nacionales —el Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia; inversores extranjeros de EE. UU., China y Brasil; agroindustria;

ganaderos, colonos nativos; colonos extranjeros (por ejemplo, menonitas, brasileños, argentinos, rusos); mineros; madereros; megaproyectos de carreteras, puentes y represas; y corporaciones petroleras— por imponer sus ideas y prácticas supremacistas a las 34 naciones indígenas que viven en las tierras bajas bolivianas y por violar sus derechos.

Al igual que con los regímenes neoliberales de la década de 1990 y principios de la de 2000, varios proyectos de petróleo y gas completados bajo Morales, Áñez y Arce violaron los derechos indígenas a la consulta y el consentimiento libre, previo e informado establecidos en la Constitución de Bolivia de 2009, las leyes bolivianas, el Convenio 169 de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT) y la Declaración de las Naciones Unidas sobre los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas (DNUDPI, adoptada por Bolivia en 2007). Los proyectos incluyen exploración (por ejemplo, estudios sísmicos), extracción, distribución (por ejemplo, gasoductos) y refinación. Incluso bajo el supuestamente "gobierno indígena" de Morales, la empresa petrolera estatal, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB), no consultó debidamente a los pueblos indígenas que vivían en el Parque Madidi. En 2008, la administración de Morales anunció que YPFB se uniría a su contraparte venezolana, formando Petroandina Sociedad Anónima Mixta (SAM) —con el 60 por ciento de las acciones propiedad de YPFB y el 40 por ciento de la petrolera estatal venezolana Petróleos de Venezuela, SA, (PDVSA)— para realizar exploración y extracción de petróleo en el norte del departamento de La Paz, incluido Madidi. El parque, que se extiende desde los Andes hasta la cuenca del Amazonas, es el hogar de varios pueblos indígenas y es uno de los lugares con mayor biodiversidad de la Tierra. Cuando las negociaciones entre empresas y organizaciones indígenas llegaron a un punto muerto, el estado pasó por alto la Organización Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz (CPILAP) y las dos organizaciones indígenas cuyos territorios serían directamente afectados: la Organización del Pueblo Indígena Mosetén (OPIM) y la Organización del Pueblo Indígena Leco y Comunidades de Larecaja (PILCOL) (Mendoza 2009). En lugar de consultar con estas tres organizaciones, el Ministerio de Hidrocarburos obtuvo la aprobación de los líderes de algunas comunidades afectadas y emitió la licencia ambiental a Petroandina SAM. La exploración de petróleo comenzó a pesar de las objeciones de CPILAP, OPIM y PILCOL.

Para consternación de los pueblos indígenas afectados, a pesar de la llamada "nacionalización" del sector de petróleo y gas por parte de Morales, continuó la usurpación de territorios indígenas, así como la extracción y exportación de la mayor parte del gas del país por las corporaciones multinacionales. Disfrazados bajo subsidiarias como Chaco, Andina y Transredes, los socios extranjeros incluyen Petrobras (Brasil), Shell (Reino Unido/Holanda), PDVSA (Venezuela), Repsol (España), BG Group (Reino Unido), Tecpetrol (Argentina/Italia), Total (Francia), Shengli (China) y Gazprom (Rusia) (Elliott 2011). La "nacionalización" no expropió los activos de ninguna empresa petrolera transnacional (Kohl 2010, 117). Más bien, el estado llevó a cabo lo que Brent Kaup (2010) llama una "nacionalización neoliberal", que recuperó el control físico de los hidrocarburos para el estado y obligó a las empresas a firmar contratos que pagaban mayores regalías e impuestos (Gordon y Luoma 2008, 101). Según un representante de YPFB, el estado llevó a cabo una "adquisición hostil" o una compra en el mercado libre (Gordon y Luoma 2008, 130). Simplemente renegoció los contratos con empresas extranjeras y compró un mínimo del 51 por ciento de sus participaciones. La avalancha en curso de actividades extractivas en los territorios indígenas bolivianos fue un motivador principal para la marcha indígena de 2021. Una de las primeras declaraciones emitidas por los manifestantes denunció esta extracción y llamó a las autoridades nacionales y regionales a respetar los derechos indígenas:

> Marchamos nuevamente para decirles a Uds. Gobernantes, que respeten nuestra Identidad, nuestras culturas, nuestros territorios; que dejen de destruir los bosques y la vida. Los proyectos de desarrollo de los gobernantes nacionales y departamentales son lo mismo; para Uds. es desarrollo y progreso, para nosotros es destrucción. No se dan cuentan que las Leyes y Decretos

> son incendiarios, ecocidios, biocidas que todos lamentamos cuando ocurren los incendios forestales. Son justamente para favorecer a los agroindustriales, a los ganaderos y a los mal llamados interculturales. El gobierno no tiene un poco de dignidad. Hablan de izquierda y derecha, pero les da lo mismo vendernos, a países como China o Estados Unidos, con tal de que les llegue la plata y con eso piensan que compraron salud, vida, bienestar. La construcción de caminos es para mayor destrucción, saqueo e invasión en nuestros territorios, bosques y los recursos naturales. (Parlamento de Naciones Indígenas de la Amazonía, Oriente y Chaco de Bolivia 2021b)[1]

Los marchistas permanecieron 64 días en la Universidad Autónoma Gabriel René Moreno, donde debatieron y analizaron la necesidad de reafirmar su "libre determinación". Como primer paso, conformaron el Parlamento de Naciones Indígenas de la Amazonía, Oriente y Chaco de Bolivia.

Los marchistas cuestionaron las corporaciones multinacionales, las instituciones de financiamiento internacional y los gobiernos de Luis Arce (2020–presente), Jeanine Áñez (2019–2020), y Evo Morales (2006–2019), por promulgar 14 leyes y por apoyar diversos proyectos que promueven la deforestación, los incendios e la invasión de territorios indígenas y áreas protegidas. En las décadas de 1980 y 1990, las fuerzas del capitalismo neoliberal, como las políticas de estabilización y ajuste estructural del Banco Mundial y el Fondo Monetario Internacional, tratados de comercio "libre", privatizaciones y proyectos como el proyecto Tierras Bajas del Este del Banco Mundial[2], provocaron la deforestación masiva en y alrededor de tierras indígenas para cultivos comerciales industriales como soja, algodón y sorgo (Hecht 2005; Hindery 1997; Jones 1995; Kaimowitz, Thiele y Pacheco 1999; Redo, Millington y Hindery 2011; World Bank 1993). La deforestación impulsada por la agroindustria continuó bajo Morales, Añez y Arce, como lo ejemplifican los acuerdos realizados durante la Cumbre Agrícola y Ganadera de 2015 en Santa Cruz, Bolivia, denominada "Sembrando Bolivia"[3]. Responsabilizaron al Estado de tolerar las invasiones de tierras y alentar las inversiones extranjeras:

> El "Estado Plurinacional", controlado por el MAS [Movimiento al Socialismo], gobierna sólo para su partido, para los sectores sociales que se benefician al amparo del estado: cocaleros del Chapare vinculados al narcotráfico, los mal llamados "interculturales" colonizadores internos … a esto se reduce su eslogan del "vivir bien"; el privilegio y protección a agronegocios vinculados a capitales extranjeros, la exportación de carne vacuna … a costa de la destrucción de los bosques, los incendios forestales que, contribuyen al calentamiento global que tanto inquieta al mundo, causados y promovidos por el gobierno mediante la invasión y avasallamiento de los territorios indígenas, las tierras fiscales y las áreas protegidas. (Parlamento de Naciones Indígenas de Bolivia 2021a)[4]

Fortalecidas por las políticas gubernamentales, las tierras ocupadas por colonos y pequeños agricultores se cuadruplicaron, por ejemplo, en el Bosque Chiquitano del Departamento de Santa Cruz de 2009 a 2021 (*Página Siete* 2021), donde ahora viven más de 1400 comunidades de colonos, muchas de las cuales provienen de los trópicos de Cochabamba y los Andes (ANF Noticias 2021). Según un informe de la Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza, luego de la elección de Evo Morales en 2005, la deforestación en la provincia de San Ignacio de Velasco, ubicada en el Bosque Chiquitano, se quintuplicó en los 13 años siguientes, totalizando 243 000 hectáreas,

[1] "Interculturales" se refiere a los agricultores colonos a pequeña escala (incluidos los cultivadores de coca) de los Andes.

