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Negotiating Nature: Imaginaries, Interventions and Resistance

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The Social Production of Nature between Coloniality and Capitalism (Introduction)

Abstract

Written from an environmental history background and a political ecology perspective with an emphasis on developments in Latin America, this introduction to the *fiar* issue *Negotiating Nature: Imaginaries, Interventions and Resistance* provides a conceptual reflection upon the problematic interrelations between coloniality, capitalism, and nature. First, the concept of Nature itself is questioned in regard to its colonial implications. Second, the material exchange and biotic flows towards and within the Americas are explored. Third, the social production of nature in the Americas is addressed. And fourth, the entanglements between colonial and capitalist nature(s) are discussed. Conflictive negotiations of nature and resistance are the topic of the fifth part. This introduction ends with the plea for a decolonization of nature that implies the need to re-conceptualize the relations between human society and its non-human environment.

Keywords: Nature, coloniality, capitalism, environmental history, Columbian Exchange, political ecology, extractivism, knowledge production, epistemology

The invention of the Americas in the wake of the European conquests was based upon imaginaries of nature. The idealization of the potential of soil and subsoil, the idea of frontier and physical proximity with the “wild”, the perception of great distances and vast geographic spaces constituted social imaginaries of nature in the colonial situation. The “Columbian Exchange” also brought large-scale environmental transformations, making the interaction between humans and nature a central issue in the formation of modern American societies (Crosby 1995). This thematic issue of *fiar* seeks to discuss the meaning of Nature to American societies as well as concrete environmental change from an interdisciplinary perspective which brings humanities, social sciences, and to a certain extent also natural sciences, into a dialogue. How is Nature politically negotiated and socially produced? Who are the actors within this negotiation? What strategies do they use to control, determine, exploit, and relate to a changing nature? Exemplary contributions from different locations in the Americas, such as Brazil, the Andes, Central America, the Caribbean, and Canada explore the aforementioned questions and offer approaches to analyze and to rethink the ways nature is dealt with through imaginaries, political and economic interventions, and diverse forms of resistance.

Since its foundations environmental history has basically been concerned with the three Cs – colonialism, capitalism, and conservation – and their impacts on the social production of environment. Recently, this triad has been criticized as it fails to address other issues of environmental importance and because of its moral and political impetus (Carey 2009). In addition, the tendency of some scholars to narrate society-nature relations in Latin America as a story of decay and fall from paradise due to colonialism and capitalism has been criticized by recent studies in the field of environmental history.

Warren Dean’s history of the Brazilian Atlantic forest (1995), Funez-Monzonte’s history of the destruction of the rainforest in Cuba to plant sugar cane (2008) or Bernard Nietschmann’s history of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (1973) all underline the destructive forces of colonialism. But they argue that most deforestation and appropriation of indigenous lands was a product of a capitalist mode of production that started to bring massive transformation in the late 19th or 20th centuries. Some of these works have been criticized for their underlying “declensionist narrative”, portraying a situation in which humans only destroy nature, extract resources and degrade lands (Carey 2009). What is needed is a more complex understanding of human-nature interactions, taking into account the *creation* of nature(s). Instead of reproducing the “pristine myth” – especially influential as a founding myth of the US – and a victimization of local population, researchers should (and have actually started to) ask which social groups transformed landscapes in which way and why as well as who was affected by this. Furthermore, one should pay attention to the other factors affecting human-nature interactions.

There are still a lot of open questions necessary to address the ways in which the triangle of colonialism, capitalism and conservation is shaping and producing nature(s) in the Americas. One key element is to not reduce coloniality to a structural layer of *longue durée* that does not change over time. The Latin American approaches of coloniality (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 1991)

have been important to highlight the extent to which the trauma of colonialism still shapes contemporary American societies. Nevertheless, it is quite problematic to reproduce a simple structuralist argument of the repetition of the same. Instead, it seems more appropriate to understand coloniality in terms of fluid grounds, which are not fixed but permanently renewed and challenged by shifting thoughts, administrative practices, and decolonial struggles. To grasp the struggles in, around, and against coloniality it is important to identify conjunctures of colonization and of decolonization, as well as events that interrupt the routines of colonial governance (Kaltmeier 2016).

Since colonial times, the interaction between humans and nature in the Americas has generated social controversies which still underpin major political discussions: what part of nature can be destroyed, what kind of nature has to be preserved, tamed or maintained “wild”; intensively exploited or sustainably managed? Discursive strands that sometimes date back to the so-called “discoveries” of the double continent should be discussed in connection with more recent nature-related concepts such as conservation, neo-extractivism, biodiversity, or sustainable development. In this introduction we do not want to limit ourselves to the presentation of the essays assembled in this issue, but aim to provide a conceptual reflection upon the problematic interrelations between coloniality, capitalism, and nature. First, we question the concept of nature itself, especially in regard to its colonial implications. Second, our text explores the material exchange and biotic flows towards and within the Americas. Third, it addresses the social production of nature in the Americas; and fourth, the entanglements between colonial and capitalist nature(s). Conflictive negotiations of nature and resistance are the topic of the fifth part of this introduction. Our reflection ends with a plea for a decolonization of nature, which implies the need to re-conceptualize the relations between society and the environment.

1. Nature, a Problematic and or Even a Colonial Term?

The accumulation of knowledge was an integral part of the projects of European expansion since the 16th century. Counting, mapping, classifying, and representing “the other” were – and still are – basic operations in the creation of power-knowledge complexes about the other and its space (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Kaltmeier 2012). This includes the production of knowledge about nature in the colonized areas in particular. In this regard, foreign artefacts were integrated and classified in Western knowledge systems. In doing so, the local, Western European epistemologies have been globalized and represented as universal truth, while other knowledge systems have been minimized and delegitimized. A basic operation emerged in Western thought to separate nature from society. The concept of natural laws, for instance, expresses the idea of the epistemological separation of nature from society. A similar logic takes place in Cartesian philosophy through the separation of the mind from the body (Haila 2000).

Nevertheless, anthropologists – such as Philippe Descola – have argued that such a separation of nature from society cannot be conceived of as universal (Descola 2005). It is rather a particular Western operation, which is globalized by acts of epistemological violence. The concept ‘nature’ is linked with the Western vision of modernity that arguably exists to draw an artificial separation between what is human and what is not (Latour 1992). This conceptualization is put into question by a whole array of anthropological and ethno-historical research in the Americas. In the Andean world Joseph Bastien (1985) has highlighted that the local environment is often conceptualized in terms of human body. Like the human body the space underlies principles of metabolic flows and exchanges.

But if, as anthropologists have known since at least the 1990s, the separation between nature and culture is a Western invention that many so-called “primitive” people do not recognize, why is it that first Nations / indigenous groups in America so often resort to the concept of Nature? The key to answering this question lies in the fact that many indigenous societies are not isolated from modern capitalism, but have to deal with Western conceptions of nature that circulate through representations provided by the mass media, governmental agencies and NGOs. The contributions of Heeren and Cremers/Rasch to this *fiar* issue address this context, respectively through the examples of bioprospecting regulation in Ecuador, and nature as a field of force in the Western highlands of Guatemala. They show how the concept of nature has become a tool for indigenous groups to claim their rights and resist against an uncontrolled and full incorporation of their land and communities into the logic of capitalism. This way, native people might enter a logic of self-government, fostered by international organizations like the World Bank, which Astrid Ulloa (2005) termed as “ecological native” – the quasi-ontological articulation of nature and indigeneity in new forms of eco-governmentality.

All contributions of the present issue also show that nature is never a vague, de-territorialized, but always a locally rooted concept. For local communities, nature stands for the conceptual continuity of their concrete attachment to a given territory, a land, a specifically located ecosystem. Against this background, several questions arise: is nature not just a translation, which Native communities use in order to make their territorial and social claims understandable to the Western, capitalist world? Is the concept of nature not just a prism through which Westerners can start to see the biotic networks that link indigenous people to their territory and to the non-human life inhabiting it? In that case, what does the *Consejo del Pueblo Maya* tell us when they proclaim “cuidar nuestro ambiente es nuestro deber” (Cremers/Rasch)? They have appropriated Western concepts invented to separate the non-human from the human, such as “environment”, “biodiversity”, “nature”, which historically are absent from most indigenous societies in the Americas, and make little sense in the cosmogonies, which structure (or used to structure) their perception of the world. In that perspective, it is interesting to see how so many Native groups throughout the Americas have (successfully) attempted, since the 1970s, to reframe themselves as brothers of nature, guardians of biodiversity or friends of the environment. Does this narrative correspond to what first Nations and indigenous groups actually think of themselves, or rather to

the image they need to give to the rest of the world in order to lend legitimacy to different kinds of claims? And why do self-proclaimed “modern” societies pay attention when Amerindians mobilize for the protection of animal and plant species, forest ecologies, rivers, but much less when their message is “only” based on questions of land redistribution, territorial recognition, or labor conditions? We cannot answer these questions in general terms, because each constellation has its particularities. But surely in regard to the use of nature indigenous peoples are located in a colonial power field between epistemological colonization, strategic use of Western concepts, and persistence of local knowledges and epistemologies.

The separation of nature from society is a basic epistemological operation of coloniality. It is a structuring principle of *longue durée* that has shaped nature-society relations in the Americas. Nevertheless, the concrete conceptualizations of nature underlie different conjunctures, and we can identify the simultaneous existence of different, sometimes contradicting, concepts of nature. Heeren and Cremers/ Rasch indicate the multiplicity of meanings of nature, indexed on the cultural and spiritual representations but also, many times predominantly, on the interest of the humans using it. As a result, nature (in modern capitalism in particular) is not a rigid concept but an object of perpetual negotiations. In this *fiar* issue, Sauthier’s contribution about the ‘Brazilianization’ of a European literary work through the prism of the tropical landscapes outlines that even in a nation-building context, local visions of nature vary depending on regional identities. The meaning of nature, in sum, is variable *because* it is always embedded within a specific human context.

Obviously, this does not mean that negotiated Natures are consensual Natures: they are not consensual but the result of power relations. If Natures takes on different meanings for different people, if our way of naming and perceiving non-human beings and things depend on our cultural, social and spiritual background, then nature does not have the same value for everyone. There is a disproportion in the way non-human life is perceived by different human groups. Many times the destruction of non-human life in American contexts has resulted in a violation of the ontologies according to which the life, values and beliefs of Natives are structured. What one group considers game, an export item or an energy resource can be a sacred being, an essential factor of social cohesion or a crucial hillside source for others.

Not only through the point of view of indigenous societies but also within Western epistemologies, nature has come to be understood in diverging ways, especially in regard to postcolonial settings. A case in point is the Pan-American critique of the theory of American degeneracy which was presented in the late 18th century by the French naturalist, George Louis Leclerc, probably better known as Comte de Buffon. He developed a theory of degeneration in the Americas in which, for example, New World species were described as smaller and weaker than European ones, because of allegedly unfavorable climate conditions making healthy life impossible. This degeneration hypothesis extended to the indigenous and even creole population of the Americas. US-American and Latin American intellectuals, amongst them Thomas Jefferson, criticized the climate-based assumptions and its underlying racism, showing that there was no unanimous vision of nature and so-called natural laws within the Western world.

2. About the ‘Columbian Exchange’ and Biotic Flows

A central aspect to unthinking the ontological separation of society/culture and nature is to attribute agency to non-human actors or agents. Plants, animals, hurricanes, or germs are depicted and can be analyzed as central agents of social change and social transformation (Latour 2004). A seminal approach to grasping non-human agency in the Americas is Alfred Crosby’s work on the ‘Columbian Exchange’. In many respects, the ‘Columbian Exchange’ showed the path by depicting American landscapes, animals, plants, forests, etc. as a result of colonial encounters and shocks (Crosby 1972; 2004). This perspective deeply influenced environmentally concerned disciplines, such as environmental sociology or environmental history, and their visions of the Americas.

In many contemporary biological studies on neophytes and neozoons, the notion of ecological imperialism, i.e. how the introduction of new species in the Americas is related to the colonial project, is denied. Due to some biologist, the species themselves are seen as “invaders”, “colonizers” – as, for example, the most common ape in Brazil called ‘sagui’ is more and more classified as an invasive species (Guimarães, 2015). Other researchers conceive the circulation of species between the Americas and Europe without paying due attention to colonial power relations, which comes out to representing the Columbian exchange as a sum of rather smooth and balanced transactions (Ewald 1995). There is a danger in underestimating violent shocks and ignoring the underlying structures of violence and inequality.

Taking into account different conjunctures of coloniality, we also argue that one cannot limit the Columbian exchange to the early colonial times. The idea of a Columbian exchange, related to the historical figure of Cristopher Columbus, can therefore be misleading. It highlights the beginning of the exchange - as the Vikings did not leave important biotics in the New World - but it does not sufficiently address the ongoing colonial biotic flows. Therefore we prefer to speak of “colonial exchange”, meaning with colonial not a historical period but the ongoing field of force of coloniality. Indeed, a renewed conjuncture of introduction of new Eurasian species took place in the context of 19th century settler colonialism in the US, where the dispersal vectors of colonization of neophytes correlated significantly with the settlement patterns of European settlers (Mosena 2015). The history of rubber in the first half of 20th century, which involved the circulation of seeds and the reproduction of tree species between independent nations of South America, and the European colonies in Asia and Africa, is also significant in that respect (Dean 1987). It shows that the Columbian exchange continued to exist in a global framework in which (formally) colonial and (supposedly) non-colonial contexts intertwined and superposed each other. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the transpacific biotic flows have not been as important as the transatlantic ones. Most Asian species have been introduced via the Eurasian dispersal vectors and the Atlantic. Crosby’s work has also been influential in biology, where 1492 is a fundamental turning point for the definition of neobiota (Gläve / Mosena 2015). Other disciplines, such as Cultural Studies have sought inspiration in the ‘Columbian Exchange’ thesis. For example Rüdiger Kunow (2011)

analyzed the extent to which the flow of germs shape the community-formation and governmental, often racialized, techniques in the US-American metropolis.

3. The Social Production of Nature in the Americas

Nature and environments are not only constructed in theories and epistemologies, they are also produced materially, exploited, transformed, and appropriated. In order to use and produce both nature and environment, geopolitical imaginations emerge, be they implicit or explicit, that make some environments more valuable to use than others are. In colonial imaginaries the double myth of untouched land to be conquered and the El Dorado to be exploited have been central topics (Sutter 2000: 63ff). Recently, much literature has concentrated on questioning the pristine myth, both in environmental history (Denevan 1992) and in the emerging field of political ecology (Cronon/ Demos 2003). Several authors argued that it is basically a European and colonial imagination that the tropical rainforest is a non-cultivated landscape or an “empty land”.

North America had been imagined as a vast, grassy expanse teeming with game and a small number of nomads who left few marks on the land. South America, too, or at least the Amazon rain forest, was thought of as almost an untouched Eden. Newer research shows how false this idea is (Mann 2005). Archeological findings have evidenced the existence of sophisticated agrarian systems before the European invasions (Cleary 2001, Miller 2007), and even pre-Columbian ecological crises have likely occurred there as well (Radkau 2000: 43ff). The illusion of emptiness and virginity tells us more about the European, colonial imagination than about the Americas themselves. But this colonial imagination has also been a motor of destruction as it fed dreams of domination and competition of telluric width with “Nature”. The modern history of the Americas abounds with mega-projects aiming to “win” against nature, such as the decision to reverse the flow of the Chicago river in the 1880s, the building of the Panama Canal (Baquero Melo 2015; Sutter 2000), or the giant farms of the Ford, Jari, and VW companies in the Amazon (Grandin 2010; Acker 2014a). All of these examples, which show the aspiration of the West to defeat natural laws, left concrete traces of the environmental effects, which Western, fantasized visions of nature could engender.

Conflictive debates and severe misunderstandings occurred about what it actually means to question the idea of wilderness (Crist/ Hargrove 2004; Proctor 1998). Social constructivists argue that “nature” as such is always a social construction and does not exist apart from people’s perceptions and beliefs about it. They say that the understandings of nature and human relationships with the environment are cultural expressions. Cultural groups transform the natural environment into landscapes that result in ongoing negotiations in a cultural context and create meanings that are by no way inherent to the nature of things (Greider/ Garkovic 1994). All concepts to describe nature and its qualities, such as wilderness, biodiversity or habitat, are human inventions that carry cultural, political and other important meanings. This perspective has caused

a lot of contradiction among biologists, geographers and environmental organizations. They accused constructivists to ignore the scientific documentation about the biodiversity crisis and climate change and to draw attention toward discourses about the environmental predicament, rather than examining that predicament itself. This can indirectly contribute to legitimizing the human colonization of the Earth (Crist /Hargrove 2004). Or in more pronounced words: this “dangerous flirt with relativism” could end up being “as destructive to nature as bulldozers and chain saws” (ibid.).

The concept of nature has been questioned not only from a constructivist standpoint but from a materialist background as well. Drawing on Marx’s work, Neil Smith argues that all nature is or has been transformed by capitalist forces, which now operate on a global scale (Smith 2008, originally 1984). Smith analyses how capitalism and class power serve to make, unmake and remake natural and fabricated environments throughout history. The argument is that even when in former times people struggled for their means of subsistence, they have appropriated, altered and produced their various environments. He therefore argued that nothing is natural about nature, but that everything we perceive as nature has been transformed by humans and capital. In *Reinventing Eden*, Carolyn Merchant elaborated on the biblical origin of this logic, as she interpreted the capitalist obsession to order nature, exploit it and consume its fruits as a perpetual attempt to recreate the lost Paradise on Earth (2003).

There have been attempts to overcome the struggle between purely constructivist and purely materialist points of view. Within literature studies, ecocriticism, for example, is an academic area that tends to blur the boundaries between our mental representations and our concrete experience of materiality. In the present issue, Roland Walter’s article about inter/transbiotic memory traces in inter-American literature shows that American natures are like texts in which we can read the continent’s tumultuous history (Iovino 2006). This history involves not only humans, but also non-humans, and hybrids resulting from the encounter of both.

Within the philosophy of social science a broader debate is dedicated to the presumptions and (in-) compatibilities between a constructivist and a materialist understanding of nature (Forsyth 2001; Evanoff 2005). Drawing on science and technology studies (STS), critical realism investigates the role of knowledge which claims to have scientific solutions for pressing environmental problems and locates these within historic political and social relations. Often Western knowledge is privileged against local understandings of nature – even if it completely misreads the driving forces of environmental change (Fairhead/ Leach 1996). Unlike STS, realist political ecology does not just seek to illustrate how knowledge about environmental issues and boundaries between nature and society are constructed. Political ecology also proposes socially fairer ways of dealing with the situation, and attempts to reconstruct a new and more effective science without claiming to convey the only true story (Forsyth 2001).

Within Political Ecology, the approach of the “societal relationships with nature” addresses both the social construction and the material properties of broadly discussed issues such as biodiversity (Görg 2004). The relationship between society and nature is not seen as an external

one, but as simultaneously different and mutually constituted (Brand/ Wissen 2013: 680f.) This conceptualization of 'Nature' does indeed exist as a material-substantial environment, but it is intrinsically shaped by society and is managed and symbolized in spatio-temporally different forms. Furthermore, it is seen as crucial that the configuration of the society-nature relationship is constitutive for social and political domination. Society-nature relationships are concrete material relationships structured by social processes of production and consumption. They develop dynamically and undergo socio-ecological transformation defined by social perceptions and interpretations with a certain hegemonic order, which, in turn, impose certain limits on these constructions (Brand/ Wissen 2013: 681).

Since the colonial conquests, a central element of the societal relationships with nature in Latin America has been the extraction of resources – especially gold, silver, zinc, copper, coal and oil. The history of the entire sub-continent has been shaped by the flows of extractivism (Galeano 1997). By the end of the nineteenth century, the asymmetric integration of Latin America into the world economy as an exporter of primary products was fully articulated as an economy based on export enclaves with brutal social and labor conditions. Although during the phase of import substitution (about 1930/45-1973) other pillars of the economy have been developed, at the end of the 20th century the role of the extraction of resources and the export of primary goods regained an important relevance for societies all over the continent. The progressive governments in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela among others expanded the extraction of resources during an era of favorable price on the world market and used the commodity boom to finance expansive social policy. In this context a discussion about neo-extractivism as a new development strategy and its social and environmental impacts emerged (Lander 2009; Brand/ Dietz 2014). The new extractivism is based on the appropriation of nature in which Latin America continues to be very dependent on the world market as an exporter of no or very few processed goods (Gudynas 2009: 188ff.) The international division of labor placed Latin America in a colonial and imperial manner to exploit its workforce and its nature, transferring wealth to Europe (Lander 2009). The commodification, exploitation and export of nature have even intensified with the new progressive governments in Latin America (Lander 2009:3). Social movements, especially indigenous movements and local peasants have mobilized against displacement, the environmental and health consequences of this model – sometimes accusing large-scale mining of being a western way of exploiting earth, sometimes with the argument that all benefits are transferred to other parts of the world. Progressive governments tend to negate or downplay the negative effects and often accuse the protesters as being against development (Gudynas 2009: 204ff; Bebbington 2009; see also Acosta in this issue). Which kind of knowledge is privileged and whether the extraction of resources reproduce colonial imbalances or can possibly help Latin American countries overcome colonial legacies of dependence and poverty are currently objects of controversy.

4. Entanglements between the Colonial and Capitalist Nature(s)

Throughout the issue, a historical continuity appears between colonialism and modern capitalism that has its origin in the conquest of the Americas. The construction of the Americas had – as Aníbal Quijano argues – material and social impacts. Hand in hand with the economic and political conquest a “coloniality of power” is also established based on identity politics. In the classification of the “racial” Other the European self is constructed, while the construction of the racial inferior Other served the needs of labor exploitation. For Wallerstein and Quijano this lies at the heart of the formation of the modern capitalist world system. Both eras generated schemes of exploitation which maintained indigenous people and Nature in a position of subordination. Colonialism and capitalism shared the same vision of nature as unlimited reserve of resources, implying the exclusion of environmental costs from economic calculation. This is especially the case for the colonized areas where in the long 16th century extractivism was the main economic activity. This economic pattern was completed in the 19th century with the colonization of land in the Cono Sur and in North America. The intertwining between extractivist practices and coloniality led Alimonda (2011) to elaborate the concept of ‘naturaleza colonizada’, as according to him, Latin America tends to be envisaged as a subaltern space that can be “exploited, devastated, reconfigured” according to global economic needs. He also makes an important point when he says that ‘naturaleza’ is not only ‘colonizada’ by industrial powers from the global North, but also through the representations and actions of Latin American elites themselves. The global economic system indeed is one dimension that influences the power balance underlying extraction activities, but not the only one. The creation or reproduction of domination schemes that base on locally rooted practices also play an essential role in degrading ecosystems and engendering conditions of human servitude. Massive deforestation in the Amazon in the last third of the 20th century, for example, was partly fueled by a global demand for commodities but turned out to be possible through the region’s well-established forced labor networks (Acker 2014b).

The “extractivist mentality” animate even those who, within the capitalist system, advocate for more social justice and control of financial flux. This is because the exploitation of nature constantly appears as the most rapid and efficient solution to produce riches, as is shown in this *fiar* issue by Acosta, who analyzes extractivism as a persisting category of devastation. Acosta, but also Figueira, who contributed to the present issue with a movie and interview on the consequences of Chinese-financed infrastructure projects in Jamaica, evidence the tiny link between the idea of nature as *reserve*, and the absence of structural policies to fight against social inequalities in the Americas. The contributions of Walter, Heeren and Cremers/Rasch show in turn how these inequalities are deeply intertwined with phenomena of racial hierarchization. They put in evidence the historical exclusion of indigenous groups and people of African/slave descent from the imaginaries of modernity, which emerged along with the growth of capitalism after the independences. Thus, including nature as a source of life in our vision of politico-economic structures in the Americas helps to understand that racial, social and environmental imbalances do

not only result from the behavior of greedy elites ready to submit all forms of “otherness” to maximize their profit. Instead, these imbalances are at the core of the “mito del progreso” (Acosta), which sees the overexploitation of nature as a solution supposedly conciliating the needs of all social classes.

The texts of this issue point at a certain historical continuity between the mechanisms of domination that characterize colonialism and capitalism. But some contributions (especially Heeren and Cremers/ Rasch) also point at specificities of capitalism, such as the creation of spaces of negotiations in which subaltern populations can earn a place within the economic system. Another subtlety of capitalism is its capacity to make all things marketable, even nature as a concept. Up to today the tourist industry sells an image of tropical landscapes as paradises for tourist consumption (Sheller 2003), while some conservation strategies tend to see local inhabitants as “invaders” and “illegal occupants” of “virgin” nature who destroy biodiversity hotspots (Ojeda 2012: 364). In the past three decades cosmetic firms, global organic food networks, advertising companies, the entertainment industry and ecotourism have built on an exotic vision of the Americas as a “wild” and still largely “pristine” continent.

In this context, approximations between humans and nature have also become a powerful commercial argument. Thus, and paradoxically, the success of this marketability of nature is also a sign that something is changing at the core of capitalist society. In enlarging sectors of urban American populations, there exists a demand for more direct forms of connecting with nature, and even a growing curiosity for indigenous knowledge and cosmogonies as well as an emerging interest for the spiritual value of non-human forms of life. Of course, this post-modern desire of more nature may sometimes take brutal and careless forms (we see it in several examples in the contributions to this *fiar* issue). Still, it is hard to deny that there is an ongoing tendency to interrogate, even unconsciously, the “great divide” between nature and culture theorized by Descola (2005). This is where the notion of the “ecological unconscious”, proposed by Walter in the present issue, might start. This “ecological unconscious” could very likely situate itself precisely within the spaces of negotiation between capitalist economy and indigenous cosmogonies, between the ‘mito del progreso’ and the nostalgia of pristine nature that expresses itself through ecotourism. That same “ecological unconscious” might explain the ecological contradictions throughout the Americas: attachment to wilderness versus rampant agrarian colonization of space, global records of carbon consumptions versus the first and biggest natural parks in the world, expropriation of indigenous peoples and destruction of their environment versus the diffuse presence of indigenous toponyms mapping the American landscapes.

5. Conflicts, Resistance and Contestations

Resistance against the colonial subjection of nature and its inhabitants has been present since the beginning of the conquest of the Americas. Indigenous groups all over the continent tried to escape the brutal relations by rebelling or migrating to more remote areas. In the Americas, a number of territories has either been conquered much later or remained unconquered. Despite epidemics, slavery, massacres and colonial rule people resisted, fled and developed a wide set of strategies to deal with life-endangering threats. The struggles for independence and the ensuing conflicts and civil wars between competing elites in many countries showed that vast territories have been relatively isolated. Often glorified as “nation building processes”, at the end of the 19th century, the repressive state apparatuses broadened their scope – which meant to “integrate” certain territories into the “nation” by violently implementing private property and forcing people to work. The massive dispossession of indigenous lands, the displacement of people by force and many rebellions against both characterized the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During the whole 20th century many countries in the Americas experienced processes of internal colonization, and celebrated people who settled on so-called “last frontiers” – within Alaska, the Brazilian Amazon, Northern Guatemala, the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, “Tierra del Fuego” in Southern Chile and Southern Argentina, among many others.

Colonization in the various meanings of the term always generated conflicts over who controls the land, how to decide over land use and how to transform nature in specific places. Research on conflicts about nature is a key issue, if not even the defining element, of political ecology. By 2013, two-thirds of all political ecology studies contained as a central element of analysis the term “conflict”, which constituted the second most important conceptual tool after the notion of “power” (Le Brillon 2015: 598). Watts (2000: 263ff), for instance, defines the goal of political ecology as to explain environmental conflict in terms of struggles over knowledge, power and practice as well as over politics, justice and governance. Martinez Alier conceptualizes political ecology as “the study of ecological distribution conflicts” (2002: 71), and Robbins sees the four key questions political ecology is concerned with as 1) degradation and marginalization, 2) environmental conflict, 3) conservation and control and 4) environmental identity and social movements (Robbins 2004: 14f).

Conflict also plays a major role for this *fiar* issue, in which all articles talk about different understandings of what nature is and depict nature as something which social actors transform. As Acosta, Heeren, Figuera and Cremers/ Rasch show, different actors have very different interests about how to transform nature, extract resources and generate profit from this process. Nevertheless, nature can also be a source of emancipation and the protection of nature can be a mobilizing element for collective actors. In some cases it serves as a basis to build new collective, post-colonial identities. In the texts of Heeren and Cremers/ Rasch, indigenous communities use nature as an argument to fight for their rights within the capitalist context. Walter explores the possibility to resist (post-)colonial domination by *reconnecting* with the history of oppressed

minorities and with the alternatives lectures, which the latter offer to perceive the cohesion of the different dimensions of the world (human, animal, mineral, vegetal). Sauthier shows how tropical nature can play the role of an intermediary, through which Brazilians absorb, chew and transform European culture to “Americanize” it. In this context, nature becomes a space of affirmation of identity and differentiation from Europe, which is based on the rejection of colonial influence.

6. Decolonizing Nature?

Humans have subjugated and transformed nature for millennia, but the intensity of their action of resource extraction has accelerated a lot with colonialism and capitalism. Although concerns with the damaging effects of anthropic activities on nature have much older roots, the idea that humanity as a whole can be a danger for the earth's ecological balance has grown especially influential since the 1970s. The “limits of Growth” reports from 1972 was one of the first widely recognized signals that started the discussion about the effects of industrialization (Meadows et al. 1972). The reduction of pollution of the environment in the industrial areas and the declaration of protected areas were the key political strategies that responded to this emerging awareness, but a real reduction of growth was never intended. The discussion about causes and impacts of climate change essentially took form in the 1980s in a continuation of these debates. “Sustainability” started to be a concept that was used for almost everything and made into a modern publicity slogan. Although often imagined under pressure of spectacular scenarios that predicted the earth a catastrophic future if pollution continued to grow, strategies to protect the environment, reduce carbon emissions and stop deforestation had limited effects. Later on, interdisciplinary teams (but mainly with a natural science focus) started to measure the “planetary boundaries” (Rockström 2009). But despite many expert reports (Stern Review 2006; WBGU 2011, etc.), international conferences (Rio 1992, Kyoto 1997, Paris 2015 amongst many other), and an emerging global environmental governance as well as the recent intent to have a social-ecological turn within development policy and proclaim the sustainable development goals (SDGs), the linear development of resource consumption remains far from being checked. Up to today, only severe economic crises have had a significant impact in terms of reducing the ecological footprint (Krausmann et al 2009).

Remarkably, the recent discussion about the Anthropocene seems to indicate an epistemological rupture: even within geology human beings are now seen as a telluric force transforming nature in an irreversible way – a contradictory mixture of gardener and predators (critically Görg 2016). Some works date the beginning of the Anthropocene back to the start of the Neolithic revolution 10,000 years ago, while other situate it during the “Great Acceleration” of the industrial revolution in Western Europe 200 years ago (Krausmann et al 2009). From the perspective of the Columbian Exchange Charles Mann has identified 1492 as most important rupture and coined the concept of the homogenocene to analyze the merging of ecosystems from

Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas that had been separated before since the fragmentation of Pangaea (Mann 2011: 3-50). This brings a completely new timeframe into the discussion about historical conjunctures – but is still an open, controversial discussion. As Görg puts it, the dialectics of the control over nature has entered a new phase, and once again the Anthropocene shows that humans have dominated nature, but are not able to control their relations with it (Görg 2016: 34). What all these debates have in common is that they imagine “humanity” as a collective actor equally causing the problems. The danger of this approach is that it ignores the differences between Global North and Global South, but also between different groups and classes within respective world regions, especially in terms of consumption patterns or even cosmological representations (Bonneuil/ Fresco 2016). Not all societies have a predatory approach to the non-human environment, nor have all humans the same carbon footprint. Promoters of the Anthropocene narrative often ignore asymmetric power relations and tend to frame problems in apocalyptic scenarios, but offer a very technocratic and marked-based approach to handle them, if not even post-political managerial planning (critically: Lövbrand et al 2015).

