


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Indigenous resistance at the frontiers of accumulation: Challenging the coloniality of space in International Relations

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(Received 09 May 2022; revised 18 April 2023; accepted 26 April 2023)

Abstract

Latin America has long been subjected to colonial development that has negated Indigenous territory. In the present conjuncture, the region is home to the largest volume of environmental conflicts in the world. These conflicts are intrinsically connected to the wider model of neo-extractivist development that has been embraced throughout the continent since the early 2000s. Indigenous communities have frequently been the victims of this model of extractive development, with their territories becoming the primary sites for the aggressive expansion of the resource frontier. This has generated new political conflicts, as Indigenous communities conversely assert claims to territory and resources. In this article, I link these conflicts to what I term the ‘coloniality of space’, whereby Indigenous territorial forms have been *theoretically* elided from traditional spatial imaginaries within International Relations and *concretely* negated through practices within the global political economy. Moving beyond the territorial trap of nation-state centrism, Indigenous forms of resistance raise important questions about the subject and actors of International Relations.

Keywords: Bolivia; extractive development; Indigenous; International Relations; Latin America; Mexico

Introduction

This article contributes to growing debates in International Relations (IR) that have focused on the Eurocentrism of the discipline, its racial silencing, and the broader calls to decolonize the subject.¹ It does so by exploring ongoing Indigenous struggles against neo-extractive development in Latin America. Indigenous peoples throughout Latin America are defending their territories in the face of an expanding resource frontier. Frontiers represent contested sites of struggle over land and territory in the racialized expansion of capitalism.² Smith once remarked that ‘the frontier takes different forms in different places: it adapts to place as it makes place. But everywhere the frontier

¹Zeynep Capan, ‘Decolonising international relations?’, *Third World Quarterly*, 38:1 (2017), pp. 1–15; Branwen Jones, *Decolonizing International Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); John Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1970–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); Meera Sabaratnam, ‘Is IR theory white? Racialised subject-positioning in three canonical texts’, *Millennium*, 49:1 (2020), pp. 3–31.

²Alke Jenss, ‘Control, utility and formalization at the “frontier”: Contested discourses on agriculture in Eastern Columbia’, *Alternatus*, 4:2 (2010), pp. 129–47; Adam Morton, ‘A geography of blood meridian: Primitive accumulation on the frontier of space’, *Political Geography*, 91 (2021), DOI:102486.

is present.³ This article is concerned with the struggles surrounding the expansion of the resource frontier in Latin America. Despite reports on the global phenomenon of Indigenous dispossession linked to extractive development⁴ and the widespread understanding gleaned from geographical studies that space is a social product of our wider interactions and relations,⁵ Indigenous struggles often remain theoretically elided within IR and viewed through the prism of domestic politics. This article rejects such a view. First, Indigenous struggles are clearly entangled within the global political economy and hence the ‘international’ via the capitalist remaking of space. As Patel and Moore note: ‘Capitalism not only *has* frontiers; it exists only *through* frontiers, expanding from one place to the next, transforming socioecological relations.’⁶ Second, Indigenous communities contest not only the making of these frontiers but also the sovereign authority of the nation-state, offering a mode of international relations from below. However, despite this demonstrative display of agency, ‘subalterns rarely receive formal recognition for their crucial role in *making* world politics.’⁷ I argue that the reason for this lies in the *coloniality of space* in IR. The coloniality of space is simultaneously both a material project of territorial dispossession and an epistemic project of negating other imaginaries of the world that are contrary to the hegemonic order.

Indigenous communities have suffered from territorial dispossession linked to extractive development since the time of colonization. These conflicts at present are intrinsically connected to the model of neo-extractivist development that has been embraced throughout the continent since the early 2000s. The alleged difference from previous extractivist forms of development (which are looked upon as creating unequal development within Latin America) is that there is now, supposedly, a renewed focus on developmental issues. The state thus works in tandem with transnational corporations to use the market to provide additional opportunities or to fund social programmes targeted at the poor.⁸ Nevertheless, this has created major tensions, as Indigenous territories are once again becoming the primary sites for the aggressive expansion of the resource frontier, generating new political conflicts.⁹ In this regard, I highlight how Indigenous claims to territory represent a major challenge to the methodological nationalism of IR.¹⁰ This article thus contributes to a growing body of work that asserts the central importance of Indigenous politics for rethinking the discipline.¹¹ Indigenous struggles for autonomy demonstrate the possibility of a politics beyond the nation-state and forms of Western modernity. Indigenous resistance can thus disrupt traditional thinking in IR via an ‘insurrection of subjugated knowledge.’¹²

³Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 16.

⁴Global Witness, ‘Defenders of the earth: Killings of land and environmental defenders in 2016’, available at: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defenders-earth/>; Last Line of Defence, available at: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/last-line-defence/>

⁵Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005).

⁶Raj Patel and Jason Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (London: Verso, 2020), pp. 18–19.

⁷Lily Ling, *The Dao of World Politics: Towards a Post-Westphalian Worldist International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁸Hans-Jürgen Burchardt and Kristina Dietz, ‘(Neo-)extractivism: A new challenge for development theory from Latin America’, *Third World Quarterly*, 35:3 (2014), pp. 467–70.

⁹Henry Veltmeyer, ‘The political economy of natural resource extraction: A new model or extractive imperialism?’, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 34:1 (2012), pp. 75–7.

¹⁰John Agnew, ‘The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory’, *Review of International Political Economy*, 1:1 (1994), pp. 53–80.

¹¹Ana Delgado, *Internal Colonialism and International Relations: Tracks of Decolonization in Bolivia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021); Mariam Georgis and Nicole Lugosi-Schimpf, ‘Indigenising international relations: Insights from centring indigeneity in Canada and Iraq’, *Millennium*, 50:1 (2021), pp. 174–98; Sheryl Lightfoot, *Global Indigenous Politics: A Subtle Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2016); Manuela Picq, *Vernacular Sovereignities: Indigenous Women Challenging World Politics* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018); Kerena Shaw, ‘Indigeneity and the international’, *Millennium*, 31:1 (2002), pp. 55–81.

¹²Juan Ricardo Aparicio and Mario Blaser, ‘La “ciudad letrada” y la insurrección de saberes subyugados en América Latina’, in Xochitl Leyva, Jorge Alonso, R. Aída Hernández, et al. (eds), *Prácticas otras de conocimiento(s): Entre crisis, Entre guerras* (Guadalajara: Taller Editorial La Casa del Mango/Clasco, 2018), pp. 104–34.

As a scholar from the UK, I am of course geographically removed from the lived reality of Indigenous struggles in Latin America. However, I take inspiration from such struggles, and I am committed to reflecting on how hegemonic practices within IR and International Political Economy can be challenged and diverse practices and epistemologies both respected and learned from.

Bolivia and Mexico provide two of the most compelling examples of Indigenous struggles. Bolivia has the highest percentage of the total population who identify as belonging to an Indigenous group (41%), whereas Mexico is the nation with numerically the highest number of people who identify as belonging to an Indigenous group (16.83 million).¹³ Bolivia is also where the most far-reaching transformations have taken place in terms of state structures, with the country being renamed as a plurinational state in 2009. In short, there were (and are) efforts in Bolivia (however fraught with contradictions) to build an Indigenous state.¹⁴ In the case of Mexico, the Zapatista uprising on 1 January 1994 (and their ongoing struggle) has perhaps been the most emblematic Indigenous movement of the last three decades, gaining worldwide resonance and support. As well as proving to be an inspiration for democratizing Mexico from below, the Zapatistas helped propel the rise of Indigenous social justice movements in and beyond Latin America. However, unlike the situation in Bolivia where Indigenous movements converged on state transformation, Indigenous movements in Mexico have been marked by their largely autonomous character from state power. This has continued with the formation of the *Concejo Indígena de Gobierno* (CIG, Indigenous Governing Council) in 2017.¹⁵

The article is organized as follows. First, I discuss the erasure of Indigenous peoples from the academic imagination of IR linked to the coloniality of space. I then provide the key methodological reference points for making a comparative analysis that avoids the territorial trap. Second, to empirically make the case that there is a broad conjuncture in which social movements from these two countries can be situated, I outline the contemporary political economy of neo-extractivist development in Latin America. I then delve into the two country-specific examples, before offering a final concluding section about what this means for rethinking IR.

The coloniality of space in International Relations

It has been noted that the very category of being Indigenous was linked to European colonialism. That is to say 'indigeneity can only come into being from contested, geographically and temporally-fixing processes'.¹⁶ State formation, both in and beyond Latin America, has taken place through Indigenous dispossession.¹⁷ State sovereignty, the key marker and subject matter of IR, was thus founded upon colonial violence. As Mallon put it, 'the idea of the nation as an "imagined community" grew in relation to its opposite, the colony'.¹⁸ As is well known, the experience of colonization decimated the Indigenous populations of Latin America and curtailed their existing forms of

¹³World Bank, *Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century: The First Decade* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), p. 25. It should be noted that identification as an Indigenous person is a fluid rather than fixed issue. In the case of Bolivia, there was a 20% decline in people identifying as Indigenous from 2001 to 2012 according to census reports, most likely due to the way the question was phrased. Contrariwise, in Mexico following the Zapatistas rebellion, a higher number of people began to identify as Indigenous.