[2] Aprobado en 1990, el proyecto de las Tierras Bajas del Este de $54 millones del Banco Mundial provocó deforestación por parte de agricultores industriales a gran escala que cultivan cultivos de exportación como la soja en las tierras bajas del este de Bolivia (ver https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P006152)

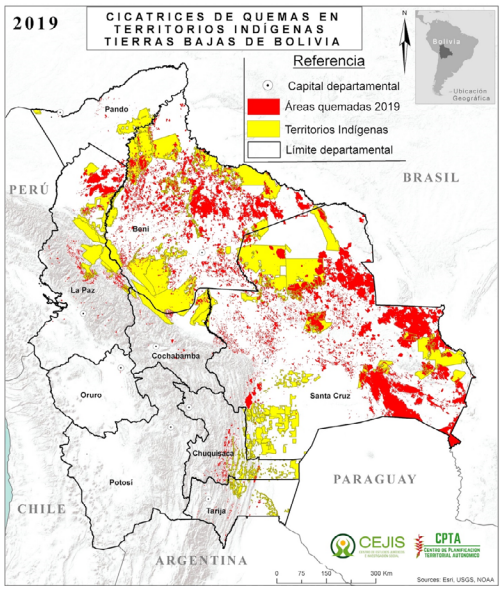
[3] Para más detalles ver Menchaca (2015).

[4] Evo Morales era un cultivador de coca que se convirtió en presidente de la confederación de sindicatos cocaleros locales, cargo que aún ocupa. Durante la presidencia de Morales fue criticado por favorecer a los cocaleros frente a otros sectores, como en el caso TIPNIS. "Vivir Bien" es un concepto que se encuentra en las culturas Quechua, Aymara y otras culturas indígenas que se refiere a una forma de vida en armonía con otras personas y el planeta (ver Gudynas y Acosta 2011).

e incrementando la tasa de 3000 hectáreas por año a más de 21 000 hectáreas por año (Vincenti 2021). El Bosque Chiquitano tiene una extensión de 22 976 600 hectáreas. En la misma zona, en las últimas tres décadas, las temperaturas aumentaron 0,6 grados centígrados y las precipitaciones disminuyeron un 17 por ciento. La deforestación en la región es preocupante debido a la importancia ecológica del bosque y dado que los bosques saludables son cruciales para la sobrevivencia de los pueblos indígenas y otros. Un equipo del Programa de Evaluación Rápida de Conservation International llamó al Bosque Chiquitano "el tramo más grande de bosque seco alto, relativamente inalterado en el Neotrópico, si no todo el mundo" (Parker et al. 1993). Para consternación de los pueblos indígenas que dependen del bosque, el Gobierno de Bolivia no se adhirió a la Declaración de los Líderes de Glasgow sobre los bosques y uso de la tierra en la Conferencia de las Naciones Unidas sobre el Cambio Climático (COP26) de 2021, firmada por los líderes de 141 países, cuyos territorios abarcan más del 85 por ciento de los bosques del planeta (Edie 2021)[5].

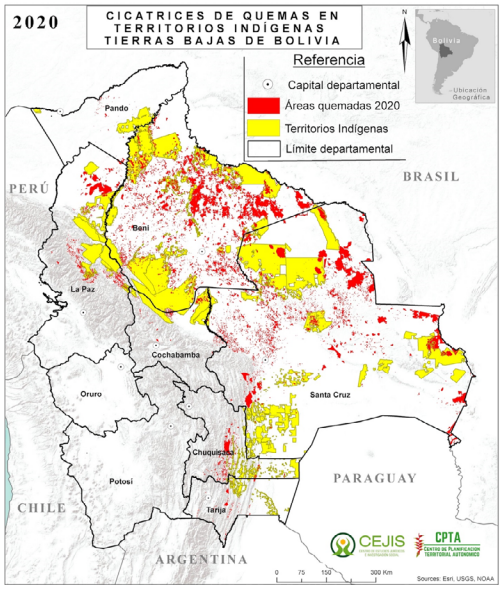
Estas dinámicas de deforestación y despojo muestran cómo un enfoque de ecología política es útil para situar la movilización indígena y aliada en el contexto de fuerzas políticas y macroeconómicas más amplias, por ejemplo, las "reformas" económicas neoliberales de Bolivia y el posterior giro hacia el supuesto nacionalismo de los recursos, que alimentaban la deforestación (Hindery 2014). La deforestación está estrechamente relacionada con los devastadores "incendios del Amazonas" desatados en las tierras bajas de Bolivia en los últimos años. Una parte significativa de los bosques quemados durante los devastadores incendios de 2019, 2020 y 2021 eran territorios indígenas, áreas protegidas y tierras públicas. Los incendios fueron provocados por agroindustriales, ganaderos e "interculturales" (cocaleros y colonizadores), que han talado grandes cantidades de bosque tropical. Entre 2002 y 2020, Bolivia ocupó el cuarto lugar en pérdida de bosques tropicales primarios, después de Brasil, Indonesia y la República Democrática del Congo (BBC 2021). Solo en 2020, se talaron aproximadamente 300 000 hectáreas de bosque tropical, el cuarto más alto del mundo. Los pueblos indígenas que viven en las tierras bajas de Bolivia están muy afectados por esta deforestación y los incendios. Según la ONG boliviana CEJIS (Aguilar 2021) entre 2010 y 2020 se quemaron 5 229 872 hectáreas –un área ligeramente superior al tamaño de Costa Rica– en 58 territorios indígenas, que comprenden el 42 por ciento de las tierras indígenas tituladas. Esto es significativo ya que el área boscosa en Bolivia es de 51 750 680 hectáreas, lo que representa aproximadamente el diez por ciento de los bosques de Bolivia quemados (ver figura 2, figura 3).

Figura 2. Cicatrices de quemas en territorios indígenas, 2019.



[5] Para obtener la información más reciente sobre los signatarios de la declaración, consulte "Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use," UN Climate Change Conference UK 2021, 2 de noviembre de 2021, https://ukcop26.org/glasgow-leaders-declaration-on-forests-and-land-use/.

Figura 3. Cicatrices de quemas en territorios indígenas, 2020.



En 2020, el Tribunal Internacional de los Derechos de la Naturaleza determinó que los incendios de 2019 en Bolivia fueron un Ecocidio causado por políticas gubernamentales y agroindustrias (ANF Noticias 2020). Varias entidades fueron declaradas responsables colectivamente por el crimen, incluido el gobierno de Morales de 2019; el gobierno de Añez de 2020; la Asamblea Legislativa, incluidos los escaños pertenecientes tanto al partido gobernante como a la oposición; productores agropecuarios y productores de soja modificada genéticamente. Recomendó la derogación de 13 leyes que promueven la deforestación y la quema. Entre ellas se encontraba el Decreto Supremo 26075, modificado bajo Morales, que autorizó la quema y cambió las designaciones de uso del suelo en los departamentos de Santa Cruz y Beni para que la agroindustria pudiera expandirse (Noticias ambientales 2020). También pidió la derogación de un controvertido decreto emitido por Añez que autorizaba cinco cultivos modificados genéticamente. La abrogación de las "Leyes Ecocidas", exigidas por la marcha por "Territorio, Identidad y Cultura", es fundamental para salvaguardar el bosque y los medios de vida de los pueblos indígenas y otras personas que dependen de él.

Muchos pueblos indígenas de las tierras bajas bolivianas perciben el bosque como la "casa grande", una fuente crucial de alimentos, agua, oxígeno, medicinas y materiales que sustentan sus medios de vida. Cuando se pierde el bosque, también se pierde la supervivencia indígena, la conservación de la biodiversidad y la mitigación del cambio climático. El conocimiento indígena y las prácticas de conservación de los pueblos indígenas son vitales para mantener intacto el bosque. Entre 2000 y 2012, las tasas de deforestación dentro de los territorios indígenas titulados en Bolivia fueron 2.8 veces menores que las tasas en el exterior (Ding et al. 2016, 42). Este papel crucial que juegan los pueblos indígenas bolivianos en la conservación de los bosques tropicales es emblemático de los patrones en todo el mundo, ya que aproximadamente el 80 por ciento de la biodiversidad forestal restante del mundo se encuentra dentro de los territorios de los pueblos indígenas (IUCN 2019).