As noted before there are numerous struggles of local dwellers, indigenous and Afro-American communities and advocate organizations aiming to defend local livelihoods. Especially in conjunctures in which the accumulation of capital through extraction and expropriation is accelerating, there is a growing number of different struggles of resistance. While these sites of struggle may decelerate conjunctures of colonial extraction, we argue that it is also necessary to question the coloniality of nature in its different dimensions. Academic reflections about this task to ‘decolonize nature’ formally emerged in 2003 with an excellent collective work on the history of the British empire (Adams and Mulligan), featuring case studies about settler societies (Australia), Native communities (Australia’s Aborigenes), countries going through decolonization processes (South Africa) or even phenomena of internal colonization within the colonial metropolis (Scotland). The choice to focus on this specific (but huge and extremely diversified) colonial context enabled the authors to give an insight into the multilayered makeup of colonial and post-colonial situations in which discourses about nature are embedded. Yet, the book essentially interrogated how conservation was interwoven with colonial mentalities, and how it served as a tool to perpetuate situations of domination. We believe this is an important aspect. At the same time, one should not lose sight that the most severe effects of coloniality on the life of people and nature are not due to the excesses of conservationist thinking, but rather to logics of limitless and violent exploitation of human and non-human resources. While the topic of conservation appears in various contributions of this *fiar* issue, the present volume inscribes it in a broader reflection aiming to rethink the general nature-culture dialectic, which, beyond conservation, has impacts on most aspects of collective life in the Americas.

First, it seems important to foster new epistemologies beyond the nature-culture divide. In the Americas these new epistemologies can emerge from the dialogue between Western and indigenous knowledge. These diverse forms of knowledge have to be conceptualized as social-cultural patterns to relate to environments. In this sense the colonial notion of comparing

indigeneity to nature has to be rejected. There is no inherent feature that makes indigenous people more “natural” than Western people. Furthermore, it is important that indigenous knowledge is not only subordinated to or integrated in Western knowledge; it is instead an epistemological rupture of revolution (Kuhn 1962). This is a difficult task, since, in our contemporary global knowledge society, there is the permanent danger of expropriating and/or commodifying indigenous knowledge. As the debates on bio-piracy show, while denying the value of indigenous knowledge developed over many generations, Western powers now attempt to colonize life itself (Shiva 1997). The current use of patenting and genetic engineering is understood by Shiva as an attempt from the West to recolonize the Global South.

Second, decolonizing nature should take into account the materiality and internal logics of environment. Material space matters to think about and to interrelate with the environment. And it would be misleading to relate all destructive forms of the use of nature to coloniality and capitalism. As the dynamics of deforestation in Central America show, many forms of agriculture developed in a specific area of a country are not compatible with the conditions with the soils of the rainforest. Or while Andean indigenous-peasant communities have complex reciprocity systems in regard to its highland environments, they fail to relate to tropical environments in the lowlands (Kaltmeier 1999). Nevertheless, it would be very interesting to further research the way in which those supposedly local dynamics are both shaped by internal colonialism, and a homemade ignorance towards natural conditions in a specific place, interwoven with Western ideas of progress and modernity. A decolonial approach towards different understandings of nature has to handle the problem that these are almost always relational and shaped by multiple transnational relations.

Third, this means to undo the existing interrelation between society and the biotic and a-biotic environment based on exploitation, extractivism and misuse. In many indigenous societies, these relations are conceived in terms of reciprocity and substance orientation. This implies systems of care beyond the Western extremes of preservation of pristine wildernesses and profit-maximizing extraction. To unthink and possibly re-conceptualize the category of Nature, we should relate to the different imaginations of and modes of relation with environment. Maybe new radical proposals from a “world-ecology perspective” to overcome the nature-society divide through conceptualizing the “web of life” (Moore 2015) or Bruno Latour’s provocation to speak of “multinaturalism” (Latour 2004) can contribute in the future and start a dialogue on coloniality to find new ways of conceptualizing the field of Nature/ Environment/ Society/ Culture.

Hopefully this issue of *fiar* is able to make a small, but thought-provoking contribution from very different disciplinary, regional and theoretical perspectives to the ongoing and broad debate about the multiple meanings of Nature and their underlying epistemologies in different parts of the world.

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Aporte al debate: El extractivismo como categoría de saqueo y devastación

Resumen

El extractivismo es un concepto que ayuda a explicar el saqueo, acumulación, concentración, devastación (neo) colonial, así como la evolución del capitalismo moderno e incluso las ideas de desarrollo y subdesarrollo –como dos caras de un mismo proceso. Si bien el extractivismo comenzó a fraguarse hace más 500 años, ni este ni los procesos de conquista y colonización concluyeron al finalizar la dominación europea. Y debe quedar claro que no hay colonialidad sin colonialismo, ni capitalismo sin extractivismo, pues éste es un fenómeno estructural, históricamente vinculado y acotado a la modernidad capitalista.

Keywords: Extractivismo, colonialidad, capitalismo, coyuntura, teorías de desarrollo, Naturaleza

“Los progresos de los conocimientos cósmicos exigieron el precio de todas las violencias y horrores que los conquistadores, que se tenían a sí mismos por civilizados, extendieron por todo el continente”,

Alexander von Humboldt, “Kosmos” (1769-1859)

El extractivismo es un concepto que ayuda a explicar el saqueo, acumulación, concentración, devastación (neo) colonial, así como la evolución del capitalismo moderno e incluso las ideas de desarrollo y subdesarrollo –como dos caras de un mismo proceso. Si bien el extractivismo comenzó a fraguarse hace más 500 años, ni este ni los procesos de conquista y colonización concluyeron al finalizar la dominación europea. Y debe quedar claro que no hay colonialidad sin colonialismo, ni capitalismo sin extractivismo, pues éste es un fenómeno estructural, históricamente vinculado y acotado a la modernidad capitalista. [2]

Para intentar una definición comprensible, el extractivismo hará referencia a aquellas actividades que remueven grandes volúmenes de recursos naturales no procesados (o que lo son limitadamente), sobre todo para la exportación en función de la demanda de los países centrales. El extractivismo no se limita a minerales o petróleo. Hay también extractivismo agrario, forestal, pesquero, inclusive turístico. Así en línea con Eduardo Gudynas – de quien se obtiene esta definición – cabría hablar mejor de extractivismos. [3]

Con la conquista y colonización de América, África y Asia empezó a estructurarse la economía-mundo: el sistema capitalista. Como elemento fundacional de tal sistema se consolidó la modalidad de acumulación extractiva, determinada entonces por las demandas de los nacientes centros capitalistas. Situación que se mantiene hasta ahora. A unas regiones se les especializó en extraer y producir materias primas y bienes primarios, mientras que otras asumieron el papel de producir manufacturas, con frecuencia usando los recursos naturales de los países empobrecidos. El saldo de este proceso es la vigencia inamovible de modalidades de acumulación primario-exportadoras, con el extractivismo como una de sus manifestaciones.

En años recientes se ha agudizado el extractivismo. Aprovechando sus cuantiosas reservas monetarias y financieras, muchas empresas transnacionales y algunas economías emergentes -como China también India, aunque en menor escala- han adquirido cada vez más activos a lo largo y ancho del planeta, ampliando aceleradamente su área de influencia. No solo son importantes demandantes de materias primas. En la lista de sus compras aparecen yacimientos petroleros y mineros, así como tierras para producir alimentos, en todos los continentes. En suma, presenciamos procesos de desposesión como los entiende David Harvey [4] e incluso una suerte de acumulación originaria global, con rasgos similares a los planteados por Karl Marx (1876) [5] y también por Rosa Luxemburg (1912).

Aquí algo fundamental. La apropiación de recursos naturales extraídos aplicando una serie de violencias [6] – es decir atropellando los Derechos Humanos y los Derechos de la Naturaleza, “no es una consecuencia de un tipo de extracción sino que es una condición necesaria para poder llevar a cabo la apropiación de recursos naturales”, como atinadamente señala Eduardo Gudynas. [7] Y esto se lo ha hecho inclusive sin importar el agotamiento de muchos recursos.

Neoextractivismo, versión contemporánea del extractivismo de viejo cuño

En los últimos años, conscientes de algunas patologías propias del extractivismo, varios países de la región con regímenes “progresistas” han impulsado ciertos cambios importantes respecto a algunos elementos de la modalidad de acumulación primario-exportadora, pero sin afectarla en su esencia. Así, más allá de los discursos e inclusive de algunos planes oficiales para superarla, se ha consolidado y también ampliado la modalidad extractivista de acumulación.

Desde una postura nacionalista, los gobiernos “progresistas” han procurado principalmente un mayor acceso y control del Estado sobre los recursos naturales y sobre los beneficios de su extracción, lo cual no está mal. Lo preocupante es que desde esta postura se critica el control de los recursos naturales por parte de los capitales transnacionales, pero no la extracción en sí.

Si se contabilizaran los costos de los impactos sociales, ambientales y productivos de la extracción del petróleo o de los minerales, desaparecerían muchos de los beneficios económicos de estas actividades. Incluso si fueran crematísticamente rentables dichos proyectos, incorporando dichos costos, queda flotando la pregunta sobre la conveniencia de continuar ahondando esta modalidad de acumulación primario-exportadora que mantiene a estos países en una situación de subdesarrollo.

En estas condiciones el neoextractivismo [8], impulsado por gobiernos “progresistas”, es parte de una versión contemporánea del desarrollismo propio de América del Sur; opción duramente criticada en décadas anteriores tanto por estructuralistas y dependentistas. [9] Y por cierto, el extractivismo en el siglo XXI, inclusive el practicado por los gobiernos “progresistas”, no deja de ser conquistador y recolonizador.

Un dato a tomar en cuenta. En todos los países latinoamericanos, con gobiernos “progresistas” y neoliberales, los segmentos tradicionalmente marginados de la población han experimentado una relativa mejoría en sus condiciones de vida gracias al incremento de las exportaciones de materias primas en el último período debido a los elevados precios de las materias primas. Eso sí, en los países con presidentes “progresistas” este resultado se explica no solo por el crecimiento económico, sino también por una mejor distribución de los crecientes ingresos del extractivismo. Sin embargo, más allá de las improntas discursivas revolucionarias de estos gobernantes, no se ha impulsado una redistribución de la riqueza, menos aún un cambio de la modalidad de acumulación. Esto se explica por lo relativamente fácil que es obtener ventaja de la Naturaleza -atropellando a sus defensores- sin entrar en complejos procesos sociales y políticos

de redistribución. Así incluso los grupos más acomodados de las viejas y nuevas oligarquías, muchas de ellas vinculadas al capital transnacional, no han dejado de obtener jugosas ganancias durante la época “progresista”.

Lo que cabe destacar es que los gobiernos “progresistas” y también los neoliberales, mantienen su fe en el mito del progreso en su deriva productivista y el mito del desarrollo en tanto dirección única, sobre todo en su visión mecanicista de crecimiento económico, así como sus múltiples sinónimos. Y lo que más llama la atención es la confianza casi ilimitada de los gobernantes “progresistas” en los beneficios del extractivismo; quienes incluso han llegado a afirmar simplonamente que el extractivismo es apenas un sistema técnico de procesamiento de la Naturaleza. [10]

Ahora, cuando el ciclo de precios altos de las materias primas llega a su final, en todos los países, incluso de la mano de gobiernos “progresistas”, se vuelve a la lógica de los ajustes de inspiración neoliberal que, como todo indica, terminarán por golpear más a los de siempre: los sectores populares y medios.

La trampa de la maldición de la abundancia

Un punto cuestionable de esta modalidad de acumulación radica en la forma en que se extraen y se aprovechan dichos recursos, así como en la manera en que se distribuyen sus frutos. Pero el asunto es mucho más complejo. Las sendas del extractivismo -progresista o neoliberal- no son el problema mayor. La dificultad radica en el extractivismo mismo, que en esencia es de origen colonial y siempre violento, con todo lo que esto implica. Y que como tal mantiene a estos países atados al mercado mundial de manera subordinada y, en consecuencia, condenados al subdesarrollo. [11] Pongámoslo en palabras de Rosa Luxemburg: *“el capitalismo vive a expensas de economías coloniales; vive, más exactamente de su ruina. Y si para acumular tiene absoluta necesidad de ellas, es porque éstas le ofrecen la tierra nutritiva a expensas de la cual se cumple la acumulación”*. [12]

Esta realidad, que ha dado lugar a la tesis de la *“maldición de la abundancia”* [13], explica la existencia de economías en extremo frágiles y dependientes, víctimas de crisis económicas recurrentes, al tiempo que se consolidan mentalidades “rentistas”. Todo esto profundiza la débil y escasa institucionalidad, alienta la corrupción. Lo expuesto se complica con las prácticas clientelares y patrimonialistas desplegadas vía políticas sociales que deterioran el tejido organizativo y comunitario de la sociedad. Más allá de la ruptura de los límites ambientales, esta modalidad de acumulación primario-exportadora contribuye a frenar la construcción de democracias sólidas; así, el autoritarismo [14] o el populismo de alta intensidad, para tomar este concepto de la socióloga argentina Maristella Svampa [15], caracteriza a los gobiernos extractivistas, especialmente a los “progresistas”.

La realidad de una economía primario-exportadora, sea de recursos petroleros, minerales y/o frutas tropicales, por ejemplo, es decir exportadora de Naturaleza, se refleja además en un

escaso interés por invertir en el mercado interno. Esto redundaría en una limitada integración del sector exportador con la producción nacional. No hay los incentivos que permitan desarrollar y diversificar la producción interna, vinculándola a los procesos exportadores, que a su vez deberían transformar los recursos naturales en bienes de mayor valor agregado. Esta situación es explicable por lo relativamente fácil que resulta obtener ventaja de la generosa Naturaleza y de muchas veces también de una mano de obra barata.

Para cerrar el círculo es necesario comprender que el grueso del beneficio de estas actividades extractivas lo reciben las economías ricas, importadoras de estos recursos. Luego estos países sacan un provecho mayor procesando las materias primas y comercializándolas como productos terminados. Mientras tanto los países exportadores de bienes primarios, reciben, normalmente, una mínima participación de la renta minera o petrolera, mientras cargan con el peso de los pasivos ambientales y sociales. Los primeros importan Naturaleza, los segundos la exportan. Los primeros son desarrollados, los otros no.

A lo anterior se suma la masiva concentración de dichas rentas en pocos grupos oligopólicos. Estos sectores y amplios segmentos empresariales, contagiados por el rentismo, no encuentran alicientes (tampoco los crean) para sus inversiones en la economía doméstica. Con frecuencia sacan sus ganancias fuera del país y llegan inclusive a manejar sus negocios con empresas afincadas en lugares conocidos como paraísos fiscales.

Así las cosas, tampoco existe estímulo o presión para invertir los ingresos recibidos por las exportaciones de productos primarios en las propias actividades exportadoras, pues la ventaja comparativa radica en la generosidad de la Naturaleza, antes que en el esfuerzo innovador del ser humano. La respuesta para enfrentar una creciente demanda o incluso para responder a la caída de los precios de dichos recursos en el mercado mundial, ha sido -como ya dejó anotado- expandir la frontera extractiva provocando cada vez más y mayores complicaciones.

No nos olvidemos que en este tipo de economías extractivistas, muchas veces con una elevada demanda de capital y tecnología para la extracción de las materias primas, funciona con una lógica de enclave. No hay impulso integradores de esas actividades primario-exportadoras con el resto de la economía y de la sociedad. Así el aparato productivo queda sujeto a las vicisitudes del mercado mundial. En especial, queda vulnerable a la competencia de otros países en similares condiciones, que buscan sostener sus ingresos sin preocuparse mayormente por un manejo más adecuado de los precios. Y como resultado de esto, las posibilidades de integración regional, indispensables para ampliar los mercados domésticos, desaparecen si todos los países vecinos producen similares materias primas.

Preguntémonos, entonces, hasta cuándo se va a aceptar que todos los países productores de bienes primarios similares, que son muchos, puedan desarrollarse esperando que la demanda internacional sea sostenida y permanente. En este escenario hay que reconocer que el real control de las exportaciones nacionales está en manos de los países centrales, aún cuando no siempre se registren importantes inversiones extranjeras en las actividades extractivistas. Muchas empresas estatales de las economías primario-exportadoras (con la anuencia de sus respectivos

gobiernos, por cierto) parecerían programadas para reaccionar exclusivamente ante impulsos foráneos. Por otro lado, hay países, como en la actualidad China, que entregan cuantiosos créditos asegurándose el repago directa o indirectamente con recursos naturales. En síntesis, la lógica de la extracción de recursos naturales, motivada por la demanda externa, caracteriza la evolución de estas economías primario-exportadoras.

Debido a estas condiciones y a las características tecnológicas de las actividades petrolera o minera e incluso del agronegocio intensivo, no hay una masiva generación directa de empleo. Adicionalmente, las comunidades en cuyos territorios o vecindades se realizan estas actividades extractivistas han sufrido y sufren los efectos de una serie de dificultades socioambientales derivadas de este tipo de explotaciones. La miseria de grandes masas de la población parecería ser, por tanto, consustancial a la presencia de ingentes cantidades de recursos naturales (con alta renta diferencial). Esta modalidad de acumulación no requiere del mercado interno, incluso funciona con salarios decrecientes. No hay la presión social que obliga a reinvertir en mejoras de la productividad. Estas actividades extractivas impiden, con frecuencia, la ejecución de planes de desarrollo local adecuados.

Por todas estas razones, rápidamente descritas, estas economías primario-exportadoras no han conseguido superar la “trampa de la pobreza”. Esta es la gran paradoja: hay países que son ricos en recursos naturales, que incluso pueden tener importantes ingresos financieros, pero que no consiguen establecer las bases para su desarrollo y siguen siendo pobres.

Si se puede superar “la maldición de la abundancia”

Frente a la omnipresencia de los extractivismos asoman con frecuencia los reclamos por alternativas. Estas existen. El meollo radica en no seguir extendiendo y profundizando un modelo económico extractivista, es decir primario-exportador. Ese esquema no ha sido la senda para salir de la pobreza de ningún país. [16] El escape de una economía extractivista, que tendrá que arrastrar por un tiempo algunas actividades de este tipo, debe considerar un punto clave: el decrecimiento planificado del extractivismo. Por lo tanto, plantearse como opción más extractivismos para superar el extractivismo es una falacia.

En línea con lo dicho hay que potenciar actividades sustentables, así como aquellas que den paso a la manufactura de las materias primas dentro de cada país, pero sin caer en la lógica del productivismo y el consumismo alentada por las demandas de acumulación del capital. Por igual se requiere otro tipo de participación en el mercado mundial, construyendo bases de una integración regional más autocentrada para inclusive poder negociar mejores condiciones en bloque. Pero sobre todo, no se debe deteriorar más la Naturaleza y aumentar las brechas sociales. El éxito de este tipo de estrategias para procesar una transición social, económica, cultural, ecológica, dependerá de su coherencia y, particularmente, del grado de comprensión y respaldo social que tenga.

Igualmente hay que estar claros que la eliminación de la pobreza no se consigue solamente con inversión social y obra pública, y/o con una mejor distribución del ingreso. Si se quiere erradicar la pobreza hay que dar paso a una sustantiva redistribución de la riqueza y se debe cambiar la modalidad de acumulación primario-exportadora, que constituye la base estructural de tantas inequidades y violencias.

Por igual urge abordar con responsabilidad el tema del crecimiento económico. Paulatinamente vamos entendiendo que el crecimiento económico no es sinónimo de desarrollo y éste, por lo demás, se ha demostrado como un fantasma inalcanzable. Aunque puede sorprender a algunas personas, los países que se consideran desarrollados, son maldesarrollados [17]; por ejemplo viven mucho más allá de sus capacidades ecológicas y no han logrado resolver la inequidad social, mientras aumentan las frustraciones sicosociales en su seno. En síntesis, es imposible sostener el crecimiento económico permanente en un mundo con claros límites biofísicos, que comienzan ser superados. De aquí surge la necesidad de vincular estas discusiones sobre el extractivismo con el decrecimiento o post-crecimiento. [18]

Este reto no lo vamos a resolver de la noche a la mañana. Hay que dar paso a transiciones a partir de miles y miles de prácticas alternativas existentes en todo el planeta, orientadas por horizontes que propugnan una vida en armonía entre los seres humanos y de estos con la Naturaleza. Eso nos conmina a transitar hacia una nueva civilización: pasar del antropocentrismo al biocentrismo es el reto. Esta nueva civilización no surgirá de manera espontánea. Se trata de una construcción y reconstrucción paciente y decidida, que empieza por desmontar varios fetiches y en propiciar cambios radicales, a partir de experiencias existentes y también construyendo nuevas utopías.

Este es el punto. Contamos con valores, experiencias y prácticas civilizatorias alternativas, como las que ofrece el Buen Vivir o *sumak kawsay* o *suma qamaña* de las comunidades indígenas andinas y amazónica. [19] A más de las visiones de Nuestra América hay otras muchas aproximaciones a pensamientos filosóficos de alguna manera emparentados con la búsqueda de una vida armoniosa desde visiones filosóficas incluyentes en todos los continentes. El Buen Vivir, en tanto cultura de vida, con diversos nombres y variedades, ha sido conocido y practicado en distintos períodos en las diferentes regiones de la Madre Tierra, como podría ser el *Ubuntu* en África o el *Swaraj* en la India. [20] Aunque mejor sería hablar en plural de buenos convivires, para no abrir la puerta a un Buen Vivir único, homogéneo, imposible de realizar, por lo demás. En suma, nos toca construir un mundo donde quepan otros mundos, sin que ninguno de ellos sea víctima de la marginación y la explotación, y donde todos los seres humanos vivamos con dignidad y en armonía con la Naturaleza.

Endnotes

[1] Economista ecuatoriano. Investigador de la FLACSO-Ecuador. Exministro de Energía y Minas. Expresidente de la Asamblea Constituyente. Excandidato a la Presidencia de la República.

[2] Horacio Machado Aráoz “La naturaleza americana y el orden colonial del capital - El debate sobre el “extractivismo” en tiempos de resaca”, en *rebelión.org*; abril del 2016. <https://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=211020>.

[3] Se recomienda el libro de este autor: Eduardo Gudynas, *Extractivismos – Ecología, economía y política de un modo de entender el desarrollo y la Naturaleza*, CLAES - CEDIB, La Paz, 2015.

[4] Consultar en Harve,y David. *El nuevo imperialismo*. Madrid: Akal, 2003.

[5] Precisamente, desde la perspectiva de Marx, al hablarnos sobre la acumulación originaria, nos dice claramente que el origen de esta se encuentra en la violencia: “El descubrimiento de las comarcas auríferas y argentíferas en América, el exterminio, esclavización y soterramiento en las minas de la población aborigen, la conquista y saqueo de las Indias Orientales, la transformación de África en un coto reservado para la caza comercial de pieles-negras, caracterizan los albores de la era de producción capitalista. Estos procesos idílicos constituyen factores fundamentales de la acumulación originaria”, Karl Marx, *El Capital*, tomo I, 1876. Print.

[6] Karl Marx, “*La conquista, el sojuzgamiento, el homicidio motivado por el robo: en una palabra, la violencia*”, Karl Marx, *El Capital*, tomo I, Vol. III, 1876; Rosa Luxemburg, “*La violencia, el engaño, la opresión y la rapiña*” (1912).

[7] Gudynas Eduardo. “Extracciones, extractivismos y extrahecciones - Un marco conceptual sobre la apropiación de recursos naturales.” *Observatorio del desarrollo* 18 (febrero 2013). 1-18.

[8] Hay varias aproximaciones este concepto. Algunos tratadistas hablan de neoextractivismo en el caso de los gobiernos progresistas, otros lo usan para denominar la reciente fase de extracción de recursos naturales. Aquí asumimos la primera acepción conceptual.

[9] Esta discusión tiene mucha historia en América Latina. Podríamos recurrir a los aportes de los dependentistas, de indudable actualidad. Por ejemplo Furtado, Celso. *Teoría y política del desarrollo económico*. México: Siglo XXI, 1969. Print; Pinto, Aníbal, “Naturaleza e implicaciones de la “heterogeneidad estructural” de la América Latina”. *El Trimestre Económico*. 37.145.8, 1970. Print; Frank, Andre Gunder. *Capitalismo y subdesarrollo en América Latina*. México: Siglo XXI, 1970. Print. Una actualización de este debate en sintonía con el extractivismo se encuentra en el artículo de Acosta, Alberto. “Las dependencias del extractivismo. Aporte para un debate incompleto.” *Actual Marx Intervenciones* 20 (2016). Print.

[10] Linera, Álvaro García. *Geopolítica de la Amazonía. Poder hacendal - patrimonial y acumulación capitalista*. Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia: La Paz, 2012. Print.

[11] Vale revisar los valiosos aportes de Jürgen Schuldt sobre esta materia, por ejemplo en Schuldt, Jürgen *¿Somos pobres porque somos ricos? Recursos naturales, tecnología y globalización*. Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2015. Print Una síntesis preliminar de estas reflexiones se encuentran el artículo de Jürgen Schuldt y Alberto Acosta, “Algunos elementos para repensar el desarrollo – Una lectura para pequeños países”, en, Alberto Acosta, ed. *El desarrollo en la Globalización*. Caracas: Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 2000. Print.

[12] Luxemburg, Rosa. *La Acumulación del Capital*. Edicions Internacionals Sedov, 1912. Disponible en www.grupgerminal.org.

[13] En la teoría se habla de la “maldición de los recursos” o la “paradoja de la abundancia”. Ver esta discusión en el libro de Acosta, Alberto. *La maldición de la abundancia*. Quito: CEP, Swissaid y Abya-Yala, 2009. La bibliografía sobre este tema, desde las más variadas vertientes ideológicas, es enorme.

[14] La intolerancia de los regímenes “progresistas” con los críticos al extractivismo es proverbial. Una síntesis de este particular nos ofrece Horacio Machado Aráoz Ibid.

[15] Consultar Maristella Svampa: “América Latina: de nuevas izquierdas a populismos de alta intensidad”, octubre de 2015. <http://revistamemoria.mx/?p=702>.

[16] Noruega no es la excepción que confirma la regla. En este caso la extracción de petróleo empezó y se expandió cuando ya existían sólidas instituciones económicas y políticas democráticas e institucionalizadas, con una sociedad sin inequidades comparables a la de los países petroleros o mineros, es decir cuando el país escandinavo ya era un país que podría ser considerado como desarrollado.

[17] Ver, por ejemplo, el libro de Tortosa, José María. “Mal desarrollo y mal vivir – Pobreza y violencia escala mundial.” Ed. Alberto Acosta y Esperanza Martínez. Quito: Serie Debate Constituyente, Abya-Yala, 2011. Print.

[18] Para encontrar puntos en común basta revisar el interesante el aporte -traducido a varios idiomas- de varios autores en el libro de D’Alisa, Giacomo y Federico Demaria y Giorgios Kallis, eds. *Degrowth. Handbuch für eine neue Ära*. München: Oekom Verlag, 2016. Print. También es aleccionadora la lectura del libro de Koldo Unceta sobre esta discusión, relacionando el postcrecimiento con el postdesarrollo. Acosta, Alberto y Esperanza Martínez, eds. *Desarrollo, postcrecimiento y Buen Vivir*. Quito: Serie Debate Constituyente, Abya-Yala, 2014. Print.

[19] La lista de textos que abordan este tema es cada vez más grande. Podríamos mencionar, entre muchos otros aportes, los textos del autor de estas líneas, como el libro *El Buen Vivir Sumak Kawsay, una oportunidad para imaginar otros mundos*, ICARIA, Barcelona, 2013 (Este libro ha sido editado en francés - Utopia 2014, en alemán - Oekom Verlag 2015, en portugués - Editorial Autonomia Literária y Editorial Elefante 2016).

[20] Ver Kothari, Ashish y Federico Demaria y Alberto Acosta. “Buen Vivir, Degrowth and Ecological Swaraj: Alternatives to sustainable development and the Green Economy.” *Development* 57, 3/4, 2015.

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Inter/Transbiotic Memory Traces, Transculturation, and Decolonization in Inter-American Literature

Abstract

By linking ecological and postcolonial issues as a theoretical approach to an analysis of literature, this essay's starting point is that there is an existential link between humans and nature/landscape, outer and inner landscape. Furthermore, one of the principal themes in inter-American literatures is the conquest, exploitation and destruction of nature/landscape as well as its resurrection as *locus amoenus*, an immaculate Edenic sanctuary or El Dorado. Thus, nature in the literatures of the American continent symbolizes a temporal, spatial, and cultural in-betweenness characterized by the brutalization of space and people rooted in the past and disseminated in the present in rhizomic ways. It externalizes the spectral feature of inherent, repressed forms of violence that return in response to disavowal and make their presence felt at the levels of lived experience, imagination and enunciation—forms which together constitute the political, cultural and ecological unconscious of the inter-American experience. The objective of this essay is to analyze the mnemonic process that translates this double brutalization in creative works by Margaret Atwood (Canada), Linda Hogan (United States), Orlando Romero (United States), Toni Morrison (United States), Patrick Chamoiseau (Martinique), and Manoel de Barros (Brazil).

Keywords: Transculturalization, Decolonization, Memory, Inter-American Literatures, El Dorado, Nature, Eden, Patrick Chamoiseau, Manoel de Barros, Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison

1. Of Memory Traces and the Brutalization of Space and People

According to Édouard Glissant (*Discourse* 146), “[t]he landscape has its language.” In “Elegía,” Nicolás Guillen asserts that “*Hay que aprender a recordar / lo que las nubes no pueden olvidar [...]*” (“You have to learn to remember what the clouds cannot forget”). [1] Whereas Glissant’s statement affirms the relationship between human beings and nature—someone observing/describing nature—and the ontological existence of nature-in-itself, Guillen’s lines emphasize the importance and necessity of human beings not only to view, picture, and represent nature, but to understand, decipher, and remember its messages. Wilson Harris formulates the relationship between humans and their surroundings as follows: “There is a dialogue there between one’s internal being, one’s psyche, and the nature of the place, the landscape” (Gilkes 33). If, according to these three thinkers, there is an existential link between man and nature/landscape, outer and inner landscape, it is important not only to reveal its characteristics, but also to examine how writers translate this “dialogue” on the levels of theme, style, and structure: how they express perceptions of living nature in their creative works.

In the Americas, the colonizers, driven by utopian ideas and material greed, landscaped nature from ‘savage’ wilderness to ‘cultivated’ garden, resulting in earthscapes and seascapes imbued with violated bodies, minds and places. In this sense, landscape/seascape/nature (their physical attributes) are symbols of history. Thus, Glissant writes: “Our landscape is its own monument: its meaning can only be traced on the underside. It is all history” (*Discourse* 11).

One of the principal characteristics of colonization, in the Americas and elsewhere, is dislocation. From autochthonous empires, European colonization, independence and nation building to our digital times, the American continent has been characterized by diverse forms and practices of violent dislocation and disjunctive experience. This experience of transcultural coloniality as an ongoing process of interethnic domination and resistance, which is one of the most important common denominators linking nations in their difference throughout the continent, involves space, time, language, identity, ethos and worldview, that is the entire cultural episteme, class, politics and economics. As such, it has a decisive impact on citizenship and nationhood. In this sense, Antonio Cornejo-Polar (147) argues that nation-spaces in the Americas are “traumáticamente dismembradas” (“traumatically dismembered”) and characterized by “heterogeneidade conflitiva” (“conflictive heterogeneity”). This ethnocultural heterogeneity has its roots in the diverse forms and phases of (neo/post)colonial dislocation with its implicit migratory processes: those who move forcefully or freely do so without leaving behind their ethnocultural mind-set determined by specific belief systems, social values and mores—attitudes that usually differ from those native to the land. Thus, the diverse transcultural crossroads throughout the American continent constitute “*transfrontera* contact zones” (Saldívar 13-14) characterized not only by ethnocultural difference, but also different attitudes to landscape/nature. Both colonizers in the past and tourists in the present, for example, are linked by a perception that imposes attitudes to landscape of the homeland on the place of arrival, or views new landscapes through the epistemic lenses of the homeland.