¹⁴Nancy Postero, *The Indigenous State: Race, Politics and Performance in Plurinational Bolivia* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019).

¹⁵Inés Durán Matute, 'Solidaridad comunitaria transnacional del Concejo Indígena de Gobierno (CIG) por otra democracia, justicia y libertad', *Migración y desarrollo*, 16:31 (2018), pp. 41–70.

¹⁶Sarah Radcliffe, 'Geography and indigeneity I: Indigeneity, coloniality and knowledge', *Progress in Human Geography*, 41:2 (2017), pp. 220–229 (p. 221).

¹⁷Juan Castro and Manuela Picq, 'Stateness as landgrab: A political history of Maya dispossession in Guatemala', *American Quarterly*, 69:4 (2017), pp. 791–9.

¹⁸Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 8.

sovereignty. This involved attacks on Indigenous communal land, traditions, and legal status.¹⁹ Speed has argued that because the states that emerged from colonization contain occupation as a permanent feature, they should be considered settler colonial states.²⁰ Veracini further outlines that settler colonialism ‘is generally understood as an inherently dynamic circumstance where Indigenous and Exogenous Others progressively disappear in a variety of ways: extermination, incarceration containment, and assimilation for Indigenous people (or a combination of all these elements).’²¹ The primary impetus for this remains access to Indigenous territory. This is important to consider when reflecting on the how neo-extractivism continues colonial violence. The negation of Indigenous territory is thus not something confined to the past but continues in the present, often justified in the name of development.²² Thus, as Alfred and Corntassel note, ‘Indigeness is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism.’²³ This occurs when surviving forms of communal land become subject to the expansion of capitalist frontiers either through privatization or through state-granted concessions to resources found within Indigenous territory. Colonialism is thus not to be viewed as something that has left a past legacy but a continuing and ongoing process that speaks to the urgency of the present.²⁴ Opposed to this, there has been a rigorous process of contestation and demands for territorial control by Indigenous peoples, asserting their right to autonomy and self-governance.²⁵ Long-term memories of anti-colonial struggle remain a powerful mobilizing force, as does the survival of ‘practical socialism’ within Indigenous communities.²⁶ However, IR as a discipline often continues to view such struggles as if they were a purely domestic issue.²⁷ This in turn leads to the continuing erasure of Indigenous people from the international imagination.²⁸ As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues, ‘knowledge and the power to define what counts as real knowledge lies at the epistemic core of colonialism.’²⁹

For the above reasons, scholars in Latin America working within the tradition of Decolonial thought have become an important resource for those wanting to both critique and rethink IR.³⁰ Numerous Latin American thinkers have sought to theorize how we can refer to the continuing legacies of colonialism in structuring the present. Whilst others have spoken of the ‘coloniality of power’,³¹ the ‘coloniality of knowledge’,³² or the ‘coloniality of Being’,³³ in this article I would like to propose the term the ‘coloniality of space’ as a contribution to a specifically Historical

¹⁹ Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2020), p. 30.

²⁰ Shannon Speed, ‘Structures of settler capitalism in Abya Yala’, *American Quarterly*, 69:4 (2017), pp. 783–90.

²¹ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), pp. 16–17.

²² Chris Hesketh ‘Clean development or the development of dispossession? The political economy of wind parks in Southern Mexico’, *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 5:2 (2022), pp. 543–65.

²³ Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, ‘Being Indigenous: Resurgences against contemporary colonialism’, *Government and Opposition*, 40:4 (2005), pp. 597–614. (p. 597).

²⁴ Ann Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

²⁵ Chris Hesketh, *Spaces of Capital/Spaces of Resistance: Mexico and the Global Political Economy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017).

²⁶ José Carlos Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*, trans. M. Urquidí (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971); Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: Luchas del campesinado Aymara y Qhechwa 1900–1980* (La Paz, Bolivia: La Mirada Salvaje, 1984).

²⁷ Georgis and Lugosi-Schimpf, ‘Indigenising international relations’, p. 186.

²⁸ Lightfoot, *Global Indigenous Politics*, p. 5; Shaw, ‘Indigeneity and the international’, p. 56.

²⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury Group, 2022), p. xii.

³⁰ Karen Tucker, ‘Unravelling coloniality in international relations: Knowledge, relationality, and strategies for engagement’, *International Political Sociology*, 12:3 (2018), pp. 215–32.

³¹ Anibal Quijano, ‘Coloniality of power, eurocentrism, and Latin America’, *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1:3 (2000), pp. 533–80.

³² Edgardo Lander, *La colonialidad del saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales* (Buenos Aires: CLASCO, 2000).

³³ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept’, *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007), pp. 240–70.

Materialist analysis. I prefer this term, as once we come to investigate transformations in space produced through colonial imperatives, we can move from largely autonomous cultural explanations to those that are grounded in the social relations of production and historical specificity.³⁴ Placing the accent on Indigenous resistance and agency is also a crucial task for rethinking IR. As Alfred and Corntassel explain:

there is a danger in allowing colonization to be the only story of Indigenous lives. It must be recognized that colonialism is a narrative in which the Settler's power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power.³⁵

Walker famously highlighted how dominant conceptions of the international order take the sovereign state as the limit of the spatial imagination, whilst eliding other geographies.³⁶ This opens questions as to how we might consider other such forms of political community, not based in Eurocentric, colonial-state spaces.³⁷ This is especially relevant when we consider the invisibility of Indigenous communities in IR. The absence of Indigenous peoples has been described as one of the most 'enduring oversights and omissions of international relations.'³⁸ Moreover, the absence of indigeneity from theorization in IR continues to legitimize colonialism in the present.³⁹ Exploring Indigenous resistance to neo-extractivist development is pertinent in this regard, as this allows us a window to view alternative geographies of relational belonging. In short, this asks us to consider what possibilities, transformative values, and insights might emerge from the project of Indigenous resurgence and claims to autonomy.⁴⁰ Central to this is the assertion of the right to territory.⁴¹ Indigenous struggles in Latin America therefore have the potential not only to critique dominant ways of knowing in IR but also to open new horizons of knowledge to be learned from as well. It helps to disrupt the dominant Eurocentric field of IR by widening its theoretical and empirical concerns. Not only do Indigenous communities survive as 'submerged nationalities,'⁴² their communal practices can also serve as the basis for a critique of capitalism and an alternative to it in times of environmental crises.⁴³ A focus on Indigenous struggles and what this means for IR

³⁴Stuart Hall, 'Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance', in Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (eds), *Selected Writings on Race and Difference* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), pp. 195–245; Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 129.

³⁵Alfred and Corntassel, 'Being Indigenous', p. 601.

³⁶Rob Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³⁷Tariq Jazeel, 'Subaltern geographies: Geographical knowledge and postcolonial strategy', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 35:1 (2014), pp. 88–103.

³⁸J. Marshall Beier, 'Beyond hegemonic state(ment)s of nature: Indigenous knowledge and non-state possibilities in international relations', in G. Chowdry and S. Nair (eds), *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class* (Abingdon: Routledge 2004), pp. 82–114. (p. 82).

³⁹J. Marshall Beier, *International Relations in Uncommon Places: Indigeneity, Cosmology, and the Limits of International Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Tucker, 'Unravelling coloniality'.

⁴⁰Mario Blaser, Ravi De Costa, Deborah McGregor, and William D. Coleman (eds), *Indigenous Peoples and Autonomy: Insights for a Global Age* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 153; Leanne Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p. 25.

⁴¹Padini Nirmal and Dianne Rocheleau, 'Decolonizing degrowth in the post-development convergence: Questions, experiences, and proposals from two Indigenous territories', *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 2:3 (2019), pp.465–492 (p. 472).

⁴²June Nash, 'Global integration and subsistence insecurity', *American Anthropologist*, 96:1 (1994), pp. 7–30 (p. 8).