La marcha denunció públicamente la negación del gobierno de Arce a reunirse con ellos y la calificó como "silencio discriminatorio que atenta contra nuestros derechos" (Parlamento de Naciones Indígenas de Bolivia 2021a). Irónicamente, en lugar de reconocer las justas demandas de los marchistas, los medios de comunicación y las ONG supuestamente progresistas, de la izquierda o que apoyan los derechos indígenas no apoyaron la marcha por temor a represalias por parte del gobierno, o creyeron los argumentos de la administración Arce de que la marcha fue una táctica de la derecha para socavar su legitimidad. En contraste, en una muestra de solidaridad, varias organizaciones, incluidos pueblos indígenas de las tierras altas, pequeños agricultores y trabajadores, emitieron declaraciones apoyando la marcha. Entre ellos se encontraban la Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos; la Comisión de Derechos Indígenas del Parlamento; la Central Obrera de Chuquisaca; la Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas de Tierras Bajas; varios movimientos sociales; y la Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA). Además de crear el Parlamento de Naciones Indígenas de Bolivia, los marchistas indígenas elaboraron una plataforma

de 14 puntos, que denuncia las violaciones de sus derechos, la invasión de sus territorios, pero a su vez que transmite mensajes de unidad entre la población boliviana:

> 4. Declaramos [...] la alianza de las 34 Naciones Indígenas con la sociedad civil, con la población no-indígena, [...] delinearemos [...] acciones para construir la sociedad que nos merecemos, más allá del extractivismo, y aportando con alternativas a los modelos de desarrollo de las culturas destructivas de la vida, reivindicamos la necesidad de convivir en reciprocidad con la naturaleza y de ello sabemos mucho y serán nuestros aportes a la humanidad. (Parlamento de Naciones Indígenas 2021a)

La movilización indígena y aliada en las décadas de 1990 y 2000 logró el reconocimiento de los derechos indígenas a la participación política, la consulta previa y la autodeterminación en la Constitución de 2009 pero, irónicamente, las leyes implementadas por Evo Morales desde 2009, incluidas la Ley Electoral, la Ley Minera, la Ley de Autonomías y la Ley de Deslinde Jurisdiccional han puesto en peligro estos logros, impulsando en cambio proyectos extractivos hacia territorios indígenas (Mendoza 2021).

La Ley de Régimen Electoral de 2010 reconoce la consulta previa, pero no es vinculante. En varios casos, el gobierno de Morales promovió la creación de "organizaciones indígenas paralelas" con líderes del MAS cuando los pueblos indígenas se opusieron a proyectos extractivos en territorios indígenas. Amenazó con no titular los territorios indígenas y ofreció proyectos comunitarios a cambio del consentimiento de los líderes indígenas. Tales actos desconocen los daños y pasivos ambientales generados por estos proyectos, como lo ejemplifica el caso del Territorio Comunitario de Origen (TCO) y área protegida Apolo, ubicado en la Amazonía Boliviana en el Departamento de La Paz. En este caso la Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Bolivia (CNAMIB) denunció la pequeña proporción de tierras tituladas y la falta de consulta.

Al igual que con otros TCO indígenas en Bolivia, la cantidad de tierra que el gobierno tituló fue mucho menor de lo que solicitaron los residentes de Apolo. Paralelamente, en el caso del gasoducto Cuiabá de Enron y Shell (Hindery 2014), los pueblos indígenas de la TCO de Apolo sintieron que fueron engañados para aceptar una compensación que nunca recibieron en su totalidad, y por la que aprobaban un proyecto de extracción que degradaría el bosque del que dependen.

Figura 4. Marchistas con un cartel que dice "Resistencias indígena del TIPNIS: la lucha por la vida y honor a los ancestros". Foto por Miguel Angel Valdivia Zarco.

Los marchistas también exigieron que el gobierno boliviano derogue el Decreto Supremo 2366, que fue emitido por Morales en 2015. El decreto legalizó el desarrollo de petróleo y gas en las Áreas Protegidas, donde las corporaciones petroleras multinacionales obtuvieron concesiones (Campanini 2015).

Figura 5. Marchista indígena portando un cartel pidiendo que derogue el Decreto Supremo 2366 (2015) emitido por Evo Morales, que legalizó el desarrollo de petróleo y gas en las Áreas Protegidas. Foto por Miguel Angel Valdivia Zarco.

Figura 6. El letrero al frente dice "Ni a la derecha ni a la pseudoizquierda. Estamos por la Madre Tierra". Foto por Miguel Angel Valdivia Zarco.

Figura 7. Marchistas indígenas mostrando la bandera nacional boliviana y otras banderas con la flor de Patujú (*Heliconia rostrata*), que representa la unificación y los pueblos indígenas de las tierras bajas. Foto por Miguel Angel Valdivia Zarco.

A medida que desaparecen los bosques de Bolivia, los pueblos indígenas pierden los alimentos, el agua y las medicinas que los sustentan. Sus culturas e identidades se erosionan y se vuelven vulnerables a la homogeneización cultural por influencias dentro y fuera de Bolivia. A medida que se pierden los bosques, también se pierden los conocimientos indígenas, la diversidad cultural, la biodiversidad, las formas de vida no humanas, el germoplasma nativo y los genotipos endémicos. Debido a la alteración del clima y la deforestación, ciudades como Santa Cruz se vuelven más cálidas y secas, los ciclos del agua se interrumpen, se captura menos carbono y se produce menos oxígeno. Paralelamente al caos climático en otras partes de los trópicos, las lluvias torrenciales y las inundaciones provocan escorrentías y erosión. Los períodos anormales de frío intenso, granizo en los valles Andinos y vientos huracanados son cada vez más comunes. El cambio climático en Bolivia proviene de políticas y prácticas de instituciones de financiamiento internacionales, gobiernos y corporaciones que imponen modelos de desarrollo extractivos y consumistas que destruyen la naturaleza y los pueblos indígenas que viven en reciprocidad con la naturaleza. Este llamado "desarrollo" deja a su paso una injusticia social y ambiental. Estas son las grandes enseñanzas de la "Segunda Gran Marcha Indígena por el Territorio, la Identidad y la Cultura", que hace un llamado al mundo para que abandone las prácticas que destruyen la naturaleza y cambie a alternativas no consuntivas

que dejan los bosques en pie. Esto implica el uso de los recursos forestales sin destruirlos, viviendo en reciprocidad con la naturaleza, y aprendiendo que los bosques no son para la agricultura industrial, sino una fuente de vida que produce agua dulce, oxígeno, alimentos, medicinas, hábitat y regulación del clima. En un mundo interrelacionado marcado por la catástrofe climática y la devastadora pérdida de biodiversidad, proteger los derechos de los pueblos indígenas de Bolivia y los bosques donde viven es un paso vital para salvaguardar el bienestar del planeta. El destino de los bosques de Bolivia es una preocupación para todos[6].

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Fotos, videos, mapas y documentos relacionados con la marcha indígena recopiladas por los autores se pueden encontrar en: https://pages.uoregon.edu/dhindery/marcha%20indigena%20articulo/.

An English version of this article, translated by Derrick Hindery, can be found at the following link: https://pages.uoregon.edu/dhindery/marcha%20indigena%20articulo/articulo/What%20is%20lost%20when%20the%20forest%20is%20lost%20the%20struggle%20for%20indigenous%20rights%20and%20environmental%20justice%20in%20Bolivia.docx.

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[6] Consulte el libro clásico *The Fate of the Forest* (Hecht y Cockburn 1990) para obtener un excelente relato de los impulsores políticos y económicos fundamentales de la deforestación en la Amazonía brasileña, así como el papel fundamental de las personas que dependen de los bosques en su protección.

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Rethinking Environmental Polarization and Pesticide Use in Argentina

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What is the relationship between sociopolitical polarization and environmental polarization in Argentina? On the basis of our ongoing research on farming and pesticides in the Argentine Pampas, we argue that polarized sociopolitical views do not map neatly onto environmental positions. More specifically, actors at odds in the sociopolitical field share common assumptions and support similar policies when it comes to pesticide use.

Long-established perspectives in rural studies looked closely at class ideology and interests, assuming a notion of personhood that understands subjects as rational, utilitarian actors moved by their self-seeking interests and/or captured by dominant ideologies. In the case of Argentine farmers, a widespread discourse in the social sciences and among environmental activists often portrays them in Manichean terms, making farmers using pesticides the "bad guys" for poisoning the environment and creating public health risks. This stance, we argue, misses that farmers often breathe the same air they spray, blurring the line between victim and perpetrator. Black-and-white characterizations may gloss over the fact that farmers firmly believe that there are few alternatives to using pesticides if they want to stay profitable, sustain their farms, keep their land, and reproduce their identity as farmers. We claim that a binary approach disregards too quickly the moral and subjective aspects underlying pesticide use and agrochemical exposure. We argue, then, that a polarizing approach that maligns farmers does not open much space for nuance and obfuscates our understanding of pesticide use. Analyzing the discourses of farmers "in their own terms," in contrast, reveals ambivalences and ambiguities in their understandings of pesticide use and agrochemical exposure.

In this contribution, we join researchers investigating how farmers see their activity beyond strictly economic terms (Córdoba 2018). In doing so, we aim to offer an alternative take to social sciences' predominant understandings of the "soybean boom" in Argentina (which are often fixated on suffering subjects), and redirect our gaze instead toward midsize farmers, socially embedded in the rural towns where they live. What alternative narratives emerge if the prism of "dark anthropology" (Ortner 2016) is balanced with an ethnographic disposition attentive to how people make moral sense of the universe of agrochemical-based agriculture?