Furthermore, the Western definition of humanity has always been based on diverse types of otherization: the (non)human as an uncivilized and animalized other. This anthropomorphic and racist idea, which negates the other's independent self, continues to justify processes of neocolonization, invasion, and/or domination. In this sense, inter-American dislocation is deeply rooted in the brutalization of space, human beings and the entire biota. With reference to this dislocation qua in-betweenness, Glissant argues that "[...] the poetics of the American continent" are characterized by "a search for temporal duration" with writers "struggling in the confusion of time [...] this exploded, suffered time [...] linked to 'transferred' space. [...], the 'memory' of which has become stamped on the spatial reality that we all live. [...] Space [...] seems to me open, exploded, rent. There is something violent in this American sense of literary space" (*Discourse* 144-145); a violence that links the past and the present and has a decisive impact on a community's identity. Speaking about the French Caribbean, he argues that the violence of the plantation system did not allow "[o]ur historical consciousness" to "be deposited gradually and continuously like sediment [...]" but came together in the context of shock, contraction, painful negation, and explosive forces" (*Discourse* 61-62). The result is an erasure of "collective memory" rendering "lived history as a steadily advancing neurosis" (*Discourse* 65).

Mapped on the body, soul and mind of human beings and the environment they inhabit, this physical and epistemic violence, I argue, is a foundational sociocultural condition of societies throughout the Americas. Space, time, memory and identity are linked in that identity is shaped by connections to the physical world within a temporal process. Words, through memory, recreate a world of references and it is this world of references that (re)constitutes identity within a historical process: an identity rooted in a culturally specific ethos and worldview and articulated in a specific language. If this equation of subject, language, ethos, and worldview is broken, then identity is dislocated. Mythopoetic articulation is able to reverse this situation through a revision of history and thereby relocate identity within a re-membered cultural episteme that is, the founding categories, processes of naming in a variety of discourses that give meaning to things, events, etc., values through which we know and interpret things and act accordingly. Multi-ethnic inter-American artists play, write, sing, paint, photograph, sculpture and perform sites of memory through the process of remembrance in order to come to terms with a traumatic past and its effects in the present. The importance of this *working through* the events of the past resides precisely in the sedimentation of a traumatically lived experience into present historical consciousness. In the process, a dislocated identity may be relocated not necessarily in one specific place but between places, that is in a diasporic space characterized by overlapping, juxtaposed, or transculturated epistemes.

Since one of the principal themes in inter-American literatures is the conquest, exploitation and destruction of nature/landscape/place as well as its resurrection as *locus amoenus*, an immaculate Edenic sanctuary or El Dorado qua utopia, I contend that nature in inter-American texts symbolizes a temporal, spatial, and cultural in-betweenness characterized by the brutalization of space and people rooted in the past and disseminated in the present in rhizomic ways. It externalizes the spectral nature of inherent, repressed forms of violence that return in response to

disavowal and make their presence felt at the levels of lived experience, imagination and enunciation—forms which together constitute the political, cultural and ecological unconscious of the inter-American experience. In this sense, nature functions as an allegory of human decadence in William Faulkner; human errantry, hope and frustration in Alejo Carpentier; human regeneration in Ernest Hemingway; social exploitation and violation of the natural order (humans = maize) in Miguel Asturias; human *Dasein* in João Guimarães Rosa; or as monuments, memory, and mythopoeic setting in Patrick Chamoiseau, Édouard Glissant, Derek Walcott, and Maryse Condé, to name just a few. From this angle, inter-American creative works constitute mnemonic sites where an unspeakable experience is re-created and thus formed into an object of conscious comprehension through cultural negotiation; a negotiation based on imagination—a key word in this process—that resists the silence of forgetting and distortion by attributing a circular, open meaning to the present in which the past accumulates toward the future.

How do writers establish the link between identity and place that is, between an individual's/group's inner landscape and their surroundings, their outer landscape? I contend that it is through memory and imagination. If according to Paul Ricoeur (539) four types of memory traces can be distinguished—"la trace écrite" ("the written trace") or "trace documentaire" ("documentary trace"); "la trace psychique" ("the psychic trace"); "la trace cérébrale" ("the cerebral trace") and "la trace matérielle" ("the material trace")—and if following Patrick Chamoiseau (*Écrire* 120), memories "irradient dans la Trace, elles *l'habitent* d'une presence-sans-matière offerte à l'émotion. Leurs associations, Traces-mémoires [...] sont jeu des mémoires qui se sont emmêlées. [...] Leurs significations demeurent évolutives" ("radiate in the Trace, they inhabit the trace with a presence-without-matter offered to emotion. Their associations, Trace-memories, [...] are a play of entangled memories. [...] Their significations remain evolutionary") and "me font entendre-voir-toucher-imaginer l'emmêlée des histoires qui ont tissé ma terre" ("make me understand-see-touch-imagine the entanglement of the histories that have woven my land"), then, memory, the complex process of remembering and forgetting, has to be situated in its geographical, social, and cultural context. Toni Morrison resurrects settings, events, and agents of the past by means of four different types of memory nourished by "the act of imagination": "my own recollections [...] the recollection of others", "memories within" as "subsoil", and what she calls "emotional memory" ("Site" 111, 119). Since memory is performatively structured, the act of remembering, argues Huysen, is rather "an act of *recherche* than of recuperation" (85). This means that memory is a function of subjectivity that through its intrinsic mobile nature highlights a sense of loss (*le temp perdu*): feeling/imagination in search of past knowledge. Transferred from the individual, lived experience of the African ancestors to the collective imagination, memory, as Morrison asserts, emphasizes the discontinuity between the lived and remembered past. Afro-diasporic *milieus* and *lieux de mémoire* are constituted by versions of the past generated and sustained by imagined/invented memory.

How do writers translate memory, in itself a dislocation between and within times and spaces inhabiting all elements of the biota, on the level of discourse and plot? When stones talk, butterflies think, clouds remember, plants forget, trees feel and animals rationalize in literary texts, are we

dealing with allegorical imagination, magical realism, *lo real maravilloso*, the fantastic, or is this rather a specific type of memory whose connections to its object or source are mediated less by recollection than by projection and creation?

How do contemporary writers in the Americas come to terms with the legacy of the past, which they have not experienced? How do they transform traumatic memory—the brutalization of space and people and the implicit forms and practices of physical and epistemic violence—into narrative memory? In other words, how do they deal with what Wilson Harris (90) has memorably called the “living fossil of buried cultures” and the narrative voice in Morrison’s *A Mercy* (160) has described as the devastating result of this violent foundational condition, namely “the withering inside that enslaves and opens the door for what is wild”?

The way people inhabit place and space, then, is a key issue in the inter-American context of violent (re)appropriation, mobility and dis/relocations. Here it is important to remember that a sense of place means belonging, being at home in a place as well as longing for a place-as-home. Thus, a sense of place is crucial for a community’s cultural episteme, that is, the interwoven relationship between ethos—an individual’s place in a specific ethnocultural context, especially the way (s)he imagines this subject position—and worldview, that is, how (s)he views space from this place. Since in the Americas the equation of subject, language, ethos, worldview is dislocated because of a forced mobility that has prevented the majority of Americans from owning land—which in itself could be seen as a crucial factor for the masses’ alienation from environmental issues throughout the Americas—it is important to examine how this sense of place is developed with regard to identity. Are we confronted with a text’s colonial or decolonial attitude with regard to the culture-nature divide? How do texts translate the link between human and nonhuman dislocation, their in-between being-in-the-world?

In other words, what type of memory translates the ecological unconscious that imbues the relation between human beings, their environment and the rest of the biota? If for Fredric Jameson (1992) the “political unconscious” is the simultaneously absent and present because desired cultural revolution that would transform an unjust hegemony of the political system into a just democracy, then one could define the ecological unconscious as the simultaneously absent and present because desired ecological transformation that would bring about a change of the hegemonic and exploitative vision with respect to the biota. A change of vision and our attitudes with regard to the plant and animal world—a biotic ethics—is necessarily based on a change of cultural imagination, especially the internalized systems, thought/speech disposition that generate specific social practices, what Bourdieu (1977) in his analysis of the ‘*habitus*’ described as the “cultural unconscious.” According to Lawrence Buell (170) this new ecological ethics is based on a “compromise of reinhabitation” that “implies the extension of a moral and, sometimes, even legal position to the nonhuman world.” In this sense, for Charles Taylor the process of literary rememorization opens as it constitutes a “moral space, a space in which issues are raised concerning what is right and what is wrong, what is worth doing or not, what makes sense and is of importance for one and what is trivial and secondary” (28). In the following, I want to examine the

space of literary memory as moral/social/cultural space—a space constituted by inter/transbiotic mnemonic traces filled with the writer’s emotion and imagination—in select creative works by Margaret Atwood (Canada), Linda Hogan (United States), Orlando Romero (United States), Toni Morrison (United States), Patrick Chamoiseau (Martinique), and Manoel de Barros (Brazil). [2]

2. Into the Wild: Inter/Transbiotic Identity in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*

Margaret Atwood’s novel *Surfacing* is the story of a young woman who returns to northern Quebec, to the remote island of her childhood with her lover and two friends, to investigate the mysterious disappearance of her father. Throughout the journey that lasts about one week, the protagonist is flooded with memories and realizes that going home means entering not only another place, but other places and times, and accepting the multiple others in one’s inner and outer landscape. In the process, memory condenses diverse places, times and species at a present crossroads where the interior and the city, culture and nature as well as human beings and nonhumans meet in a tension-laden relationship.

The journey into the interior of Quebec is simultaneously a constant imaginary moving back and forth between the present and the protagonist’s childhood and adolescence. It is the journey of an adult woman haunted by the traumatic experience of an abortion and the subsequent breaking off with her parents. In this sense, the journey in search of her father is also an attempt at establishing contact with her dead mother and her own self: an individual memory (Bergson) imbued with what Ricoeur has termed *mémoire des proches* set in collective, social memory (Halbwachs). Similar to Faulkner, but by means of shorter and less convoluted sentences, Margaret Atwood works the temporal flux, the changes of perspective and the focalization of the characters through the narrative voice to graph the unconscious impulses in her protagonist’s mind. In the process, the protagonist’s memory reveals diverse forms and practices of violence that human beings inflict upon each other and the environment within a network of power relations characterized by domination and exploitation. To become conscious of the disavowal of a violence that haunts its *Verleugnung* and to be able to integrate the dislocated and belated traumatic experience as sedimented memory, the protagonist has to:

be more careful about my memories, I have to be sure they’re my own and not the memories of other people telling me what I felt, how I acted, what I said: if the events are wrong the feelings I remember about them will be wrong too, I’ll start inventing them and there will be no way of correcting it, the ones who could help are gone. (72)

This process of conscientization, then, requires the deconstruction of “the memories fraudulent as passports” that fill “a faked album”, this “paper house” (149) she has been living in until the beginning of this journey. Grounded in and propelled by social experience, this mnemonic deconstruction establishes a link between the political, cultural and ecological unconscious of Canadian society: the way Canadian (and, in a broader sense, Western) democracy in the 1970s was a hegemonic system based upon the oppression, subalternization and/or exploitation of all the

others constituting its inner margin in the name of a ruthless capitalistic economic order and its consumer culture.

Atwood emphasizes the destructive effects of this order, the disastrous moral cost in hypocrisy, alienation, and destructiveness that Western civilization entails, in the behavior, actions and thoughts of the protagonist's lover and friends; namely, their complete reification. Furthermore, the text's decolonial attitude lays bare the devastation of the land (fauna, flora, water resources, etc.) by electric companies, lumber business, and tourism in an allegorical way, mirroring human degeneration. At one point in the plot, for example, the protagonist and her three travelling companions come upon a camp of American hunters who had just killed and strung up a heron. This image haunts the protagonist and makes her wonder "what part of them [the hunters] the heron was, that they needed so much to kill it" (123). I argue that the text's decolonial attitude problematizes what the environmental philosopher Deane Curtin (145) has termed "environmental racism": "the connection, in theory and practice, of race and environment so that the oppression of one is connected to, and supported by, the oppression of the other." White Americans hunting game in Canadian woods desecrates the cosmogony and cosmology of First Nation Peoples. It could be seen as an extreme form of what Val Plumwood (*Environmental 4*) has called "hegemonic centrism": the self-privileging view underlying colonialism, racism, and sexism alike, all of which support each other and have historically been used for the purposes of exploiting nature while reducing nonhuman claims to a shared earth. In the process, we should not forget, as Plumwood ("Decolonizing" 53) argues, that the western definition of humanity has always depended on the presence of the not-human: the uncivilized and the animalistic. The justification for invasion and colonization proceeded and continues to proceed from this racist, anthropomorphic basis—one that negates the independent self of nature, or projects abjections upon nonhuman elements of the biota as a license to kill. A physical, psychological, epistemic and ecological violence resumed in the protagonist's question: "How did we get bad?" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 134). [3]

In order to think this question over the protagonist distances herself from her travel companions and moves into the wild—with a lake and the woods functioning as *locus amoenus*—in an attempt at reconstructing her alienated/ fragmented self and way of living and relating to others, human and nonhuman. This immersion into nature—which bears the characteristics of a ritual passage through the *limen* (Gennep)—constitutes a critique of Western civilization in that the protagonist wants to strip herself of all that is artificially induced by the ideological machinery of social normalization. In this sense, she wants to "stop being in the mirror" in order "not to see myself but to see" (186): to see herself through the other and the other in herself based on mutual respect. This implies that she does not hunt animals with a weapon but "with my hands," since "that will be fair" (193). This, then, is an inter/transbiotic identitarian stance expressed as follows: "I lean against a tree, I am a tree leaning" or, "I am not an animal or a tree, I am the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place" (193). The protagonist's relocation of identity substitutes the difference-as-separation that characterizes the relationship between human beings and nonhumans for a diversity-in-relation in which humans and nonhumans coexist in a mutual give-and-take

exchange. Her identitarian reconstruction, then, carries the message that culture as a human product should not be seen in opposition to nature since human culture resides in and is determined by nature. In other words, our human existence and history is inextricably intertwined with those of other species.

3. Into Landscape: Inter/Transbiotic Epistemes and Transculturality in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*; Orlando Romero's *Nambé Year One*, and Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*

An inter/transbiotic relationship between the human and nonhuman worlds can also be discerned in Chickasaw poet, novelist and essayist Linda Hogan's novel *Solar Storms*. Other than in Atwood's text, however, the protagonist's identity is constituted by a interbiotic tribal memory—which unlike postmemory (Hirsch) links not only generations inter and intra-ethnically, but also diverse species in their lived experiences. It is through this type of memory that Angela in *Solar Storms* moves from cultural alienation to tribal consciousness. That is to say, she learns that besides Euro-American history and culture, there is a tribal-specific Native American consciousness that emphasizes connections rather than divisions between spiritual and material realms. In her creative and critical texts, Hogan strives to break down the culture/ nature dichotomy and heal the alienation between the human and nonhuman worlds. Echoing Chief Joseph's memorable statement made in early May 1877, at the last council between the Nez Perce Indians and representatives of the United States government before the outbreak of the Nez Perce War—"The earth and myself are of one mind. The measure of the land and the measure of our bodies are the same" (McLuhan 54)—Hogan has stated that "[w]e are all the same world inside different skins, and with different intelligences" (*Intimate* xiv). Thus, for Hogan there is no difference between the genocide of Native American peoples and the ongoing destruction of nature: "what happens to people and what happens to the land is the same thing" (*Dwellings* 89). The explicit sense of this deep link between matter and mind, land and body, expressed by Chief Joseph and Linda Hogan, is that mind is not the special province of human beings. The specific landscape from which a tribe emerges determines their ethos and worldview, providing tribal societies with the founding cultural categories and symbols, the classificatory schemes of sameness and difference, the mythopoetic processes of original naming and informing the language to articulate the underlying order of things and knowledge through which they interpret reality. Therefore, removal from this landscape initiates an alienation not only from many aspects of a tribal way of life, but also from the self as part of the tribe located within the landscape. [4] This explains that the ongoing experience of invasion, genocide, dispossession, colonization, relocation and ethnocide—the darker, bloody side of the American Dream—has disrupted the notion of home/ identity within First Nation cultures. This is also why so many characters in Native American fiction, do not feel at home both in their tribal culture, whose language they do not speak, and in the world of white culture where they occupy the outer margin, hovering as the invisible shadow over the colonizer's guilt-ridden racialized memory. [5] Thus, as Louis Owens (5) argued, "[t]he recovering or rearticulation of an identity, a process dependent upon a rediscovered sense of place as well as community [...] is at the center of American Indian fiction."

In *Solar Storms* Angela summarizes the identity quest as a journey in search of wholeness as follows: "I wanted an unbroken line between me and the past. I wanted not to be fragments and pieces left behind by fur traders, soldiers, priests, and schools" (77). After an odyssey through a series of foster homes, she decides to return to her place of birth, envisioning herself as water flowing back to its source. Set in the 1970s in the Great Lakes region, where scattered members of Cree, Anishinabe, and various other tribes fight against the construction of dams and reservoirs threatening to flood their homelands, the novel describes Angela's "falling into a lake" (26), the fertile waters of her great-grandmother's storytelling. Later, moving in a canoe up north, and surrounded by water, Angela gradually begins to live

inside water. There was no separation between us. I knew in a moment what water was. It was what had been snow. It had passed through old forests, now gone. It was the sweetness of milk and corn and it had journeyed through human lives. It was blood spilled on the ground. Some of it was the blood of my ancestors. [...] In that moment I understood I was part of the same equation as birds and rain (78-79).

Stories, the power of words, trigger Angela's thoughts and dreams, which link her to the world of plants and animals in that specific place. This falling into tribal nature-as-culture, where "everything merged and united" (177), where "the old ones" can be heard "in the songs of wolves" (176)—an act of interior consciousness by means of which life and identity are called into being within a *sacred hoop*—enables Angela to envision an alternative reality without borders: "Maybe the roots of dreaming are in the soil of dailiness, or in the heart, or in another place without words, but when they come together and grow, they are like the seeds of hydrogen and the seeds of oxygen that together create ocean, lake, and ice. In this way, the plants and I joined each other" (171). By joining forces with several other generations of women represented by Agnes, Dora-Rouge, and Bush, assuming responsibility for her younger half-sister, and relocating her self within place-as-space through water tropes, Angela enters and actively shapes tribal history and culture. Angela's reconstruction of identity and her subsequent communal agency, aided by a speaking nature (118) unleashing floodwaters against the roads of the intruders, align the energy of tribal people with the energy of nature through the power of words against the interference of white people living in disharmony with the earth.

Solar Storms, then, is a ceremonial representation of an integrated vision of reality set against sociocultural definitions of the self and the universe that are based on divisions and lead to the destruction of life on earth. The objective of Hogan's creative and critical works is to mend the broken covenant between the human and nonhuman worlds, decolonize mental space ("mental slavery" to use Bob Marley's memorable words), deconstruct artificial borders through the workings of an inter/transbiotic memory and thereby transform our sense of what it means to inhabit the earth: a sense of place as sense of space characterized by biotic harmony and justice.

Written and published in the first decade of the "Chicano Renaissance," Orlando Romero's *Nambé-Year One* (1976), delineates a protagonist, Mateo, in search of his identitarian roots as he tries to understand his past and relate it to his present situation, that of an educated Chicano-Indian

sculptor, the symbol of a mixed cultural heritage composed of Anglo-Saxon, Hispanic and Amerindian traditions:

I am the incarnation of the wild blood, that hybrid solar-maize plant blood. There is Indian in us, of ancient forgotten peoples [...]. The Moor, the Jew, the Arab, Spanish, and Indian blood force us to live by the law of nature and its mystical powers in the valleys of the Sangre de Cristos, not by the law made in the minds of men. (12, 19)

Guided by his grandfather's orally transmitted wisdom and by his own thoughts and imagination that he derives from his creativity of a *santero*, a woodcarver, Mateo becomes immersed in the mythopoetic collective memory of Nambé, a rural community in northern New Mexico, and begins to understand that his artwork is based on the energy he draws from nature. If according to Rudolfo Anaya ("Writer" 46), people "born and raised in the southwest" are always "affected by the land. The landscape changes man, and the man becomes his landscape," then I argue that Mateo becomes a vital part of his landscape. Mateo's consubstantiality with the maize plant conveys a dynamic relationship between humans and nature: "From the maize plant we have secured the nourishment of our physical spirit by eating and drinking it in countless forms" (17). Mateo regards the growing of maize, whose "substance fortifies the body against the evil spirits of sickness" (17), as an integral part of the eternal life-death cycle in which "death is not dying, but coming back again to nourishing living things" (15). This idea, which is similar to the Maya's worship of the maize plant and their equation of a maize plant's developmental stages with those of a human being, [6] expresses Mateo's belief in the mysteries and wonders of life, nature, the earth, and in the interconnectedness of all things. [7]

This inter/transbiotic cyclical perception of self and reality, then, supplements a monolithic rational view of life and reality sanctified by science. In fact, by juggling these cultural elements in a transcultural way, Orlando Romero becomes a *transculturador*, a writer-artist qua "negotiator of the disruptive in-between zone of inter- and intracultural disjunctures and conjunctures — the place where diverse histories, customs, values, beliefs, and cognitive systems are contested and interwoven without their different representations being dissolved into each other" (Walter 363). In the following, let me further elaborate on this link between an inter/transbiotic cultural episteme and transculturation by moving from Chicano literature into the field of African American literature.

In Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*, a novel that problematizes African American identitarian issues in the Black diaspora, nature is seen through its specific elements rather than as a holistic frame for the characters' actions. Set on a fictitious Caribbean island, the novel juxtaposes the white owners of a winter house and their black servants in contrary complementarity, undermining the clear-cut divisions between the pairs and their roles and thus staging in carnivalesque fashion a neocolonial version of plantation life in the 1980s. Nature, while being ravaged by the dictates of modern capitalism, remembers the past, joining forces with the maroon horsemen who have lived in the woods since their escape from slavery centuries ago. Whether in the scene of the butterflies criticizing Jadine's fetishistic reification (74), or the swamp womens' astonishment at Jadine's

rejection of her blackness, specifically the role of black women in her rural community (157), nature feels, thinks and acts in its own right and is read in symbolic terms to denounce a materialist-imperialist social structure that causes not only Jadine's ethnocultural alienation and fragmentation, but an ecological disaster that since the plantation system to our present times of global tourism/cosmopolitanism has caused terrible havoc. Under the impact of neocolonial imperialism—rich white tycoons building their vacation homes—the island's flora and fauna express and act in the face of their destruction::

[...] clouds and fishes were convinced that the world was over, that the sea-green green of the sea and the sky-blue sky of the sky were no longer permanent. Wild parrots [...] agreed and raised havoc as they flew away to look for yet another refuge. [...] The clouds gathered together, stood still and watched the river scuttle around the forest floor, crash headlong into the haunches of hills with no notion of where it was going [...]. The clouds looked at each other, then broke apart in confusion. [...] When it was over, and houses instead grew in the hills, those trees that had been spared dreamed of their comrades [...]. Then the rain changed and was no longer equal (7-8).

Morrison attributes the power of creation to the elements of nature, which become agents with voices and thoughts rather than victimized objects. Furthermore, the mythomagic maroon horsemen who since having fled the plantation roam the island's hills and rain forest, seeing "with the eye of the mind" (131), contribute to an intercultural ethos and worldview based on a time-space continuum in which all human and nonhuman beings, alive or dead, are connected: a cosmology where African and American elements of culture meet and act in a transcultural contact zone. In order to transmit this dynamic relationship between the world of spirits, humans, animals, plants and trees within a temporal flow between the past, present, and future, Morrison delineates a landscape that acts through the mediation of human perception. It is important to highlight that this mediation is rooted in a perception of the natural order of the universe in which communication and knowledge are not only human attributes, but characteristics which pertain to nonhumans too. If, following Morrison ("Unspeakable" 210) "a void may be empty, but is not a vacuum," I contend that she fills the voids of Western discourse with African spirituality and thereby supplements linear and hierarchical relationships based on separation with circular detours, that is, dynamic relationships between humans and nonhumans, times and space, re-creating the universe as an interconnected organism characterized by a dynamic coexistence of all forms of life. Morrison's roots in African spirituality reside precisely in her use of spirit as vital force and cosmic energy whose fluxes connect spheres of visible and invisible existence. [6] If, as Nada Elia (151) has stated, "Africana women novelists are mediators [...] functioning liminally," then Morrison, located on the interlocking hyphen between African-American, linking and separating two continents and two cultural epistemes, is a transcultural mediator of the tension-laden bonds that hold the two in relationship.

In Hogan, Romero, and Morrison nature and its implicit elements have a life of their own and feature as substances whose energy operates in both the environment and living creatures and whose perception is embedded in specific ethnocultural epistemes. This inter/transbiotic characteristic of culture is set in what Mary Louise Pratt (6-7) has described as "contact zone," that

is, “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” What Pratt calls “radically asymmetrical relations of power” that imbued the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized continue to determine intercultural contact in neocolonial contact zones. In other words, all the writers and their works discussed so far include nature in their critique of the (post/neo)colonial machine. In the process, they denounce one of the fundamental aspects of what Anibal Quijano has theorized as *colonialidad del poder*, namely the issue of land: land-as-commodity, land-as-place, land-as-home. This issue was and continues to be a complex one in the Americas. Let me briefly elaborate on this by introducing two texts, one by a Peruvian farmer, the other by a Chicano writer, to emphasize the link between institutionalized landgrabbing and migration.

In *¿Por Qué No Cuidar a Esos Montes Sagrados?* Girvan Tuanama Fasabi, emphasizes the importance of land in the cultural episteme of the Kichwa-Lamistas. The book defends the right of the community *Kawana Ampí Urku las Palmeras* in the department of San Martín, located in the Peruvian Amazon forest, to decide their fate rooted in the collective use of the land they have inhabited for generations against the intrusion of the transnational companies and their interest in the exploitation of natural resources. The unconstitutional appropriation of the community’s land by these companies is tolerated if not actively encouraged by governmental policies and leads to uprootedness and diasporization. The local, regional and national authorities, according to the author, do not “escuchen las voces de las comunidades locales, la posición de las comunidades [...] estamos queriendo el territorio para garantizar que los hijos de nuestros hijos tengan agua, conozcan siquiera un pez [...]” (“listen to the voices of the local communities, the position of the communities [...] we want the territory to guarantee that the sons of our sons will have water, know at least what a fish is [...]”) (18). What is at issue here, as well as in other parts of the Americas and the world, is more than a plea for subsistence farming, but an entire ethnocultural episteme: a cosmogony/cosmology articulated in a specific language, Quechua in this case, that forms the foundation of a being-in-the-world in a specific place at a given time. In this sense, Fasabi asks: “Y me pregunto, pues, cuando deforestamos todo ese monte ¿adónde se irán los espíritus? ¿Por qué no cuidar a esos montes sagrados?” (“And I ask myself, if we deforest the entire hill where will the spirits go? Why not tend these sacred mountains?”) (27).

Fasabi denotes what Hogan, Romero and Morrison connote, namely a crucial common situation that links diverse nations and peoples in their difference: a dichotomy between basically two meanings attributed to land by the military industrial complex, governments, consumer society, and big landowners on the one hand, and, on the other, by indigenous communities. Whereas for the former the land is a means to make a profit, for autochthonous peoples land is the place where their ancestors and sacred beings live, a place giving identity to the community and used for subsistence farming.

In Tomás Rivera’s *... Y no se lo tragó la tierra/ ...And the earth did not part*, the narrative voice articulates what it means to be driven away from the land and thus forcefully pushed into migration:

“When we arrive, when we arrive. At this point, quite frankly, I’m tired of always arriving someplace. Arriving is the same as leaving because as soon as we arrive ... well, quite frankly, I’m tired of always arriving. Maybe I should say when we don’t arrive because that’s the plain truth. We never really arrive anywhere” (115). Dislocation as a result of global and local policies that constitute what Edward Soja has termed a “geographically uneven development” (23) is demystified in the novel as an orchestrated system between nations with the objective to keep these migrants running within a no-man’s-land, a legal and sociocultural *nepantla*; a means that guarantees a cheap exploitable labor pool.

4. Into *Pierre-Monde*: Inter/Transbiotic Memory and Creole Identity in Patrick Chamoiseau’s *L’esclave vieil homme et le molosse*

Like the writers discussed so far, Patrick Chamoiseau uses an inter/transbiotic memory to revise the hegemonic historical discourse from a subaltern perspective and reveal the link between the brutalization of place and people. In the process, Chamoiseau re-creates a universe based on interconnected fluxes and relations constituting “*un organisme ouvert, circulaire et vivant*” (“an open, circular and living organism”) (*Biblique* 471; emphasis in the original). According to Chamoiseau (*Biblique* 309), the role of nature is fundamental in the consciousness-raising process of human beings: “Les plantes [...] ne connaissent pas le bien ou le mal, le juste ou le l’injuste, elles connaissent les équilibres du monde” (“Plants [...] do not know good and evil, justness and injustice; they know the equilibriums of the world”). Since it is impossible to understand these balances in a rational way, human beings should “aiguiser sa conscience et libérer (à force de silence et patience) ce sens animal qui donne leur âme aux autres” (“sharpen their conscience and liberate—through silence and patience—this animal sense that gives the soul to others”) (*Biblique* 300). By respecting and taking in a bit of the vegetal and animal others, in mutual prolongations, a nonhierarchical relation between the human and nonhuman worlds is possible. Other than Atwood, Hogan, Romero, and Morrison, Chamoiseau’s mythopoetic revision of the culture-nature divide imbues human and nonhuman dislocation with an additional meaning. In order to elaborate on this issue, let me take a closer look at his novel *L’esclave vieil homme et le molosse* (1997).

In the book, nature functions as a site of memory for all those who perished during the colonial holocaust in the Caribbean region. Whereas the official hegemonic discourse registers the disappearance of all autochthonous peoples or silences them into oblivion by not registering them at all, Chamoiseau reintegrates them into the present panorama of lived reality: “Les Amérindiens des premiers temps se sont transformés en lianes de douleurs qui étranglent les arbres et ruissellent sur les falaises, tel le sang inapaisé de leur propre génocide” (“The Amerindians of earlier times transformed themselves into lianes of pain that strangle the trees and run over the cliffs like blood agitated by their own genocide”) (21). Thus, their being-in-the-world becomes an integral part of an inter/transbiotic memory, a collective memory linking not only groups of human beings, but humans and nonhumans in proliferative rhizomic ways. By writing them into existence Chamoiseau bestows

an identity on them—an identity rooted in the past-present and in a place as memory site to which they never had legal access.

In contrast to this collective inter/transbiotic memory, the memory of the old slave is repressed. Though unwilling to remember the experience of enslavement and the journey from Africa to the Americas, he has “le goût de la mer sur les lèvres” (“the taste of the ocean on his lips”) and hears “le museau dramatique des requins contre la coque” (“the dramatic muzzle of the sharks against the hull”) (51). Traumatized, he is “catastrophiquement vivant” (“catastrophically alive”) (50), that is, he lives in schizophrenic mental, physical and epistemic in-betweenness. Before his actual escape from the plantation, this traumatic memory manifests itself as “décharge,” a “pulsion vomie d’un endroit oublié” (41). For years, the old slave is able to control these traumatic discharges, this “vomited impulse of a forgotten place” by eating clods of earth and rubbing himself against a wall. Until one day he escapes from the plantation into the nearby forest—this heterotopic ecosystem characterized by an efficient harmonious order under the apparent vegetal disorder. It is in this forest-as-*limen* where life and death dance cheek to cheek, engaging in an interrelated and continuous process of transformative becoming, that the old slave encounters a place to be, an identitarian home, roots in routes. When he comes upon an enormous rock that blocks his way, he leans against it, embraces it, touches the lines of its paintings and begins to communicate with “les peuples réfugiés” (135), those who escaped from the colonial holocaust and left their trace in the rock. This is how Chamoiseau delineates the old slave’s transcultural, inter/transbiotic homecoming:

La Pierre rêve. Elle m’engoue de ses rêves. [...] nos rêves s’entremêlent, une nouée de mers, de savanes, de Grandes-terres et d’îles, d’attentats et de guerres, de cales sombres et d’errances migrantes [...]. Une jonction d’exils et de dieux, d’échecs et de conquêtes, de sujétions et de morts. [...] Tout cela, [...] tourbillonne dans un mouvement de vie — vie en vie sur cette terre. La Terre. Nous sommes toute la Terre. [...] La Pierre ne me parle pas, ses rêves matérialisent dans mon esprit le verbe de ces mourants que j’avais délaissé. La Pierre est des peuples. Des peuples dont il ne reste qu’elle. Leur seule mémoire, enveloppe de mille mémoires. Leur seule parole, grosse de toutes paroles. Cri de leurs cris. L’ultime matière de ces existences. [...] Ces disparus vivent en moi par le biais de la Pierre. Un chaos de millions d’âmes. Elles content, chantent, rient. [...] Le chanté de la Pierre est en moi. Il m’emplit [...] de vie.

