A dissertation submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of the

Central European University in partial fulfillment of the

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Multispecies foodscapes and polyculture politics,

rematriation

from Iximulew's Pueblo Maya Ixil

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2024

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, Gina D'Alesandro, candidate for the Ph.D. degree in Environmental Sciences and Policy, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. No AI was used in the writing or analysis of the dissertation. All images are sourced by the author unless otherwise noted. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the dissertation infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the dissertation has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION submitted by:

Gina D'ALESANDRO

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and entitled: **Multispecies foodscapes and polyculture politics, rematriation from Iximulew's Pueblo Maya Ixil**

November 2024

This dissertation presents multispecies ethnographic research conducted with the Maya Ixil Indigenous *Pueblo* and their *milpa* food system in Iximulew, Abya Yala. Identifying Ixil demands for food sovereignty as contestations of extractivism and its exploitation of 'resources' that endures in the wake of European settler colonization, Indigenous practices and knowledge systems are articulated as structures of care for and maintenance of the land-based *milpa* food system that builds upon and continues a heritage of distinctly 'more-than-human' and Indigenous systems of governance and economy conserving networks of life and biodiversity, *in situ*. Forms of Maya Ixil ways of knowing, doing, and being are identified as the praxis of a politics of *feminismo comunitario* that, similarly, defines Ixil ancestral territory and identities connected to land. The process of re-articulating this politics of connection is characterized through the theoretical frame of 'rematriation', a process of equalizing inequalities across species and from colonial social constructs as fractured relationships between Indigenous Peoples, the land, and its living systems are restored. Analyzing the rematriation process through the 4Rs (relationality, reciprocity, responsibility, and redistribution), settler colonial rationalities guiding extractivism are juxtaposed with Maya Ixil notions of living in right relation, the good life, or '*tiichajil*', to reveal the latter's place-based, non-anthropocentric notions of conservation and development.

Through the example of the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve, the first empirical chapter of the dissertation examines patterned processes of extractivism designed by the colonial nature/culture divide's top-down and people-less model of 'conservation'. Producing a form of 'conservation' that protects 'resources' for the benefactors of a colonial, patriarchal modernity to profit from, models like these at Visis Cabá are shown dispossessing Indigenous Peoples in a landscape-scale impoverishment that occurs across species. Advocating for the bottom-up biocultural diversity conservation model, carried across generations of Maya Ixil for millennia and which today serves as a source of restoration and repair of traumas to a more-than-human landscape through its equalizing and unifying effects, the dissertation's last three empirical chapters connect the Maya Ixil and their food sovereign processes with the production of an abundance of species and health, designed in and by multispecies reciprocities. The focus of these chapters centers around the mechanisms of biodiversity *creation* and its stewardship according to Indigenous knowledge systems and practices that the Maya Ixil transmit through land-based pedagogies of the *milpa*.

Through an analysis of Maya Ixil initiatives and mechanisms as structures of a rematriation process, the dissertation seeks to understand how Ixil biocultural knowledges and practices demonstrate more-than-human ways of knowing, doing, and being that steward the health of a landscape as an obligation and responsibility to provide care that is shared by all species. The dissertation argues that food sovereignty movements of the Maya Ixil and other Indigenous land caretakers who protect more-than-human identities and their networks of life materialize forms of justice in a decolonization movement that repairs and reorients the human in her relationship to the Earth. Locating the more-than-human politics of *feminismo comunitario*, central in Iximulewan, more-than-human justice movements, this politics of equality and its wealth of shared abundance addresses global problems as its benefits extend to networks of life globally through their translation into health, life, and a future for all beings.

Keywords: Maya Ixil, *campesinx*, biocultural diversity conservation, *milpa*, more-than-human, rematriation, biodiversity, environment, cuerpo-tierra-territorio, more-than-human justice, *feminismo comunitario*.

Acknowledgements

It is important to this part of my positionality to take responsibility and be accountable for change, inviting others of the same positionality to do the same. This is a vital part of the more-than-human social justice movements I participate in that address inequality and injustice at the grassroots level with impacts that connect movements at the global one. Every positionality has a role to play to invoke change. Aside from holding those accountable who invoke the most violence and pain by benefitting from the structures of inequality, from my positionality I also support and propel forward this research's interlocutors in the shared movement that is beyond the human, to reach equality, justice, and the material metric of it measured in the materiality of food as health. In relation to Indigenous decolonial actors in a shared more-than-human movement to bring change to our relationships with the living world, I do not claim to speak on behalf of IPLC. In the feminist tradition of "stand[ing] with" them (Tallbear 2014: 2) in the process of conducting research that seeks to identify and elaborate upon shared goals and desires while also keeping oneself within a critical frame, the intention of the research is to contribute new knowledge and insights to a broader public regarding pathways into a more-than-human future, guided by healthful relationships with plants, animals, fungi and others, others who are also a part of a collective 'food system'. I gratefully acknowledge the depth of knowledge and perspective shared with me in the course of my research, informing and shaping the orientation of this research and writing and teaching me how to better advocate for the movement and make space for those who should be seen leading it. *T'an tixh* to the Maya Ixil for the invitation to undertake this project and for your kindness and care. Most importantly, thank you for your work and effort to push change and continue fighting for justice, despite the challenges.