Soybeans and Pesticides in Argentina

As shown by the dossier published in the Fall 2021 issue of *LASA Forum*, extractivist activities have come to dominate the economy of many Latin American countries, deepening the region's dependency on primary exports while bringing about new forms of socio-environmental destruction and dispossession. In Argentina, this regional model of "*maldesarrollo*" (Svampa and Viale 2015) is represented by the sweeping expansion of genetically modified (GM) soybeans and other agrochemical-dependent crops. The commercialization of genetically engineered herbicide-resistant soybeans in 1996 unleashed

a process of agricultural intensification that dramatically increased the use of agrochemicals in Argentina.

A quarter century after the introduction of GM crops, the social and environmental impacts created by agrochemical use are undeniable. Herbicide drifts that damage non-GM crops and contaminate the air, agricultural runoff polluting waterways, and overall worrying cancer clusters in rural towns and peri-urban populations are some of the consequences of Argentina's incorporation into the global "pesticide treadmill."[1] Several researchers have raised concerns about the consequences of widespread agrochemical use (among many others, see Domínguez and Sabatino 2010; Verzeñassi 2014; Beilin and Suryanarayanan 2017; Schmidt and López 2018; and Leguizamón 2020).

In our previous work, indeed, we tackled these issues. We wrote about the ways in which peasants affected by pesticide drifts resisted and accommodated the expansion of genetically modified crops and agrochemical exposure in Northern Argentina (Lapegna 2013, 2016) and, in the Pampas region, we focused on gender identities and the social organization of agroecological care (Kunin 2019), pesticides' risk perception and gender dynamics (Kunin and Lucero 2020), and rural high school students' exposure to pesticides (Kunin et al. 2019). Our ongoing collaborative research, in contrast, changes the focus from "suffering subjects" to more privileged actors, who nonetheless live and work in rural towns. We seek to offer a new perspective on GM crops and pesticide use in Argentina by "studying up" agricultural biotechnology and pesticides, focusing on the actors who use herbicides and benefit from soybean production (rather than only on those excluded from it).

Grietas and Continuities with Crucial Differences

Political polarization has been on the rise in Argentina. The Peronist administrations of Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2008–2015) rekindled economic neo-developmentalism and confrontation around "populism" in Argentina. The polarization between "Kirchneristas" and their detractors became particularly vocal, visible, and virulent in 2008. Then, agribusiness associations, farmer organizations, and people in rural towns across Argentina mobilized against an increase in soybean export taxes, with the support of media conglomerates and large portions of the urban middle classes. What became known as the conflict between the government and "*el campo*" crystallized what is popularly known in Argentina as "*la grieta*" (the crack): a metaphorical but real tension and division between pro- and anti-Kirchner positions. *La grieta* manifests both in the public sphere of national politics and the intimacy of family gatherings or workplace relationships—dynamics not that different from the *fútbol* rivalries pitting friends, acquaintances, and relatives against one another.

Yet, despite the sociopolitical chasm of *la grieta*, it would be hard to argue that there is environmental polarization in Argentina. Put differently, the diametrically opposed positions on environmental issues in Argentina do not even come close to the political polarization of the country. While environmentalism is gaining ground in Argentina, socio-environmental issues are far from being seriously incorporated into the political agenda—even when scholars and activists have been pressing the point. Journalist Darío Aranda, indeed, claims that support for soybean production in Argentina has become state policy: both neoliberal and neo-developmentalist governments supported the expansion of export-oriented agricultural production based on the "technological package" of GM seeds, agrochemicals, and large

[1] "The Pesticide Treadmill," Pesticide Action Network, https://www.panna.org/gmos-pesticides-profit/pesticide-treadmill.

machinery.[2] Kirchnerista administrations did little to alter the reliance on monocultures and agrochemicals of export-oriented agriculture. For example, during the administration of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the government proposed a plan to expand the area used for agriculture in 2011 (thus increasing the use of agrochemicals), promoted the installation of a Monsanto plant in Córdoba in 2012, and favored global agribusiness corporations (Lapegna 2016, 160; Lapegna 2017, 324). Former minister of science and technology Lino Barañao embodied the continuities across governments. Appointed by Cristina Kirchner in 2007, he publicly and repeatedly downplayed the toxicity of glyphosate and kept his position throughout the administration of Mauricio Macri.

There were, however, important differences between the rural policies of neoliberal governments (the Menem, De la Rúa, and Macri administrations) and those of neo-developmentalist administrations (the Kirchners and the current Fernández government). While neoliberal governments applied policies that hurt marginalized rural actors (e.g., eliminating regulations that supported smallholders in the 1990s or closing agencies and programs for rural development during the Macri administration), neo-development governments played both sides. Kirchnerista administrations favored the expansion of agribusiness but also created spaces, programs, and initiatives that had the avowed goal of supporting peasants, Indigenous peoples, small farmers, and the broadly defined category of "family farming." More recently, the Alberto Fernández administration created the first National Directorate of Agroecology, an office within the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Livestock.

Rethinking Pesticide Use in Argentina

Scholars have offered several political, economic, and institutional explanations for the support behind agrochemical-dependent agriculture in Argentina: a strategy of "export-oriented populism" (Richardson 2009), a dominant "bio-hegemony" (Newell 2009), the struggles of Kirchnerismo to stay in power (Lapegna 2017), the ideological underpinnings of neo-developmentalism (Barri and Wahren 2010), and the ability of a new agrarian entrepreneurial class to outmaneuver older farming classes (Gras and Hernández 2019) are some of them. While these analyses provide sound material and ideological explanations, they also leave important aspects out of the picture. By emphasizing class ideology and interests, these perspectives assume a notion of personhood that understands subjects as rational, unwavering utilitarian actors moved by their self-seeking interests and/or captured by dominant ideologies. While these are long-established perspectives in rural studies, we claim that they disregard too quickly the moral and subjective aspects underlying understandings of pesticide use and agrochemical exposure. How do farmers and people living in rural towns respond to the accusation that they are responsible for contaminating the air, water, and health in rural and semi-urban communities across the country? Besides "making money" or following the logic of progress, how do they think and feel about these issues? To address these questions, we draw from our ongoing collaboration on a larger project in which we apply an elemental anthropological principle, that is, to capture *in their own terms* the points of view of people using agrochemicals to understand pesticide exposure, environmental issues, and public health controversies.

Assuming a relational notion of personhood means that people who spray and people being sprayed, *fumigadores y fumigados*, are embedded in a social web of ambivalences and ambiguities. People residing in "sprayed towns" who either publicly denounce, stay silent, or hold doubts about the risks of pesticide exposure are often relatives, friends, or neighbors of the people who spray (Leguizamón 2020; Kunin 2019). In our research with the latter, we

2 Giuliana Sordo, "Entrevista a Darío Aranda: 'Las políticas extractivas van a continuar en el próximo gobierno, no importa quien gane," *La Primera Piedra*, March 18, 2015, https://www.laprimerapiedra.com.ar/2015/03/entrevista-a-dario-aranda-las-politicas-extractivas-van-a-continuar-en-el-proximo-gobierno-no-importa-quien-gane/.

noticed that they hesitate and express doubts about the risks of agrochemical exposure, torn between the constant messages of companies and public officials reassuring them that agrochemicals are safe and their concerns about applying agrochemicals where they live with their families. Pesticide-dependent agriculture results in "both, autonomy and dependence, care and disintegration. The more-than-human entanglements that are woven around this master plan are ambiguous and contradictory" (Müller 2021, 175). When taking emic, multiple, and multilayered points of view seriously and adopting an ethnographic approach that keeps romantic views, idealizations, and preconceptions in check, the resulting image is not a neatly divided, polarized picture but a fuzzy, nebulous field.

At first sight, public discourses on agrochemicals may suggest a field of clear-cut lines and definite positions. At the national scale, farmers' public discourses legitimize agrochemical use by downplaying the extent and risks of toxic exposure. But while the industry's minimization of the risk of pesticides may suggest a cynical or conspiratorial attitude, pesticides are also inserted in a narrative of imperative and sometimes even humanitarian need. Farmers usually think that they "cannot produce without pesticides" and that their production "feeds the world" to meet population growth. Pesticides are thought of as a (positive and morally charged) solution to world hunger.

The farmers we spoke to do not live in Argentina's large cities or abroad, but rather in small or medium-sized rural districts in the Pampas. "We all live off the countryside" is a common mantra in these places, and the uneven benefits of the soybean boom are often swept under the mantle of national and technological "progress." Given these material and ideological forces, it may not come as a surprise that protests against pesticides are few and far between, and that regulations aiming to curb pesticide use are seldom enforced (if at all). But protests of any kind are not habitual in these towns, where anti-anonymity sociability is prevalent (Kunin 2019), social control through gossip and rumors is strong (Kunin and Faccio 2021), social inequalities run deep, kinship ties are very important for doing business, and farmers are often prominent local figures. That is why Leguizamón (2020) talks about an "elephant in the field" in reference to the compliance and consent of local populations toward pesticide exposure.