The Rock dreams. I am enchanted with its dreams. [...] our dreams blend, oceans, savannas, masses of land and islands, assassinations and wars, somber holds and migrant errandries all knotted together [...]. A junction of exiles and gods, failures and achievements, subserviences and deaths. [...] All that [...] whirls in a movement of life—life within life on earth. The Earth. We are the Earth. [...] The stone does not talk to me, its dreams materialize in my spirit the language of all the dying people I have left behind. The Stone belongs to the people—the people whose only trace is this stone. Their only memory wrapped in a thousand memories. Their only discourse pregnant with all discourses. Scream of their screams. The ultimate matter of their existence. [...] Those who have disappeared live in me through the bias of the Stone. A chaos of a million souls. They talk, chant, laugh. [...] The song of the Stone is within me. It fills me [...] with life. (127-131)

In the plantation settings of the Americas, the forest qua *limen* became a place of resistance; a place where a new beginning (historical, cultural, identitarian) was possible. [9] In Chamoiseau’s text, the forest as “ventre-manman” (105), mother’s womb, becomes the place of the old slave’s

rebirth; a place as catalytic agent of consciousness. The old slave's embrace of the rock, an eternal one since he dies in this position, should be seen as a homecoming, an identitarian reterritorialization that ends his traumatic dismemberment and negation of the self by anchoring it in the island's ethnocultural diversity, relating the enslaved African newcomers with the massacred Amerindian peoples. Both ethnic groups constitute what Chamoiseau, in *Écrire en pays dominé* (281) has called a "*pierre-monde*," a stone-world—a universe of ethnocultural groups linked through a continuous process of *créolisation*. As such, this "*pierre-monde*," similar to Édouard Glissant's "tout-monde," yet based on a less abstract and more material, tangible element, stands for the continuous dynamics that unite the diverse elements of the biota in their difference.

Mnemonic imagination re-creates the violence of the past in order to un-write the official story with its effacements and distortions. Furthermore, and perhaps most important, in that it is imbued with the values, visions and belief systems of those unwritten by the official discourse of History, it incorporates this violence into the present lived experience as a reference. In this sense, words, through memory, recuperate a world of references which contributes to the (re)constitution of identity within a historical process. Through imagination, the projection of the Amerindian peoples' absence-as-presence onto the old slave, Chamoiseau elevates, what he has called in *Un Dimanche au Cachot* (101) this "mémoire impossible au rang de témoignage" ("impossible memory to the level of testimony"). Freeing oneself, then, means to "aller en soi" ("turn one's eyes inward") (*Dimanche* 234) and, in the tradition of the plantation *griots*, to sharpen one's individual imagination through a collective consciousness that includes the entire biota.

This type of performative inter/transbiotic memory as social practice becomes a means of understanding and actively shaping the past within the present pointing towards the future by evoking ideas that serve as stepping-stones to agency. As such, it is a possible site from which to revise history and remap the relationship between the human and nonhuman worlds. In other words, a translation of cultural difference as separation into cultural diversity as relation begins with a process of consciousness-raising and moves outward through imagination. According to Chamoiseau, nature plays a crucial role in this process: a circle links the entire biota of different places, spaces, and cultural contexts, but also differences within the species. Memory in Chamoiseau, then, explodes a linear monocultural episteme into a fractal, transcultural, interbiotic one; an episteme that embraces all elements of the ecosystem in rhizomic ways through displacement, that is, mobility and transformation.

In the light of reality-in-process, the act of writing cannot possibly translate a stable, fixed truth. Therefore, the aim of storytelling is not to explain something but to illuminate and confirm the impossible, incomprehensible, unthinkable and unspeakable. It reveals the other of and within the same through possibilities of never-ending displacements, prolongations and desires. This image of creation as an ongoing search inscribes it in the process of displacement, which explodes systemic limits by working through intercultural fusion and fissure and thereby opening up diverse horizons of free, errant development. Circles of rupture and continuity, thus, constitute the text's decolonial attitude: an investment of the thematic and structural circularity expressing the spiritual knowledge-

as-consciousness with an undecidability that locates identity in a fluid inter/transbiotic time-space continuum.

5. Into Nature: Manoel Barros' Inter/Transbiotic Poetic Vision

The decolonial attitude in Manoel de Barros' poetry and prose differs from that of Chamoiseau's inter/transbiotic ethos and worldview in that its objective is not a mythopoetic resurrection of a specific ethnocultural knowledge. What links Barros and Chamoiseau in their difference is the importance both writers attribute to the power of creative imagination in the process of delineating a critical inter/transbiotic map of the world. The mnemonic process at work in Barros' poetry deconstructs rational scientific thinking with its implicit anthropocentric logic by transfiguring human language through a semantic and syntactic transgression in order to re-create the languages of nature: "Ouço uma frase de araquã: ên-ên? Co-hô! Ahê/ han? hum?/ Não tive preparatório em linguagem de araquã./ [...] Mas pode uma/ Palavra chegar à perfeição de se tornar um/ pássaro?/ Antigamente podia./ As letras aceitavam pássaros (I hear a sentence of an araquã: ên-ên? Co-hô! Ahê/ han? hum?/ I am not well versed in the language of an araquã./ [...] But can a/ Word reach such a state of perfection that it becomes a/ bird? In the past it could./ Letters accepted birds") (*Concerto* 27). This linguistic deconstruction creates an interstitial space where thought and emotion meet and interrelate, where "a palavra não significa mais, mas entoa" ("the word does not signify anymore, but chants") (*Menino* 41). This is how Barros expresses his longed-for inter/transbiotic identity: "[...] eu queria ser chão [...] para que em mim as árvores crescessem. Para que sobre mim as conchas se formassem [...] para que sobre mim os rios corressem" ("[...] I wish I were earth [...] so that trees could grow within me. So that shells could form on me; so that rivers would run over me") (*Memórias* 89). Barros' poetry highlights the inseparable linkage between earth's and human beings' history and being. Thus, it reminds us that we literally carry within us the 'humus' from where we come from and go back to. Furthermore, it points to the various languages of art in nature: "Quando as aves falam com as pedras e as rãs com as águas — é de poesia que estão falando" ("When birds talk with stones and frogs with water—it is poetry they are talking") (*Concerto* 55). In Barros' creative works language becomes a means and space of decolonization—"palavras que fossem de fontes e não de tanques" ("words that would be like fountains rather than tanks") (*Memórias* 97)—emphasizing that we are (a part of) nature and that nature exists in its own right. His poetry, similar to Chamoiseau's texts, suggests that decolonization is an act of conscientization that starts with(in) us: "Conforme a gente recebesse formatos da natureza, as palavras incorporavam as formas da natureza. [...] Se a brisa da manhã despetalasse em nós o amanhecer, as palavras amanheciam" ("Depending on our reception of nature's formats, words would incorporate the forms of nature. [...] If the morning breeze would unfold dawn in us, words would dawn") (*Memórias* 145). In Barros, then, words chant a *concrete green utopia* via an inter/transbiotic memory that evokes (and thus asks us to act according to) a post-rational order characterized by an egalitarian relationship between human beings and the rest of the biota. In the process, this type of memory functions as a counter-memory in that it resurrects the subjugated nature within us and

criticizes our alienation from and exploitation of the biotic others with whom we share life on earth: “Sente-se pois então que árvores, bichos e pessoas têm natureza assumida igual. O homem no longe, alongado quase, e suas referências vegetais, animais. Todos se fundem na natureza intacta” (“One can feel, then, that trees, animals and persons have an assumed equal nature. Man prolonged into his vegetal, animal references. All merged in an intact nature”) (*Livro* 34).

6. Conclusion

By disclosing the link between a political unconscious (the unresolved question of exploitation), a cultural unconscious (the unresolved question of human beings’ alienation via ideological interpellation) and an ecological unconscious (the unresolved question of the exploitation and destruction of nature), the texts discussed in this essay connote that historical, political, economic, cultural and ecological issues are interwoven in the postcolonial debate. Their decolonial attitude resides in the deconstruction of an anthropomorphic attitude toward nature: instead of mastering the land, one should establish a harmonious relationship with it. By representing landscape through its specific elements, these texts propose alternative ways of imagining the relation between people, society and the environment. The interweaving of the characters’ thoughts and actions with those of nature reveals and problematizes that one cannot separate the life of an individual from the life of his/her surroundings, from life on earth.

Culture, then, can be defined as a memory effect produced by the epistemes that give significance to the communities that inhabit specific places and spaces. The inter/transbiotic memory in the texts by Atwood, Hogan, Romero, Morrison, Chamoiseau, and Barros links the inner with the outer landscape, or in the memorable words of Wilson Harris: “Language possesses resources which one has to sense as coming not only from within oneself, but from outside, from the land itself, from the rivers, from the forest. And also from those persons and those cultures that existed in the landscape and have left their trace” (Gilkes 33). In this sense, these texts from different inter-American ethnocultural contexts exemplify Édouard Glissant’s “aesthetics of the earth,” “an aesthetics of disruption [...] intrusion [...] and connection” (*Poetics* 150-151) based on a mnemonic process that involves imagination as it interweaves multidimensional biotic worlds and thereby revises reality and history. As such, this inter/transbiotic memory qua counter-memory constitutes the idea of an other logic, an other way of perceiving and relating to difference; in fact, it frees us human beings into our own nature and that of the many others with which we share life on this planet.

Endnotes

[1] Translations in this essay are mine.

[2] The choice of these multi-ethnic writers and their works is a random one and does not intend to cover and thus be representative of the entire American continent and its peoples.

[3] In “Post-Colonial,” Atwood asks another pertinent question about Canadians and their collective identity vis-à-vis Native Canadians and immigrants: “Who are we, now, inside the *we* corral, the *we* palisade, the *we* fortress, and who are they?” (99-100). In this context, see also Northrop Frye (1995) who argued that Canadians are characterized by a “garrison mentality.”

[4] For an essayistic delineation of this topic, see Silko's *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (1996). In Silko's novel *Ceremony* (45), Josiah expresses this interbiotic identitarian relationship as follows: “He pointed his chin at the springs and around at the narrow canyon. ‘This is where we come from, see. This sand, this stone, these trees, the vines, all the wildflowers. This earth keeps us going’.”

[5] Abel and Set in N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968) and *The Ancient Child* (1989); Tayo and Indigo in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999); Ephanie in Paula Gunn Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* (1983); the nameless narrator and Jim Loney in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (1974) and *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979); Fleur's daughter Lulu in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988); Willie Begay in Anna Lee Walters's *Ghost Singer* (1988); Omishto in Linda Hogan's *Power* (1998); and Jacob Nashoba in Louis Owen's *Dark River* (1999), to name just a few ailing characters of Native American novels.

[6] See for example, *Popul Vuh. Las antiguas historias del Quiché*.

[7] Similarly, Rudolfo Anaya in *Bless Me, Ultima* uses *la tierra* and nature as a point of departure for his exploration of a dynamic, interconnected perception of reality. In the process, Anaya re-creates a sacred pagan vision of reality—a vision of the sanctity, unity, and wholeness of all life. Anaya and Romero, then, immerse their protagonists in cosmic cycles where, in Ultima's words “all waters are one,” united by “the great cycle that binds us all” (113).

[8] Here I am drawing on Mbiti's analysis of spirituality in traditional African thought: “The invisible world is symbolized or manifested by those visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible world. The physical and spiritual are but two dimensions of one and the same universe” (57).

[9] In *Landscape and Memory*, Schama points out that in traditional European literature the forest functions as a liminal place, a place of transformation.

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Brasilianiser Proust
– La nature comme élément d’assimilation de l’importation culturelle - (1920-1960) [1]

Résumé

C’est en 1920 que les premiers volumes d’*À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* arrivent au Brésil. En décembre 1919, le nom de l’auteur était apparu pour la première fois dans la presse de Rio de Janeiro, porté par le Prix Goncourt qu’il venait de remporter.

Proust peine dans un premier temps à se construire une place auprès du lectorat brésilien, mais dès la seconde moitié des années 1920, il est de plus en plus commenté. On observe alors une appropriation brésilienne de *La Recherche* et une mise en adéquation de la lecture de l’œuvre et de sa critique avec les problématiques culturelles et identitaires du pays dans la période. La réception brésilienne de Proust se fait ainsi à travers une assimilation de son œuvre à l’espace de réception. Le paysage brésilien et la nature exubérante du pays, compris comme éléments métonymiques de l’espace de réception, sont dans cette optique des outils d’appropriation de Proust : des éléments permettant de le *brasilianiser*.

Cet article a pour objectif de montrer quels sont les procédés de cette assimilation anthropophagique de l’auteur de la *Recherche*. Il cherche également à observer de quelle manière l’œuvre de Proust peut apporter des clés de lecture réflexive à la société brésilienne et à ses problématiques culturelles au moment où l’écrivain est lu et commenté.

Mot Clés: Proust, Brésil, réception, appropriation

Cet article met en évidence, à travers l'observation de la réception et des intertextualités brésiliennes de Proust, le fait que la référence aux paysages brésiliens est un moyen de *brasilianiser* l'auteur. Il s'agit de passer des pommiers en fleurs et de la fraîcheur de Balbec aux allées ensoleillées, au soleil de plomb et aux plages tropicales de Rio de Janeiro ou aux espaces ruraux du *Nordeste*. L'objectif est ici d'observer l'intégration de Proust à l'espace brésilien et l'usage de la référence au paysage comme instrument de cet accueil de l'auteur. Le bût est également de démontrer que ce processus d'assimilation perdure dans le temps, tout au long de la période étudiée, en particulier dans le *Nordeste* ou auprès des auteurs originaires de cette région.

Cette lecture se fonde sur une perception de la nature comme construction sociale et culturelle. (Teixeira 17-18) Cette approche, alternative à une conception de la nature en terme de milieu et d'environnement tend à penser le rapport entre nature et société à travers les représentations et les sensibilités. Les historiographies qui ont le plus traité la nature dans cette optique, à savoir histoire littéraire, histoire de l'art et histoire des représentations et des sensibilités, ont ainsi lu la nature à travers le prisme du paysage. [2] Le paysage a en ce sens deux acceptions différentes: la portion de territoire saisie d'un coup d'œil, telle qu'elle s'offre à la perception du regard, et le tableau qui représente celle-ci, sa transcription à travers ce même regard. Les historiens qui ont traité la question ont donné à cette double définition deux désignations: *pays*, relativement au territoire, *paysage* dans le cas d'une construction esthétique ou culturelle de cet espace saisi, comme c'est le cas en littérature. [3] Alain Corbin parle dans ce cas des „multiples logiques [qui] déterminent la manière d'apprécier l'espace [...] . L'histoire du paysage implique donc une analyse de tout ce qui influe sur la façon de charger l'espace de significations, de symboles et de désirs.“ (57) Pour Christine Baron, „Il s'agit de penser le paysage comme un moyen de territorialiser une parole littéraire“ („Littérature“), de placer celle-ci dans un espace spécifique vu comme celui dans lequel s'inscrit l'œuvre littéraire. Le rapport entre nature et littérature est par définition un produit culturel, social et anthropocentrique. Ici, on pourra passer par la notion de paysage qui équivaut à l'espace perçu par la littérature à travers le prisme des représentations et des sensibilités. On observera ainsi la manière dont la nature, comme résultat d'une construction sociale et culturelle, est inscrite dans ce paysage (nature exotique insérée dans l'espace de la ville et civilisée par celle-ci à Rio de Janeiro, nature plus sauvage dans lequel est installée l'action humaine, notamment rurale, dans le cas du *Nordeste*).

La circulation d'une œuvre littéraire induit la translation d'un objet culturel d'un espace d'émission vers un espace de réception. Ces deux espaces peuvent être profondément différents, quand ils ne sont pas antagonistes. Leurs divergences tiennent au contexte, à des problématiques identitaires et à des publics de réception dissemblables; selon la formule d'Hans Robert Jauss, les horizons d'attente face à une œuvre littéraire ne sont pas les mêmes. (Réception) Les travaux sur les transferts culturels montrent qu'un transfert ne s'établit que vers un espace de réception prêt à l'accueillir. (Espagne, Werner; Frank) Dès lors, pour qu'un produit culturel (œuvre littéraire, genre musical, esthétique, style, etc.) arrive quelque part, il est nécessaire qu'il entre en résonance avec

un espace de réception et qu'il y soit en ce sens lisible. À cet égard, il est possible d'appliquer les idées de Roland Barthes sur la mort de l'auteur à un lectorat impliqué par l'espace de réception : le sens ou l'intentionnalité prêtés à l'auteur d'une œuvre n'a pas plus de valeur que le sens perçu par le lecteur. (61-67) Ce cadre proposé par Roland Barthes induit un espace de liberté ouvert à toutes les interprétations et toutes les assimilations d'un auteur à un espace de réception. Michel Espagne (*Transferts*) ou Blaise Wilfert (*Paris*) ont ainsi largement illustré la manière dont un espace de réception attribue un sens spécifique à un objet culturel reçu.

Dans le cas du Brésil, alors que l'arrivée de l'œuvre de Marcel Proust s'opère par le biais du Prix Goncourt que l'auteur reçoit en 1919 pour *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* [4], c'est à travers l'assimilation à l'espace de réception et à ses paysages que cette diffusion de l'écrivain va s'opérer. Durant la seconde partie des années 1920, Proust est ainsi la référence intertextuelle d'un poème au message inscrit dans le refus de l'importation culturelle étrangère (Jorge de Lima, *O Mundo do menino impossível*), des trois premiers romans d'un cycle de l'espace régional brésilien (*Menino do Engenho*, *Doidinho* et *Banguê*, de José Lins do Rêgo) ou d'un pastiche inscrit dans l'espace de la capitale du pays (*Sob o olhar malicioso dos trópicos*, de Barreto Filho). Dans ces trois cas comme dans d'autres, la transposition intertextuelle de l'œuvre proustienne au Brésil s'opère par le biais de son inscription dans les paysages brésiliens des régions dont sont issues ces œuvres.

I. Un espace de réception morcelé et contrasté

Le Brésil des années 1920 est tiraillé, au niveau culturel, par des mouvements multiples et contrastés: de l'*Anatolisme* [5], à Rio de Janeiro, au modernisme *paulista*, à São Paulo ou au régionalisme dans le *Nordeste* et plus sensiblement à Recife. Si ces mouvements ont tous pour enjeu commun la construction d'une identité culturelle nationale, les procédés mis en œuvre pour aboutir à celle-ci n'y sont pas les mêmes.

À Rio de Janeiro, le mouvement *anatoliste* se positionne dans la préservation d'un lien empathique avec la matrice culturelle européenne, essentiellement française; seule s'y ajoute une contestation féroce du complexe périphérique que les élites *cariocas* avaient ressenti vis-à-vis de la France durant tout le XIX^e siècle. (Compagnon 246-47) São Paulo vit au même moment un contexte culturel tout à fait différent. L'élite de la ville adopte une attitude totalement opposée à celle qui a cours à Rio de Janeiro: le modernisme *paulista* s'inscrit dans un important rejet de l'héritage culturel européen du XIX^e siècle. Dans le *Nordeste* se développe un mouvement de retour à la terre et aux traditions rurales en complète rupture avec les centres nationaux, accusés de s'inscrire dans la servilité de l'importation internationale. Dès lors, rapidement, la région s'inscrit dans le refus de l'importation étrangère, en corollaire à son positionnement contre Rio de Janeiro et São Paulo.

Dans les trois cas, l'enjeu de la définition culturelle tourne, directement ou indirectement, autour d'un rapport à ce qui vient d'Europe, et plus particulièrement de France. Dans le cas du modernisme *paulista*, cependant, la culture importée d'Europe est occultée, ignorée ou du moins évoquée *a minima*, elle n'est pas assimilée. Ce ne sont dès lors que les cas de l'*anatolisme carioca* et du *régionalisme nordestin*, en ce qu'ils impliquent une réception culturelle, qui auront de quoi être ici envisagés.

L'assimilation de Marcel Proust à son espace de réception brésilien, que ce soit à Rio et dans le *Nordeste*, se fait au fil du temps. Alors que l'arrivée de l'œuvre est attestée en 1920, dans le prolongement de l'attribution du Prix Goncourt à l'auteur pour *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* [6], Proust n'est évoqué, dans une perspective critique, que plus tard. En effet, il faut attendre 1924 pour lire, à Rio de Janeiro, un article sur l'auteur, écrit par l'écrivain, dramaturge et ancien diplomate Graça Aranha. (*Espirito* 99-100) Celui-ci voit en Proust le produit d'une Europe décadente, d'un monde qui a failli et à cet égard comme un auteur qui „ne nous rajeunit pas.“ [7] La conjonction de ce premier article critique à Rio et des premières études parisiennes sur celui-ci montre cependant qu'il est nécessaire pour un public carioca de se positionner par rapport à ce qui fait l'actualité littéraire parisienne.

L'année suivante, le poète de Jorge de Lima publie, dans l'état *nordestin* d'*Alagoas*, un recueil de poésie intitulé *O mundo do menino impossível*. Ce poème du refus de l'importation étrangère s'inscrit ainsi dans une intertextualité étrangère, celle de *Du Côté de chez Swann*. Jorge de Lima qui sera, quelques années plus tard, l'auteur d'un des premiers essais brésiliens sur Proust (*Dois Ensaio*s) avait découvert l'auteur dès 1922, à travers le voyage rocambolesque du dernier secrétaire de l'écrivain au Brésil, ce qui ne peut qu'accréditer encore l'adoption de cette intertextualité. (Rocha 49-56)

La conférence à l'Académie Brésilienne de Lettres du comparatiste littéraire français Paul Hazard, en 1926, change la perception brésilienne de Proust. (Brito Broca 257-260) Ainsi Alceu Amoroso Lima, présent dans la salle et alors déjà connaisseur de l'œuvre de l'auteur [8] publie, les deux années suivantes, deux essais sur Proust : l'un consacré à la musique chez l'écrivain et chez Stendhal, l'autre, tiré d'une conférence donnée en 1927 au lycée français de Rio de Janeiro, et publié l'année suivante. (*Estudos* 147-184)

C'est à Alceu Amoroso Lima que le poète Augusto Meyer, originaire du Rio Grande do Sul, dédie son élégie à Marcel Proust, publiée en 1928. [9] Le poème semble s'inscrire en empathie avec l'auteur / narrateur de la *Recherche*, il pratique notamment le glissement entre l'espace du roman, chambre parisienne et plage de Balbec, et l'espace de réception de celui-ci, paysages et climats tropicaux du Brésil, lieu où la lecture est présentée.

En 1929, dans son essai sur Marcel Proust, écrit pour lui garantir une chaire de lettre au *Liceo Alagoano* de Maceio, Jorge de Lima transpose l'auteur dans l'espace *nordestin*, celui des campagnes brésiliennes ; il le fait notamment à travers l'assimilation de Combray au village *nordestin*. (*Dois Ensaio*s 9-10)

Dans un tout autre esprit, en 1930, c'est l'espace *carioca* qui produit le premier pastiche de l'auteur, sous la plume de Barreto Filho. (*Sob*) Proust y est nommément cité, et bon nombre des passages de la *Recherche* sont repris (qu'il s'agisse par exemple du rapport du narrateur à des avatars de Gilberte et d'Albertine, ou du passage, présent au début de *La prisonnière*, où le narrateur perçoit les bruits de la ville à travers sa fenêtre). Le Paris du narrateur de la *Recherche* a cependant été déplacé ici dans l'espace *carioca*, substituant les quartiers et renvoyant à une description tropicalisée de l'espace: dès lors Barreto Filho inscrit Proust dans son lieu de réception brésilien, et assimile ainsi l'auteur au Brésil.

L'observation des premières réceptions brésiliennes de l'auteur de la *Recherche* montre que cette appropriation s'opère, dans les milieux *régionalistes* comme *anatoliens*, à travers le prisme des paysages brésiliens, qui deviennent un outil de l'intégration de l'auteur: un levier d'assimilation, de *brasilianisation*. [10] Il n'en faut pas moins constater une différence essentielle dans la nature des paysages qui servent à assimiler Proust au pays: celui de Rio de Janeiro et celui du *Nordeste* ne sont clairement pas les mêmes. Alors qu'au sein de la capitale, la nature est profondément humaine, organisée et inscrite dans la ville, et à cet égard dans l'action humaine, dans le cas du *Nordeste*, c'est à une action humaine inscrite dans une nature plus sauvage que l'on est confronté.

II. Un Proust brésilien – Le paysage comme élément d'assimilation (1924-1933)

À la *Recherche du Temps Perdu* fait l'objet, tout au long des années 1920, d'une assimilation de l'œuvre à l'espace dans lequel elle arrive (ce qui se pratique dans le cadre du mouvement culturel *anatoliste* et du modernisme *carioca* à Rio de Janeiro mais aussi du régionalisme, dans le *Nordeste*). Ces espaces culturels qui s'approprient l'œuvre de Proust et y voient le reflet d'une identité en cours de définition le font pour diverses raisons. Les significations de cette assimilation peuvent même être antagonistes entre un espace et l'autre: à Rio, il s'agit d'être moderne et à l'heure de Paris, à Maceio ou Recife (*Nordeste*), on trouve en Proust une image paradoxale du rejet de l'importation étrangère, et par ce biais, des centres culturels nationaux. Cependant, une des constantes de ces mouvements d'appropriation identitaire de l'auteur réside dans les usages fréquents et différents selon les espaces du paysage brésilien comme élément d'assimilation de l'œuvre proustienne aux contextes culturels brésiliens. Un premier constat essentiel à faire est la différence de ce paysage entre un espace et l'autre. Ainsi, on remarquera dans divers exemples d'assimilation que si le paysage *carioca* est empreint d'une nature exotique, celle-ci est fermement inscrite au sein de la ville. Ce n'est pas le cas dans le *Nordeste*, où le paysage est sauvage ou dans le meilleur des cas rural, correspondant ainsi à l'opposition aux villes que le régionalisme local cultive.

Dans le cadre du mouvement *anatoliste* et des auteurs qui lui sont apparentés ou liés, la démarche d'intégration de l'œuvre vise à construire une proximité entre l'espace parisien (ou les

espaces associés à la capitale), en ce qu'il a de culturellement central, et l'espace de Rio de Janeiro, de la capitale brésilienne, qui aspire à la même centralité et à une légitimité culturelle comparable à celle de la capitale française. L'élegie à Marcel Proust d'Augusto Meyer (écrite en 1926, publiée en 1928) est représentative de cette démarche.

Élegie pour Marcel Proust

Allée de bambous, verte ogive,
Découpée sur le bleu de la douce après-midi.
L'or du soleil tremble sur le sable de l'allée,
Les feuilles papillonnent, les papillons fleurissent

Porte de ténèbres en pleine lumière.

Marcel, délicat enfant, je suis avec toi, Proust:
Je vois mieux l'amande noire de tes yeux,
Transparence d'une longue veille
J'imagine tes mains,
Comme deux oiseaux posés dans la pénombre

Écoute – la vie avance, avance et meurt

Prendre la vague qui frangeait le blond sable de Balbec
Satin rose des pommiers dans le bleu du ciel
Fleur charnelle des jeunes filles se promenant en bord de mer
Brume qui estompe Paris à travers la fenêtre
Intermittences, pluie et soleil, LE TEMPS PERDU.

Marcel Proust, vif diagramme enseveli dans l'alcôve
Ta chambre était plus grande que le monde,
En elle tenait un autre monde

Je ferme ton livre douloureux dans ce calme tropical
Comme légèrement se ferment les ailes d'un rideau
En doux babil, sur le sommeil d'un enfant [11]

Ce poème commence dans le contexte tropical de la lecture et de la réception (v.1-4), symbolisé par le soleil de plomb sur le sable de l'allée. Ce sable, qui pourrait tout aussi bien être celui d'une plage, est essentiellement baigné de soleil et de chaleur. La végétation tropicale (les bambous) et l'exubérance de cette nature (papillons fleurissant et fleurs papillonnantes) ajoute à la dimension tropicale de ce paysage. Cependant, il s'agit bien d'une allée, image d'un espace qui s'il est naturel n'en est pas moins fortement ordonné par l'homme, à l'image d'un jardin. Il passe ensuite à la verbalisation d'une empathie entre le poète et l'enfant délicat, Marcel (v.6-10). Le poème présente ici un paysage moins tropical et exotique, celui de Balbec (v.12-14): le sable ne danse plus sous un soleil de plomb mais est frangé par la vague fraîche, la couleur dominante est par ailleurs le rose des pommiers normands en fleurs. Ces fleurs renvoient elles-mêmes aux jeunes filles rencontrées sur la plage de Balbec. Si c'est toujours le paysage qui est dépeint dans ce second cas, l'exubérance tropicale a disparu, le poème mettant ici en scène la nature de la Normandie des

vacances de parisien. Les deux vers suivants (v.14-16) s'inscrivent dans le Paris du narrateur, la brume qui estompe la ville à travers la fenêtre renvoie au passage du réveil de Paris depuis la chambre du narrateur dans *La Prisonnière*. La nature semble avoir disparu de ce paysage citadin et se limiter au climat: pluie et soleil. Trois vers d'empathie avec le romancier, pour la première fois nommé (v. 17-19), illustrent l'auteur retiré en sa chambre et enfantant un monde plus grand que le sien. Enfin, les trois derniers vers du poème (v.20-22) nous ramènent dans un espace tropical, et pour la première fois ainsi nommé, avec l'enfant devenu lecteur, et refermant son livre.

La superposition des deux espaces, celui de la réception et celui de la production de l'œuvre littéraire se fait ainsi à travers le paysage dans lequel sont inscrit deux enfants, l'enfant narrateur et l'enfant lecteur, mais aussi à travers la juxtaposition de deux lieux rendus singuliers par le recours au paysage (soleil de plomb, végétation exubérante tropicale d'un côté, fraîcheur de la mer baignant les plages et pommiers en fleurs de l'autre côté). Le paysage est cependant dans un cas comme de l'autre profondément urbain et « civilisé »: ici l'allée baignée de soleil — si le jardin est tropical, il est cependant inscrit dans une ville qui n'est pas décrite (l'usage du terme « allée » y fait référence) — là, la nature normande des vacances balnéaires des parisiens. Le paysage naturel urbanisé présent dans cette appréhension brésilienne de Proust renvoie à l'inscription de la nature dans la ville, à un paysage certes fait de fleurs exubérantes et de sable blond, mais profondément inséré dans un contexte urbain et civilisé. Le paysage de la province, celui de la périphérie, de Combray, avec sa dimension sauvage et rustique, reste le grand absent de ce poème: il semble que le paramètre provincial n'est pas pris en compte dans le Proust que souhaite s'approprier l'espace *carioca*. Par ailleurs, cette représentation d'un paysage naturel luxuriant et coloré notamment par des fleurs, mais qui reste inscrit dans la capitale, à la manière d'une allée bien taillée au sol de sable blond, est tout à fait représentatif du rapport à la nature de Rio de Janeiro. En regard de ce paysage tropical, le paysage de Paris semble dans ce poème totalement urbain, ne laissant plus aucune place à la nature.