⁴³David Barkin and Alejandra Sánchez, 'The communitarian revolutionary subject: New forms of social transformation', *Third World Quarterly*, 41:8 (2020), pp. 1421–41.

thus contributes to the project of theorizing from the perspective of the Global South and from knowledge derived from struggle.⁴⁴

This raises the question of how to use a methodology that avoids the territorial trap and allows us to centre subaltern voices. I draw theoretically from two important methodological backstops. The first of these relates to the very mode of comparison. Bruff has highlighted that when engaging in analytical comparison there is a need to foreground the politics of *why* one compares, and what is at stake in doing so.⁴⁵ In short, if there is always a politics to the comparative method, the task is to be open and explicit about what that politics is. In this case, the concern is to highlight ongoing dispossession and epistemic injustice. This leaves the key issues of what is to be compared and how. Here, I utilize McMichael's notion of 'incorporated comparison' to analyse Indigenous struggles.⁴⁶ Incorporated comparison is of major utility, as it is a non-state centric mode of comparative analysis. This method of comparison allows us to focus on a major phenomenon like Indigenous resistance across multiple spaces, whilst at the same time being attentive to the broader structural setting or conjuncture in which such movements are articulated. In McMichael's own words:

this strategy reformulates the role of comparison, subordinating it to a *substantive historical problem*. Comparison becomes an 'internal' rather than an 'external' (formal) feature of inquiry, relating apparently separate processes (in time/ and or space) as components of a broader, world-historical process or conjuncture.⁴⁷

The common connections between them or the *substantive historical problem* addressed is the territorial dispossession that is resulting from rapacious capitalist development in its current guise of neo-extractivism. My emphasis on resistance is also significant methodologically. Weber has highlighted that social struggles have not been sufficiently foregrounded in the method of incorporated comparison.⁴⁸ I therefore further such efforts to centre social struggles within this method. Resistance is therefore thought of as 'an enacted and embodied mode of structural critique'.⁴⁹ This brings with it a desire to counterpose to neo-extractivism a different life project on behalf of Indigenous communities. In other words, Indigenous resistance to neo-extractivism is not just a refusal but simultaneously an affirmative project grounded in dignity that opens new horizons of possibility through struggle.⁵⁰

Racialized class formation

In analysing the coloniality of space in IR, I also seek to develop the term 'racialised class formation'.⁵¹ It should be noted at this juncture that a major intellectual trend, both in Latin America and beyond, is to interpret Indigenous politics through a Decolonial approach. However, this approach

⁴⁴Ramón Grosfoguel and Roberto Almanza Hernández (eds), *Lugares descoloniales: Espacios de intervención en las Américas* (Bogotá, DC: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2012); Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁵Ian Bruff, 'The politics of comparing capitalisms', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 53:6 (2021), pp. 1273–92.

⁴⁶Phillip McMichael, 'Incorporating comparison within a world-historical perspective: An alternative comparative method', *American Sociological Review*, 55:3 (1990), pp. 285–397; Phillip McMichael, 'World-systems analysis, globalization and incorporated comparison', *Journal of World Systems Research*, 3 (2000), pp. 68–99.

⁴⁷McMichael, 'Incorporating comparison', p. 389, emphasis added.

⁴⁸Heloise Weber, 'A political analysis of the formal comparative method: Historicizing the globalization and development debate', *Globalizations*, 4:4 (2007), pp. 559–72.

⁴⁹Robert Nichols, *Theft Is Property: Dispossession and Critical Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), p. 85.

⁵⁰Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, p. 35.

⁵¹To be clear, I am not arguing that Indigenous peoples in Latin America are a race. Rather that Indigenous peoples are 'racialised', that is to say, they are inserted into socially constructed, racist hierarchies of domination. See Robbie Shilliam, *Race and the Undeserving Poor* (Newcastle: Agenda Publishing, 2018), p. 4; Mariam Georgis and Nicole Lugosi, '(Re)inserting race and indigeneity in international relations theory: A post-colonial approach', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 26:1 (2014), pp. 71–83 (p. 72).

has often overlooked issues of class in favour of an exclusive focus on race when reflecting on issues of coloniality.⁵² Epitomizing this view, Blanco and Delgado argue that race is the crucial 'operative element of coloniality' and that 'race became the fundamental axis of colonial social relations'.⁵³ This trend of course needs to be historically contextualized, as for a long period of time Indigenous peoples in Latin America were only viewed through class categories by both states and academic perspectives (thereby erasing their ethnic identities).⁵⁴ However, since the 1990s, class-based organizations have declined somewhat, and class-based issues have lost some saliency as a mobilizing axis. Conversely, organizations focusing on ethnicity and race have been strengthened.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Historical Materialist analyses in Latin America have always recognized that, since the time of colonialism, race and class cannot be meaningfully separated in any analysis of exploitation and exclusion.⁵⁶ Shilliam has recently argued that 'there is no politics of class that is not already racialised'.⁵⁷ Whilst accepting this, we must acknowledge this statement holds true in reverse as well. It is vital therefore that we foreground both race *and* class together. My concept of racialized class formation seeks to do just that. It draws inspiration from Gerardo Otero's notion of political class formation. Political class formation proposes a synthesis of both class and identity-based politics, as well as economic and cultural issues, and examines not just social relations of production but also relations of reproduction – the latter contributing significantly to notions of identity.⁵⁸

This imbrication of race and class is evidenced in the seminal 'Declaration of Quito', made up of 120 Indian Nations, international organizations, and fraternal organizations, which stated:

through our struggles we have learned that our problems are not different, in many respects, from those of other popular sectors. We are convinced that we must march alongside the peasants, the workers, the marginalized sectors, together with the intellectuals committed to our cause, in order to destroy the dominant system of oppression and construct a new society.⁵⁹

In the case of Bolivia, Indigenous movements have long focused on the need to 'see with two eyes', namely as a member of an exploited peasant class *and* as an oppressed racial group.⁶⁰ Meanwhile in Mexico, the Zapatistas, in their 'Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle', called for a wider alliance of the non-electoral left 'to build FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico'.⁶¹ Interlinkages between race and class are asserted not only by Marxist political economists but also by a range of Indigenous scholars.⁶² However, this

⁵² Maldonado-Torres, 'Coloniality of being'; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, pp. 52–4.

⁵³ Ramon Blanco and Ana Delgado, 'Problematising the ultimate other of modernity: The crystallisation of coloniality in International Politics', *Contexto Internacional*, 41 (2019), pp. 599–619 (p. 603).

⁵⁴ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Liberal democracy and ayllu democracy in Bolivia: The case of Northern Potosí', *Journal of Development Studies*, 26:4 (1990), pp. 97–121.

⁵⁵ Jose Antonio Lucero, *Struggles of Voice: The Politics of Indigenous Representation in the Andes* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), p. 88.

⁵⁶ Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretative Essays*; René Zavaleta Mercado, *Lo nacional-popular en Bolivia* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1986).

⁵⁷ Shilliam, *Race and the Undeserving Poor*, p. 180.

⁵⁸ Gerardo Otero, *Farewell to the Peasantry? Political Class Formation in Rural Mexico* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999). Gerardo Otero and Heidi Jugenitz, 'Challenging national borders from within: The political-class formation of Indigenous peasants in Latin America', *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 40:5 (2003), pp. 503–24.

⁵⁹ Declaration of Quito, *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, 3:3 (1990), pp. 12–13 (p. 12).

⁶⁰ Xavier Albó, 'El retorno del indio', *Revista andina*, 9:2 (1990), pp. 299–366 (p. 313).

⁶¹ Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee, 'Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona', Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee – General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (2005), available at: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/sdsl-en/>.

⁶² Hesketh, *Spaces of Capital/Spaces of Resistance*; Adam Morton, *Revolution and the State in Modern Mexico: The Political Economy of Uneven Development*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013); Jeffrey Webber, *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2012); Albó, 'El retorno del indio'; Coulthard, *Red Skin, White*

does require a non-reductive approach to class that enables us to explore the ‘culturally specific quality of class formations in any historically specific society’.⁶³

In this article, I explore differentiated attitudes towards extractivist development, based on fieldwork in both Mexico and Bolivia. This is based on repeated visits between 2008 and 2017 to Mexico and roughly one month in Bolivia from 2019 to 2020. During this fieldwork, I conducted interviews with representatives of Indigenous communities as well as prominent Indigenous organizations and organizations that work in tandem with advancing Indigenous, *originario*, or peasant rights. I now move to discuss the panorama of extractivist development to make the case for the incorporated comparison of dispossession that Indigenous resistance is responding to with renewed urgency in the current conjuncture.

Neo-extractivism as the new frontier of accumulation: The regional panorama of development in Latin America

Latin America is currently home to the largest volume of environmental conflicts in the world.⁶⁴ According to the Environmental Justice Atlas, there are currently 960 ongoing environmental conflicts in the region.⁶⁵ These conflicts are intimately tied to the changing contours of the region’s political economy. This involved a turn from an inward-looking model of development that dominated the landscape following the Second World War to a greater embrace of the world market in the 1980s and 1990s in line with the Washington Consensus. This subsequently gave way to the ‘commodities consensus’ in the twenty-first century, based on the large-scale export of primary commodities.⁶⁶ The latter ‘commodities consensus’ has involved a continent-wide drive ‘to open up frontiers for extracting hydrocarbons, mining, producing biofuels, harvesting timber, and investing in agroindustry’.⁶⁷

When Latin America first moved away from the post-war model of Import-Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) to the neoliberal turn during the 1980s and 1990s, sources of foreign direct investment were oriented to buying up state-owned assets. However, foreign investment has increasingly shifted into primary commodities, including oil, gas, industrial minerals, and metals.⁶⁸ This has led to the re-primerization of Latin American economies, meaning a focus once again on primary commodities as the basis of wealth generation.⁶⁹ It must be emphasized that this represents a step change in developmental thinking. The explicit strategy of ISI (the uneven success in different countries notwithstanding) was designed to counter a reliance on primary commodities in order to move the continent away from its dependent position within the global political economy. The move towards re-primerization began with the neoliberal era, when the expansion of oil, mining, and intensified agricultural development took place. However, it was consolidated by the model of post-neoliberalism or neo-structuralism that has been embraced to differing degrees

Masks; Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London: Verso, 2019).