What we are registering (which complicates a polarized approach), is that farmers keep their worries latent, their thoughts ambiguous, and their assertions ambivalent in the more intimate settings of in-depth interviews. We found three tropes that stand out. First, an ambivalence toward the risks of agrochemical exposure. Second, their own understanding of environmentalism, mainly devoted to "caretaking" of the soil, which is in turn informed by the "no-till" technique of planting seeds without plowing the land (a practice afforded by herbicide-resistant crops, since weeds are eliminated with herbicides instead of by plowing the land). Third, an assumption of pesticides as a "safety net" in a highly financialized mode of production where there is little room for productive failures or financial missteps.

First, the farmers we interviewed expressed ambivalent positions regarding the dangers of pesticide use. On one hand, they expressed mistrust toward the scientific literature showing links between herbicide exposure and cancer or other negative health impacts. They see these findings as biased or having "political" motivations intended to "demonize" them. Using their own bodies as evidence of the nonexistence of danger, they repeatedly shared that they live close to agricultural fields and that "nothing has ever happened" to them. Or they mentioned examples of people who have been working in the fields for decades and, if the claims about the toxicity of pesticides were true, "they would all be dead" by now. They also stated that agrochemicals like glyphosate are less dangerous than older herbicides like paraquat.

While adopting this somewhat dismissive stance toward the risks of pesticide exposure, some also expressed concerns about exposing their children, their pets, or their workers to

agrochemicals. Our interviewees, in other words, simultaneously expressed the existence and nonexistence of hazards associated with pesticides. They claimed that herbicides are not dangerous when properly used, while also underlining the precautions they need to take or expressing doubts about safety. This ambivalent understanding of toxic exposure is also a way of diluting the negative consequences of spraying pesticides or residing next to sprayed fields. In other words, we see these expressions as ways of making toxic exposure livable and as a means of building acceptance in their communities (for a similar situation in the city of Buenos Aires, see Auyero and Swistun 2009).

Second, many social scientists or environmental activists see farmers as unconcerned with the environment or mostly moved by "greenwashing" intentions. What we want to highlight is that the farmers we interviewed expressed their own understanding of environmentalism, mostly in relation to the health of soils. Following their own environmental imaginaries, they readily admitted that it is necessary to "take care" of the soil, seen as an asset in danger. They discussed these practices of soil care in terms of crop rotation, the incorporation of cover crops, and, when possible, reduction of agrochemical applications and use of "green label" products.

Third, farmers are often portrayed as confident, purely profit-seeking actors, who use pesticides in a Machiavellian way. We do not dispute that many Argentine farmers are well-to-do thanks to the agrarian boom. The farmers we interviewed, however, assess profitability under the light of past negative experiences, and profits assuage fears about going bankrupt or losing their land. For them, staying in business (and pesticides are a key part of that) is not only an economic issue. An agronomic failure or economic crisis would also mean to be seen as "losers" in their town, and for some of them that would also mean to be questioned by relatives for forfeiting the land patrimony bestowed to them. Farmers, instead, are proud of having outclimbed their parents on the social ladder and of weathering the 1990s, when the Argentine peso was pegged to the dollar and many farmers went bankrupt and had their land auctioned (Giarracca and Teubal 2001). Having lived through that process instilled a view of pesticides as a "safety net," a key tool in the stabilization of productive uncertainties. The package of herbicides and herbicide-tolerant seeds allows for no-till agriculture, reducing labor and simplifying management. Additionally, agrochemicals are usually bought in US dollars on credit, to be paid when the crops are sold. A weed infestation can ruin the crop, consume their income, and, potentially, drive them into debt. Pesticides thus become an imperative tool to reduce risks and keep the specter of bankruptcy at bay. The socio-natural assemblage of herbicide-resistant crops and their entangled ecological, productive, economic, and financial risks are what keep farmers awake at night, rather than environmental concerns *stricto sensu*.

These pressing issues and lines of convergence among apparently disparate phenomena may go unnoticed in some environmentalist discourses, where mentions of the materiality of agricultural production can be glaringly absent. To further complicate things, midsize farmers occupy multiple positions in globalized food systems. While farmers in the Pampas are certainly responsible for spraying people, crops, water, and animals and occupy a privileged position within Argentina's agrarian structure (e.g., in comparison to campesinos), they are also subordinate to the global agribusiness companies selling them inputs and those buying their products. And while they may occupy prominent positions as public figures in their "rur-urban" dwellings, they don't have the financial, economic, or political power of those who speak on their behalf on the national scene. By taking these constraints into account, we can be better attuned to the fact that farmers who are steeped in the system of monocrop production for export both reproduce and are trapped by the pesticide treadmill.

Argentina's agrarian boom not only provides an income to farmers; their profitability also allows them to reproduce their identity and see themselves as stewards of the land. Furthermore, the agrarian boom revitalizes the still powerful self-image of Argentina as a global power, or *el granero del mundo*. The pesticide-dependent

model of agricultural production thus allows farmers not only to keep their money in the bank but also their self-understanding as farmers. Pesticide-dependent agriculture allows Argentine farmers to maintain their position of relative privilege in their communities (and the nation) as their economic success with GM soybeans translates into social standing as successful entrepreneurs and local role models.

Conclusion

Writing about the challenges of analyzing GM crops, the anthropologist Glenn Davis Stone (2005, 208) compellingly argued that both technophile Malthusianism and un-nuanced Marxism share "an overriding commitment to an ethical black-and-white," dichotomous perspective and a tendency "to delegitimate an examination of the grays." Considering that a "complete transformation of crop biotechnology (putting the genie back in the bottle) seems impossible," a perspective attuned to gray zones "reaches for a more systemic and synthetic analysis of the sociocultural context into which genetically modified crops are being introduced" (Stone 2005, 214).

In this article, we heeded this stance and examined gray zones to problematize the relationship between sociopolitical polarization and environmental polarization; we offered a different narrative about pesticides use and agrochemical exposure, one in which ambiguities and ambivalences are not "resolved" or glossed over but rather explored in their generative capacity. We emerged from our conversations with farmers convinced that seeing them as either skillful, shrewd entrepreneurs or as careless, self-interested polluters leaves little room to incorporate the ambivalences and ambiguities that they express about monocropping and pesticides. A number of scholars (ourselves included) have paid close attention to the suffering victims of dispossession, the stoic heroes opposing those forces, and/or the evil corporations imposing them. We, in contrast, want to decamp from our echo chambers and keep "the romance of resistance" (Abu-Lughod 1990) at bay. As the humanistic social sciences have long established, understanding is not justifying or celebrating.

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El litio, un (des)estabilizador de transiciones bipolares

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Decir que hemos sido expulsados del presente puede parecer una paradoja. No: es una experiencia que todos hemos sentido alguna vez; algunos la hemos vivido primero como una condena y después transformada en conciencia y acción. La búsqueda del presente no es la búsqueda del edén terrestre ni de la eternidad sin fechas: es la búsqueda de la realidad real. Para nosotros, hispanoamericanos, ese presente real no estaba en nuestros países: era el tiempo que vivían los otros, los ingleses, los franceses, los alemanes. El tiempo de Nueva York, París, Londres.

—OCTAVIO PAZ, "LA BÚSQUEDA DEL PRESENTE", CONFERENCIA PREMIO NOBEL 1990

A tres décadas de que Octavio Paz dejase al desnudo la gramática colonial que disloca al presente de nuestros territorios latinoamericanos, esta lógica dominante sigue expresándose a través de discursos y prácticas asociadas al cambio climático y a la urgente necesidad de implementar estrategias orientadas a reducir la temperatura del planeta. De hecho, reducir emisiones de CO_2 a través del reemplazo tecnológico del transporte fósil por uno eléctrico energizado por baterías de iones de litio, es un buen ejemplo de cómo lógicas coloniales siguen alimentando el sueño del edén terrestre y el presente bucólico de ciudades verdes vitalizadas con energías renovables. Buenos Aires, La Paz o Santiago, capitales de los principales países que hoy extraen y exportan el material esencial para la creación de estos futuros verdes soportados por tecnologías dependientes en el litio, siguen añorando el tiempo de Nueva York, Oslo o Shenzhen. La creciente demanda de litio, necesaria para el desarrollo de las baterías que permitirán la electromovilidad en Estados Unidos, Europa y China, está acompañada de discursos y humores celebratorios que, encarnando el delirio del capital, expresan compromisos mesiánicos y promesas lineales y unívocas sobre el sueño del edén terrestre de la neutralidad climática.

Figura 1. Taxi impulsado por baterías de litio producido por BYD, Shenzhen. El color de su placa patente revela su condición de ser "verde". Foto por Pablo Ampuero.