Avec *Sob o Olhar malicios dos Trópicos* (sous le regard malicieux des tropiques), pastiche proustien de l'écrivain José Barreto Filho, publié en 1929, la réception *carioca* de Proust quitte les champs de la critique littéraire ou de la poésie pour intégrer, via l'intertextualité, une œuvre de fiction. Le premier chapitre du roman commence par une évocation directe de la notion des intermittences du cœur. (*Sob* 1-2) Dans le second chapitre, le narrateur se remémore ses souvenirs d'enfance et ses premiers amours. „Madame" et sa fille, Marabá, correspondent immédiatement aux personnages d'Odette et Gilberte chez Proust. Ces souvenirs sont situés dans l'élégant quartier de *Laranjeiras*, à Rio de Janeiro: un des quartiers de la bourgeoisie carioca, sans doute le plus assimilable à Paris, bien qu'il constitue la marge de la *Floresta da Tijuca*, portion de forêt sauvage incluse dans la ville. Le lien du paysage entre quartier raffiné et bourgeois et nature insérée dans la capitale du Brésil est ici établi de la même manière que dans le poème d'Augusto Meyer.

C'est à travers une fleur bel et bien brésilienne qu'est faite la première évocation directe de l'auteur de la *Recherche* dans le roman. En effet, celle-ci intervient pour décrire le soin qu'apporte „Madame“ à ses orchidées, plus précisément des Catleyas. (Sob 12) Si ces fleurs sont bel et bien présentes dans *Du Côté de chez Swann* et y jouent un rôle essentiel, il n'est sans doute pas innocent que l'orchidée, fleur naturellement présente au Brésil, serve de pont entre le Paris de Proust et le Rio élégant décrit par Barreto Filho. De la même manière, au début du chapitre IV du même roman est transposé le passage de *La Prisonnière* où le narrateur proustien, à travers sa fenêtre, perçoit le temps du jour (en prêtant attention à la nature de l'air, son humidité, les bruits de la rue, etc). Là où Proust semble cependant décrire essentiellement des matins hivernaux (présence de neige, „matin spacieux, glacial et pur“, absence de chaleur, même lorsque le jour décrit est ensoleillé), André Lins, le narrateur de Barreto Filho est confronté à des matinées tropicales. En effet, à travers la fenêtre ouverte c'est l'atmosphère douce et pleine de clarté du soleil matinal que perçoit le personnage: „[il] sent que l'air est chaud avec une certitude objective, externe, sans expérience, comme s'il voyait la chaleur dans l'air stagnant“. C'est aussi dans une douce véranda encadrée par une branche blonde d'Acacia (qui dans sa variété première est une plante tropicale ou réservées aux régions tempérées chaudes), que le protagoniste reçoit „la lumière pure du matin, comme un indice de vie libre et saine.“ (Sob 85-86)

Ces exemples, tirés d'un roman pastiche portant, rien qu'en son titre, la marque du tropical, présentent à nouveau une *brasilianisation* de Proust par le biais du paysage: éléments de la flore et climat de Rio de Janeiro. Encore plus que chez Augusto Meyer cependant, le paysage présenté ici est profondément « civilisée par la ville », rapprochant la capitale brésilienne de Paris à travers Proust: les catleyas sont soignés au sein d'une maison bourgeoise d'un quartier chic de Rio de Janeiro, la chaleur du jour est perçue à travers une douce véranda que la branche d'Acacia ne fait qu'encadrer. Le paysage est ainsi agencé pour favoriser l'assimilation de l'espace *carioca* à l'espace parisien, il est à cet égard l'outil qui sert à rapprocher la capitale brésilienne et le centre culturel matriciel du XIX^e siècle: Paris.

Dans le cadre du mouvement régionaliste, essentiellement dans le *Nordeste*, c'est d'une autre manière que va s'opérer l'usage du paysage brésilien. En effet, l'appropriation de Proust se fait autour de la relation d'opposition entre Combray et Paris, espace du temps idéalisé des vacances enfantines contre lieu du temps perdu et de la vanité. Cette dialectique est adaptée à la situation des centres culturels nationaux (Rio de Janeiro et São Paulo) et à la dynamique d'importation culturelle étrangère, qu'il s'agit de rejeter. À cet égard, l'emprunt de Proust équivaut à un rejet de l'importation culturelle étrangère dans son ensemble, et des centres culturels nationaux, accusés de pratiquer celle-ci, en particulier.

Le poème *O Mundo do Menino Impossível*, de Jorge de Lima, est construit autour du refus de l'importation étrangère ; l'enfant impossible détruit ainsi tous les jouets que lui ont offert ses grands parents:

[...] L'ours de Nuremberg, le vieux barbare yougoslave,
 Les poupées de Paris aux cheveux crêpés,
 La petite voiture portugaise, faite de feuilles de Flandres,
 La boîte à musique tchécoslovaque
 Le polichinelle italien « made in England »
 Et le macaque brésilien de Buenos Aires
 « Moviendo la cola y la cabeza »
 L'enfant turbulent qui a même détruit les soldats de plomb de Moscou.
 Et a crevé les yeux d'un Papa Noël [...] [12]

Après quoi, l'enfant saisit une boîte d'allumette, un morceau de bois et un épi de maïs, éléments de son quotidien, des jouets plus proches de lui. Cependant, cette scène s'inscrit dans l'attente du baiser de la nuit. Cette dernière est assimilée en « mère nègre », en nourrice noire, reflet *nordestin* de la Françoise de Proust, au couché, face à une lumière vacillant sur le mur, image de la lanterne merveilleuse du narrateur de Combray. Par ailleurs, l'image du monde créé à partir de rien au creux de la chambre, c'est aussi bien là à l'image de l'écrivain démiurge, assimilée par la critique française à Proust, qu'il est fait référence. Le fait que l'un des premiers essais critiques brésiliens sur l'auteur soit aussi, en 1929, de Jorge de Lima (Dois Ensaio), qui l'avait découvert en 1922, accredit l'hypothèse de cette intertextualité frappée au coin du paysage brésilien. (Rocha) L'évocation des nouveaux jouets de l'enfant: bout de bois, épis de maïs, galet de la rivière, renvoie à un décor rural, où la rivière passe, où on plante le maïs et où l'on est proche de la terre. Les éléments culturels du paysage sont également représentés à travers l'usage que fait le protagoniste de ces nouveaux jouets, par exemple les bouts de bois, qu'il se représente en *Cangaçeiros*, bandits d'honneur des *sertões* du *Nordeste*. Enfin, le paysage rural est présent à travers le paon sur le toit, animal de la faune exotique évoqué dans les deux derniers vers du poème. Si le paon peut paraître étrange ici, peut-être faut-il en rapprocher le *coquette paon*, une espèce de colibri présente au Brésil, l'usage de l'animal fait ici office d'élément naturel emblématique du Brésil et de son exotisme et non de la région *nordestine* en particulier: ce n'est pas un oiseau de la région mais il a de quoi donner un effet d'exotisme face à l'intertexte proustien du poème.

Dans les trois premiers romans de son « cycle de la canne », *Menino do Engenho* (1932), *Doidinho* (1933) et *Banguê* (1941), José Lins do Rêgo met en scène l'enfance, dans la ferme de son grand père, de Carlos Melo, puis sa carrière à la ville et pour finir, son retour à la plantation de canne à sucre, qu'il se décide à diriger. Ce parcours présente une nette intertextualité proustienne, cependant, c'est à travers du paysage que ce nouveau Combray prend ses réalités brésiliennes. En effet, Carlos Melo grandit dans une plantation de canne à sucre, auprès d'un moulin à sucre (*Engenho*). Ce moulin est décrit dans le roman de la même manière que le narrateur de la *Recherche* décrit l'église de Combray, c'est bien un lieu de fascination. Bon nombre d'éléments du paysage *nordestin* sont ainsi évoqués de la même manière que le sont ceux de la province chez Proust: du moulin à sucre au dortoir aux esclaves, des *Cangaceiros* aux légendes de la région. Carlos Melo se baigne à la rivière sous un soleil de plomb, et décrit la nature tropicale de sa région,

essentiellement à travers la flore. Si le paysage n'est pas le seul élément dont le monde littéraire brésilien fait usage pour s'approprier Proust, il est indéniablement un des éléments de cette translation.

L'usage de la référence au paysage brésilien pour assimiler l'écrivain à l'espace de réception se maintient par ailleurs à long terme.

III. Proust et paysages brésiliens au fil du temps

Le moment de la première réception d'*À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* au Brésil équivaut à un temps d'appropriation nécessaire de l'auteur au contexte intellectuel de réception. Cette réception passe par une assimilation de l'œuvre à l'espace brésilien, dont le paysage est un des leviers.

La diffusion de Proust connaît un net étiage au Brésil dans les années 1930, conséquence, en partie, de la disparition de celui-ci dans le champs littéraire et intellectuel français. (Tadié 36-7, 62-64) Cependant, il n'en reste pas moins une référence lorsqu'il s'agit de parler de modernité littéraire ou de trouver un élément de comparaison pour parler d'auteurs contemporains brésiliens comme étrangers. Dès 1936, Marcel Proust réapparaît dans le pays, à la faveur d'un article qui le compare à un des pères de la littérature brésilienne, Machado de Assis. [13] Ce rapprochement peut être vu comme un autre moyen d'assimiler Proust à son espace de réception. L'année suivante, l'auteur figure au programme d'entrée de certaines universités brésiliennes [14], signe que celui-ci est bel et bien devenu un élément de légitimation culturelle au Brésil. Si l'écrivain semble ainsi réapparaître au Brésil à la fin des années 1930, son retour critique se fait surtout dans les années 1940-1950, en bonne partie de manière concomitante à sa traduction, publiée de 1948 à 1957. Si l'appropriation brésilienne de l'écrivain par le biais du paysage n'est pas la seule assimilation possible, elle n'en perdure pas moins sur cette période, mais semble plus le fait, sur le long terme, de la réception régionaliste, quand bien même ces *nordestins* pourraient se trouver géographiquement à Rio de Janeiro.

Ainsi, dans son roman, *A Mulher obscura* (1939), Jorge de Lima, l'auteur du poème *O Mundo do Menino Impossível*, transpose Combray dans l'espace de la maison du planteur *nordestin* en accentuant la dimension patriarcale (le père ayant étudié la médecine et étant rentré gérer la plantation familiale). Le portrait des noires au bain y est brossé, avec force description du paysage *nordestin* (flore, rivière, climat, etc). Un autre passage du roman transpose ensemble les thématiques des chambres multiples du réveil du narrateur et de la mémoire chez Proust:

De nombreuses années se sont passées, et voilà à nouveau que je dors à Madalena, après avoir dormi dans les milliers de chambres du monde. Dans toutes, des chambres accolées à des grandes avenues mouvementées, à des cabarets, en cabine sur les eaux de l'océan, près d'églises, de forêts, des quais, des couvents, des

hôpitaux, des casernes, dans toutes, les rumeurs ambiantes ont toujours altéré mes sommeils. Dans toutes, si par hasard, il m'arrivait de dormir la fenêtre ouverte sur un jardin ou si le domestique oubliait un petit vase de fleurs dans la chambre, me voici dans un clair sommeil avec Constance, qui a rempli de suavité les jours de mon enfance. Une fois, durant une période de persécution politique qui suivit une de nos révolutions, nous fûmes arrêtés, moi et trois camarades étudiants, pour subversion: la police avait trouvé sur nos tables de travail quelque roman russe. Au poste, après nous avoir bastonnés méthodiquement, ils nous laissèrent dans une cellule grillagée qui donnait sur un toit obscur. Malgré toute la tragicomédie qui venait d'arriver, je me suis réveillé au matin en rêvant de Constance : le parfum d'un jasmin en fleur était venu, par dessus les toits, de quelque balcon distant ou du petit jardin des modestes maisons du quartier. (*A Mulher* 25)

L'évocation du Jasmin comme élément de substitution de la madeleine proustienne renvoie, en même temps qu'à la thématique de la mémoire, chère à l'auteur de la *Recherche*, à un autre climat et représente une autre flore que celle de l'espace dans lequel a été initialement publié la *Recherche*. Au demeurant, cette plante de climat tempéré pourrait être assimilée au climat méditerranéen, mais pas à celui de Paris, Balbec ou même Combray: la plante, cultivée en extérieur, renvoie ainsi à une nature tempérée ou tropicale plus proche de l'espace de réception brésilien que de la France. Le paysage, représenté ici par le jasmin en fleur, et l'évocation du contexte politique brésilien du moment (en l'occurrence, ici, la violence politique et l'anticommunisme viscéral de l'*Estado Novo*, régime dictatorial instauré dès 1937 par Getúlio Vargas) sont des éléments d'intégration de Proust à l'espace brésilien.

La publication en 1949, au moment de la traduction de l'auteur au Brésil, d'un numéro de la revue *Nordeste* de Recife, consacré à la province chez Proust, découle aussi de cette dynamique. Dans l'éditorial du numéro, Aderbal Jurema (1912-1986) [15] rapproche la province décrite par Proust de celle que vivent ses lecteurs brésiliens. Un des importants acteurs de rapprochement de ces espaces est représenté par le fleuve, un élément naturel du paysage au sein des villes évoquées: qu'il s'agisse de Paris, Rio de Janeiro ou Recife:

Dans ce numéro de *Nordeste*, nous chercherons à réaliser une excursion vers notre province perdue à tous. Peu importe que nous soyons au Pernambouc ou à Combray, dans la géographie de la mémoire, le concept de latitude et de longitude est aussi libre et arbitraire que les formules de rhétorique et de grammaire pour le véritable poète. C'est pourquoi, nous considérons comme frère celui qui a su interpréter avec vigueur et sensibilité la recherche éternelle du temps perdu. (...)

Nous sommes tous, au moins en de rares instants, des proustiens : que nous vivions à Recife, entourés des vieux et placides cristaux du fleuve Capibaribe, ou au fleuve [16] tumultueux des bords de la Guanabara, ou encore à Paris, sur les berges des eaux limoneuses et civilisées de la Seine. En nous, sans compter le temps ni mesurer l'espace, l'enfant que nous avons été, le jeune homme que nous ne nous apercevons pas avoir été et la maturité d'aujourd'hui, demeurent et demeureront toujours, à l'incessante recherche de la province perdue. [17]

Même au sein des villes, envisagées également dans cet éditorial pour rapprocher Proust et son espace de réception, c'est un élément naturel qui traverse ou borde celles-ci qui est envisagé pour opérer ce rapprochement (baie de mer ou fleuve). De la même manière, pour le poète João Cabral de Melo Neto (1920-1999) [18], le fleuve Capibaribe, traversant Recife, représente la *Madeleine de Proust* de tout *nordestin*. [19] Dans *Provincia Submersa* [20], roman publié en 1957 aux éditions du *Proust-Club* de Rio de Janeiro, et qu'Octacilio Alecrim (1906-1968) [21] revendique comme proustien, l'auteur se souvient de son enfance, dans le village de *Macaíba*, dans le *Rio Grande do Norte*, où celui-ci est né. Dans ce roman, on peut constater tout d'abord une assimilation de l'auteur de la *Recherche* à son espace de réception à travers une description exotique des espaces ruraux *nordestins*. Il est également possible d'observer chez Octacilio Alecrim l'usage qui est fait de la démarche proustienne de mémoire involontaire. Enfin, *Provincia Submersa* met en évidence l'opposition, présente également chez Proust, entre le lieu provincial de l'enfance comme paradis perdu et l'enfer de la ville et de sa mondanité.

Ainsi, ce rapprochement entre Proust et son lieu de réception brésilien à travers l'évocation des paysages du pays est opéré au fil du temps essentiellement chez les auteurs issus de l'espace *nordestin*. Il s'agit de valoriser les périphéries nationales par rapport aux centres culturels. L'usage de la référence aux paysages ruraux et à la vie paysanne nationale a ainsi encore plus de sens que dans un autre contexte de réception. Proust induisant en partie cette opposition entre Paris et Combray, le fait que cette dynamique perdure dans cet espace de réception en particulier est alors pleinement compréhensible.

Les paysages comme éléments identitaires et emblématiques brésiliens

Si l'auteur de la *Recherche* semble trouver sa place au Brésil en bonne partie à travers l'appropriation qui en est faite, en rapport avec les problématiques intellectuelles du contexte de l'espace de réception, la lecture-appropriation de son œuvre peut s'opérer de manière bien éloignée de sa réception française. Les mécanismes de cette réception sont le fait des transferts culturels tels que les théorise Michel Espagne (*Transferts*), la lecture d'une importation culturelle étant liée à l'espace de réception et à ce que celui-ci peut y lire. Cette perspective géographique induit ainsi les mêmes mécanismes que l'*Horizon d'attente*, théorisé par Hans Robert Jauss relativement à la réception d'une œuvre littéraire sur le temps. (*Réception*) Roland Barthes souligne, de son côté, le rôle créateur que joue le lecteur dans l'élaboration du sens perçu d'une œuvre littéraire dans un espace et à un moment donné. (*La Mort*)

S'ils ne font pas pleinement partie, du moins pas directement, du sens construit, du motif de cette assimilation-réception brésilienne de Proust, les paysages brésiliens sont des outils d'appropriation de l'auteur dans l'espace du pays. Bien que cet usage d'un paysage exotique par rapport à l'espace de production d'une œuvre renvoie à toute une tradition d'auteurs européens depuis le XVIII^e siècle (de Voltaire à Stevenson, de Rousseau à Pierre Loti), il est aussi un moyen,

pour des auteurs de ces *périphéries littéraires exotiques*, d'assimiler à leur espace un auteur importé. Les paysages brésiliens, sont ainsi des éléments identitaires. À cet égard, la nature, en plus d'être un élément avec lequel composer ou un élément à exploiter, devient un élément d'anthropophagie culturelle, au sens où l'entend le modernisme brésilien. [22] La nature est ici en effet ce qui permet de s'approprier ce qui n'est pas soi au départ, et, une fois ce processus d'ingestion fait, d'y superposer, à la manière d'un palimpseste, la lecture de l'œuvre par son espace de réception. Le Brésil dans lequel se diffuse l'œuvre proustienne n'en est pas moins morcelé entre des réceptions, des lectures et des critiques différentes, fruits de contextes divers. Ce morcellement se lit également à travers la multitude des paysages qui assimilent l'œuvre de Proust à ses espaces de réception brésiliens.

Dès lors, en tant qu'élément métonymique des Brésils, les paysages jouent un rôle d'intégration de l'œuvre de Proust aux espaces de réception et à la manière dont ces espaces construisent leurs propres définitions. Si au départ *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* est fortement liée à l'espace français et plus spécifiquement parisien, elle n'en devient pas moins, dans les intertextualités auxquelles elle donne lieu, un élément de construction d'identités brésiliennes multiples.

Notes de fin

- [1] Cet article prend place dans une réflexion plus large sur la diffusion, la réception et la traduction de l'œuvre de Marcel Proust au Brésil. Celle-ci a donné lieu à une thèse de doctorat intitulée *Combray sous les tropiques. Diffusion, réception et traduction de l'œuvre de Marcel Proust au Brésil (1913-1960)*, soutenue à l'Université Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle en décembre 2014.
- [2] Hoskins, William G. *The Making of the English Landscape*. Londres: Hodder and Stoughton 1955. Roger, Alain. *La Théorie du paysage en France (1974-1994)*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1995.
- [3] Roger, Alain. *Court traité du paysage*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997.
- [4] *O Imparcial*, Rio de Janeiro, samedi 13 décembre 1919, p. 4 ; *O Paiz*. Rio de Janeiro, 13 décembre 1919, p.5.
- [5] Le nom de ce mouvement est dérivé du nom d'Anatole France, auteur français à grand succès à Rio de Janeiro jusque dans les années 1920.
- [6] Sociedade dos amigos de Marcel Proust, *Marcel Proust, quem foi e o que fez*, Rio de Janeiro, 1963.
- [7] „Proust não nos rejuvenesce.“
- [8] Athayde, Tristão de , “O implacável Proust.” *Jornal do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro, 9 Juillet 1971.
- [9] Meyer, Augusto, “Elegia para Marcel Proust.” *Giraluz*. Porto Alegre: Livraria do Globo, 1928.
- [10] Si le contexte et la situation sont différents, le travail d'Antoine Acker montre que ce processus d'adaptation aux problématiques nationales ne se limite pas aux objets d'importation culturelle. Une entreprise comme Volkswagen, largement dominante au Brésil dès les années 1950, fait aussi l'objet d'une « brésilianisation », devenant ainsi un acteur à part entière des grands débats nationaux. Voir : Acker 2014.
- [11] Sauf mention contraire, les traductions sont personnelles

Elegia para Marcel Proust

Aléa de bambús, verde ogiva
recortada no azul da tarde mansa,
o ouro do sol trema na areia da alameda
farfalham folhas, borboletas florescem

Portão de sombra em plena luz

Gemen as lizas taquaras como frutas folhudas
onde o vento imita o mar.

Marcel, menino mimoso, estou contigo, Proust :
vejo melhor a amendoa negra dos teus olhos.

Transparência de uma longa vigília,
imagino as tuas mãos
como dois passaros pousados na penumbra.

Escuta – a vida avança avança e morre...

Prender a onda que franjava a areia loura de Balbec ?

Setim rosseo das manceiras no azul.

Flora carnal das raparigas passeando a beira-mar.

Brima esfuminho Paris pela vidraça

Intermittencias chuva e sol Le temps perdu.

Marcel Proust, diagrama vivo sepultado na alcova,
o teu quarto era maior que o mundo:
cabia nelle outro mundo...

Fecho o teu livro doloroso nesta calma tropical
como quem fecha leve leve a aza de um cortinado
nini-nana sobre o somno de um menino...

Meyer, Augusto. "Elegia para Marcel Proust." *Giraluz*. Porto Alegre: Livraria do Globo, 1928. Print.

[12] [...]o urso de Nürnberg,
o velho barbado jugoeslavo,
as poupées de Paris aux
cheveux crêpés,
o carrinho português
feito de folha-de-flandres,
a caixa de música checoslovaca,
o polichinelo italiano
made in England,
o trem de ferro de U. S. A.
e o macaco brasileiro
de Buenos Aires
moviendo la cola y la cabeza.

O menino impossível
que destruiu até
os soldados de chumbo de Moscou
e furou os olhos de um Papá Noel [...]

[13] Mig, Lucia. *Muel-Pereiraachado de Assis: estudo critico e biografico*. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1936. 264-265. Print.

[14] *Diario Oficial*, Espirito Santo, 12.03.1937, p.3. / *Diario da Manhã*, Vitoria, 21.11.1937, p.7.

[15] Aderbal de Araujo Jurema est un avocat, enseignant et homme politique brésilien. Né dans l'État de la Paraíba, il s'installe à Recife et fait ses études en droit à la faculté de Recife, avant d'y enseigner.

[16] Jeu de mot en portugais avec le mot rio, le fleuve, et le nom de ville, Rio de Janeiro.

[17] *Nordeste*, Recife, année IV, n°5, novembre-décembre 1949, p. 2.

[18] João Cabral de Melo Neto est un poète et diplomate brésilien, il fut aussi un ami de Joan Miró. Membre de l'Académie pernamboucaine de Lettres et de l'Académie Brésilienne de Lettres, il a été pressenti pour le Prix Nobel de Littérature en 1999.

[19] Mello Neto, João Cabral de. "Porto dos Cavalos." *Crime na Calle Relator*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1987. Print.

[20] Alecrim, Octacilio. *Provincia Submersa*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições do Proust Club, 1957. Print.

[21] Octacilio Alecrim est un écrivain et intellectuel brésilien. Fils d'une famille de propriétaires terriens aisés du Rio Grande do Norte. Auteur peu connu au Brésil, il se fait reconnaître à travers sa connaissance de l'auteur d'*À la recherche du Temps perdu*.

[22] Andrade 1928.

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**‘El dios dinero es el que manda’.
Nature as a Field of Force in the Western Highlands of Guatemala**

Abstract:

This article discusses the way in which the construction of a variety of territorial narratives is developed in the Western highlands of Guatemala. In a globalizing world, different meanings that are attributed to nature are often conflictive and indefinite. In the Guatemalan Highlands, these frequently competing ideas of what nature ‘is’ and what it ‘should be’ are elucidated by means of territorial narratives. Meanings given to nature are often expressions of establishing or negotiating ‘power’, relating to intrinsic cultural, political and physical aspect of that particular territory. In this article we approach nature as a source of negotiation and conflict, as a “field of force”. We analyze this field of force through the unravelling of different territorial narratives constructed in the context of globalization: nature as a commodity to be extracted, nature as territory, and nature as a sacred and cultural tourist destination. These narratives are constructed on different levels within the perspective of, and related to global trends of massive resource extraction, ecotourism and the globalization of rights. Discussing these narratives that are shaped in the negotiations over nature and environmentalism, we explain the intensity and ambiguousness of these conflicts.

Keywords: Territorial Narratives, Guatemala, Commodity, Nature, Environmentalism

1. Introduction

In this article we analyse how the meaning of 'nature' is negotiated in the Western Highlands of Guatemala in the context of massive resource extraction, the globalization of indigenous rights and expanding ecotourism. In order to justify ideas about and control over meanings of land and its resources, different actors engage in processes of constructing territorial narratives in which 'nature' is a central element. The Guatemalan government and mining companies consider 'nature' as a natural resource that can be deployed to alleviate poverty by way of extracting its subsoil resources. In ecotourism 'nature' is imagined as a resource that generates income by safeguarding it according to (Western) ideas about what nature should look like. At the same time, indigenous groups claim their spiritual rights to territory, referring to their cosmovision in which nature is a central element. At times, such narratives become further politicized when people not only attach spiritual, but also political meanings to nature and territory in order to actively resist processes of territorialization by the Guatemalan state. Negotiations about these different meanings of nature are often conflictive: Guatemala has witnessed an increase in socio-environmental conflicts in which different understandings of nature are a key point (see, for example Urkidi 2011, Costanza 2015, Vogt 2015, among many others). Conflicts over such meanings represent power relations and, as most other conflicts related to natural resources, are not only about 'nature' but also (if not foremost) about who decides about development. It is a battle over authority, legitimacy and citizenship (Peluso and Vandergeest 1995, Boelens 2008, Rasch 2012).

The aim of this article is to unravel 'nature' as a field of force in Guatemala and as such to disclose how conflicts over meanings of nature are inherently political and represent and inform conflicts over natural resources at the same time. Nuijten (2005) has conceptualised force fields as structural forms of power relations, which are shaped around the access to, and use of, specific resources. Force fields (or fields of force, as we call them) cohere around certain problems and resources and lead to forms of ordering in which socio-political categories with differing positions and interests define themselves. We argue that in order to understand contemporary socio-environmental conflicts, it is important to unravel, first, the different meanings that people attach to nature and, second, how such meanings are made instrumental to gain control over nature and provide important arguments in conflicts over access to natural resources. Such an analysis is relevant for understanding the manifestation of socio-environmental conflicts in Guatemala, where the indigenous population has been excluded from main domains of political decision making processes regarding the lands that they use, inhabit and perform their rituals on. Guatemala has witnessed an increase in socio-environmental conflicts in which different understandings of nature are a key point (Urkidi 2011, Costanza 2015, Vogt 2015). Different valuations of 'nature' are often at the root of such conflicts (Muradian et al 2003). These processes are multilayered and embedded in a long history of violence and exclusion.

2. Nature as a Field of Force

To capture the intrinsic relationship of meanings of nature with politics, spirituality and social conflicts over natural resources, we use Guha and Martinez –Alier’s notion of ‘varieties of environmentalisms’ (Martinez–Alier & Guha 1997). In their 1997 volume on varieties in environmentalisms, they convincingly show that environmentalism is not only a phenomenon in the global North, but that people in the South can also be ‘green’ although this ‘being green’ has other roots and manifestations. Such environmentalisms often have their root in poverty and social conflict over resources. In this article we analyse how such environmentalisms are constructed, making use of the idea of ‘territorial narratives’.

Territorial narratives are constructed as representative for different environmentalisms. Territorial narratives have a clear territorial dimension for those who enunciate them and focus on the characteristics of the territory that are most functional for the argument that is proposed by the narrative (Damonte 2009). Territorial narratives are constructed with the aim of territorializing space with the objective of establishing control over natural resources and the people who use them (Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995). This process is about excluding and including people within the boundaries of a territory and can therefore be considered a claim, a way of governmentalizing space (Foucault in Peluso & Lund 2011). Along these lines, territory is ascribed sociocultural, historical and/or physical characteristics that support the argument of the projected narrative with the intention of gaining ‘control’ (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995, Damonte 2009, Rasch 2013).

The ‘echelon of rights’, developed by Boelens and Zwartveen to analyze water conflicts (Boelens 2008), is useful to analyze how different territorial narratives are constructed and represent different actors and interests, as it captures the different levels of abstraction of environmental conflicts: the struggle over material means (resources), the contest over rights and operational norms (rules), the decision-making authority and the legitimacy of rights systems (regulatory control), and, finally, the diverging discourses that defend or challenge particular policies, normative constructs and regimes of representation. These different levels of abstraction also become visible in the narratives that are constructed in the negotiations over nature.

To sum up, to analyze nature as a field of force we use three interrelated concepts: the notion of different environmentalisms, territorial narratives and the echelon of rights. We consider environmentalism to be rooted in different territorial narratives, which we consider to be made up of the echelon of rights.

3. Methodology

The case studies presented in this article are based on field work in Guatemala by both authors. Gijs Cremers carried out research on the meaning of sacred natural sites, ecotourism, Maya spirituality and processes of territorialization in relation to local and global (environmental) dynamics. The research was conducted in the second half of 2014 and information was gathered using qualitative research methods, primarily based on participant observation among tour guides, tourists, the indigenous community and spiritual leaders in Laguna de Chicabal and (eco)tour agencies in Quetzaltenango. Furthermore, he conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews with twelve tour guides and (eco)tour agencies in Quetzaltenango, sixteen spiritual leaders in and around Laguna de Chicabal and several tourists visiting both places. Next to that, photography as a research method was applied, adding to the value of the analysis since the visual images called upon dialogue on issues taken for granted within the research community. As such, photos were shown to research participants and photos of important places and objects were shot by research participants, invoking conversation and discussion on a visual representation of the area and different artifacts.

Elisabet Dueholm Rasch has conducted research on activism, the meaning of land and mining (and other megaprojects) since 2009, as a continuation of her PhD research (field work: 18 months). The material presented in this article was collected during field work between 2009 and 2013. During this field work, the author applied different qualitative ethnographic methods; conducting participant observation in different activist meetings, and as observer in an indigenous consultation in San Francisco la Unión. The heart of the material, however, consists of unstructured and semi-structured interviews that the author conducted as part of the research with fifteen members of NGO's local activists, regional and national leaders between 2010 and 2012. In both cases, the authors triangulated data from interviews with observations, (semi)textual artefact analysis and informal conversations. (Semi)textual artefacts include posters, meeting minutes, flyers and newspaper articles. In this way, the internal validity of both case studies was secured (Bernard 2011, Madden 2010).

Both authors kept field logs, and made reflective and consolidated field notes during field work. These notes were discussed and compared during several meetings in order to deduct important themes and topics. From the elements that emerged from the field work material, we deduced the 'territorial narratives' that we will present in this article. We consider narratives as social constructs that are able to represent complex situations that are understandable for everyone. As such, narratives provide a context in which we locate ourselves, where to situate our ideas, values and actions and eventually predict the future (González 2006). Territorial narratives provide people with logical explanatory systems that allow them to engage with the territory they live in.

The article proceeds as follows. We will discuss three territorial narratives that compete for power and legitimacy in the Western Highlands of Guatemala in three separate sections: nature as source for large-scale development, nature as territory and nature as a sacred site to attract tourists with. These narratives are constructed in the context of, and at the same time dialectically informed by, global trends of massive resource extraction, ecotourism and the globalization of rights. At the same time, these narratives are multi-layered and dynamic. Additionally, as we will show, the narratives become more complex and contradictory as we move from the global and national to the local level. The territorial narratives that we discuss represent different environmentalisms and are constructed by different actors. We unravel each territorial narrative, using the echelon of rights as developed by Boelens (2008).