⁶³Stuart Hall, ‘Gramsci’s relevance for the study of race and ethnicity’, *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10:2 (1986), pp. 5–27 (p. 24).

⁶⁴Marcela Torres Wong, *Natural Resources, Extraction and Indigenous Rights in Latin America: Exploring the Boundaries of State Corporate Crime in Bolivia, Peru and Mexico* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 5; Henry Veltmeyer, ‘Investment, governance and resistance in the new extractive economies of Latin America’, in Kalowatie Deonandan and Michael L. Dougherty (eds), *Mining in Latin America: Critical Approaches to the New Extraction* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 27–44.

⁶⁵<https://ejatlas.org>.

⁶⁶Maristella Svampa, ‘Consensus de los commodities, giro ecoterritorial y pensamiento crítico en América Latina’, *Observatorio Social de América Latina*, 13:32 (2012), pp. 15–38.

⁶⁷Antony Bebbington, ‘The new extraction: Rewriting the political ecology of the Andes?’, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 42:5 (2009), pp. 12–20 (p. 13).

⁶⁸Veltmeyer, ‘Investment, governance and resistance’, p. 27.

⁶⁹ECLAC, *Economic Growth with Equity: Challenges for Latin America* (Santiago de Chile: United Nations Publications, 2007).

across Latin America.⁷⁰ This has been more pejoratively labelled as neo-extractivist development.⁷¹ As noted in the introduction, neo-extractivist development involves the state working in tandem with transnational corporations to use the market to provide additional opportunities or to fund social programmes targeted at the poor.⁷² This dovetails with the fact that post-neoliberalism has largely been a project pursued by left-oriented government that has sought to respond to the privatization of resources that occurred under the neoliberal era and to reassert state control. Crucially, however, many states have done so within a dominant paradigm of ‘resource nationalism’, whereby the primary goal has been to exert greater state control over natural resources rather than opposing extractivism itself. This has created tension with many Indigenous movements, as their claims to territory and natural resources are subordinated by the expansion of the resource frontier via capital and the state.⁷³

This model has also had other numerous negative ramifications. First, there are issues that can be referred to as broadly structural. The reliance on rents extracted from primary commodities has meant that left-oriented governments in the region did not take radical steps to fundamentally transform the structure of the economy in terms of ownership.⁷⁴ This means that colonial space is not challenged, as the region remains subject to the demands of the metropolitan centre and (re)produced as nature-exporting societies.⁷⁵ As an accumulation strategy, neo-extractivism would seem to accept many of the ideas of classical development.⁷⁶ The structural imperative of overcoming dependency within the global political economy is thereby negated. Second, although also linked to the structural imperatives of neo-extractivism, are the social consequences of this model of development. As Bebbington summarizes, ‘the extractive frontier is an aggressive one in all senses, not least the geographical.’⁷⁷ Neo-extractive development entails projects of place-making as it seeks out cheap nature as the pivot of further capital accumulation.⁷⁸ In doing so, it is Indigenous peoples that have often seen their territories become the prime sites for expanding the extractive frontier.⁷⁹ The current politics of Indigenous resistance is thus inextricably tied to the neo-extractive model of development that reinscribes the coloniality of space and racialized forms of class formation. The continued expansion of the natural resource frontier reinforces the pattern of settler colonial power relations which negate the possibilities of Indigenous sovereignty by undermining its material basis.⁸⁰ This implies the need for ‘fundamental changes in the structures of power the countries of the Americas were founded on.’⁸¹

⁷⁰Jean Grugel and Pia Riggiozzi, ‘Post-neoliberalism in Latin America: Rebuilding and reclaiming the state after crisis’, *Development and Change*, 43:1 (2012), pp. 1–21.

⁷¹Eduardo Gudynas, ‘Diez tesis urgentes sobre el nuevo extractivismo: Contextos y demandas bajo el progresismo sudamericano actual’, in Centro Andino de Acción Popular and Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social (eds), *Extractivismo, política, y sociedad* (Quito: Centro Andino de Acción Popular y Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social, 2009).

⁷²Burchardt and Dietz, ‘(Neo-)extractivism’.

⁷³Marc Becker, ‘Building a plurinational Ecuador: Complications and contradictions’, *Socialism and Democracy*, 26:3 (2012), pp. 72–92; Thea Riofrancos, *Resource Radicals: From Petro-Nationalism to Post-Extractivism in Ecuador* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

⁷⁴Linda Farthing, ‘An opportunity squandered? Elites, social movements, and the government of Evo Morales’, *Latin American Perspectives*, 46:1 (2019), pp. 212–29; Angus McNelly, ‘Neoliberalism and its class character in the political economy of Bolivia under Evo Morales’, *New Political Economy*, 25.3 (2020), pp. 419–438.

⁷⁵Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 7.

⁷⁶Eduardo Gudynas, ‘Debates on development and its alternatives in Latin America’, in M. Lang and D. Mokranai (eds), *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions from Latin America* (Quito: Transnational Institute/Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, 2013), pp. 15–40 (p. 26).

⁷⁷Bebbington, ‘The new extraction’, p. 14.

⁷⁸Jason Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life* (London: Verso, 2015).

⁷⁹Veltmeyer, ‘Political economy’, pp. 75–7.

⁸⁰Estes, *Our History Is the Future*, p. 147.

⁸¹Speed, ‘Structures of settler capitalism’, p. 789.

This has led to a new dialectic of struggle in recent decades, as the possibilities for subsistence have been further undermined.⁸² It has been highlighted that the classic model of primitive accumulation outlined by Marx, whereby people become dispossessed of their land and subsequently proletarianized, does not necessarily hold true for Indigenous communities. Capital is often more interested in the natural resources within Indigenous territory than the labour power of Indigenous peoples.⁸³ Rather than being newly produced as proletarian subjects, Indigenous subjectivities are instead being produced as ‘relative surplus populations’ for which capital has limited use.⁸⁴ However, an area that has been underexplored so far is how relative surplus populations can resist their own marginalization.⁸⁵ Svampa notes in this regard that there has been an explosion of socio-environmental movements in response to extractive development.⁸⁶ These have been characterized by assembly-style decision-making and demands for autonomy. Others have cited growing forms of collective consciousness or what has been called a ‘communitarian revolutionary subject’ that asserts an alternative to our present social and environmental crises.⁸⁷ This anti-extractivist position crucially involves counterclaims to territorial control. Whilst for post-neoliberal states the challenge of sovereignty has been to assert greater state control over natural resources, many Indigenous communities have conversely asserted their own territorial sovereignty in the face of the power of capital and the state that are newly seeking to invade their communities.⁸⁸ Coulthard refers to this place-based opposition to colonial dispossession as the enactment of ‘grounded normativity’, meaning ‘the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time.’⁸⁹ This assertion of autonomy directly challenges the sovereign claims of settler colonial states.

I now explore the issue of Indigenous resistance to neo-extractive development in greater detail through the cases of Mexico and Bolivia. Indigenous territory here is often counterposed to the sovereignty of the nation-state. However, we must remember to treat the term indigeneity with caution, as it can be conceptually imprecise.⁹⁰ When thinking about Indigenous resistance, it is important to note that the fact of indigeneity does not lead to homogenous attitudes to neo-extractive projects.⁹¹ Rather, attitudes tend to depend on historical relationships established between different groups and the state, as well as the availability (or not) of other opportunities to make a living.⁹² What can sometimes appear as anti-extractivist stances therefore often turn out to be negotiations for better terms for accepting the industry. This is precisely why the concept of racialized class formation is important, as it helps us overcome an essentializing of Indigenous communities to see how variegated responses relate to historically specific conditions (which include the possibilities of rent capture or alternatively grounded development projects to emerge).

⁸²Nash, ‘Global integration’.

⁸³Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, pp. 12–13; June Nash, *Mayan Visions: the Quest for Autonomy in an Age of Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 1.

⁸⁴Tania Murray Li, ‘After development: Surplus population and the politics of entitlement’, *Development and Change*, 48:6 (2017), pp. 1247–61.

⁸⁵Nicholas Bernards and Susan Soederberg ‘Relative surplus populations and the crises of contemporary capitalism: Reviving, revisiting, recasting’, *Geoforum*, 126 (2021), pp. 412–19.

⁸⁶Svampa, ‘Consenso de los commodities’, p. 20.

⁸⁷Barkin and Sánchez, ‘The communitarian revolutionary subject’.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 1425; de Sousa Santos, Epistemologies of the South, Nash, *Mayan Visions*, p. 2; Riofrancos, *Resource Radicals*, p. 45.

⁸⁹Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, p. 13.