Europa promete ser "el primer bloque climáticamente neutro del mundo para el año 2050", garantizando que no se "[dejará] a

nadie atrás"[1]. En Chile, SQM —empresa privada de capitales mayormente chilenos— se suma a este gran proyecto al ofrecer nada menos que "soluciones para el progreso humano", comprometiéndose a "reducir la extracción de salmuera en un 50% al año 2030, [... y así] disminuir el consumo de agua continental en un 65% al año 2040", llegando a ser una empresa de "carbono neutral en todos sus productos al año 2040 y, en el caso del litio, cloruro de potasio y yodo al año 2030"[2].

El litio es uno de los materiales fundamentales en la producción de baterías eléctricas, y es utilizado para estabilizar los mercados cada vez más rentables de energías renovables a través de la electromovilidad. Si bien observamos un crecimiento económico ininterrumpido en el norte global asociado a este mercado, este mismo crecimiento contrasta fuertemente con las presentes "realidades reales" de Octavio Paz, donde se explota el litio a través de prácticas extractivistas que implican la destrucción y despojo de ecosistemas y formas de vida[3]. En este contexto, la preocupación decolonial de Octavio Paz encuentra hoy una nueva forma, puesto que para quiénes y dónde será beneficiosa y sostenible tal transición energética resulta aún controversial. Cuestionar, abrir, y pensar críticamente sobre cómo se construye tanto ese nosotros de la transición energética, como esa temporalidad y espacialidad moderna de la escala planetaria estratégica, se vuelve un imperativo ético. En este texto proponemos unas ideas preliminares para pensar este imperativo ético.

Desde Latinoamérica, no es difícil constatar cómo la genealogía de la transición energética es el misma que la de la transición capitalista. No es difícil constatar cómo proyectos globalizantes irrumpen e interrumpen en los espacios locales. Menos aún darse cuenta de cómo estas transiciones invisibilizan la interdependencia de procesos situados que buscan la descarbonización a escala planetaria. Al separar al mundo en continentes, discretos y distintos, e imponer un tiempo lineal unívoco y universal, estas transiciones, pensadas desde el Norte Global, operan sin considerar la relevancia ecológica de la sostenibilidad de procesos ecológicos interdependientes. En este sentido, y considerando como en Latinoamérica *la sed de litio es sed de agua*, en este trabajo damos cuenta del carácter procesual de los humores en juego en estas transiciones. Nos interesa mostrar cómo estas transiciones basadas en litio estabilizan y desestabilizan humores maníacos y depresivos, humanos y no humanos. Considerando la estabilización que produce el litio en cuadros psiquiátricos bipolares y en proyectos globalizantes de descarbonización de la economía a través de soluciones tecnológicas ecomodernistas y capitalistas, proponemos pensar las transiciones energéticas como transiciones bipolares, a saber, transiciones caracterizadas por el actuar de humores depresivos y maníacos que cuestionan radicalmente el tiempo lineal que impone la transición energética hegemónica. Con transiciones bipolares nos interesa indicar cómo el mismo humor maníaco que propone una descarbonización frenética —que beneficia a muy pocos— rearticula territorios de impotencia caracterizados por tensiones continuas entre estos humores maníacos y la generación de humores depresivos. Así, nuestro diagnóstico humoral considera el norte y el sur como categorías que sólo a veces coinciden con zonas geográficas y que, muchas veces, se articulan no como puntos cardinales absolutos, sino como zonas humorales relacionadas con la distribución desigual de líquidos fundamentales para la vida, en mundos caracterizados por una enorme inestabilidad, y en algunos casos, como el de Chile, por una severa e inquietante sequía.

[1] "Financiar la transición verde: El plan de inversiones del Pacto Verde Europeo y el mecanismo para una transición justa", *Comisión Europea*, comunicado de prensa, 14 de enero de 2020, Bruselas, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/ip_20_17.

[2] "SQM entre las cinco empresas chilenas más sustentables según ponderación ESG", *Timeline Antofagasta*, 25 de enero de 2021.

[3] Para discusiones sobre extractivismos en América Latina ver Acosta (2011), Gudynás (2016) y Svampa (2019).

Figura 2. Extracción de agua subterránea en el Salar de Atacama para lubricación de maquinarias en piscinas de evaporación. Foto por Cristóbal Bonelli.

La necesidad de considerar la relevancia del agua dentro de estas transiciones capitalistas que igualan la sed maníaca de litio a la minería de agua, nos impulsa a elaborar una teoría procesual de los humores en juego en estos procesos. También nos obliga a diseñar un aparato conceptual que dé cuenta de cómo estas transiciones estabilizan y desestabilizan humores humanos y no humanos. En la imaginación occidental, la teoría de los humores es antigua. Remonta a Grecia y su cosmología del cuerpo humano como contenedor de líquidos básicos (sangre, bilis amarilla, bilis negra y flema) relacionados con los cuatro elementos fundamentales (aire, fuego, tierra, agua). Estabilizar estos humores suponía tener una buena salud, un buen humor y, en consecuencia, un "buen vivir". En nuestro escenario de cambio climático y crisis ecológicas, estos cuatro elementos fundamentales y sus concomitantes fluidos básicos, aparecen altamente desestabilizados, y ese añorado buen vivir toma más bien la forma de un dramático vivir agónico.

Además de considerar la teoría humoral griega, mítica, queremos entender estos desarreglos del planeta desde la salud mental y la psiquiatría contemporánea, especialmente a través de la definición de bipolaridad que aparece en el último manual de diagnóstico psiquiátrico DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Este establece como primer criterio para la manía "un periodo persistentemente elevado, expansivo o de humor irritable" y "un aumento anormal y persistente de actividades orientadas a la tarea, o aumento de energía", corroborando así las primeras conceptualizaciones del cuadro hechas por Kraepelin (1921) hace un siglo, cuando enfatizaba el "aumento del estar ocupado" como fundamental en la manía. Este humor maníaco puede ser visto como capitalista; no descansa ni un segundo, y se expresa a través de la extracción continua de agua en muchos lugares de América Latina, extracción que tampoco se detiene[4]. Es este humor maníaco, y las desestabilizaciones humorales que produce en las materialidades no humanas, el que nos permite pensar a la transición energética como una transición bipolar. En ellas, lo maníaco aparece como polaridad norte en aparente tensión con una polaridad sur; polos que no necesariamente coinciden con un territorio geográfico, como establecía Octavio Paz.

Proponemos una teoría humoral de las transiciones a través del concepto "transición bipolar", concepto útil ya que da cuenta de la distribución desigual, desequilibrada y polarizada de estados anímicos y fluidos humanos y no humanos presente en el *modus operandi* del capital. Pensamos estas transiciones bipolares conectando parcialmente los lenguajes de la salud mental —humor maníaco y humor depresivo— con los lenguajes griegos, más míticos, relacionados a los humores más básicos del cuerpo humano y del planeta. Desde el territorio extractivista latinoamericano, las transiciones bipolares presentan una peculiar articulación y desequilibrio entre el humor maniaco capitalista y el uso del agua; en particular, cuando se refiere al litio y su explotación de agua dulce (usada para el proceso

[4] Para efectos de este trabajo, hemos decidido focalizarnos en la extracción de agua. Sin embargo, en la lógica Marxista del "capital constante", este humor maníaco evidentemente esta transversalmente presente en todo tipo de práctica extractiva, en su organización del trabajo y la creación de plusvalía a través de la explotación de la fuerza de trabajo y la organización de los turnos de trabajo. Ver Marx (1975).

productivo) y salmuera (usada para la producción de diferentes compuestos de litio dependiendo del país donde se extraiga).

Pensar las transiciones bipolares nos permite, además, conectar dos discursos que tienden a quedar disociados en el dominio público: el discurso de las transiciones energéticas —enmarcadas dentro de las transiciones capitalistas— y el discurso diagnóstico en salud mental y su detección de desórdenes bipolares o desórdenes del humor. La categoría "bipolar" nos permite desplazar a la categoría "energética" desde el presente del sur, y descolonizar el punto de partida obsesionado por la energía, el crecimiento económico ilimitado asociado a modelos de desarrollo, que impone el norte. Norte y sur, desde la óptica critica de transiciones bipolares, tienen que ver con mundos asociados a humores propios del discurso bipolar: proponemos el norte como animado por un humor maníaco y el sur como proclive al humor depresivo. Este énfasis en humores polarizados permite pensar la descarbonización del transporte como una respuesta maníaca-capitalista, como parte de un cuadro mayor de distribución de desigualdades. Este humor maniaco se expresa como descarbonización maníaca en donde no hay transiciones energéticas, sino muchas veces, adiciones energéticas (ver Fornillo 2018; York y Bell 2019). La transición bipolar permite dar cuenta de este proceso al diagnosticar el estado maníaco del capitalismo (Martin 2007), que enfrenta el cambio climático con más producción y negocio: más baterías, más autos, más trabajo, más energía, más crecimiento económico —elementos y promesas que no pueden existir sin individuos competitivos—.