4. Guatemala's Highlands and Massive Resource Extraction, the Globalization of Rights and Expanding Ecotourism

Territorial narratives in Guatemala are shaped and negotiated by both local and global actors, such as indigenous communities, mining companies, and (eco)tourists, who continually develop (different) claims to territory (Damonte 2009, Rasch 2013). In what follows we discuss the sites and actors that are involved in these negotiations over nature and in the construction of related territorial narratives. We will embed this in the socio-political history of Guatemala, as history is often central to territorial narratives and partly explain the contemporary dynamic character of nature as a field of force.

The issues of territorialization, Maya spirituality and territorial rights cannot be understood without taking into consideration the violent past, which provides a background for expression of contemporary Maya identity (Carlsen 1997, Fischer & Hendrickson 2003: 67, Brown 2004). Between 1960 and 1996 Guatemala was plunged into an internal conflict in which the indigenous population was faced with (cultural) repression, extreme violence and the deprivation of (spiritual) rights (Fischer & Hendrickson 2003: 67, Ybarra 2012). Throughout the conflict, sacred sites were designated 'subversive' and conducting ceremonies and other forms of expressing indigenous identity became an act of insubordination (Ybarra 2012). In the 1970s the guerrilla movement, the Guatemalan Army of the Poor (EGP - *Ejército Guatemalteco de los Pobres*), gained ground in the Western Highlands as a reaction to the destruction of indigenous communities — as a part of the scorched earth tactic — by the military. It goes beyond the scope of this article to discuss all the atrocities that took place during the war, but it is essential to note that it had a tremendous impact on the communities the Western Highlands.

The return to civilian rule in 1986 paved the way for peace negotiations between the state and the guerrilla organization *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG, National Guatemalan Revolutionary Unity). The Maya Movement [1] became an important political actor

during the democratization process and succeeded in putting indigenous issues on the table of the peace negotiations. In 1996, the peace negotiations were concluded. As part of the peace negotiations, the rights of Guatemala's indigenous population were laid down in the Accord of Identity and Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (AIDPI – *Acuerdo de la identidad y los derechos de los pueblos indígenas*), signed in 1995. At the same time, the indigenous population gained access to global legal repertoires such as internationally recognized human and indigenous rights conventions (Warren 1998, Sieder 2002, Hale 2006). In 1995 the Guatemalan State also signed Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO 169). This document includes numerous indigenous rights and has served as an important point of reference in the formulation of claims by the Maya Movement and by indigenous movements in the rest of Latin America; it can be considered as part of the globalization of indigenous rights. Both documents establish the right of indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making processes on the development in territories where they live, as well as the spiritual rights of indigenous peoples. This recognition of indigenous rights to territory and spirituality should be considered within the wider context of the recognition of indigenous rights and the rise of indigenous movements in Latin America (Sieder 2007, Bastos and Camus 2003).

As such, an important part of the peace process has been reclaiming natural and historical sacred places (Ybarra 2012) and a variety of groups have been promoting “ethnic pride and [have created] a sanctioned public space for Maya culture” (Fischer & Hendrickson 2003: 73). This included recovering sacred places and using these to openly express and practice religious customs (Ybarra 2012). In this process the (re)construction of Maya identity and spirituality is used to obtain and maintain an active call for territorial rights (Montejo 1999: 157-162, Sieder 2007). Today, for 40% of the indigenous population that resides in the Guatemalan highlands, reclaiming their lands in order to survive is a crucial part of daily life. Ybarra (2012) stresses that while the Guatemalan state is reluctant to grant territorial rights to a ‘Maya collectivity’, organizations that advocate Maya spiritual rights are embracing the idea of legalization of, for example, natural sacred places. This is because a great variety of these places in the region are believed to possess intrinsic (ceremonial) energy, which enhances mediation between the human world and the ‘powers-that-be’ (Carlsen 1997, Fischer & Hendrickson 2003, Brown 2004). The importance of natural sacred spaces in Maya culture is rooted in history and time, and the meaning given to sacred places is constantly negotiated.

Parallel to providing more space and autonomy for indigenous peoples and the recognition of indigenous political and spiritual rights, the state reformed the Mining Law in 1997. Until that time, Guatemala's natural resources had remained largely unexplored due to the civil war. The liberalization of the Mining Law made it extremely attractive for foreign companies to invest in this sector. Since then, the Guatemalan government has been granting concessions to transnational mining companies without consulting the population that actually lives in these territories. This is in sharp contrast with efforts that the same state made to decentralize development and recognize the

rights and identity of the indigenous population (Sieder 2007). The liberalization of the Mining Law reflects neoliberal development policies that are often not compatible with indigenous cosmology and identity (Holden & Jacobsen 2008). It is a way of territorializing nature in which it becomes framed as a natural resource that can be extracted. Such a process of territorialization often does not respect the rights of indigenous peoples, nor does it include the role of municipal and local authorities as agents of their own development.

Along the same line, ecotourism has developed rapidly in Guatemala. Nature has been conceptualised within a mainly Western environmental framework and partly commoditized. Ecotourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors of the global tourist industry over the last two decades. Regardless of many contradictions, “defences and critiques of ecotourism both share the assumption that it constitutes a promising route for generating benefits for those living close to tropical biodiversity without undermining its existence” (Agrawal & Redford 2006: 20). The ways local networks interact with global actors in this arena in order to create this ‘promising route’, however, are ambiguous. Ecotourism is not always considered the best option. As a consequence of the ecological richness on the slopes of Laguna de Chicabal for example, the municipality of San Martín Sacatepéquez and the *Asociación de Agricultores Ecológicos Laguna de Chicabal* (ASAECO) have officially deemed it a natural and cultural monument and protected area. Nevertheless, the Maya Mam who live near the volcano depend on the constant availability of their ceremonial places in order to sustain in their (spiritual) livelihoods. The shore around the crater lake is home to approximately 25 ceremonial Maya sites and recently constructed eco-lodges in *Laguna Seca* – on the lower side of the volcano – are frequently used by indigenous cultural and community-based movements, emphasizing the entanglement of ecotourism, indigenous culture and global dynamics on a community level. In sum, many different actors move around on this particular field of force, that is ‘nature’, all giving meaning to nature as way of legitimizing ideas and positions on its meaning: tourists, tourist operators, the state, mining companies, anti-mining activists, spiritual leaders and conservationists. In what follows we will unravel the territorial narrative that different actors construct. In the conclusion we will reflect on how these narratives relate to each other.

5. Nature as a Source for Large-Scale (Neoliberal) Development

“Guatemala is favored by nature and counts with a mineral potential, which responsible exploitation is compatible with the environment and its natural resources, just like with the needs of the communities.” [2]

The above quote, taken from the website of the Guatemalan Ministry of Energy and Mines, demonstrates how nature is considered a natural resource that can be exploited in order to alleviate poverty and promote development in Guatemala without doing harm to the environment. As such, one of the main arguments of the Guatemalan government to grant concessions to transnational mining companies in this area is ‘development’. An important element of this way of framing nature

is the idea that mining can be sustainable. This is based on the following premises: 1) mining catalyzes development, 2) technical fixes can solve almost every problem and 3) those opposed to mining mainly comprise ignorant and 'anti-development' communities and NGOs (Whitmore 2006). [3] The idea of sustainable mining almost promotes itself as a way of being green, as an environmentalism rooted in the richness of natural resources in terms of minerals, without harming community life, nor the environment. 'Nature' is considered a source for development in this territorial narrative, but as a development without negative ecological or social consequences. The main actors that construct the 'nature as development narrative' are the Guatemalan government and (mostly Canadian) mining companies. They have one common interest although they might follow different logics of action: economic development. The government believes in mining as a way of generating development through employment and mineral rents; the mining companies use the logic of a profit organization. In this territorial narrative, exploiting nature is considered in the interest of Guatemala as it can help development at the national level. At the same time, this argument is at times voiced in terms of interests for the people, as a way for all Guatemalans to get out of poverty. This is supported by the World Bank as a strategy for poverty alleviation and employment (Bastos & Brett, 2010), and fits within the general trend of Latin American governments considering mining and other mega-projects as the best way of 'development' (Moody 2007). The World Bank has, for example, provided the Canadian company Glamis Gold Ltd.'s Montana Exploradora Marlin Project in Guatemala with a loan of \$45 million (World Bank, 2010). At the same time, local governments often diverge from the position of the national government, putting them in a difficult position: the national government might pressure municipal mayors to go along with mining plans (see also Dougherty 2011).

Approaching nature and its resources as a source for large-scale development infringes on indigenous livelihood strategies and spirituality, and there has been a lot of resistance against this form of territorialization. We will discuss that more in-depth when we come to the next territorial narrative on nature. What is important to understand here is that an important element of the 'nature as development narrative' is the actual delegitimization of the resistance against it. One of the most important actors in this process is the *Fundación Contra el Terrorismo* (Foundation against terrorism). Due to these processes of delegitimization, many activists say that the interests go beyond the economic. They consider mining to be a new system of dispossession and a new way of controlling the population. Taking control of the land as a source for large-scale economic development is considered a way to recolonize the land (field notes Elisabet Dueholm Rasch; 2010, 2012) as the revenues will benefit foreign companies and the state, rather than the local inhabitants for whom nature is an important element of livelihood and worldview. Mining represents, according to many activists, just one more act of expropriation and exploitation that can be added to a history of exclusion of the indigenous population (Mérida & Krenmayr, 2008: 11).

This idea of expropriation and dispossession is confirmed by the way the Guatemalan government goes about the rules and regulations involved. First, the Guatemalan State has

neglected agreements that secure indigenous rights to participation in development and has granted licenses to transnational mining companies without consulting the population that actually live on the relevant territories. In Guatemala, subsoil resources are property of the state, and it can thus decide what happens to these resources. The state, then, can grant permission for extraction to foreign companies. However, as discussed in the former section, indigenous communities also have rights, which are laid down in international agreements. These rights determine that indigenous peoples should be consulted when it comes to decisions regarding their land and territory. Second, governmental policies have been supported by forces that operate outside the governmental system. One of the actors is the aforementioned *Fundación Contra el Terrorismo*. These actors actively support nature as a source for development narrative by delegitimizing its opponents. Strategies that are used to do this mainly consist of criminalizing, terrorizing and discarding social mobilization against megaprojects that involve the extraction of natural resources.

The most important strategy in this effort is the violation of human rights in the name of democracy and development. This can range from death threats to denigrations on social media to paid campaigns in newspapers. An example comes from the *Fundación Contra el Terrorismo*:

In recent declarations of leaders of organizations that are supposed to defend human rights and the environment they have brought some numbers out in the public that do not do more than offend the intelligence of the Guatemalan people. To justify their existence through victimization, they have come to the extreme to say that 28 of their militants have been murdered. [4]

This is a reaction to a letter that was written by the anthropologist Irma Alicia Velazquez, who voiced her iniquity about the death threats, illegal detentions and actual deaths that have happened in the realm of mobilization against nature as a source for development. The founder of this ‘anti-terrorist organization’, Ricardo Rafael Mendez Ruiz Valdes, was also involved in framing activists that were engaged in a manifestation against a dam in Barillas (Huehuetenango) as ‘terrorists’. Ruiz Valdes has been accused of spreading materials that: “[...] constitute massive attacks towards the defenders of human rights, their liberties and their fundamental rights, as well as towards their lives, their dignity, personal integrity, security, liberty of action and association.” In most cases it is not possible to prove processes of criminalization. However, as Sibrián and van der Borgh (2014) say, it is important to document and take serious experiences of criminalization; many activists experience the policy of the state as a way of ‘closing all doors’ and ‘having a plan against social movements’ (interviews 2012).

In sum, the ‘nature as a source for development’ narrative focuses on the natural resources as central elements for a neoliberal development strategy. Massive resource extraction is considered the way to alleviate poverty and is presented as a viable way of providing people with new ways to make a living. ‘Nature’ then turns into a natural resource and becomes a commodity, and the central government is considered the representative authority to make decisions about it.

The central elements of this narrative are directly opposed to the following narrative that we shall discuss: the 'nature as territory' narrative.

6. Nature as Territory

When we enter the salon municipal three reinas indígenas are talking to the people in the salon. They are talking about the importance of reviving Maya culture, about how mining threatens Maya identity and territory. How important it is to safeguard this. When we talk afterwards, they tell me how important they find it to be against mining, as it 'has very negative impacts on nature' and because they do not want to give birth to children with, for example, only one arm --as has happened in other communities. On our way to the next community, I sit next to the municipal council member from another municipality, who is visiting the community consultation out of solidarity. He tells me that he is interested in learning about how communities are organizing. When we arrive, we are just in time for the speech of a member of the national board of CPO (Concejo del Pueblo Maya – Council of the Maya People) – and old friend of mine who has been involved in several local Maya political initiatives. He talks about the necessity of organizing local community consultations and the duty to protect nature and its resources. The representatives from the Human Rights office in Quetzaltenango are also invited to reflect on the community consultations from a human rights perspective. In their discourse, they emphasize the right to organize local consultations. When we get back to the central salon of the consultation, the counting of the votes is about to begin. As we enter the municipal hall, my eye catches a poster on the wall, and again I am struck by the sentence 'cuidar nuestro medio ambiente es nuestro deber (to take care of the environment is our duty)'. At the end of the evening there's no doubt; the San Francisco population is against mining, and against electric wiring across their territory. Because it is a duty to defend nature and its resources, not only a right (field notes Elisabet Dueholm Rasch, November 2013).

The fragment above shows different elements that are important in the construction of the 'nature as territory' narrative: the diversity of actors that is involved in constructing the narrative, the central elements of the narratives in terms of the necessity to take care of nature. We will explore these elements in more depth below.

In the narrative that frames nature as territory, nature is described as something that is inherently political. It is, as Boelens (2008) and many others have noticed, often not only about nature, but about who can decide what happens to nature and how this is done (Fulmer et al. 2008). The territorial narrative contains different important elements. The first element is the Maya identity that is considered within this narrative to be inherently rooted in sacred meanings of land and other natural resources. On the basis of this identity, the indigenous population can also formulate their relationship to the land as a political right. So, as an activist would say, '*as Mayas, we say NO to mining*'. This is a way the narrative is constructed on the national level as part of indigenous resistance against mining. Closely related are other elements of the narrative: ecological rights, e.g. the right to health, to clean water and a sane environment. Often these ecological rights are framed as being specifically important for the indigenous people as environment and nature take on a

specific place in their worldview. In some cases an element of gender has been added to this discourse; women sometimes formulate their claims in terms of liberation of the female body (Rasch 2012). These three elements all come together in one central claim against 'neoliberalism' in which the state and mining companies are put forward as 'capitalist' and 'the enemy'. Indigenous people are portrayed as real owners of the land, inhabitants of nature, have the right to decide on nature and what happens to it. To justify this, natural resources are framed in terms of territorial – political as well as sacred – rights.

Nature and its resources are often related to the sacredness of the territory since indigenous people often advocate a strong connection with (self)declared sacred territory (e.g. volcanoes, lakes, mountaintops) in their claim making and struggle for territorial rights. As such, spirituality and sacred places are important elements of the 'nature as territory' narrative. Besides serving as a key location for ceremonies and traditional indigenous education, sacred sites relate to livelihoods, (ecological, cultural and spiritual) well-being and 'cultural services' (Verschuuren 2012). Sacred natural sites generate both cultural and ecotourism as well as spiritual pilgrimage, supposedly making the places a substantial contributor to local economic activity (Verschuuren 2012: 5). Recently, sacred sites have also become of interest to scholars interested in ecosystems, who have been promoting 'the integration of cultural concerns in ecology and conservation' (Verschuuren 2012: 5). As such, sacred sites in the region are a crossroads of Maya spirituality, ecotourism and political activity and can be considered important centers of both material and 'intangible' cultural and ecological manifestations (e.g. Fischer & Hendrickson 2003, Brown 2004, Martain-Haverbeck 2006, Brown & Emery 2008). From this perspective, the declaration of Lake Chicabal as a 'cultural and natural territory' can also be considered as a way of establishing territorial power over territory.

The way people claim rights to territory are closely related to the actual claims they make; these claims are rooted in and justified by international as well as national legislation and agreements, and related to individual as well as collective group rights. Some of the strategies that people employ include marches and road blocks, but the most popular way of claiming 'the right to territory' is by way of organizing community consultations via the legal path, most of the times rooted in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Municipal Code, the Law on Rural Development Committees, the Guatemalan Constitution, the Agreement on the Rights and Identity of Indigenous Peoples, the ILO 169. These consultations have been widely studied (see for example Van de Sandt 2009, Urkidi 2011, Costanza 2011, Rasch 2012, among others).

Such community consultations should be considered within the general tendency of employing indigenous legal activism as a way of resisting mega-projects in Guatemala (Sieder 2007 and 2011). Since 2004 more than seventy community consultations have been organized in Guatemala, in which the population decided not to agree with future mining activities. The best known (and studied) was the Sipakapa consultation in 2005 (Van de Sandt, 2009; Yagenova & García, 2009; Dougherty, 2011; Urkidi, 2011). In the narrative of nature as territory, nature is made instrumental by different actors. Indigenous activists, lawyers and community leaders resort to the

courts to claim their rights, combining international agreements, national legislation and indigenous law. Through providing legal advice, formulating law proposals and bringing cases to human rights courts, indigenous activists demand participation in decision-making processes regarding natural resources and development (Rasch 2012).

The 'nature as territory' narrative is constructed at the local, regional and national level and claims territory on different scales, applying different levels of legislation. The way nature is framed in this narrative is informed by globalized discourses of indigenous rights to territory and indigenous rights, as well as by Guatemala's violent past. Often, elements of indigenous identity are emphasized to make the argument stronger. In this process, local communities not only contest their right to natural resource use or access to land, but also question who the decision-making authority is and construct their own discourse to defend their normative constructs (Boelens 2008). This has led to a polarized situation in Guatemala, where actors that construct this narrative have come to be considered diametrically opposed to the state and mining companies. As we will see in the elaboration of the following territorial narrative, these apparently diametrical dimensions of territorial narratives are negotiated at the local level.

7. Nature as a Cultural and Ecological Tourist Destination

'Come with me' Rodrigo says, smiling and avoiding eye contact. He urges me to follow him as I get up from my seat – a decaying tree trunk – and walks across an open space on the forested slope. We walk through a variety of tropical flowers and plants. Birds are singing from the dense canopy. The warmth of the afternoon sun has yet to dry the morning dew and a smell of wet vegetation and mud is still recognizable. We walk up a slippery dirt road and pass a barking dog, Rodrigo always three steps ahead of me. We chat about Guatemalan history, contemporary politics and about the current natural backdrop. Rodrigo, a 37-year old Maya Mam *ajq'ij* – a Maya daykeeper or spiritual guide –, seems to know everything about the sacred volcano we are climbing; about its history, its place within the Mayan worldview and about its ecological significance. We walk by an old Ceiba tree and Rodrigo lectures me about its importance within local *Cosmovisión* as he lectures me about the meaning of nearly everything around us. Regardless what I notice or point out, Rodrigo would enlighten me with ongoing, exciting and remarkable stories.

The way Rodrigo explains about the setting and the meaning of nature and its sacredness shows how he employs his knowledge about the territory and how he – and, as he assures me, a vast majority of the local community – relates to his surroundings. These indigenous ecological narratives are frequently heard and reproduced by many *ajq'ij'ab* (plural) and the local indigenous population. Ethnic and spiritual identity is strongly rooted in the landscape; the exceptional geography of Laguna de Chicabal forms the foundation of local spiritual life. And indeed Maya spiritual guides include these surroundings – i.e. volcanoes, mountains, caves, and forests – in

ceremonial recitations and daily life. The landscape does not only exist in a physical state, but captures a much broader and more intangible realm in which specific religious and non-religious worldviews are enacted and negotiated. People depend on the land for their well-being, bringing about a new layer of tensions regarding the meaning of nature. Chicabal, meaning ‘good place’ in Maya Mam, is an important sacred natural site in the western Quetzaltenango area and altars around the lake are visited the entire year, following the *Cholq’ij* – the Maya calendar.

As a result the territorial dimension of the area is thus shaped by natural and sacred (or both) arguments. The story of Rodrigo above reflects how he constructs territorial narratives around this area and in what way he gives meaning to what he labels ‘his ancestral grounds’. “Nature as a whole is more important to the local community than it is to foreigners,” he says. By explicitly stating that this territory ‘belongs’ to the local community and that the value of (sacred) nature can “only be understood [in this way]” by the local community, he constructs a territorial narrative that encompasses a more local claim for land and spiritual rights. Chicabal and ‘its nature’ becomes important for (self) identification and cultural and religious values. Nature, then, becomes a sociocultural and spiritual construct, with ideas about what nature is and can become “for and by humans” (Dressler 2011). Several actors are involved in the making of this nature.

Since the park around Laguna de Chicabal has been declared a natural and cultural monument, eco- and cultural tourism have increased and both physical and spiritual territorial boundaries have changed. Newman states that “[t]he proponents of a cultural globalization argue that the sense of belonging to a specific [...] territory has been replaced (or at least is being replaced) by a deterritorialized and borderless world” (2008: 61). While borders between states become easier to cross, other more unclear territorial boundaries appear. Notions of cultural, social, economic and religious boundaries in relation to territory are influenced by global dynamics (ibid.). This is especially noticeable at sacred natural places such as Chicabal, as frictions that arise as a result of the confluence of different actors are at the same time a local issue (local cosmology, ‘traditional’ education, [spiritual] livelihoods) and a global issue ([eco]tourism, environmental organizations, and mining corporations). The outline of these particular boundaries is constructed from different angles and points of view.

An example of these vaguer boundaries comes to the fore as we zoom in on the case of Quetzaltenango’s ecotourism industry. As a fairly recent phenomenon, ecotourism in Guatemala crosses territorial boundaries without clear – and oftentimes unrecognizable due to historical or (local) cultural – physical limits. The general idea of ecotourism is that it facilitates rural development by, for example, generating and diversifying income possibilities. It provides a greater variety of activities within a region and thus complements cultural tourism next to reducing environmental shocks. However, in order to do so, ecotourism is required to meet the needs of both locals and tourists and thus “need[s] to be based on the preferences of the tourists and locals as well as the physical characteristics of the area [...] especially [...] in areas with historic civil conflict and areas where tourists and residents represent distinct social and cultural groups” (Hearne and Santos

2005). The latter is especially the case near Chicabal, although ecotourism in the area has developed poorly over time and most of the local community is disconnected from ecotourism related money flows. Furthermore, many spiritual guides in Chicabal feel that their sacred surroundings, altars and ceremonial places are indeed protected by ASAECO to some extent as the organization clearly asks tourists, for example, to not leave any garbage and swim in the sacred volcanic lake, but feel left out of decision-making when it comes to considering the local environment and the sacred crater lake. This is, among other things, caused by the fact that most members of ASAECO are evangelical and do not, in the eyes of most spiritual guides, consider the volcano as a sacred 'being' (Taylor 2005).

Rain is pouring down on the tin roofs and quieting life on the streets as I walk around looking for María Elena's house in Quetzaltenango's *Zona 1*. "Just look for the small red house with the wooden door," my point of reference, not nearly enough information to make her home easy to locate. María Elena was born and bred in San Martín Sacatepéquez and moved to Quetzaltenango to find a job in tourism at the age of 27. She worked as a teacher at a Spanish school and behind the desk of a travel agency but has dedicated recent years of her life taking care of her family. When I finally find the house – a wooden door indeed – she is waiting for me on the patio with fresh made instant coffee and *pancitos dulces*. María Elena vividly remembers when more tourists started showing up in Chicabal. She tells that the area has changed over time. "The community has only profited little from tourism in Chicabal, only the people who know their way around foreigners, speak Spanish or even English, and people who live very close to the volcano." She pauses for a second, takes a sip from her coffee and continues. "For example, most travel agencies hire guides from Quetzaltenango, they don't care more about Laguna de Chicabal as they care about tours to Zunil or Salcajá. Local knowledge should be used as well for tourism to be profitable for the community of San Martín." María Elena claims that ecotourism alone is not enough to prevent damage to local territory near Chicabal, repeatedly telling me that local networks need restructuring, and local, community-based tourism in San Martín Sacatepéquez is needed for the community to benefit from the nearby national park. "Tourism is a good source of income and would increase employment for the people in the community [of San Martín], but who will prepare them for tourists? A lot of people do not speak Spanish very well. They have neither hot water nor a good meal to offer and they don't recognize the foreigners' way of thinking. Then tourists, would they live under such conditions? Xela [Quetzaltenango] is only an hour away. I don't think so. It is a task for the government to show people's 'normal live' in Guatemala, but they profit from Antigua, from Tikal, and from Atitlán; the small communities here are not important enough."

Like in the indigenous ecological narrative, elements that come to the fore in the María Elena's story are rooted more locally. Territory here is framed within both an ecological as an (eco)touristic narrative. According to this narrative, the idea of nature around Chicabal is negotiated by different actors. Next to indigenous communities, tourists have a great impact on how 'nature' is shaped and how the claim for 'rights' and 'power' is distributed. The ascribed characteristics change

as the narrative changes. Most (eco)tourists for example aspire a more 'authentic' and 'pristine' vision of culture and nature. The idea that ecotourism generates income has led to the construction of infrastructure (i.e. roads, lodges) on and around Chicabals volcanic crater, 'destroying' parts of its ecosystem. On the other hand, as stated by ASAECO, it aims, among others, to "contribute to better life standards of the local community, increase economic standards, improve sustainable and responsible environment, ecotourism, and agriculture and decrease poverty." [5] However, it is often uncertain if these intentions are realized.

About the presence of ecotourism, María Elena notes that a "fundamental change of the entire system is needed" in order for it to succeed in Guatemala. She moves around on her chair a little, making it screech on the tile-floor, and looks out the window. "For example, Quetzales, Guatemala's national bird now facing extinction, used to live here (see Solórzano et al. 2003), on Cerro El Baúl [in Quetzaltenango]. Not too long ago you could see them if you watched very carefully. I never have, but I have heard people telling stories about seeing Quetzales. Now they have constructed a road and the birds are gone. You would have to leave the city to see them." She picks up her steaming cup of coffee and stares at the black liquid for a few seconds as if contemplating the right words to say before continuing. "Since the 1990s tourism has changed in Xela. In Chile Verde [San Martín Sacatepéquez] as well! Ecotourism is hard to describe and to analyze. It is new for us and I understand it has done much in Costa Rica. A lot of people think tourism is bad; but it is just a clash of thoughts, of ideas and cultures, and of course it *has* caused problems. There are different ideas and goals indeed, tourism changes the situation. But is it all bad? I don't think so [...]. On the one hand ecotourism helps to create a relation with the natural world, helps tourists to understand what we understand and how. But the people here in Guatemala aren't prepared yet. There is little to no education and there is not enough knowledge to make ecotourism sustainable for people *and* nature. All of this has changed a little since the founding of ASAECO, now there are at least people who are cleaning the roads, putting up signs and information, and guiding the tourists."

The general idea that indigenous communities would not be able to cope with the tourists flocking to 'their' lands, has been pointed out by Johnston (2006), who stresses that ecotourism is emerging so fast that it will overwhelm communities that 'own' the resource and lead to the loss of the initial resource itself. She continues by stating that travel agencies typically fail to recognize ancestral and/or sacred lands of indigenous communities and that in many cases these lands are vulnerable for being taken over by commercial companies. Exploitation and degradation of sacred lands are a concern of several *Ajq'ij'ab* who work at Laguna de Chicabal. Rodrigo says that the volcano is owned by the spirits and the spirits should be the ones that decide its boundaries, physical and non-physical. "Now roads have been constructed. Do people ask the spirits for permission to destroy nature? Is everybody entering the site asking for permission as they were asked to do? Do you not think *our* land is more and more becoming an economic product instead of a spiritual and sacred place?" When talking about the influence of ecotourism on natural sacred

places, Carlos, a Quetzaltenango-based tourist guide told me that the needs of ‘the sacred’ – in this case the indigenous community – and the tourism industry are unlikely to see eye to eye. “Everybody has different ways of identifying nature and making it the way that suits them best.” The cases above illustrate how different views of nature shape different territorial narratives and how people decide what happens or should happen to a territory and in what way this should happen; indigenous groups, tourist agencies and ecotourists formulate narratives to ‘claim’ their spiritual or environmental rights to territory in which nature has a central place.

The socio-environmental struggles reflected in ecological indigenous and ecotourism narratives evolve further when the two are not only conflictive, but also intertwined. As shown above, both narratives are entangled as both groups both win and lose from each other’s visions of what ‘nature’ entails. This is especially the case in Chicabal, where ecotourism has caused damage to nature (i.e. construction of roads, campsites, lodges, cars) as well as stimulated local indigenous groups to emphasize the sacredness of the volcano and their cultural and spiritual identity, and express the importance of nature within their worldview. At the same time, their rights and access to economic sources are limited as nearly all tourists depart from and return to Quetzaltenango, using tourist agencies and urban-based guides. The claiming of rights or access to the territory is first rooted in historical and cultural patterns such as ancestry and spirituality and second, outlined by environmental and legal ‘boundaries’. The junction of this socio-environmental conflict and the coming together of these narratives was very eloquently and cynically framed by Carlos, who stated that all different environmentalisms meet as soon as people recognize the new god that entered the realm: “*el Dios Dinero es El que manda.*”

8. Discussion and Conclusion

In this article we have shown how different territorial narratives encapsulate – and are part of negotiating – the meaning that is given to nature in the context of processes of globalization. In the Guatemalan Highlands, territorial narratives and different meanings of nature are constructed by a variety of actors that defend different positions regarding control over and connotations of territory and its natural resources in the broadest sense. We have demonstrated that the control over rights in a particular territory is not only a matter of different ideas and set boundaries, but also a complex and ambiguous negotiated process that takes place in different dimensions (Boelens 2008). Indigenous groups produce narratives to claim their spiritual, cultural and historical rights to territory in which nature plays a key role. Such cultural and spiritual territorial narratives often become more politicized when people not only attach spiritual, but also political or economic meanings to nature in order to ‘gain control’ over a certain territory. These narratives are constructed in the context of, and informed by, global tendencies such as massive resource extraction, ecotourism and the

globalization of rights. Constructed by different actors, using different sets of beliefs and views in order to establish what they experience as 'nature', they represent different environmentalisms. We have analyzed territorial narratives as being constructed on a field of force, that is, nature. Hereby we have looked into the different actors, interests and regulations that inform struggles over the meaning of nature. We have shown that a variety of actors engage in such negotiations: mining companies, the Guatemalan government, activists, spiritual leaders and tourists (agents). They all engage in constructing often conflictive territorial narratives in which they give diverging meanings to nature. These meanings are informed by the different interests that they have in the process of territorialization: profit, spiritual life, indigenous identity or making a living out of tourism. Negotiating such meanings of nature are about more than nature itself. It is about who has the right to decide about nature, about the regimes of representation (Boelens 2008). It has also become clear that such negotiations can only be understood by taking two extra elements into account: the socio-political history of Guatemala, characterized by violence and exclusion on the one hand and the globalized context of expanding massive resource extraction, the globalization of rights and ecotourism. These developments shape the negotiations of nature on the different levels of abstraction that have been developed by Boelens (2008) as the echelon of rights in various ways. The actors that are involved in the negotiations on nature are present on multiple levels: one, government officials as well as environmental and indigenous activists on the national level, whose actions are informed by discourses of sustainable massive resource extraction (government) and the globalization of environmental and indigenous rights (activists). Two, local actors and their actions are shaped by globalized discourses of rights on the one hand and the global trend of ecotourism on the other. The way these actors frame and legitimize their narratives of nature are informed by the history of violence and exclusion. This contributes to the idea that the exploitation of nature is a new process of dispossession, which is an important element in the discourses of many indigenous activists. These globalized developments inform the way different actors claim their rights and employ local, customary, national and international rights discourses. In sum, territorial narratives that represent different environmentalisms are constructed on different levels and are informed by different processes of globalization.