⁹⁰Andrew Canessa, ‘Conflict, claim and contradiction in the new “Indigenous” state of Bolivia’, *Critique of Anthropology*, 34:2 (2014), pp. 153–73.

⁹¹Penelope Anthias, ‘Indigenous peoples and the new extraction: From territorial rights to hydrocarbon citizenship in the Bolivian Chaco’, *Latin American Perspectives*, 45:5 (2018), pp. 136–53.

⁹²Torres Wong, *Natural Resources*, p. 9.

Territories in resistance

Mexico

Mexico's early modern period of development and state formation was thoroughly shaped by dispossession and the extraction of natural resources characteristic of the coloniality of space.⁹³ This led to a racialized class formation, with small-scale peasant and Indigenous agriculture subservient to capital-intensive export-oriented agriculture.⁹⁴ In the contemporary period, environmental conflicts in the country have been intensified by neoliberal reforms, especially following the administration of Carlos Salinas (1988–1994). Mexico has, in recent decades, become a major site for transnational capital investment in extractive industries. During the administration of Felipe Calderón (2006–2012), the volume of mining concessions increased by 53 per cent nationally.⁹⁵ These mining concessions have also advanced the extractive frontier further into heavily Indigenous states such as Oaxaca and Chiapas.⁹⁶ In places such as Oaxaca, for example, this amounted to close to 8% of the whole territory of the state.⁹⁷ It is no coincidence that it is these two states that have seen the emergence of the most radical Indigenous social movements.⁹⁸

Oaxaca is the most demographically Indigenous state in Mexico, where 75 per cent of land is held as communal property – either in the form of *ejidos* or *tierras comunales*.⁹⁹ This provides a major impetus to resistance movements, as Indigenous communities often consider themselves the sovereign authorities over territory. It is important here to distinguish land from territory. Whereas land can be defined as a geographically demarcated area, territory implies deeper ties to collective issues of identity and memory which serve as the basis for the reproduction of community life.¹⁰⁰ Neftalí Reyes from EDUCA – a Non-Governmental Organization dedicated to democracy and development among marginalized sectors of the population in Oaxaca – highlighted the importance of this for Indigenous communities in resistance, stating:

because many decisions are anchored at the community level, they are decisions that they take collectively, and I believe the other element is that they are communities that maintain collective property. So not only their ethnic-cultural composition, not only the political or agrarian composition, but also there is a collective vision of being a community.

This is sometimes referred to in Oaxaca as *comunalidad*. *Comunalidad* is an epistemological perspective and lived practice, grounded in communal life (and obligations). It includes notions of territory, governance, labour, and enjoyment (in the form of fiestas).¹⁰¹ Thus, as Aldo González from the Unión de Organizaciones de la Sierra Juárez (UNOSJO)¹⁰² explains, ‘these characteristics that are typical of the Indigenous communities are those that have enabled them to survive throughout colonialism, and they are a living expression that also enables or has enabled them to

⁹³Hesketh, *Spaces of Capital/Spaces of Resistance*, pp. 74–5.

⁹⁴David Carruthers, ‘Indigenous ecology and the politics of linkage in Mexican social movements’, *Third World Quarterly*, 17:5 (1996), pp. 1011–12.

⁹⁵Susana González, ‘En este sexenio creció 53% el territorio concesionado a mineras’, *La Jornada* (3 September 2012).

⁹⁶Alessandro Morosin, ‘Comunalidad, Guendaliza’a and anti-mine mobilizations in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec’, *Journal of Political Ecology*, 27:1 (2020), pp. 917–938 (p. 922); Daniel Sandoval, ‘Expansión e intensificación de la explotación minera en México’ (desde 1988 hasta 2020), available at: {http://ceccam.org/sites/default/files/portada_0.jpg}.

⁹⁷Secretaría de Economía, ‘Panorama Minero del Estado de Oaxaca’, available at: {<http://www.sgm.gob.mx/pdfs/OAXACA.pdf>}, p. 11.

⁹⁸Chris Hesketh, ‘The clash of spatializations: Geopolitics and class struggles in Southern Mexico’, *Latin American Perspectives*, 40:4 (2013), pp. 70–87.

⁹⁹Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, *Anuario estadístico y geográfico de Oaxaca 2014* (Aguascalientes: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2014), p. 913.

¹⁰⁰Francisco López Bárcenas, ‘Territorios, tierra y recursos naturales de los Pueblos Indígenas en México’, in J. A. González Galván (ed.), *Constitución y derechos indígenas* (México, DF: UNAM, 2002), pp. 121–143 (p.126).

¹⁰¹Benjamin Maldonado Alvarado, *Autonomía y comunalidad india: Enfoques y propuestas desde Oaxaca* (Oaxaca: CEDI, 2002); Jamie Martínez Luna, *Comunalidad y desarrollo* (México: Conaculta/Campo, 2003).

¹⁰²Personal interview, 2017.

survive neoliberal globalisation'. The practice of *comunalidad* is therefore a concrete example of how the coloniality of space in IR (both as a material practice and epistemological project) is being resisted.

It is important to note the connections between the arrival of transnational capital and agrarian reform (as private companies were previously banned from such associations). This changed with reforms introduced in 1992. Policies such as PROCEDE and later FANAR sought to certify and regularize landholdings, which then facilitates privatization. Armando de la Cruz from Tequio Jurídico (a grassroots organization based in Oaxaca that promotes Indigenous autonomy and collective rights, especially to territory) argues that these policies are 'nothing more than the legalisation of dispossession, and this is due of course to the capitalist system of exploiting, of taking advantage of natural resources'. As has been identified as a broader pattern in Latin America,¹⁰³ the costs of this model in Mexico 'fall heavily on small-holder farming communities and Indigenous groups whose territories contain valuable materials'.¹⁰⁴ In response to this, Indigenous actors have been vital in questioning the model of development and its environmental consequences. In the current period, the main forms of conflict in Oaxaca revolve around mining concessions and the concessions provided in places such as the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in relation to wind farms.¹⁰⁵ Both of these generate conflicts by breaking communal relationships with land and therefore the possibility of Indigenous autonomy. Ana García from EDUCA summarized the situation as follows: 'we start with the idea that there are two life projects in conflict: the project of capital and the project of the communities'.¹⁰⁶ Expanding on this theme, Carmen Santiago Alonso, a founding member of Flor y Canto (a Oaxacan civil society organization dedicated to promoting and defending human rights and the collective rights of Indigenous peoples and their natural resources) spoke to the particularity of Oaxaca, noting:

there is an important motive, because we have not given up the defence and care of our natural resources. The land, the forests, the water, the minerals. Those that each and every one of the governments, from Carlos Salinas Gortari to the last president Enrique Peña Nieto, have given to the hands of transnational corporations. Therefore the value that we have as Indigenous people, have pushed us, have motivated us, they have required us to organise and defend our rights.¹⁰⁷

Armando de la Cruz from Tequio Jurídico spoke of the importance for Indigenous communities of strengthening their internal democratic mechanisms through community assemblies. He highlighted to me the importance of anti-extractive resistance in places such as Magdalena Teitipac and Capulalpam, both of which successfully mobilized against mining companies. In his view, such acts of resistance, whilst localized, 'set an example for other community processes that have the same problems' and demonstrate how defence might be possible.

As noted earlier, the major issue here is one of territorial defence counterposed to the logic of capital and the state.¹⁰⁸ Gabi Linares from UNOSJO stated in this regard, 'the subject of territory has become the axis that moves this articulation' among Indigenous movements.¹⁰⁹ Responding to a question I posed about the meaning of territory, Francisco García, who sits on the Comisariado

¹⁰³ Veltmeyer, 'The political economy of natural resource extraction'.

¹⁰⁴ Darcy Tetreault, 'Free-market mining in Mexico', *Critical Sociology*, 42:4–5 (2016), pp. 643–659 (p. 644).

¹⁰⁵ Wind power is often seen as a clean form of energy, and indeed most wind parks set up in the Isthmus are registered under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). However, Aldo Gonzalez (personal interview 2017) rejected this view, stating 'we are not able to say that they are speaking of clean mechanisms of development, they are speaking of an expropriation and about the exploitation of the countries of the South in this case'. (See also Hesketh, 'Clean development').

¹⁰⁶ Personal interview, 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Personal interview, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Hesketh, *Spaces of Capital/Spaces of Resistance*.

¹⁰⁹ Personal interview, 2017.

de Bienes Comunes (Commission of Communal Goods) in the municipality of the Zapotec community of Capulalpam told me, 'for us, it is life because from the land, from mother earth, we get our food, we get water, and when we die that's where we go. So for us, it is everything and that is why actions have been taken to take care of that territory ... there are elements that unite us strongly and one of those is territory.'¹¹⁰ Capulalpam reflects an interesting case of racialized class formation, as it has a long history based on mining (and thus seeming integration to the capitalist mode of production). Such a history provides the community with a clear element of class consciousness. However, alongside this, Indigenous communal social practices have also remained and been reinvigorated. Here, it was ex-miners who provided the basis for defence committees against neo-extractivist development, drawing from their memories of exploitation and its effect on the local water supply. Recounting one of the original meetings to discuss the mining concessions, García told me: 'When this information was presented, the assembly was called again and there they shouted in the sky and then they listened to those stories of the old miners and they said something that ... they no longer wanted that dark time of death in Capulalpam.'¹¹¹ Based on this resistance, the community has refused permission to a Canadian mining corporation, Continuum Resources, to prospect for gold in their territory, in spite of its gaining a fifty-year concession from the Mexican state, instead asserting their own autonomous, sovereign decision-making process. This example is illustrative of how Indigenous territorial claims directly contradict the claims of the nation-state to sovereignty and thus to control natural resources.