Figura 3. Ojo de agua seco en el sector de Quelana, Salar de Atacama, cercano al pozo de extracción de agua usado por empresa minera de litio. Foro por Cristóbal Bonelli.

La posición de Chile como uno de los principales proveedores de litio a nivel mundial, es parte de una historia más amplia sobre la implementación de una matriz de desarrollo neoliberal en Latinoamérica, la que se inaugura con el golpe de Estado chileno en 1973. La estrecha relación que ha existido entre la instalación y desarrollo de las empresas extractivas de litio y el poder político y económico, es evidente. En la actualidad, y en medio de un proceso constituyente que coincide con las elecciones presidenciales quizá más importantes desde la transición democrática a Chile (por presentar por primera vez la posibilidad de modificar de manera radical y estructural no solamente el escenario político sino el modelo económico que lo ha acompañado), se hace también evidente la inconmensurable presencia del capital financiero internacional en el entramado nacional. Recientemente Frank Ha, CEO de Tianqi Lithium, empresa china propietaria de casi un cuarto de las acciones de SQM, declaró que si bien son "respetuosos con los procesos internos de los países en los que invertimos [...] lo que nos ha preocupado en los últimos meses tiene que ver con algunas opiniones sobre la industria del litio en Chile, el papel del sector privado en general y de SQM en particular" (Cofré 2021). En este sentido, es ineludible tener que considerar, en cualquier análisis relativo al litio, que los capitales financieros globalizados avanzan sobre la política nacional y sobre la soberanía de un país que precisamente se está intentando recuperar en medio de los álgidos

procesos democráticos actuales. Vale la pena mencionar que durante los años ochenta, la República Popular de China (RPC) reactivó sus relaciones económicas con Chile como parte de su nueva política de reforma y apertura. Los líderes chinos estaban particularmente interesados en el proyecto económico chileno, que ellos consideraron como una exitosa liberalización de la economía sin democratización política.[5]

La estrategia china de industrialización y modernización acelerada fue exitosa en asegurar transferencias de capitales globales al país a través de la Reforma y Apertura China. Reforma y Apertura es el concepto que encapsula una serie de políticas implementadas desde 1978 que buscaron introducir la economía de mercado en el país. Este proceso ha significado un cambio radical de las estructuras sociales y productivas propias del socialismo bajo el liderazgo de Mao Zedong. La Reforma y Apertura no solo configuró una etapa de acumulación originaria de capital, sino que, en combinación con una fuerte autoridad del Estado, redefinió las relaciones de producción y la fuente de legitimación política del Partido Comunista. En solo 60 años, la RPC se convirtió en la segunda economía más poderosa del mundo, un centro internacional de manufactura e innovación y mejoró considerablemente la calidad de vida de gran parte de su población. Como contraste, estos éxitos significaron la migración masiva de trabajadores rurales a la ciudad, donde conforman el grupo social más precario, el incremento de las brechas de desigualdades sociales y regionales, y la destrucción del medioambiente y el agotamiento de recursos naturales en función del crecimiento económico. Paulatinamente, el gobierno de la RPC ha tratado de amortiguar la situación, pero no ha habido un replanteamiento radical sobre la economía y el patrón de desarrollo. Aún más, bajo la égida de la Iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta, la RPC ha logrado evitar una crisis de sobreacumulación a través de la expansión geográfica y la reorganización espacial (Harvey 2005). China ha aumentado sostenidamente su demanda de recursos naturales y su oferta de construcción de infraestructuras, lo que ha motivado la reprimarización de las economías latinoamericanas.[6] Una contradicción emerge entre la búsqueda por construir una Civilización Ecológica en la RPC sin un cuestionamiento radical de los patrones de producción y consumo capitalistas, y en su lugar, el ensalzamiento del litio, entre otros minerales, como estabilizador ecológico y económico. Así, en lugares como Chile, se perpetua un paradigma de desarrollo inasible a costa de la mercantilización de la naturaleza.

Es necesario recordar, además, que la exacerbación del trabajo productivo del extractivismo neoliberal minero en Chile necesitó separar el agua de la tierra para convertirla en mercancía. Al privatizarla, a través del Código de aguas de 1981 —que definió los derechos de aguas como propiedad privada con mínima regulación estatal— el país se convirtió en líder internacional en políticas de agua en favor del mercado, fortaleciendo además la abstracción del litio a través de su especulación financiera en las bolsas de valores más importantes.[7]

Lo que llamamos transición bipolar tiene que ver entonces no sólo con los humores maníacos y depresivos, sino también con los tiempos y espacios que dictamina la transición capitalista actual. Esta forma de expansión de capital requiere una nueva configuración del espacio-tiempo, tal como el traspaso del fordismo a la acumulación flexible dentro de una economía financiera requirió de la aceleración del tiempo

[5] Para el desarrollo de este punto, ver Ampuero (2016).

[6] La literatura económica sobre reprimarización es abundante. Una aproximación empírica y comparativa puede encontrarse en Santana Suárez (2018). Un debate sobre el rol del sector minero puede leerse en Poupeau y Maëlle (2021). Sobre el impacto de China en la industria del litio, ver Ray y Albright (2021); "Cauchari-Olaroz", Lithium Americas, https://www.lithiumamericas.com/cauchari-olaroz/. Sobre la *longue durée* de la emergencia de China y las implicancias de la política económica de la RPC en el siglo XXI vale revisar Arrighi (2007).

[7] Sobre el proceso de privatización de las aguas en Chile, ver Bauer (2015), Prieto (2016) y Yáñez y Molina (2015).

y el colapso de ciertas fronteras geográficas (Harvey 2006). Además, de manera lineal, las promesas de grandes hitos y objetivos de descarbonización a alcanzar en el 2030, 2040 o 2050, asumen una espacio-temporalidad y modos de vida unívocos. Así, no sólo desvanecen —ocultando— las transformaciones que se llevan a cabo en múltiples presentes, sino que también omiten y suprimen la necesidad de descolonizar o provincializar las temporalidades y espacialidades de las transiciones energéticas (Weinberg, González y Bonelli 2020).

La propuesta de transiciones bipolares desplaza el tiempo lineal que impone la transición capitalista y propone pensar la oscilación entre humores maníacos y depresivos, humanos y no humanos, en un presente múltiple, caracterizado por luchas y condiciones de vida desiguales y una enorme inestabilidad. Es en este contexto que el litio es un elemento usado por cuerpos maníacos —que son aquellos que acumulan la energía (DSM-5)— obsesionados con la obtención de litio y baterías. Así mismo, la transición energética-capitalista evapora el humor-agua (la flema de la tierra en la tradición griega) y destruye ecosistemas, para poder almacenar energía desvinculada de los ambientes. Las baterías de litio permiten aumentar la energía del individuo moderno y su capacidad para producir, expresando de esta manera lo que llamaremos provisoriamente "almacenamiento por extractivismo".[8] Mientras que el *modus operandi* del capitalismo en modo genérico ha sido definido por Harvey (2003) como un proceso predatorio de acumulación de capital por desposesión, la batería nos ofrece una instanciación material del capitalismo: un dispositivo que almacena energía para que algunos sigan acumulando capital en nombre del bien global, y donde aquello y aquellos desposeídos, permanecen invisibilizados y sobreexplotados en el vacío de un tiempo depresivo.

Nota

Este artículo corresponde a una versión revisada del texto "Lithium: Towards a Theory of Bipolar Transitions" ya publicado en: *Lithium: States of Exhaustion*, editado por Francisco Díaz, Anastasia Kubrak y Marina Otero Verzier (Rotterdam: het Nieuwe Instituut; Santiago: Ediciones ARQ, 2021). Además, este artículo recibió financiamiento del European Research Council (ERC) bajo el programa de investigación e innovación de la Unión Europea Horizon 2020 (grant agreement N 853133). Las ideas presentadas en este trabajo están siendo desarrolladas por el equipo de Worlds of Lithium y en este espacio LASA las presentamos como ideas in progres, con la intención de abrir y generar la discusión critica en relación al litio, su geopolítica y materialidad en distintos dominios.

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[8] El Grupo de Estudios en Geopolítica y Bienes Comunes ha propuesto pensar las transiciones como operando a través de una "acumulación por desfosillizacion". Nuestra propuesta conceptual de almacenamiento por extractivismo resuena con ese concepto.

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Proposed Changes to the LASA Constitution and Bylaws

The Executive Council (EC) of LASA, at its most recent meeting, approved the following proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association, shown in red in the third column below. Objections can be directed to LASA Executive Director, LASA, 4338 Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15213, or lasa@lasaweb.org. The cutoff date for receipt of objections to the below proposed changes is May 1, 2022.