At the same time, we have shown that territorial narratives are not only multi-layered and constructed along different scales, but also become more complex as we go from the national to the local level. Elements that might be taken for granted in one territorial narrative, such as 'ecotourism is good', as a way of legitimizing a discourse against mining, can be contested at the local level. The same goes for the sacred meanings of indigenous lands. Whereas sacredness and spirituality become politicized in the narrative 'nature as territory' and are often presented as uncontested elements of indigeneity at the national level, such categorizations might be contested as an essential element of Maya identity at the local level where people face poverty, (eco)tourists and are busy sustaining in their livelihoods. By unravelling territorial narratives along the different scales – from national to local – and by examining the different levels of abstraction in these narratives,

inspired by Boelens' echelon of rights, we have shown that the varieties of environmentalisms are constructed on different scales and are informed by local as well as global processes and power relations in which the socio-political history of violence towards and the exclusion of the indigenous population plays a crucial role.

Endnotes

[1] We define the Maya Movement as the political mobilization of indigenous organizations, groups and institutions that, through their own efforts, attempt to transform the relationship between the indigenous population and the Guatemalan nation-state (Bastos & Camus, 2003: 7).

[2] http://www.mem.gob.gt/2012/05/17/seminario_energetico_petrolero_minero/

[3] In his critique on the MMSD, Whitmore (2006) argues that the report did not 'reflect those of its victims. This meant that MMSD did not gain broad acceptance or credibility as an independent body, and as a result the project failed to generate any meaningful dialogue between those most affected by mining and those most responsible.' (p. 310). See Starke and Brown (2002) for elaboration of the idea of Mining as sustainable development, Power (2002) for an analysis of mining of development that concludes that this is not a viable way to go.

[4] <http://www.pcslatin.org/portal/images/documentos/Rotador/Julio-24-Fundacion-contra-terrorismo.jpg>
<http://www.pcslatin.org/portal/index.php/recursos-y-analisis/sala-de-prensa/noticias/2009-antropologa-irma-alicia-velasquez-nimatuj-se-defiende-de-ataques>

[5] <http://www.lagunadechicabal.com>

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Commercialization of Biodiversity: The Regulation of Bioprospecting in Ecuador

Abstract

The creation of new markets to promote sustainable development is the central premise of today's environmental policy-making. In Ecuador, bioprospecting became regulated under Access and Benefit-Sharing measures. The idea is that the commercial use of biodiversity will trigger the bio-economy sector, ensure biodiversity conservation and support rural livelihoods. In this article, I take a critical perspective on “selling nature to save it” logic. I understand bioprospecting negotiations not only as a market in which user and provider bargain over the conditions of exchange, but also one in which actors involved negotiate “Nature”.

Starting with an overview of the development of bioprospecting regulation in Ecuador, I present several case studies between 1980 and 2003. Despite the fact that bioprospecting developed from an open access regime to a highly regulated market, so far the commercialization of biodiversity has not yielded benefit-sharing on more equal grounds. Diverse concepts of “Nature” prevail among actors: The state declared biodiversity “*national patrimony*” and promotes the country’s “*competitive advantage*” in bio-economy. Companies employ biodiversity as a “*resource*” in research and development and use it as a “*marketing tool*” to promote the companies' visions on sustainability. Traditional knowledge is seen as an integral part of community “*culture*”, as a “*property*” which needs to be protected and as a “*benefit*” for community development. Finally, the focus is whether and how an alternative development model based on the concept *Buen Vivir* may give grounds to overcome exploitative resource acquisition patterns.

Keywords: Biodiversity, Ecuador, Biosprospecting, Nature, Resource, Knowledge

Introduction

The creation of “new” markets to promote sustainable development has become the central premise of today's environmental policy-making. Richly biodiverse countries in particular have implemented restrictive policies for the commercial use of their “nature's wealth”. The process of bioprospecting, the “exploration of biodiversity for commercially valuable genetic and biochemical resources” (Reid et al. 3) is regulated under Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) policies.

Many varieties of different exploratory activities are summarized under the umbrella term bioprospecting. For example, pharmaceutical companies search for “new” active ingredients. Biotechnology companies search for “new” resistance genes to be integrated into “new” crops. Beside industrial applications, research agencies and universities may conduct bioprospecting for scientific purposes as well. [1] Plant material and associated attributes like genetic resources and traditional knowledge, to be employed in research and development (R&D), used to be freely available in databases, herbaria, botanical gardens and via field expeditions. At that time, biodiversity was considered the “common heritage of mankind” (ten Kate and Laird 8).

The idea to commercialize biodiversity started in the early 1990s in the context of the development of the “Convention on Biological Diversity” (CBD). The primary objective of the CBD is to halt biodiversity loss on the global level by promoting its utilization on a sustainable basis (3). Since then the majority of richly biodiverse countries have implemented national policies on the restrictive use of biodiversity. The basic assumption is that by integrating the commercial value of biodiversity, sufficient means are generated to finance nature conservation and to support rural livelihoods. The basic principle is the assignment of the national sovereignty on biodiversity. As a result, a market is created in which user and provider negotiate over the conditions of exchange (Richerzhagen 94, 100).

Despite the fact that the promotion of a sustainable bio-economy has been taken up as a national approach in the majority of richly biodiverse countries, the commercialization of biodiversity has not fulfilled its proposed goals. In most attempts, economic approaches have been employed in order to analyze the functioning (and dys-functioning) of biodiversity markets (Richerzhagen; Gehl Sampath; Siebenhüner and Suplie). From a social science perspective, the “selling nature so save it” logic has been criticized based on the argument that it is critical to take into account societal, cultural and historical aspects in the context of bioprospecting (Dorsey; Brand and Vadrot).

I understand bioprospecting negotiations not only as a market in which user and provider bargain over the conditions of exchange, but also one in which actors involved negotiate “Nature”. Concepts of “Nature” serve as ideologies to facilitate and/or limit certain modes of action. There is a need to unmask the individual concepts of “Nature” of the different actors involved to draw attention to the underlying power asymmetries and hierarchies, prohibiting the allocation of benefits on more equal grounds.

A variety of different actors is involved in bioprospecting activities, often with diverse (and potentially divergent) perspectives upon how to deal with ABS issues. This may include industrial actors, state representatives, local and indigenous communities as well as individual, traditional knowledge holders. Intermediate actors, e.g. non-governmental organizations (NGO) and scientific experts, may be involved as well (ten Kate and Laird 4-6).

In order to shed light into the development of bioprospecting regulation in Ecuador, I will first present an overview of ABS measures and how these have been implemented in Ecuador. I will present the underlying concepts of the commercialization of biodiversity from an economic perspective, followed by a critical assessment of the “selling nature to save it” logic from a social scientific perspective. I will also examine several Ecuadorian bioprospecting cases to give an overview of the prevailing concepts of “Nature” and how these relate to certain practices within a specific historical context. Finally, I shall discuss the findings by making reference to the concept of *Buen Vivir*.

The Emergence of Access and Benefit-Sharing Measures

Since the early 1990s, public attention on global environmental issues has risen. As a result, the CBD was implemented in 1992. This formed the basis for subsequent biodiversity-related policy-making. The primary objective is to secure the “conservation of biological diversity” by promoting the “sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources” (CBD 3). The major principle of the CBD is the establishment of the state’s sovereignty over its biodiversity. The assignment of property rights on biodiversity gave grounds to stress the “misappropriate” use of biodiversity and the “insufficient” recognition of resource holders. This is based on the argument that “local and indigenous communities have historically acted as keepers, or even developers, of biological diversity and, thus, should be ‘compensated’ by those who benefit from their care and labor” (Hamilton 1487).

Today ABS policies have been implemented in the majority of richly biodiverse countries to regulate the process of bioprospecting. Even when the exact requirements and procedures highly differ, the basic principle of ABS measures is the bargain over access to biodiversity between user and provider. Consequently, bioprospecting contracts are established. Access to genetic resources is granted in exchange for specific compensation measures. Compensation mechanisms include monetary payments, e.g. upfront payments, shares of revenues and royalties, and/or non-monetary benefits, e.g. technological transfer and capacity building (ten Kate and Laird 109).

The Development of Bioprospecting Regulation in Ecuador

Ecuador is often referred to as one of the “hottest” biodiversity hotspots worldwide (Bendix et al. 1). The country is characterized by a great diversity of landscapes and climates: the dry coastal

plains “*La Costa*”, the Andean highlands “*La Sierra*” and the tropical Amazon forest “*La Amazonia*”. Regions are characterized by high level of endemic species diversity. Traditional knowledge about plants is widespread among local and indigenous communities. Thus, Ecuador is seen as a high potential area for bioprospecting activities in the search for new chemical compounds for commercial product development.

During colonial and post-colonial times, access to Ecuador's fauna and flora was unrestricted and today local biodiversity is found in botanical gardens, herbaria and databases worldwide. This exploitative practice remained basically unchallenged until the early 1990s, when public attention was drawn towards environmental issues (Mariaca). [2]

In Ecuador global environmentalism met with the emerging indigenous movement, promoting indigenous national, cultural and territorial rights against the colonial structure of the society (Altmann). [3] The establishment of sovereignty on indigenous territory was key in this development by promoting decentralized decision-making structures (Frank; Erazo).

Ecuador ratified the CBD in 1993. In 1996 a sub-regional frame for access to biodiversity was established under the Andean Pact Decision 391 (1996) “*Régimen común sobre acceso a los recursos genéticos*”. [4] National sovereignty over the development of biological and genetic heritage was implemented. The major objective was to strengthen the integration and scientific, technical and cultural cooperation of the Andean states on a sustainable basis. Specific attention was drawn to the *multi-ethnic* and *pluri-cultural* nature of the Andean states: “It is necessary to recognize the historic contribution made by the native, Afro-American, and local communities to the biological diversity, its conservation and development and the sustained use of its components, as well as to the benefit generated by that contribution” (*Decisión 391 1*).

The competent national authority, the “*Ministerio del Ambiente del Ecuador*” (MAE), oversees access requirements to genetic resources. When access to traditional knowledge is sought, supplementary annex agreements need to be reached with local and indigenous communities. The principle of “*previo consultar*” became implemented, requiring the acknowledgment of traditional practices and procedures (Mariaca). [5]

At that time, provisions and procedures on ABS were rather loosely defined and dealt with on a case-by-case basis. This led to a highly controversial debate on how best to govern bioprospecting negotiations. According to Ribadeneira Sarmiento (241) bioprospecting activities were under the “shadow of suspicion and doubt” to potentially qualify as “biopiracy” to the extent that it seemed there was no legitimate way to access genetic resources and associated knowledge. In contrast, proponents saw ABS as a national (or international) legal entity that could be presented to courts in order to get reparation or compensation for the country of origin. They argued that the biopiracy debate needed to be freed from fundamentalist beliefs and promoted an objective science-based approach.

In 2005, the “Ecuadorian Working Group on the Prevention of Biopiracy” (EWGPB) was set up to develop a coherent national approach on ABS. Several bioprospecting cases were analyzed to

define legitimate access applications (Ribadeneira Sarmiento). However, it was not until 2011 that a detailed ABS policy was implemented in Ecuador, the “*Decreto Ejecutivo 905: Reglamento Nacional al Régimen Común sobre Acceso a Recursos Genéticos en Aplicación*” [hereafter Ecuadorian ABS Regulation] (Cabreara Medaglia et al.). The idea was to “erect sufficient regulatory infrastructure to protect these resources from continued exploitation” (Dorsey 141). Therefore, a broad definition on access to biodiversity was applied, defined as “acquirement and utilization of genetic resources conserved *ex-situ* or *in-situ*, and their derived products, including their intangible components, for research, bioprospecting, conservation, industrial or commercial applications” (*Decreto Ejecutivo 905* 7). [6] The Ecuadorian ABS Regulation makes explicit reference to the Ecuadorian Constitution (2008). Rights have been granted to nature, referred to as “*Pachamama*”. Based on the concept of *Buen Vivir*, an alternative development model has been promoted based on managed scarcity instead of extractive development (Lewis 11). [7] Gudynas and Acosta define *Buen Vivir* as an “opportunity to build a different society sustained in the coexistence of human beings in their diversity and in harmony with nature, based on recognition of the diverse cultural values existing in each country and worldwide” (103). Since then, the promotion of the bio-economy has become part of the national strategy. The “*Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir 2009-2013*” states that “the country’s greatest comparative advantage is its biodiversity and, undoubtedly, the greatest competitive advantage it could have is to know how to utilize it properly, through conservation and by construction the country’s own bio- and nanotechnology industries (...) Biodiversity is synonymous with life and therefore with information” (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2009-2013 56). However, whether and how the concept of *Buen vivir* may promote sustainable development within a market economy still needs to be determined.

| Level | Regulation (Year) | Principle |
|----------------|--|--|
| inter-national | Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) | - sustainable use of biodiversity - fair and equitable benefit-sharing |
| regional | Andean Pact Decision 391 (1996) | - economic integration on a sustainable basis - multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural nature of the state |
| national | Ecuadorian ABS Regulation (2011) | - state-led approach on “Buen Vivir” - biodiversity as competitive advantage |

Table 1: Bioprospecting Regulation in Ecuador

In the following, I will present the underlying concepts of the commercialization of biodiversity from an economic perspective, followed by a critical assessment of the “selling nature to save it” logic from a social science perspective.

Commercialization of Biodiversity: An Economic Approach

The commodification of “Nature” is based on the concept of ecosystem services, defined as “benefits people obtain from ecosystems” (MEA 40). [8] Benefits obtained by a functioning natural environment either constitute market or non-market values. The idea is that only market values are reflected in environmental decision-making, while non-market values are neglected. The argument has been developed that the non-market value of biodiversity needs to be measured in order to be appropriately accounted for (Kontogianni et al. 1479). [9] By attributing value to “Nature” biodiversity is turned into a “commodity” to be traded in the biodiversity market.

ABS policies can be understood as a tool to create markets for biodiversity. Therefore, efficient institutions need to be set-up. The underlying economic concepts are mainly derived from “New Institutional Economics”, based on the assumption is that sustainable development will be achieved by promoting the commercial use of biodiversity (Sukhdev et al. 3).

According to Richerzhagen the main principles of ABS are the sovereign right of states over their genetic resources (94), the internalization of the positive externalities of biodiversity conservation (83) and the bilateral contract between provider and user of genetic resources (98). The promotion of the establishment of the sovereign right of states over their genetic resources is based on the assumption that under an open access regime the overexploitation of the resource is likely. Property rights are established to implement effective mechanisms to exclude others from using the resource. As a result, access to biodiversity is turned from a public good into a private good, which is associated with increased levels of excludability and rivalry. In order to provide efficient maintenance and investment incentives in resource conservation on the local level, property rights can be further assigned to private land owners or local communities (Swanson and Göschl; Boisvert and Caron).

The assignment of property rights is a precondition for capturing the positive externalities of biodiversity conservation. The existence of an externality is seen as a major cause of market failure, meaning that “existing markets do not efficiently allocate resources because their full costs or benefits are not reflected in the prices” (Richerzhagen 82). The positive externality of biodiversity conservation arises when efforts made on the local level create global benefits which remain uncompensated. This may lead to a reduced level of biodiversity conservation in favor of more destructive land use options (OECD).

ABS can be modeled as a bilateral contract between a richly biodiverse country granting access to genetic resource and a technologically rich countries, which provide compensation in form

of monetary and non-monetary benefits (Lerch; Boisvert and Caron). This refers to the “Coase Theorem”, understood as “given a suitable assignment of property rights, private bargaining between individuals can correct externality problems and lead to efficient outcomes” (Perman et al. 137/138). Conditions of exchange are based on a negotiation between provider and user. The bargain may result in exclusive user rights, e.g. license agreements and patents. The idea is that the bargain will end in a Pareto-optimal solution, meaning that the optimal allocation of biodiversity conservation is reached (Richerzhagen). These arguments can be summarized under the “selling nature to save it” logic (Mc Afee), proposing that biodiversity loss can be counteracted by implementing the “right” market incentives.

Social, Cultural and Historical Context of Bioprospecting Negotiations

From a social science perspective, a critical view is taken on the “selling nature to save it” logic. The commodification of “Nature” is understood in terms of “identifying and justifying new financial sources and markets for the protection of nature” (Brand and Vadrot 204).

In order to understand the societal relations to nature, it is necessary to take into account the normative, historical and political situation within which bioprospecting takes place: bioprospecting does not “happen “in the ever present now”, devoid of a historical, political-economic context and legacies of past exploitation of the prospected materials in question” (Dorsey 138). In this perspective bioprospecting negotiations do not only represent a market in which user and provider bargain over the conditions of exchange, but also one in which actors negotiate about meaning attributed to “Nature” in its various forms.[10]

Brand and Vadrot studied the global dimension of the political economy of biodiversity by explicitly taking into account the notion of discursive power and hegemony. They argue that governance ineffectiveness rests in the contradictory dynamics of globalized capitalist economies and societies. This becomes visible in typical North-South relations: the providers are richly biodiverse developing countries in the South, while the users are located in technology-rich industrialized Northern countries. According to Wynberg and Laird, user countries “seek unimpeded access to genetic resources within a softer legal framework of corporate social responsibility and contractual agreements for benefit-sharing”, while provider countries “are resentful of centuries of colonialism and the uncompensated export of genetic material and traditional knowledge and want to address these injustices and prevent further misappropriation” (24).

However, perspectives should not be assigned in a stereotypical way: state representatives, industrial actors, NGOs as well as local and indigenous communities may promote and/or oppose bioprospecting on various grounds. For example, communities are frequently presented as having worldviews alien to Western understanding only: “The notion of genes (...) understood as isolated and tradable commodities, derives from a modern technical development and does not exist in that manner in many traditional communities” (de Jonge 134). Instead, it is safe to assume that various

concepts of “Nature” and related practices prevail among the various actors. Also, these differing concepts of “Nature” may serve as ideologies to facilitate and/or limit specific modes of action.

Bioprospecting Negotiation in Ecuador: Case Studies

In the following, five cases studies will be presented to give an overview of the development of bioprospecting in Ecuador. [11] The description of case studies is based on an analysis of publications on bioprospecting negotiations. This includes scientific publications, governmental statements, industry reports, activist and community announcements as well as newspaper articles. The case studies cover the time between 1980 and 2003. Please note that the choice of data cannot be considered as representative. Generalization cannot be made due to the limited number of studies considered. Publications may rather reflect political concerns on “unregulated” bioprospecting at a certain time rather than the actual extent of commercial applications on biodiversity. In general, information on bioprospecting is difficult to retrieve as conditions of exchange are often confidential.

Commercialization of *Ayahuasca* (*Banisteropsis caapi*)

Ayahuasca (*Banisteropsis caapi*) is part of a ritual performed in the *Shuar* community in the Ecuadorian Amazon. According to Marin Gutiérrez et al. *ayahuasca* is referred to as “*la toga que permite ir al lugar de los muertos*” [the robe that allows to go to the place of death] (1067). It contains psychoactive substances, which are used for consumption to create visions to access the mystical world. This tradition is seen as the foundation of system of values and identity of the *Shuar* people. Despite changing cultural and social customs, the plant's consumption remains vital to the present day. Even when today trade in its active ingredient is banned, the utilization of the plant's natural forms is not prohibited on the grounds of being an integral part of indigenous people's worldview.

Attempts to commercialize *ayahuasca* started in the early 1980s. Mr. Loren Miller, on behalf of the U.S.-based International Plant Medicine Corporation (IPMC) collected plants for potential commercial product development in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Mr. Miller lived about two years in *Cofan* and *Siona* communities. When he left, he took several plant samples to be analyzed in the company's laboratory. As no regulation on bioprospecting was in place at that time, Mr. Miller did not feel obliged to receive consent from communities or to inform the state. In 1986, a patent on uses upon the indigenous plant *ayahuasca* in order to develop a botanical medicine was filed at the U.S. patent office (Dorsey). However, whether and how this created tensions in indigenous communities at that time cannot be determined, as no publications are available.

Bioprospecting activities need to be interpreted in their historical contexts. During the 1980 and 1990s, the national political system was characterized by instability and neoliberal politics promoted by the U.S. government. In the absence of state action taken to guarantee indigenous territorial rights, the emerging indigenous movement took up the issue. In 1996 the “*Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazonica*” (COICA) wrote a resolution, labeling the patenting of *ayahuasca* as “an offense against all the Amazon indigenous people” (Dorsey 142/143). It was argued that the “stealing” of a sacred species, like *ayahuasca*, represents a lack of respect for cultural practices. These communities declared Mr. Miller a “*persona non-grata*”.

The Inter-American Foundation, a U.S.-based development organization, strongly offended the resolution by accusing the COICA of being a terrorist organization and proposed to cease financial support. In contrast, international NGOs supported the resolution. A great coalition of national and international NGOs was set up supporting the resolution, including lawyers, indigenous communities as well as environmental and human rights activists. With the involvement of the U.S.-based “*Centro Internacional de Derecho Ambiental*” (CIEL) a large-scale legal patent challenge was initiated. The main argument was that the patent did not fulfill the requirement of novelty, as knowledge of the *ayahuasca* plant had long been documented. As a result, in 1999 the patent was revoked, three years prior to its termination (Dorsey).

Commercialization of *Sangre de Drago* (Dragon’s Blood)

In the late 1980s the U.S.-based pharmaceutical company “Shaman Pharmaceuticals” initiated a cooperative research program to conduct field explorations in the Ecuadorian Amazon. The idea was to search for plants of potential pharmaceutical interest with direct assistance by local healers. Even when no bioprospecting regulation was in place yet, neither on the international nor on the national level, awareness was raised on acknowledging indigenous communities. Thus, prior to the field collection “Shaman Pharmaceuticals” set up a corporate bioprospecting policy. It was proposed that about 15 % of the expedition budget are to be allocated among communities. In 1990 a cooperation was set up between “Shaman Pharmaceuticals” and the “*Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica*” (COICA). The field work started in 1991 and plant specimens were collected by focusing on traditional medicines. About 30 kg of dry plant samples were exported and further laboratory analysis of potentially valuable chemical ingredients was conducted (Dorsey; Svarstad).

Soon the focus was lead upon the latex sap of a *Croton sp.*, called *sangre de drago* (dragon’s blood). The latex sap is traditionally used as a natural wound cover. Eventually, two anti-viral products were developed, *Provir* and *Virend*. As a result, several patents were filed at the U.S. patent office. Part of the cooperation was the establishment of plantations on communal land. “Shaman Pharmaceuticals” proposed to establish a “reciprocal” relationship with forest-dwelling peoples to harvest and supply resources on a sustainable basis.

Despite the fact that individual community members expressed ambivalence to antagonistic reactions, the community leaders of 11 communities supported the companies' approach and signed "*cartas de compromiso*". About 180 families were involved and set up plantations for the commercial production of *sangre de drago*. About 33,000 US\$ were received as upfront payments. Despite the fact that agreements were reached, environmental NGO questioned the fairness of the "reciprocal" trade relationship. The international NGOs "Rural Advancement Foundation International" and "Cultural Survival Canada" stressed the limited benefits received by local communities and accused "Shaman Pharmaceuticals" of biopiracy. The national NGO "*Acción Ecológica*" also criticized the patenting of an indigenous plant (Svarstad).

However, in 1999 the negative approval of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration resulted into a serious setback for "Shaman Pharmaceuticals", which finally lead to bankruptcy. As a result, research on the compound terminated (Dorsey).

Bioprospecting Contract between the National Cancer Institute and FCAE

The *Awa* people live in the North-Western parts of Ecuador and in South-West Columbia. In Ecuador the *Awa* acquired legal recognition as citizens in 1988. The "*Federación de Centros Awa del Ecuador*" (FCAE) was formed. The FCAE administers land held a territory of about 1,000 km² under communal title. About 3000 people live widely dispersed in eight communities. Decision-making is made collectively at the "Community Assembly". The *Awa* territory is characterized by a high level of endemic biodiversity. Thus, the area is of priority interest for bioprospecting. In 1993, the U.S.-based "National Cancer Institute" appointed the FCAE to study the local biodiversity on community territory. The major objective was to search for plants of potential pharmaceutical interest to treat cancer. A "letter of collection" was signed between the "National Cancer Institute" and the FCAE. The agreement was approved by the "*Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*" (Bravo).

The "New York Botanical Garden" was consulted as an intermediate actor to conduct the collection of plant samples. During a period of two years, six ethno-botanical inventories were carried out and about 1500 specimens were collected. Samples were subject of further phyto-chemical analysis.

Community involvement included the guiding of the expedition and the disclosure of traditional knowledge. Community members received payments of about 500-700 sucre/day (0.5 US\$). Two traditional healers were employed at the "National Cancer Institute" to conduct sample identification. Furthermore, plantations were set up on community territory. Training was provided on primary processing methods (Bravo; Posey and Duffield). Whether or not findings resulted in commercial applications is undetermined as this information is confidential.

Despite the fact that agreement upon procedures was reached between users and providers, the environmental NGO "*Acción Ecológica*" raised criticism by making reference to the CBD. "*Acción*

Ecológica” blamed the “National Cancer Institute” of biopiracy. Especially the patenting of indigenous knowledge was perceived as the continued extraction of resources by former “colonizers”. As a result, the FCAE pro-actively developed a bioprospecting regulation on communal territory, the “*Realizaciones de Estudios Científicos en el Territorio de la Federación Awa*”. Other communities, not being involved in contracting, stressed the exclusion of *Awa* communities from Columbia (Posey and Dutfield).

A Role Model for Participatory ABS Procedures – ProBenefit Project

In 2003 the German pharmaceutical company “Dr. Wilmar Schwabe Arzneimittel GmbH & Co. KG” (Schwabe) in cooperation with the NGO “Institute for Biodiversity–Networks” set up the ProBenefit Project to develop a role model for ABS procedures in Ecuador. The objective was to conduct ethno-botanical studies in cooperation with local and indigenous communities. The Nature Reserve “*Biosfera Gran Sumaco*”, inhabited by *Kichwa* communities, was chosen as a potential research site due to its high level of biodiversity (PRO-BENEFIT).

A bioprospecting application was filed at the MAE. In 2005 a research permit to conduct an environmental inventory was granted. Cooperation with a national counterpart was initiated, the “*National Herbarium*” and the herbarium at the “*Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador*”. Several field visits were carried out. Plant material was documented and phyto-chemical analysis was conducted.

In order to access traditional knowledge on plants, the principle of “*previo consultar*” needs to be followed, requiring the acknowledgment of traditional practices and customs. Schwabe perceived the missing definition of exact requirements as a “legislative vacuum”. Prior to the field entry Schwabe commissioned a juridical and an ethnological expertise to the University Göttingen, Germany (Stoll and Reynes-Knoche; Wörrle).

Several indigenous associations were contacted, the “*Confederation de Nacionalidades Indigenas del Ecuador*” (CONAIE), the “*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana*” (CONFENIAE) and the “*Federación de Organizaciones de la Nacionalidad Kichwa de Napo*” (FONAKIN). Only FONAKIN supported the idea and showed interest in Schwabe's activities.

In 2004, a workshop with *Kichwa* community representatives was conducted. A “*grupo de trabajo*” (working group) was set up. The basic idea promoted by Schwabe was that participants will develop a coherent position over which decision-making is made at the FONAKIN “General Assembly”. However, in 2006, the General Assembly was held, but no decision was made. In the face of ongoing preparations in the context of the upcoming elections, indigenous community member argued that regional issues are of more relevance than bioprospecting activities conducted by foreign companies. Working group member argued that a more wide-reaching discussion based

on a comprehensive information campaign is required. Eventually, Schwabe refused to make further investments (PRO-BENEFIT).

Global Ocean Sampling Expedition – Galapagos

The “Global Ocean Sampling Expedition”, initiated in 2003 by the U.S.-based J. Craig Venter Institute (JCVI), aimed to analyze the genetics of the maritime microbiological diversity in order to understand their role in ecosystem processes. The expedition was presented as an adventure to the unknown, unexplored world: “a quest to unlock the secrets of the oceans by sampling, sequencing and analyzing the DNA of the microorganisms living in these waters. While this world is invisible to us, its importance is immeasurable” (JCVI).

Coastal seawater samples were mainly collected in international waters not subject to ABS requirements. In Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands were of primary interest. Marine as well as terrestrial fauna and flora, characterized by a high level of endemic species diversity, is protected under the “*Parque Nacional Galápagos*” (Suárez).

In order to conduct sampling activities in Galapagos the “Institute for Biological Energy Alternative” (IBEA), headed by J. Craig Venter, filed an application at MAE. During that time in Ecuador bioprospecting activities potentially qualifying as biopiracy were critically debated. The IBEA presented the project as a non-profit collaborative research activity of scientific purpose only: The IBEA announced to “collaborate on designated projects of mutual interest”. The objective was “the study of microbiological diversity in the Galapagos using a 'whole environment' approach (...) to determine the complex interrelationship between groups of microorganisms that affect regional and global environmental processes (MoU 1/2).

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between IBEA and MAE. The IBEA would provide “advanced technology facilities for the study for genomic sequencing and informatics” through “pioneer methods” at “no cost for the Parque Nacional Galápagos” (1). In turn, Ecuador would receive a number of non-monetary benefits. This included the generation of a publicly available “microorganism inventory of inestimable value to Ecuador” (2) and technological training on sequencing methods. It was agreed upon that data should “be used exclusively for purposes of generating public information on sequencing. In addition, neither party shall pursue nor exercise intellectual property rights over the genomic data and results (...) since this information is part of the genetic patrimony of the state of Ecuador” (2/3). The attempt by any party to make commercial applications with the data generated was considered to be a “misuse [of] the samples in its custody”. (4).

After state approval was granted, a research permit was issued by the “*Parque Nacional Galápagos*”. In order to ensure the sustainable utilization of biological resources, scientific expertise was conducted by the “*Estación Científica Charles Darwin*” and the University of Guayaquil. Reports

pointed out the national interest in scientific, technological and technical capacity development measures.

The actual collection in Galapagos was carried out in February and March 2004. In order to ship the material to the U.S.-based laboratory for further analysis, an export permit was granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2005, the MAE requested to sign a contract in order to grant authorization for publication. Several scientific reports were published in 2004 and 2008. The genetic information was made available in Gen Bank and CAMERA in 2007 (Nemogá-Soto and Lizarazo).

The Regional Office for South of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criticized that, based on the argument that the “Global Ocean Sampling Expedition” is more about the generation of “knowledge” than promoting the “conservation” of biodiversity, no specific clause on potential monetary benefits was provided for. Actual or potential commercial uses of the resources, e.g. in the enzyme industry and biofuel sector, were not considered. Furthermore, IUCN criticizes that none of the scientific reports included an Ecuadorian co-author (Nemogá-Soto and Lizarazo).