In the context of the neo-extractivist paradigm of development, Mexico has been seen as something of an outlier in relation to other countries in Latin America, as its economy has continued to be dominated by manufactured goods. Furthermore, its orthodox neoliberal political agenda meant that there was not the same effort as elsewhere for the state to capture resource rents.¹¹² However, with growing Indigenous resistance to mega-projects, there have been accompanying and targeted redistribution policies.¹¹³ This has been taking place since 2013, and these policies seek to gain subaltern support, in particular for the greater liberalization of the energy sector that took place under Enrique Peña Nieto.¹¹⁴ Carmen Santiago Alonso thus spoke to the urgency of Indigenous resistance as an environmental response to neo-extractivist development:

It is the southern states that, in the Mexican Republic, have organised ourselves around the defence of our rights, around the defence and care of the natural resources we have, because we cannot continue to allow them to irrationally exploit all our resources ... That is attacking our very nature, that is life-threatening, that the water is overexploited, that the earth is overexploited, that the forests are overexploited ... we cannot allow that which is happening, what the great transnational corporations are doing with all this natural wealth that we have ... The duty of us Indigenous peoples and communities, the duty of us women (because we are women!) ... is to defend this, to take care of this, for us and for future generations, because we want the planet to continue and what is happening right now is a great attack against our planet and we cannot allow it.¹¹⁵

I wish to argue that such examples of Indigenous struggles need to be de-provincialized and elevated to a core concern of IR. Given that they criss-cross concerns of sustainability in the global

¹¹⁰ Personal interview, 2015.

¹¹¹ Personal interview, 2015.

¹¹² Darcy Tetreault, 'The new extractivism in Mexico: Rent redistribution and resistance to mining and petroleum activities', *World Development*, 126 (2020), p. 104714.

¹¹³ Inés Durán Matute and Rocío Moreno, *La lucha por la vida frente a los megaproyectos en México* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara-Ciesas-Jorge Alonso, 2021).

¹¹⁴ Tetreault, 'The new extractivism in Mexico', pp. 2, 7.

¹¹⁵ Personal interview, 2017.

political economy, the contemporary ecological crisis, and the need for racial justice, such concerns go to the heart of challenging the coloniality of space in IR and making alternatives projects possible.

With the election of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in 2018, it appeared that there was scope for a change in direction away from the neoliberal era. However, his vision of change – encapsulated in the so-called Fourth Transformation – remains within a state-led capitalist developmental paradigm continuing the coloniality of space. That is to say, the logic of the nation-state and capital accumulation is prioritized over Indigenous claims to territory. Indigenous resistance to neo-extractivism in Mexico is of course not homogenous. It can be variously reform-oriented (e.g. geared towards obtaining greater benefits) or ecoterritorial, rejecting the dispossession associated with the expansion of the resource frontier. Tetreault notes that most resistance movements in Mexico (close to two-thirds) are of the more radical kind and that the majority are linked to the expansion of mining activity.¹¹⁶ In relation to radical resistance this is simultaneously a rejection and an affirmation, encapsulated in the common phrase, ‘*No a la minería, sí a la vida*’ (No to mining, yes to life). In terms of the affirmative yes to life, this ‘involves a consciousness of the colonial past and seeks to re-establish a link with the negated histories of colonised peoples.’¹¹⁷ A danger with place-based resistance to neo-extractivism is the potential celebration of isolated struggles that on their own can be rolled back.¹¹⁸ To this end, the development of the CIG in 2017 has been a positive initiative, as it seeks to link territorially based movements together in common articulation throughout Mexico. As Durán and Moreno outline: ‘The objective of the CIG was to position and make visible the Mexican (Indigenous) peoples, and with it their demands and problems but also look for strategies to slow the advance of the capitalist system and to take care of life and dignity collectively.’¹¹⁹ In short, therefore, this is an incipient project for challenging the coloniality of space by resisting the material practices that sustain dispossession and making alternative Indigenous epistemic projects more prominent.

This sentiment was echoed by Aldo Gonzalez, who stated:

We say that it is necessary to generate processes of articulation that go from the community level to the regional level. This is not easy to construct because every community defends its interests and at times has conflicts even with its neighbours. But it is important that they are weaving these spaces of articulation ... it is necessary because, let’s say, initiatives outside communities are being promoted at the global level, capital is moving around the world and it does not respect borders. The need for community articulation also must go in that direction because, for example, there may be some movements in Canada that could echo the struggles of communities so you need to establish those articulations so that there can be an echo in the places where the initiatives to plunder the communities are being generated.¹²⁰

Although a work in progress, the formation of the CIG, as well as networks at the national level (such as Asamblea Nacional de Afectados Ambientales [National Assembly of the Environmentally Affected] and Red Mexicana de Afectados por la Minería [Mexican Network of People Affected by Mining]) and at the transnational level (such as M4: Movimiento Mesoamericano contra el Modelo extractivo Minero [Mesoamerican Movement against the Mining Extractive Model]) can be seen as an example of what Simpson views as Indigenous international relations from below.¹²¹ The famous example of the Zapatistas is useful here in noting how the horizons of the possible can be expanded in challenging the coloniality of space.¹²² The transnational solidarity the Zapatistas

¹¹⁶Tetreault, ‘Free-market mining in Mexico.’

¹¹⁷Morosin, ‘Comunalidad’, p. 924.

¹¹⁸Hesketh, ‘Clean development’.

¹¹⁹Durán Matute and Moreno, *La lucha por la vida*, p. 13.

¹²⁰Personal interview, 2017.

¹²¹Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, pp. 55, 58, 67.

¹²²Hesketh, *Space of Capital/Spaces of Resistance*, pp. 158–70.

inspired, in terms of people and organizations from around the world seeking to learn from and with the movement, and re-engaging in activism in their own locales, shows what possibilities exist for political action.¹²³

Let us now contrast this experience of Indigenous resistance in Mexico with that of Bolivia to explore how these counter-geographies entangle with a contrasting process of state formation.

Bolivia

As noted in the introduction, demographically Bolivia has the highest percentage of the population that claims an Indigenous heritage. However, in line with the thesis I expressed earlier regarding the coloniality of space, the Indigenous population has historically been excluded from both state power and Indigenous modes of territorial sovereignty undermined by the expansion of capitalism.¹²⁴ Bolivia experienced a resurgence of Indigenous movements later than other countries in Latin America, owing to the land reforms associated with the National Revolution of 1952.¹²⁵ The Revolution served as a contradictory moment for Bolivia's Indigenous population. On the one hand, Indigenous and peasant groups were effectively enfranchised by the Revolution, as well as benefiting from processes of major land reform.¹²⁶ However, explicitly Indigenous identities were subsumed under the umbrella of *campesino* (peasant) identity. The modern nation-state in Bolivia was thus built upon the marginalization of an Indigenous identity through assimilationist policies.¹²⁷

The 1970s represented a period of change, however, with Indigenous cultural practices being promoted by intellectuals such as Fausto Reinaga, political groups such as the Kataristas, and organic intellectuals associated with the Taller de Historia Oral Andina. The coloniality of space was challenged here by a focus on the revival of the Indigenous ayllu as a form of political organization. This is a model of organization based on the pre-Hispanic past of Indigenous communities, collective ownership of land that is inalienable and where kinship ties are fundamental to the political system.¹²⁸ The ayllu has been a space of resistance to colonial hegemony and serves as an autonomous space for knowledge production and enacting an alternative cosmovision.¹²⁹ This revival of ayllus (and the larger system of markas, made up of several ayllus) found support in various transnational networks.¹³⁰

The revival of Indigenous culture was further enhanced with the election of Evo Morales and the Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS) in 2006.¹³¹ The preceding five-year period had been one of momentous social mobilization surrounding natural resources in Bolivia. The concrete result of this moment of synthesis between Indigenous struggles and national-popular forces was a symbolic refounding of Bolivia as a plurinational state.¹³² Whilst not exclusively an Indigenous movement, the political project of the MAS was nevertheless grounded in the power of Indigenous social forces.

¹²³ Alex Khasnabish, *Zapatismo beyond Borders: New Imaginations of Political Possibility* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

¹²⁴ Chris Hesketh, 'Between Pachakuti and passive revolution: The search for postcolonial sovereignty in Bolivia', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 33:4 (2020), pp. 567–86.