Location	Original Text	Revised Text
Constitution / Article IV. Officers / Numeral 4.	4. The President shall serve as chairperson of the Executive Council. The President, with the advice and consent of the majority of the Council members, shall appoint such committees as are specified in the By-Laws as well as any Task Forces deemed useful in pursuing the general objectives of the organization.	4. The President shall serve as chairperson of the Executive Council. The President, with the advice and consent of the majority of the Council members, shall appoint such committees as are specified in the By-Laws as well as any Task Forces deemed useful in pursuing the general objectives of the organization. The current President assumes the role of Editor-in-Chief of the LASA Forum.
Constitution / Article IV. Officers / Numeral 6.	"... The Executive Director will be responsible for the publication of the LASA Forum, the official LASA Newsletter, on a regular basis, as determined by the Executive Council"	"... The Executive Director will be responsible for the publication of the LASA Forum, ~~the official LASA Newsletter,~~ on a quarterly basis, or as determined by the Executive Council".
Constitution / Article VII. Amendments	...Ratification of such amendments shall require approval of a majority of those members who vote within ninety days following the distribution of ballots to all members, either through publication in the Forum or by mailing. The date by which ballots must be received will be printed on the ballot. The Executive Director is responsible for the distribution, counting, and reporting of results to the Executive Council and to the membership.	Ratification of such amendments shall require approval of a majority of those members who vote within ninety days following the email request to all members, who shall vote online at the indicated website. The date by which ballots must be received will be included in the email request for an amendment ballot. The Executive Director is responsible for the distribution, counting, and reporting of results to the Executive Council and to the membership.
By Laws / Article I. Nominations. Numeral 1 / Literal e.	The Executive Director will assist the Nominations Committee as needed in the provision of information, and the placing of any announcements in the LASA Forum, pertinent to the selection process.	The Executive Director will assist the Nominations Committee as needed in the provision of information, and the placing of any announcements in the LASA website and by email notification to the membership, pertinent to the selection process.

By Laws / Article I. Nominations. Numeral 3 / Literal b.	The Executive Director shall enter on an official ballot the names of the two candidates proposed by the Nominations Committee and the names of all candidates proposed by petition.	The Executive Director shall enter on an official ballot the names of the ~~two~~ candidates proposed by the Nominations Committee and the names of all candidates proposed by petition.
By Laws / Article I. Nominations. Numeral 4 / Literal b.	The Executive Director shall enter on an official ballot the names of the two candidates proposed by the Nominations Committee and the names of all candidates proposed by petition.	The Executive Director shall enter on an official ballot the names of the ~~two~~ candidates proposed by the Nominations Committee and the names of all candidates proposed by petition.
By Laws / Article II. Elections. Numeral 2	The Executive Director shall be responsible for counting ballots and submitting a report to the Executive Council. Election results will be published in the LASA Forum.	The Executive Director shall be responsible for counting ballots and submitting a report to the Executive Council. Election results will be published online.
By Laws / Article VII. International Congress. Numeral 2.	The agenda for the Business Meeting at the International Congress will be arranged by the President in consultation with the Executive Council and the Executive Director, and normally will include: (1) a summary of the current report of the Executive Director for the previous one year; (2) the Treasurer's report for the fiscal year; (3) a concise statement by the President-Elect outlining forthcoming plans and discussing issues of importance to members and any other business members may choose to present. A place will be reserved on the agenda for discussion of the items presented.	The agenda for the Business Meeting at the International Congress will be arranged by the President in consultation with the Executive Council and the Executive Director, and normally will include: (1) a summary of the current report of the Executive Director for the previous one year; (2) the Treasurer's report for the fiscal year; (3) a concise report by the current President for the previous one year; (4) a concise statement by the President-Elect outlining forthcoming plans and discussing issues of importance to members and any other business members may choose to present. A place will be reserved on the agenda for discussion of the items presented.
By Laws / Article VII. International Congress. Numeral 3.	Any legislative action of the members taken at a Business Meeting shall be submitted to a electronic ballot of all members.	Any legislative action of the members taken at a Business Meeting shall be submitted to an electronic ballot of all members.

By Laws / Article VII. International Congress. Numeral 7. Paragraph 1.	Proposals intended as official LASA resolutions must be sponsored by at least 2 percent of the membership in good standing and received by the LASA Secretariat thirty days prior to the beginning of each Congress. Proponents must (1) provide data to substantiate the "whereas" clause; (2) demonstrate that named parties were given an opportunity to respond; and (3) propose actions that are realistic. Sponsors may support a proposal by signed mail, signed fax, or by electronic communication to the Secretariat which indicates the name and address of the sponsor.	Proposals intended as official LASA resolutions must be sponsored by at least 2 percent of the membership in good standing and received by the LASA Secretariat thirty days prior to the beginning of each Congress. Proponents must (1) provide data to substantiate the "whereas" clause; (2) demonstrate that named parties were given an opportunity to respond; and (3) propose actions that are realistic. Sponsors may support a proposal by signed mail, ~~signed fax,~~ or by electronic communication to the Secretariat which indicates the name and address of the sponsor.
By Laws / Article VII. International Congress. Numeral 7. Paragraph 4.	...The results of the vote shall be posted in the subsequent issue of the LASA Forum and posted on the LASA Internet site.	...The results of the vote shall be ~~posted in the subsequent issue of the LASA Forum and~~ posted on the LASA Internet site.
By Laws / Article VIII. Amendments. Numeral 5.	Amendments proposed by petition but not endorsed by two-thirds of the Executive Council shall be submitted to an electronic ballot of the members in good standing and shall be ratified if approved by a majority of those members whose vote is postmarked no later than ninety days after the postmarked distribution of the ballot.	Amendments proposed by petition but not endorsed by two-thirds of the Executive Council shall be submitted to an electronic ballot of the members in good standing and shall be ratified if approved by a majority of those members whose vote is cast online no later than ninety days after the electronic distribution of the ballot.

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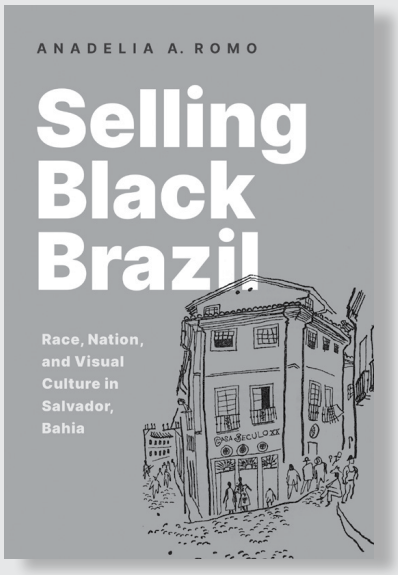
NEW AND NOTABLE



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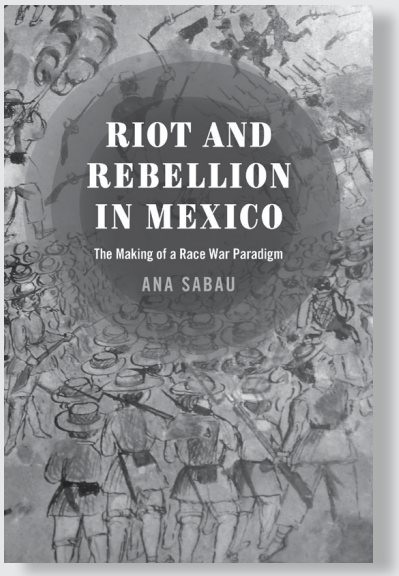

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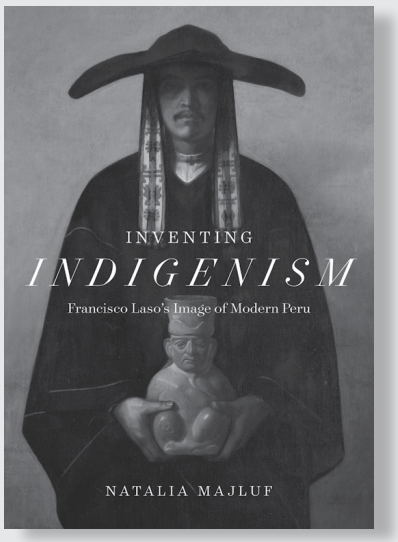

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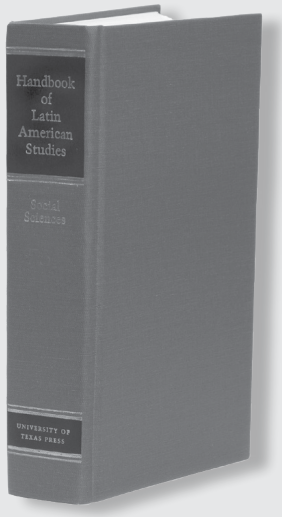

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