Overview of Bioprospecting Cases in Ecuador

The bioprospecting cases studied in this paper cover the time between 1980 and 2003. With the implementation of the national sovereignty on its biological resources, the exploration of biodiversity in Ecuador developed from an open access regime into a highly regulated market. This resulted into several changes, e.g. actors involved, negotiation procedures, and benefits received. In the following, I will group bioprospecting cases along the lines of whether ABS measures were in place or not. Two cases were conducted prior to the implementation of the CBD (1992). One case was conducted just after its set-up. Two cases followed the principles laid down by the Andean Pact Decision 391 (1996).

| Unregulated Bioprospecting | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1986 | <p>resource: <i>ayahuasca</i>, traditionally used in ritual</p> <p>user: Mr. Miller (IPMC), provider: <i>Cofan</i> and <i>Siona</i> communities</p> <p>contract: no <i>previo consultar</i>, no benefit-sharing</p> <p>R&D: botanical medicine, patent challenge</p> <p>commercialization: none</p> |
| 1990 | <p>resource: collection of medicinal plants guided by traditional healers</p> <p>user: Shaman Pharmaceuticals, provider: COICA</p> <p>contract: cooperative research, <i>cartas de compromiso</i></p> <p>benefits: 15% of expedition budget, 33,000 US\$ upfront payments</p> <p>R&D: antiviral products on <i>sangre de drago</i>, several patents filed</p> <p>commercialization: failed in clinical phase</p> |
| 1993 | <p>resource: collection of traditional medicine on communal land</p> <p>user: U.S. National Cancer Institute, provider: FCAE</p> <p>contract: letter of collection, plantations on communal land</p> <p>benefits: 500-700 sucre/day, training on processing methods</p> <p>R&D: pharmaceutical medicine, patent application unknown</p> <p>commercialization: unknown</p> |
| Regulated Bioprospecting | |
| 2003 | <p>resource: environmental inventory in <i>Biosfera Gran Sumaco</i></p> <p>user: Schwabe, provider: MAE, <i>Kichwa</i> communities</p> <p>contract: research permit, negotiation of <i>previo consultar</i> failed</p> <p>benefits: cooperation with national research institutions</p> <p>R&D: analysis of phyto-chemical ingredients</p> <p>commercialization: none</p> |
| 2003 | <p>resource: genomic sequencing of marine microbiological diversity</p> <p>user: IBEA, provider: MAE</p> <p>contract: Memorandum of understanding</p> <p>benefits: publicly available microorganism inventory, training sequencing methods</p> <p>R&D: exclusive use of data for scientific purposes only</p> |

Table 2: Overview of Bioprospecting Cases in Ecuador

Bioprospecting activities are mainly carried out in richly biodiverse areas, the Ecuadorian Amazon and tropical Andean region as well as on Galapagos islands. On the user side, it was mainly U.S.-based companies and research organizations that initiated bioprospecting activities in order to develop botanical and pharmaceutical medicines. However, new actors have entered the stage, e.g. European companies and non-profit organizations. Prior to the implementation of ABS measures mainly focused sample collections guided by traditional knowledge were conducted. When provider rights were strengthened, search strategies changed: broad scale environmental inventories were conducted without accessing related traditional knowledge. Furthermore, after access to terrestrial biodiversity became regulated, attention was drawn to microbiological marine resources not yet covered by ABS mechanisms.

Prior to the implementation of ABS measures, no state action was taken to oversee bioprospecting activities. In the case that access to traditional knowledge was sought, providers were not approached or agreements were negotiated on a voluntary basis only. Negotiating partners were mainly indigenous organizations, e.g. COICA, FONAKIN and FCAE. Even after the assignment of property rights on biodiversity, state action was not taken to institutionalize ABS requirements. Access to biodiversity is instead granted via a permit system already in place. In the case of “unregulated” bioprospecting, intermediate actors increasingly become involved to criticize “inappropriate” access conditions and/or to provide scientific expertise.

After accessing plant samples, the material was mainly exported to conduct phyto-chemical analyses of potentially valuable active ingredients. While this resulted in several patent applications at the U.S. patent office, none of the bioprospecting cases resulted in a commercial product. Only two products reached the clinical phase. In one case, bioprospecting was conducted by a non-profit organization proposing that sampling and analysis is only of scientific interest.

In the majority of cases, only limited benefits—if any at all—were received by resource providers. In two cases, monetary benefits were received by traditional healers guiding sample collection. In one case, community members received upfront payments to establish plantations on communal land. Under regulated bioprospecting conditions non-monetary benefits tend to become more relevant, e.g. cooperative research and technological capacity building.

Concepts of “Nature” in the Context of Bioprospecting Negotiations

In the following the diverse perspectives of the different actors involved in bioprospecting are presented. Specific attention is paid to the analysis of concepts of “Nature” and how these relate to certain practices within a specific historical context.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the Ecuadorian state was characterized by political instability and neoliberal U.S. politics. There was not yet any state action designed to secure biodiversity. There was not a concept of “Nature” available upon which non-exploitative resource acquisition could have been based. If at all, bioprospecting was treated as a “*foreign affair*”. With the implementation of the

Andean Pact Decision 391 (1996) the “*national sovereignty*” of states over natural resources was declared. However, only access to biological resources was internalized under the state. Access to traditional knowledge was left to indigenous communities. This situation changed when the concept of “*Buen Vivir*” was laid down in the Ecuadorian Constitution (2008), proposing an alternative development model based on “*harmony*” with nature. Since then the countries “*competitive advantage*” in bio-economy has been promoted.

From a user perspective, all bioprospecting cases studied in this paper must be regarded as a failure. Investments made, e.g. the negotiation of access agreements, plant collections and laboratory research, were not recovered. For the users of biodiversity the primary objective is to receive a reliable “*resource*” supply. Biodiversity is perceived as an “*input factor*” in R&D. Traditional knowledge can be employed as a “*device*” to improve success rates. In principle, companies do not feel responsible for biodiversity conservation and community development. However, after the implementation of ABS measures, the unconcerned user attitude to take samples, analyze them, patent their findings and commercialize them cannot be conducted anymore. In the face of being accused of biopiracy, companies are forced to take on “*responsibility*”. A pro-active approach was taken to develop long-term trade relationships, e.g. corporate bioprospecting policies, principles for cooperative research and community involvement, were set up. In this case, bioprospecting is employed as a “*marketing tool*” to promote the companies image of sustainable business-making. However, non-profit activities, proposing to unlock the “*secrets*” of the yet unexplored world of biodiversity solely for the public interest, may instead mask that once research findings are available publicly, they can potentially be employed for commercial uses as well.

On the provider side, represented by local and indigenous communities, diverse concepts of “*Nature*” prevail: indigenous plants can be perceived as an integral part of the community “*culture*” and/or as “*property*”. Communities should not be perceived as a uniform group. Instead, communities are often characterized by rivalries. In the case that agreements had been reached, other stakeholder may enter the stage and challenge such contracts. Since the early 1990s in Ecuador, the indigenous movement is actively involved in promoting national identities, territorial rights and decentralized decision-making structures. Positions taken on bioprospecting issues are not coherent: activities can be perceived as a “*loss of culture*”, as a “*stealing of a sacred plant*” and /or as a “*benefit*” for community development. On the one hand, communities can challenge biopiracy in writing a resolution to the state and by collating with NGOs. On the other hand, communities can define their own procedures and pro-actively negotiate bioprospecting agreements.

Since the implementation of the CBD, environmental NGOs dominate the bioprospecting debate. In some cases, NGOs see biodiversity as a “*community good*” and stress the “*misappropriate*” use of traditional knowledge and the missing acknowledgment of local procedures. In other cases, NGOs perceive biodiversity and traditional knowledge as “*green gold*”, the “*wealth*” of the country, as a “*key resource*” which needs to be employed to ensure sustainable development,

to finance nature conservation and to support rural livelihoods. Actions taken range from providing scientific expertise to facilitating ABS to blaming industrial actors of biopiracy, e.g. by implementing patent challenges. In the following, an overview of the concepts of “Nature” of the actors involved is provided. [13]

| Actor | Concepts of “Nature” | Practice |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| State Perspective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - missing definition of biodiversity - biodiversity as “foreign affair” - biodiversity as “national patrimony” - biodiversity as “competitive advantage” - “harmony” with nature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no action taken - national sovereignty on nature - promote bio-economy sector - create alternative development model |
| Company perspective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - indigenous plants as “resource” for production - biodiversity as “input factor” in R&D - traditional knowledge as “device” - traditional medicine as “marketing tool” - biodiversity as “secret” of unexplored world | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exploitative resource acquisition - patenting of indigenous plant uses - promote reliable resource supply - set up corporate policies - sustainable marketing strategies |
| Community perspective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “sacred” species - traditional medicine is part of “culture” - biodiversity/traditional knowledge as “property” - biodiversity as community “benefit” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - declare bioprospecting as biopiracy - set up resolutions - coalition with NGOs - define own procedures |
| NGO Perspective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - biodiversity and traditional knowledge as “green gold”, “wealth” of the country, “key resource” - biodiversity as “community good” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote sustainable development - patent challenge/public attention - provide scientific expertise |

Table 3: Concepts of “Nature” of the Actors Involved and Related Practices

Conclusion

The commercialization of biodiversity is the central premise of today's environmental policy-making. The basic idea is that by internalizing the commercial value of biodiversity, sustainable development will be achieved. In Ecuador ABS measures have been implemented under the Andean Pact Decision 391 (1996). State sovereignty over biodiversity, i.e. genetic resources and traditional knowledge, has been established. Since then, the process of bioprospecting has developed from an open access regime into a highly regulated market. Despite the fact that provider rights have been strengthened, exploitative trade patterns remain largely unchallenged. The development of commercial applications using indigenous plants has mainly failed, only limited benefits were received by resources providers, and thus, only limited incentives for biodiversity conservation are given. Even when new actors have entered the stage promoting search strategies based on more ethical considerations of fairness and equity, this has not translated into benefit-sharing on more equal grounds. Instead, companies tend to conduct random analyses of broad scale environmental inventories rather than engaging in a lengthy process to negotiate access to traditional knowledge with local and indigenous communities. Furthermore, attention has been drawn to microbiological marine resources not yet covered under ABS mechanisms. However, under regulated bioprospecting conditions, non-monetary benefits, e.g. cooperative research and technological capacity building, tend to become more relevant.

There is a need to unmask the conceptions of “Nature” used by the diverse actors involved to better understand the process of how ideas, assumptions and ideologies shape the actions taken. This allows us to draw attention to the underlying power asymmetries and hierarchies that prohibit the efficient allocation of benefits among the various actors.

The state declared the “*national sovereignty*” over biodiversity and promotes the countries “*competitive advantage*” in bio-economy. Companies employ biodiversity as a “*resource*” in R&D and use it as a “*marketing tool*” to promote the companies' vision on sustainability. Traditional knowledge is seen as an integral part of community “*culture*”, as a “*property*” which needs to be protected and as a “*benefit*” for community development. NGOs see biodiversity as a “*community good*” which need to be protected from further exploitation and facilitate scientific expertise to promote the utilization of “*green gold*”. Concepts of “Nature” cannot be assigned in a stereotypical way to either users or providers.

Despite the fact that alternative concepts of “Nature” prevail, the basic assumption of ABS that all actors involved share the Western perception of “Nature”, declaring biodiversity as a tradable commodity, remains mainly unchallenged. However, whether the alternative development model of “*Buen Vivir*”, based on indigenous worldviews, will provide means to overcome the exploitative resource acquisition pattern still remains unknown. Currently, there is a controversial debate on the possibility of establishing an alternative development model on the concept of *Buen Vivir*. The concept of “*Buen Vivir*” seems to incorporate elements of a solidarity economy, potentially

allowing for empathy in participatory procedures on a broader scope. Vanhurst and Beling (56) highlight the model's potential for a cultural, social and political renewal based on the critique of European modernity to overcome the structural nature/culture division. However, action taken under the auspices of *Buen Vivir* may mask hierarchical trade pattern within a capitalist market economy.

Endnotes

[1] Even when in the majority of bioprospecting regulations a strict division is made between scientific and commercial applications, these two are closely interrelated as scientific findings can be used for commercial purposes at a later stage.

[2] For example, in Ecuador environmental damages perpetrated by oil companies were stressed. One prominent case is the accusation of the oil company “Texacon” to be responsible for ground-water contamination in Amazonian Ecuador. In 2003, a lawsuit was filed in the United States (OilWatch).

[3] In 1984 the *Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica* (COICA) was formed, followed by the establishment of the national umbrella organization *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE) in 1986. Further regional organizations, e.g. *Federación de Organizaciones de la Nacionalidad Kichwa de Napo* (FONAKIN) were formed. In 1996 the *Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik – Nuevo País* was formed taking part in political elections. According to Andolina et al. under the indigenous movement “development and culture was reframed through neoliberal governmentalities, multiscale networking, and social protest” (20).

[4] The Andean community is a subregional organization, including Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. Even when it was primarily established to promote regional economic integration, since the mid-1990s environmental and social aspects are increasingly covered as well (Marieka).

[5] Biodiversity is considered a commodity with two components: there is a differentiation between genetic resources, defined as “biological material that contains genetic information of value”, and intangible components, defined as “all know-how, innovation or individual or collective practice, that is associated with the genetic resource” (Decisión 391 3/4).

[6] In the CBD a narrow definition of genetic resources is employed: “genetic materials (...) containing functional units of heredity” (CBD 3).

[7] For further discussion on how the concept of *Buen Vivir* relates to indigenous principles, e.g. the Quechua concept *sumak kawsay*, please refer to Vanhurst and Beling.

[8] Ecosystem services include provisioning services (e.g. food, water and timber), regulating services (e.g. climate regulation and water purification), and cultural services (e.g. recreational, aesthetic and spiritual benefits). Furthermore, supporting services (e.g. nutrient cycle, pollination, and soil formation) are linked to all three levels (MEA).

[9] This has led to a discussion whether the “value” of biodiversity is sufficient to finance its conservation (Simpson et al.; Rausser and Small).

[10] Societal relations to nature can be defined as “dynamical patterns of relations between humans, society and nature. They emerge from the culturally specific and historically variable forms and practices in which individuals, groups and cultures design and regulate their relations to Nature” (Becker et al. 76). According to Kropp the quotation mark highlights the discursive character of the term “Nature” (23). This allows one to question both every-day as well as scientific certainties.

[11] In the present study, only commercial applications of plants are covered. However, bioprospecting activities on human resources are still under-researched. For example, in the early 1990s the U.S.-based “Coriell Medical Institute” collected about 3,500 blood and tissue samples from 600 *Huaorani* people. The idea was that *Huaorani* people possess a specific genetic trait with immunity to certain diseases, e.g. hepatitis. Resources were used to develop DNA samples and cell lines, which were sold to the “Harvard University Medical School”. Only recently has the missing PIC been stressed by community representative (Mole; Hogan).

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Anne Tittor (Bielefeld University) & **Esther Figueroa** (Vagabond Media, Jamaica)

China's Involvement in Jamaica. Socio-Ecological Consequences of a Huge Infrastructural Project,
An Interview with the Filmmaker Esther Figueroa about her Film
"I Live for Art - An Ecocide Romance"

Abstract

Esther Figueroa is a Jamaican independent filmmaker, writer and linguist. She has degrees in History, East Asian Languages and Literature (Chinese) and a PhD in Linguistics. With over thirty years of media making including television programming, documentaries, educational videos, multimedia and feature film, her work focuses on the environment, local knowledge, indigenous cultures, social injustice and community empowerment. Her films include the award-winning feature documentary "Jamaica for Sale" (2009). Her publications include "Sociolinguistic Metatheory" (1994) and her recently published environmental novel about Jamaica, *Limbo* (2014). Anne Tittor interviewed Esther Figueroa in October 2015 via e-mail about the twelve-minute video "I Live for Art – An Ecocide Romance", released in 2013. The film is an experimental short about the Palisadoes Shoreline Protection and Rehabilitation Works Project in Jamaica – and how the government and a Chinese company involved in the project try to use environmental and developmental arguments to defend large-scale infrastructure construction that is destroying the local ecosystem.

Keywords: protection of nature, Caribbean, Chinese influence, development projects, infrastructure, transformation of nature, socio-environmental consequences

Anne Tittor (A.T.): Why did you choose the topic of Chinese investment in Jamaica in this film?

Esther Figueroa (E.F.): Firstly, I would not use the word investment. It is a word that is overused, without critical consideration of its use, and a word that does not apply. Large scale infrastructure projects whether publicized as “aid” or “gifts” or “investments” funded by “loans” and “grants” from foreign governments, multi-lateral or multi-national entities are not investments but continuities of the colonial project, including means by which governments, companies, products and workers have access to markets outside of their local sphere, and often part of expansionist policies, which in some cases include settlement.

A.T.: Then, what is the core of “the project” and what exactly is China’s role within it?

E.F.: The subject of my film is the Palisadoes Rehabilitation and Shoreline Protection Works Project (2010-2013). It was one of its most expensive parts of the Jamaica Development Infrastructure Programme (JDIP), which was funded through a loan from the People’s Republic of China through the China Export-Import (Ex-IM) Bank and implemented by the Chinese government’s subsidiary China Harbour Engineering Company, Ltd (CHEC).

JDIP was the beginning of the full scale Chinese dominance of the Jamaican political economy. There was no bidding for the contract, the company CHEC was granted sole source and continues to retain that status through 2015, contracted to complete the North South Highway (now a toll road it owns) and proposed a transshipment port in the Portland Bight Protected Areas. This includes a long term lease of the Goat Islands, and recently signing a MOU with the University of West Indies to do all construction expansion for the Mona campus having already built the new Medical Faculty building and the Vice-Chancellory (more on this dominance below).

A.T.: Why is the Jamaican government in favor of this project? What is the government’s role?

E.F.: Large scale infrastructure projects are beloved of states and politicians because they are highly visible, come with large price-tags, and are wonderful opportunities for crony capitalism; the dispensing of favors and patronage as well as direct theft and personal enrichment. (Patrick Wong, the CEO of the National Works Agency, the Jamaican government arm of the project, eventually was forced to step down towards the end of the project because of corruption, but, to my knowledge, he was the only high profile casualty.) The then newly elected Jamaica Labour Party came to power promising “Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!” They had been elected (in an extremely close election) through the lavish spending of money (in Jamaica buying votes is the signature of our electoral democracy) much of which had been funded through the Olint Pyramid Investment Scheme. JDIP was the means by which the government could get the cash to run the government, shore up patronage, as well as have ongoing displays of Your Government At Work. There were JDIP signs all over Jamaica from the smallest road repavement to the largest bridge and highway projects, and most of these signs are still standing! With the defeat of the JLP and the return of the People’s National

Party, in 2013 the government changed the name from JDIP to Major Infrastructure Development Programmed (MIDP) but continued the same debt relationship with the People's Republic of China and the same construction relationship with CHEC, though actual road repair work is now minimal.

A.T.: Why did you choose this topic for the film?

E.F.: The Palisadoes Rehabilitation and Shoreline Protection Works Project is also an example of disaster capitalism. The funding for earlier Palisadoes road work (the partial construction of revetment walls to protect the highway, since apparently the dunes weren't doing a good enough job) came out of disaster preparation funding in response to the South Asian tsunami. One of the claims for the Palisadoes project is that it will protect our capital Kingston and surrounding areas against damage from category 5 hurricanes and tsunamis - both completely specious claims. Climate change is the latest excuse for disaster capitalism, and the government of Jamaica (and other governments in the region) is receiving and will continue to receive funds for infrastructure projects in the name of climate change mitigation and resilience.

I made this film as part of my ongoing documentation of the destruction of Jamaica by government sanctioned actions, as well as to expose the idiocy and corruption, given that the government made ridiculous claims as to the purpose of the project, its necessity and national importance, its cost benefits, and made design, economic and environmental promises that have never been met. I documented from the beginning to the end of the project so as to create an archival record.

A.T.: Is it the first Chinese involvement in Jamaica and does it differ in any dimensions from other projects funded from abroad?

E.F.: JDIP begun in 2010, but it was not the first infrastructure project funded through Chinese loans. Already in 2007 the Cricket World Cup hosted by the West Indies brought with it new stadiums funded through loans from the Peoples Republic of China and built by Chinese construction companies and Chinese workers, and was then followed by the bargain basement purchase of government owned and divested sugar plantations and factories in Jamaica). But JDIP, as I told you, was the beginning of the full scale Chinese dominance of the Jamaican political economy.

China is now the most economically important actor in Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean and Latin America. The power and influence of China is a reality that earlier colonial powers are just starting to wake up to. In April 2015, US president Obama made a quick (non-state) visit to Jamaica, meeting with both Jamaican and CARICOM leaders, and made some passing promises of Caribbean development money for entrepreneurship and the like. Most recently in October 2015, British Prime Minister Cameron showed up for a state visit to announce money for the construction of a new prison (we haven't built any since the British) and for Caribbean development money for "roads and bridges". And the same day Cameron made a speech to parliament, (telling us to get over slavery and move on) that made most Jamaicans feel insulted and disgusted, the Prime Minister of Japan was in Jamaica promising development money for technology, culture and

education. Without the fear of Chinese hegemony, no North American, European, or Asian leaders would be visiting Jamaica.

A.T.: Does it make a difference that it is not the old colonial powers, but China who is involved?

E.F.: Chinese economic and political interests are no different than previous colonial world powers. They have the cash, the reach, and the plans for what they need: natural resources, land, geo-political influence, military power, and settlement. Jamaica is an island with a history of over 500 years of colonial rule and extraction, highly indebted, ruled by oligarchy, a deeply traumatized and unequal society with a brutal history of genocide, enslavement, displacement, and cultural replacement. A government under yet another IMF austerity regime with no money to spend on anything but debt servicing is now dependent on China and has made deals with China and CHEC that it refuses to make public. However, some are known, for example in return for completing a small portion of the North-South highway (now a toll road it owns and just over a mere month after opening hiked the toll by 80%), CHEC has been promised 1,200 acres of land wherever they want to do whatever they want. That they have chosen the Roaring River, watershed that amongst other things feeds our icon Dunns River Falls, has most Jamaicans extremely upset.

But this is just the tip of what is really going on and without any transparency rumors fly. There is rumor that the Chinese government will be granted settlement for hundreds of thousands of Chinese nationals in return for debt that Chinese citizens can become immediate Jamaican citizens to get around the pesky problem of Chinese nationals doing jobs that unemployed Jamaicans supposedly can do. The efforts to stop China getting the Goat Islands in the Portland Bight Protected Area to build a transshipment port has included trying to get the agreement between CHEC and the Jamaican government made public, but these are state secrets that cannot be shared with Jamaican citizens.

Before the Chinese it was Venezuelan Petro Caribe dollars that kept the government afloat (it is now “buying back” its Petro Caribe debt in a move applauded by IMF and World Bank), but the government never felt the need to show slavish devotion to Venezuela and was instead bowing to Spain because of Spanish tourism developments on the island, but that turned out to be extremely short lived as Spain went bust in 2008. So, Jamaica apparently desperately “needs” China, but China has so many options in the world to have its needs met and like every other colonial power once bored, loses interest, annoyed by too many obstacles by pesky environmentalists, nationalists, unhappy natives, better prospects elsewhere, downturns in domestic economy, problems at home etc., China will move on and who then can or will fill the cash void of the Jamaican government?

A. T.: In your film we hear government representatives arguing that the project will respect the environment. Do you think this objective is impossible in the context of such massive infrastructural works?

E.F.: The Palisadoes tombolo is supposed to be protected under Jamaican law (the Natural Resources Conservation Act) and is an internationally protected RAMSAR wetlands site. However, the government of Jamaica went ahead with the destruction of the dunes, the mangroves, the wetlands, etc. so as to protect nature from itself. The argument given was that the Palisadoes natural environment is subject to damaging storms and hurricanes and seas and therefore must be protected through man-made engineering from potential natural disasters. This is a case of “we must destroy the village to save the village” - we must destroy nature to save the environment. Given this attitude there is no way that the project could “respect the environment” and the claims that Patrick Wong was making as to environmental oversight and the careful adherence to environmental best practices are shown to be absolute nonsense by my footage. You can see that simple environmental requirements such as the use of silt protection floatation devices to stop debris going into the harbor failed because they were not deployed properly nor were they maintained despite Wong’s claim to 24-7 environmental oversight. One can look at the permit requirements for the project and see that the project was always in breach of its requirements.

A.T: How much protest and resistance has the project generated in Jamaica so far?

E.F.: There was a great deal of protest and efforts to stop the project, with arguments against the costs, the debt burden, the unproven economic claims as to the benefits to Jamaica and Jamaicans, and the environmental damage. These efforts went on through the entire project including a law suit by the Jamaica Environment Trust against the government for not following its own public consultation guidelines.

In the newly minted Jamaican constitution Article 13(3) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, guarantees to all persons in Jamaica:

“(l) the right to enjoy a healthy and productive environment free from the threat of injury or damage from environmental abuse and degradation of the ecological heritage, (...)”

Though this right has never been tested in the courts, it seems to be primarily in reference to the effects of environmental abuse and degradation on residents in Jamaica (such as negative effects on health). Individuals and communities who suffer from the degradation of the environment such as those living in proximity to mining and quarrying have very little to show for their efforts at redress. The government has laws protecting the natural environment, and government agencies that are supposed to enforce these laws, at the same time the government promotes the destruction of the natural environment through other laws (such as the mining, quarrying and fishing acts) and other agencies whose purpose is to allow the destruction of the environment. For example, under the mining act (from colonial era 1947) all minerals are vested in the state so you do not own your land and the government can lease or sell your land without your consent. Bauxite mining is one of the greatest destroyers of agricultural land and rural ways of life in Jamaica, yet the government continues to promote the slogan “Grow what we eat and eat what we grow!”

A.T.: In this issue of *fiar* we put emphasis on different meanings of nature in the Americas. What is the investors' and the government's understanding of nature? How is nature politically negotiated and socially constructed in Jamaica?

E.F.: Nature in Jamaica is equivalent to "bush" - unused, unproductive, uncivilized spaces that must be brought into the sphere of human production, consumption, and, most importantly, development. Though the government pays lip service to "sustainable development" and the "ecological heritage", as expressed in my film by then Minister of Transportation Mike Henry (paraphrasing) - we must come to the understanding that concerns over the conservation of the natural environment must be subsumed under the greater need of the country to "develop" and "move forward." Progress, i.e. development and moving forward, is the obsession of all Jamaican governments and all international donors and development agencies. But what is development? It is synonymous with industrial landscapes - "roads and bridges", human consumption of goods and services (GDP) and the dominance of humans over all other species. The only role that "nature" has in development is as "natural resources" that can be extracted or used by humans in some sort of way. That humans are completely dependent on the natural environment (air, water, land, soil) is arrogantly set aside and that "natural resources" have intrinsic value (including economic value) is not part of the development equation. Nature therefore is something that simply must be sacrificed until we reach our development "goals" and then we will have the "luxury" to consider such matters. For example, in arguing for coal as a form of energy production it is posited that since all advanced (i.e. developed) countries used coal, it is unfair for us to not also have that opportunity.

A.T.: Why did you choose the title "I Live for Art - An Ecocide Romance"? Why "ecocide", why romance, and what can be the role of art in those kind of struggles?

E.F.: I chose the title "I Live for Art" because in my film I use the aria "Vissi d'arte" from Puccini's opera "Tosca". Floria has been offered the impossible "bargain" by the grotesque Scarpia to have sex with him and he will free her revolutionary lover that he is torturing within her hearing. In this heart breaking aria Floria sings plaintively about all the things she has done right: "I lived for art, I lived for love, I never hurt a living soul"... and begs "perche perche Signore, perche me ne rimunerai cosi?" "Why, why, Lord, why do you reward me thus?" All Jamaicans have been bequeathed impossible "bargains" of varying degrees of humiliation and degradation and we may as well call out and ask "Why?" No one comes to her rescue and Floria ends up murdering Scarpia. Jamaica has one of the highest murder rates in the world.

I also chose the title as a satire. I don't "live for art" nor do I consider my media work "art" and find most discussions about film as art pretentious. I don't reject art as a fundamental and powerful part of the human experience. I myself have curated many art events, am a collector of visual art, and can't live without music, visual art, and literature. But I find the notion of the striving individual artist pompous and resist myself in that narrative. I was once on a film panel where the question came up

about our filmmaking as art and the other two filmmakers identified themselves as artists whose vision and artistry was the most important thing. They had no need to consider the purpose of their work or the audience - it was all about them: The Artist. I have always tried to not make my films about me, but since this film is extremely personal I gave it a title with a satirical personal statement. And since I am an activist filmmaker who does primarily non-fiction work, especially documentaries, I made it stylistically more like something one would see in an art forum or museum than the documentaries I normally make. (More on style below.)

The reason the word “Ecocide” is in the title is because that is what is taking place, and I think we need to call it what it is and stop speaking in euphemisms. I believe that ecocide is the greatest wrong in the world. My use of the word “Romance” is a shout out to Michael Moore’s “Capitalism - A Love Story”, and again is meant satirically, referring both to the meaning of romance as a heroic narrative and to the romantic notion of living for art and film making as art. There is nothing romantic about ecocide.

And there is nothing romantic about beaches and bays covered in garbage which is the case in Jamaica (much to the distress of the Tourism Enhancement Fund). We have a serious solid waste disposal crisis. We allow items for consumption to come into the island without any means of properly recycling and disposing of them. Our tropes of modernity include excess, the more you have to waste the more prosperous you are, and our mimicry of other nations’ excesses and examples of modernity mean that supermarket practices of putting everything into plastic bags has been formalized by the public health authorities. And now, in addition to supermarkets, the informal sector, which sells on sides of roads and in the traditional markets, puts everything in plastic bags, even fruit with skins on them. In addition, a high percentage of Jamaicans don’t have adequate cooking facilities and/or have occupations that make it easier and/or more cost effective to buy prepared food and beverages which inevitably come wrapped in plastic, in plastic bottles, in plastic and styrofoam containers, and then all placed in plastic carrier bags (called “scandal bags”). In addition, many don’t have proper disposal for human feces and that goes in scandal bags as well. Our garbage collection is few and far between and that which is collected ends up in mismanaged official dumps and unmanaged illegal dumps. Most people burn their garbage and/or fling it into bushes, rivers, pits, sinkholes, road sides, and gullies. When it rains, the gullies wash into the sea and end up on beaches, shorelines, wetlands, and floating in bays and harbours. This in addition to garbage dumped at sea. We have a strange unfathomable attitude to garbage. We are impeccable about cleaning ourselves, our homes, our yards, our vehicles, but the public sphere for which we have no ownership is outside the realm of our personal responsibility and therefore someone else’s business.

A.T.: Why did you opt for dividing the screen in many sequences of the film? What effect did you want to provoke for the audience?

E.F.: Returning to the style of my film, the reasons for split screen/multiple imaging were numerous. I had shot the footage in standard definition not high definition and therefore the size and resolution of the images were small. I shot a great deal of footage over three years and split screens were ways to maximize the footage, to show the same process/scene over time - multiple activities of the same process - multiple views of the location. It was also a way to show the disconnect between words and reality and the fragmented nature of the experience. And I wanted to have the eye not rest so changing the size of the image was one way to keep the viewer alert to the visual content.

A.T.: What did you intend by hearing voices speaking and singing without seeing the speakers or singers?

E.F.: I chose not to show anyone as they were speaking (all the players are on screen at some point if you know who they are, for example Minister Mike Henry in his macho posturing is pretending to operate large machinery which of course he doesn't know how to do) because I want the visuals to dominate and because these politicians and government officials are completely unaccountable for what they say and do. Though they are some of the most powerful people in Jamaica (in terms of decision making and implementation), they are invisible/hidden.

A.T.: Anything else you want to tell the readers about the film and the ongoing transformation of nature in Jamaica?

E.F.: Jamaica is in a crisis where schools do not have water, working sanitation facilities, furniture, teaching materials, proper teachers; where health clinics and public hospitals don't have the basic medical supplies, equipment, or procedures for overworked doctors to do a safe, sanitary, and careful job; where because of IMF strictures, the wages of the public sector have been frozen; where teachers, nurses, police, traffic controllers and others have had to go on sick outs, strikes or threaten strikes to be taken seriously at the negotiating table, and have been offered minuscule raises which will not cover the rate of inflation while the Jamaican dollar continues to sharply devalue (another IMF imposed condition though they deny it). The government has an IMF target to meet that will require extensive cuts in public sector employment. The government then has to waste large amounts of money and increase Chinese debt on unnecessary infrastructure projects, such as Palisadoes roadworks at approximately USD\$70 to USD\$100 million for under five kilometers of road and the Christiana Bypass which cost approximately USD\$90 million for one kilometer of roadway, that stand as monuments to particular politicians (then JLP ministers Mike Henry and Audley Shaw respectively), which is simply foolhardy and criminal. In addition, these projects do maximal damage to the natural environment, raising the temperature and adding to our ongoing problems with drought. Therefore, there is no way the government of Jamaica should receive any climate change funding while deliberately exacerbating existing conditions.

A.T.: Thank you very much for the interview.



Esther Figueroa at work (Foto: Heidi Savery)

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