¹²⁵ Albó, 'El retorno del indio', p. 311.

¹²⁶ James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia 1952–1982* (London: Verso, 1984).

¹²⁷ María Eugenia Choque and Carlos Mamani, 'Reconstitución del ayllu y derechos de los pueblos indígenas: El movimiento indio en los Andes de Bolivia', *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, 6:1 (2001), pp. 202–224 (p. 204).; Cusicanqui, 'Liberal democracy and ayllu democracy', p. 99.

¹²⁸ Choque and Mamani, 'Reconstitución del ayllu', p. 207.

¹²⁹ Marcelo Fernández Osco, 'Ayllu: Decolonial critical thinking and (AN)other autonomy', in Blaser et al. (eds), *Indigenous Peoples and Autonomy*, pp. 29–30.

¹³⁰ Lucero, *Struggles of Voice*, p. 159, 164.

¹³¹ Tathagatan Ravindran, 'Geographies of Indigenous identity: Spatial imaginaries and racialised power struggles in Bolivia', *Antipode*, 51:3 (2019), pp. 949–67.

¹³² Forest Hylton and Sinclair Thompson, *Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), p. xxii.

The Pact of Unity brought together five of the most significant Indigenous movements, who sought to set aside their past differences in order to work together to institute a new constitution. This would include proposals regarding Indigenous autonomy and territorial rights, including control over natural resources.¹³³ In his public discourse, Evo Morales also placed an emphasis on moving away from neoliberalism and instead embracing notions of communitarian socialism, living well (*vivir bien* or *suma qamaña*) and protecting Mother Earth. In short, there was a promise to decolonize the state that was linked to Indigenous epistemologies.¹³⁴ Although territorial autonomy was a major long-standing demand of many Indigenous movements in Bolivia, unlike the anti-statist resistance in Mexico, Indigenous movements in Bolivia converged upon the state in an ‘institutionalised moment of articulation’.¹³⁵ This period thus held out promise for a major challenge to the coloniality of space in Bolivia through a radical rethinking of territorial practices and social organization.

However, this has not been a straightforward story of Indigenous liberation but rather has revealed contrasting political projects for what such Indigenous liberation might mean.¹³⁶ Under the MAS, a strategy of ‘resource nationalism’ was employed, whereby greater state-based claims were asserted over natural resources, most notably oil and gas. Whilst this was indeed an important mobilizing demand of *some* Indigenous peoples, it should also be noted that the imaginary of nation-state-based sovereignty often conflicts with other Indigenous, territorially rooted concepts of sovereignty. Gustafson captures the essence of this conflict in his conception of Bolivia as a ‘gaseous state’:

the decolonizing struggles of Indigenous peoples and rethinkings of a new political order were also gasified, such that fossil capital exerted a kind of transterritorial sovereignty that privileged certain territorial projects (like that of the regionalists and a particular expression of nationalism) while subsuming other more radical political utopias.¹³⁷

In what follows, I show how the coloniality of space has in fact been reproduced in Bolivia (often in the name of Indigenous liberation). This links to the deepening of neo-extractive development and the concomitant extension of the resource frontier, which fails to undermine traditional relations within and across IR.

The re-election of Evo Morales in 2009 has now been seen by some analysts as marking the end of the promise of Indigenous mobilization, to be replaced with the logic of the state.¹³⁸ Pamela Cartagena, director of the Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado articulated this idea clearly, stating that, ‘today, Indigenous peasants and their organisations have set aside their strategic agenda and are handling the political agenda – partisan of the MAS. The issues of their own agenda have been left aside for attending a political party agenda.’¹³⁹ Hernán Avila, who originally served as an advisor to the constituent assembly and was also formerly the director of the Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS) echoed such an analysis:

what happens in 2009 is that the government – in an attempt to defeat the conservative sector which was still very influential, especially in the lowlands of Bolivia – makes a pact with parts

¹³³Stéphanie Rousseau and Anahi Morales Hudon, ‘Paths towards autonomy in Indigenous women’s movements: Mexico, Peru, Bolivia’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 48:1 (2016), pp. 33–60 (p. 46).

¹³⁴Eduardo Gudynas and Alberto Acosta, ‘La renovación de la crítica al desarrollo y el buen vivir como alternativa’, *Utopía y praxis latinoamericana*, 16:53 (2011), pp. 71–83.

¹³⁵Fernando Garcés, ‘The domestication of Indigenous autonomies in Bolivia’, in Nicole Fabricant and Bret Gustafson (eds), *Remapping Bolivia: Resources, Territory and Indigeneity in a Plurinational State* (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2011), pp. 46–67 (p.48).

¹³⁶T. Thagatan Ravindran, ‘Divergent identities: Competing Indigenous political currents in 21st-century Bolivia’, *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 15:2 (2020), pp. 130–53.

¹³⁷Bret Gustafson, *Bolivia in the Age of Gas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), p. 5.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 174.

¹³⁹Personal interview, 2019.

of that sector. The deepening agenda of the community plurinational state is replaced by the productive development agenda linked to agribusiness. Extractive activity is deepened.¹⁴⁰

This deepening of neo-extractivism was linked by many organizations that I spoke to with the violation of Indigenous rights. Ruth Alipaz, one of the founders of the Coordinadora Nacional de Defensa de los Territorios Indígenas Originarios Campesinos y Áreas Protegidas (CONTIOCAP) explained the situation as follows: ‘extractive policies aim at the expropriation of territory ... to take your living space, to take the fundamental resources such as water, land ... the freedom you have, the possibilities. Extractivism subdues people, oppresses people, whether Indigenous or not.’¹⁴¹

Expanding on this theme of extractivism having negative effects on Indigenous rights, Pamela Cartagena also noted the adverse consequences for democracy, as the right to free, prior, and informed consent became subordinated to the logic of extractive development:

Today we no longer talk about the right to consultations. The government says we will do exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in this area and I count on the endorsement of the organisation. In reality, it does have the endorsement but of the leaders, not the social base, the ones who suffer the effects of the model. The fires in the Chiquitania¹⁴² and the Amazon are the effect of an agro-export model that extends the frontier.¹⁴³

Neo-extractive development – which includes major associated infrastructure – undermines the capacity for alternatively rooted, territorially based forms of citizenship and, in the long term, possibilities of sustainability.¹⁴⁴ In other words, it limits the possibility of challenging the coloniality of space by undercutting the material basis of an alternative and refuses to engage with such alternative epistemologies and ways of being. However, a key division to be noted in the context of Indigenous movements in Bolivia is between those groups that are territorially rooted (in ancestral lands) and seek the recovery of traditions and political forms associated with these spaces and those groups that are trying to gain further access to resources and institutions of national state spaces and are thus comfortable with the idea of ‘resource nationalism.’¹⁴⁵ The MAS has tried to appeal to both constituencies, but this was always an unresolved contradiction within their hegemonic project.¹⁴⁶

Evidencing this split, Hugo López Paxi from the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) focused on the progressive achievements of the MAS, highlighting the positive role of infrastructural development. For him, Indigenous liberation was hard won and still precarious: ‘If before the q’aras dominated, now we are in power. What would happen, if say, the q’aras beat us in the elections? The fellow deputies with *polleras* will no longer exist.’¹⁴⁷ Edgar Parredes from the Central Obrera Boliviana noted that ‘there will always be failures in every process.’ However, he argued that considerable progress had been made in social inclusion under the MAS, and his main future priorities were linked to safe and decent paid work with a living wage.¹⁴⁸ Echoing this theme of social inclusion, Isabel Ramírez, Secretary of Justice for the Confederación

¹⁴⁰ Personal interview, 2019.

¹⁴¹ Personal interview, 2020.

¹⁴² The Chiquitania is an area of dry forest in the department of Santa Cruz. In August of 2019, huge fires ripped through the forest, burning 3.6 million hectares of land. Many critics saw this as a direct result of the Morales government’s efforts to expand the agricultural frontier by encouraging slash-and-burn agriculture.

¹⁴³ Personal interview, 2019.

¹⁴⁴ Jessica Hope, ‘Driving development in the Amazon: Extending infrastructural citizenship with political ecology in Bolivia’, *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 5:2 (2022), pp. 520–42.

¹⁴⁵ Canessa, ‘Conflict, claim and contradiction’, p. 160, Ravindran, ‘Geographies of Indigenous identity’.

¹⁴⁶ Anders Burman, ‘“Now we are indígenas”: Hegemony and indigeneity in the Bolivian Andes’, *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 9:3 (2014), pp. 247–71.

¹⁴⁷ Personal interview, 2019. Q’ara is a term loosely referring to the white elite of Bolivia. *Pollera* meanwhile refers to the dress of Indigenous women.

¹⁴⁸ Personal interview, 2019.

Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia – Bartolina Sisa also spoke of the MAS period empowering Indigenous women and recovering natural resources on behalf of the nation. For her, there were no conflicts among Indigenous groups in Bolivia.¹⁴⁹ Finally, Felix Ajpi from the Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia and now an MAS senator, claimed that the ‘process of change’ in Bolivia had signified dignity for Indigenous people. He acknowledged there were contradictions in neo-extractive development but was loath to give it up immediately:

We now have another way of thinking: to no longer be extractive, because everything has a limit. It [resource extraction] will end, and when it ends, what will happen to us? Bolivia is going to stop being extractive, that is our goal ... but we will not be able to definitely change too soon. If gas is going to continue to be useful in about 100 years from now, we have to leave our new generations ways of producing and generating the economy.¹⁵⁰

However, rather than rethinking neo-extractivism, under the MAS it was in fact accelerated, as embargoes on hydrocarbon exploitation were removed in seven out of 22 national parks and Bolivia moved to become the most natural-resource-dependent nation in Latin America. This expansion of the resource frontier has presaged increased conflicts with territorially rooted Indigenous groups.¹⁵¹

The conflict over the construction of a highway through the Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Secure (TIPNIS) was cited by many of my interviewees as being the symbolic moment that both saw Indigenous communities sacrificed in order to expand the frontiers of accumulation and broke their relationship with the MAS government. Arturo Rebollo Herbas from CEJIS informed me: ‘from that point, the repressions begin, extractive projects and regulatory packages begin that give extractivism ease and violate Indigenous territories and rights.’¹⁵² CIBOB and CONAMAQ, two of the most important Indigenous organizations in Bolivia, left the Pact of Unity following this dispute and were effectively taken over by parallel organizations loyal to the MAS. Former vice-president Álvaro García Linera justified the construction of the highway in terms of the furtherance of the state’s territorial sovereignty in the face of what he dubbed ‘hacendado-patrimonial power.’¹⁵³ In his discourse, this was also an issue of development defined in geopolitical terms, where the countries of the Global South would not become ‘park rangers’ for the industrial North.¹⁵⁴ However, in this argument, the social dynamics were reduced to a struggle between sovereign state and the capitalist class over territory. The idea that there might be separable Indigenous interests for territorial sovereignty (and their own agenda for development) is therefore elided.

With regards to the political economy of neo-extractivism, this conflict is also revealing of the fundamental issue: the resource-nationalist policies of the state (justified in the name of Indigenous development) and its accompanying geographical project versus the position of territorially rooted Indigenous communities that seek control over their own resources. The latter is clearly seen as dispensable to the former.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Personal interview, 2019.

¹⁵⁰ Personal interview, 2019.

¹⁵¹ Bebbington, ‘The new extraction’, p. 14, Torres Wong, *Natural Resources*, p. 13; Henry Veltmeyer, ‘Bolivia: Between voluntarist developmentalism and pragmatic extractivism’, in Henry Veltmeyer and James Petras (eds), *The New Extractivism: A Post-Neoliberal Development Model or Imperialism of the Twenty-First Century* (London: Zed, 2014), pp. 8–113 (p. 84).

¹⁵² Personal interview, 2020.

¹⁵³ Álvaro García Linera, *Geopolítica de la Amazonía: Poder hacendado-patrimonial y acumulación capitalista* (La Paz: Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional, 2012).

¹⁵⁴ Los Tiempos, ‘García Linera: No somos guardabosques’, (2012), available at: <https://www.lostiempos.com/actualidad/nacional/20120621/garcia-linera-no-somos-guardabosques>}.

¹⁵⁵ Postero, *The Indigenous State*, p. 181.

Pamela Cartagena explained the issue as follows:

There is a kind of colonisation, especially in the lowlands of the Andean region, which is not only going to exploit the land, but to impose development models, to impose customs etc. Majorities are being imposed ... in reality there are no policies that encourage this dialogue, respect for minorities etc. ... And of course, there are conflicts over the visions of development.¹⁵⁶

Johnson Jimenez Cobo, president of the Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz, in responding to a question I posed about extractive conflicts, articulated this conflict in terms of differences of ideology or cosmovision among Indigenous groups:

the plurinational state recognizes all Indigenous nations, but not all of us have the same ideas: Tacana has another worldview, another culture, another language. I, as Leco also have another culture, another language so it does not combine well and we do not understand each other so much. Why? Because brother, Aymaras, with all due respect I say, the Aymara nation always has a vision of: 'Throw it to the mountain', but instead we as Indigenous peoples have lived with nature, with that ecosystem, with biodiversity, with the potential that our territory has in natural resources.¹⁵⁷

With major Indigenous organizations being fragmented and co-opted by the MAS, it has meant that other Indigenous communities have been vulnerable to intensified extractive activities, especially in the lowlands. However, Alex Villca Limaco cited the case of Chepete Bala (where a planned hydroelectric project was due to take place) as an example of successful territorial resistance that can then link with wider national and international struggles. However, he noted that 'it has been very important to seek to weave resistance at all levels, to look for strategic allies, especially Indigenous people who fight in defence of territory, because the idea is to be able to make these struggle not be seen as isolated struggles'.¹⁵⁸ It was in this atmosphere, having seen major national Indigenous organizations co-opted or repressed, and needing to coordinate a network of multiple Indigenous resistance movements that were territorially rooted, that new organizations such as CONTIOCAP were born. Ruth Alipaz told me that they had four objectives in mind: (1) to support acts of territorial resistance, (2) to help publicize problems of affected communities in the media, (3) to help train and educate communities in their rights, and finally (4) to generate alternative proposals.¹⁵⁹ The latter was emphasized as being particularly important as 'it is not enough to criticize the extractive projects: mining, oil, hydroelectric, monoculture and others, but from our struggles and resistances we also have to be proactive, purposeful and give alternative solutions'.¹⁶⁰ This combination of making alternative epistemic projects visible and alternative material practices viable is vital to challenging the coloniality of space.

Whereas Indigenous movements in Bolivia therefore converged previously on the state, there is now a growing split between those who continue to support the MAS project of extractive development and those who seek to defend an alternative vision of development based in Indigenous territorial practices. However, this also raises further questions about the different meanings attached to postcolonial sovereignty and the struggles to achieve this. In other words, there remains contestation about what challenging the coloniality of space in IR might mean in practice.

¹⁵⁶Personal interview, 2019.

¹⁵⁷Personal interview, 2019.

¹⁵⁸Personal interview, 2020.

¹⁵⁹Personal interview, 2020.

¹⁶⁰Villca Limaco, personal interview, 2020.

Conclusion

This article has sought to draw attention to the coloniality of space in IR. It has highlighted how Indigenous territorial concerns are largely elided in the discipline. Current attempts to expand the resource frontier in Latin America via neo-extractive development not only continue this lineage of the coloniality of space, but it also provides a major window to view alternative territories of belonging that challenge the nation-state and seek to create new alliances from below. In the present conjuncture, the Pink Tide (which began, roughly in 1998) and the wave of optimism it originally brought has receded in Latin America. The state-based left has been defeated in various places by conservative social forces, and where the left remains in power its relationship to Indigenous communities is often one of hostility. This can and should provide a broader set of reflections on development and decolonization, which this article has sought to draw attention to. Indigenous territorial resistance in this view can be seen as a necessary counterpoint to a homogenizing project of capital that undermines the material possibility of survival and sovereignty of Indigenous nations and communities.¹⁶¹ Indeed, for Leanne Simpson, the fact of Indigenous communities uniting and sharing experiences is an insurgent form of Indigenous international relations from below.¹⁶² This does not mean the task ahead will be easy. A major challenge with the anti-extractivist position of Indigenous communities is the problem of hegemony. Whilst key isolated successes can be noted, whereby individual extractive projects were successfully refused, it raises the question of how resistance can be shifted into broader purposeful transformation or how the ‘unity of the diverse’ can be formed.¹⁶³ This in turn raises further questions such as who the collective subject of political transformation is and how a broad coalition can be constructed that is able to link with wider movements for social justice, thereby overcoming the isolated, peripheral nature of many Indigenous communities.¹⁶⁴ Any such transformation would also need an alternative political project capable of both challenging short-term economic interests and gaining wider acceptance whilst challenging established path dependencies. The answer to how this might be possible is not only beyond the scope of this paper, but furthermore it remains a work in progress. In an urgent time of environmental crisis, however, these will be questions that will take on a collective urgency for the near future. The resolution of these is one in which all of humanity therefore has a collective stake.

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank Adam Morton and Ian Bruff for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I would also like to acknowledge the helpful suggestions given my three anonymous reviewers.

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¹⁶¹Estes, *Our History Is the Future*.

¹⁶²Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*.

¹⁶³David McNally, ‘Unity of the diverse’: Working-class formations and popular uprisings from Cochabamba to Cairo’, in Colin Barker, Laurence Cox, John Krinsky, and Alf Gunvald, Nilsen (eds), *Marxism and Social Movements* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 401–423.

¹⁶⁴Chris Hesketh, ‘A Gramscian conjuncture in Latin America? Reflections on violence, hegemony, and geographical difference’, *Antipode*, 51:5 (2019), pp. 1474–1494 (pp. 1286–9); Riofrancos, *Resource Radicals*, p. 180.