While it is important to acknowledge specifically the time, energy and intimacy of their lives shared with me of those whom I spent time with in Iximulew and my many human and other-than-human teachers along the way, I want to deeply thank those who became my friends and extended family from the Ixil Region. The luxury of safety to name others is an injustice I'll continue to hold myself accountable to working to combat.

While my personal journey allowed me to come into contact with the communities of care from this research that have also provided space for forms of healing that have also lent hope, much of my personal journey that motivates the work and drive for justice appears only behind its words. Strongly motivating what does appear here, however, and how the research took shape from a body who has shared some space with the injustices I speak about here, I would like to re-affirm the intentions of my research which come from a place of dedicating myself to change. A change in human relationships that return to ways of living that respect other forms of life and value

them in ways that cannot be extracted from their complexities that give all of us the possibility of life. While to many this change seems abstract and meaningless, for those who have the embodied experience of injustice, and, on the other side, the forms of community that the alternative can create, we continue in the space of hope for change to impact everywhere all aspects of life as we know it. For those who participate in this movement and continue to dedicate their lives to bringing the justice of change, change that benefits all of us and in all of the more-than-human world's forms, despite so many challenges, thank you.

List of Abbreviations

ALMG – Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala

CaC – *campesinx-a-campesinx* (farmer-to-farmer)

CACIF – Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations

CAFTA- DR – Dominican Republic–Central America Free Trade Agreement

CEH – Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico

CEMEC – Centro de Monitreo y Evaluación de CONAP [Center for Monitoring and Evaluation of CONAP]

CPR – Comunidades de Población en Resistencia (Communities of People in Resistance)

COCODE – Consejo Comunitario de Desarollo [Community Development Council]

CODECA – Campesino Development Committee

CONAP – Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas [National Protected Area Council]

CONRED – Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres [National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction]

COVID-19 – coronavirus (CoV) 2019

CUC – Peasant Unity Community (Comité de Unidad Campesina)

FONTIERRAS – Nacional de Tierras

FUNDEBASE – La Fundación para el Desarrollo y Fortalecimiento de las Organizaciones de Base

FUNDAMAYA – Fundación Maya

GREPALMA – Guatemalan Palm Producers Association (Gremial de Palmicultores de Guatemala)

IACHR – Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

ILK – Indigenous and local Knowledge

ILO – International Labour Organization (La Oficina Internacional del Trabajo)

IPBES – Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IPLC – Indigenous Peoples and local communities

INAB – Instituto Nacional de Bosques (Guatemala)

INTA – Institute for Agrarian Transformation (Instituto de Transformación Agraria)

IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature

LVC – La Via Campesina

MAGA – Ministerio de Agricultura Ganadería y Alimentación (Guatemala)

MARN – Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales- Guatemala)

MINUGUA – La Misión de Naciones Unidas en Guatemala (United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala)

MST – Movimiento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra

NGO – non-governmental organization

PAC – Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil

PINFOR – Programa de Incentivos Forestales

RBM – Reserva de Biosfera Maya

REHMI – Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica

TSE – Supreme Electoral Tribunal

UFCO – United Fruit Company (La United Fruit Company)

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados)

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

I. Introduction

The trauma of colonialism remains an open wound for many Indigenous People in Iximulew,

'Land of Maize', as multiple Maya languages refer to the lands of Guatemala[1]. Rupturing the

"tejido social"[2], the 'social fabric of the community', the impact and intergenerational trauma

(Duran and Duran 1995; Duran 2019) of colonialism continues to be felt across Iximulew. From

a decolonial perspective, the historical interaction between Guatemala's Indigenous Peoples and

settler colonial figures gives context to understand how Indigenous communities struggle for

reparations and justice, particularly following the most recent and blatant atrocities in

Guatemala's internal armed conflict from 1960 to 1996[i] followed by a challenging and

incomplete reconciliation process (Viaene 2011; Brett 2016; 2016b; Olson 2016).

Relationships to land and more-than-human life in Guatemala are marked by a fundamental

ontological divide between settler colonial and indigenous perspectives that have persisted in

marginalizing indigenous populations in North and South America, referred to by many

Indigenous Peoples respectively as Turtle Island[3] and Abya Yala[4], since the colonial era. Many

Indigenous Peoples of Iximulew see current investments in extractivist projects, such as energy

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[1] From the language of Kaqchikel, 'Iximulew' is broken down as 'Ixim' meaning 'maize' and '-ulew' or 'land of'.
[2] This is the terminology used by many interlocutors of this research.
[3] The name for North America for many of the land's Indigenous peoples is translated to something along the lines of the English translation 'Turtle Island' (Kimmerer 2013: 3-5; Mann 2022).
[4] Abya Yala is the name of the territory of Latin America in the Cuna language and how Indigenous Maya scholars like Lorena Cabnal (2017: 102; Cabnal and CISCSA Ciudades Feministas 2019), referencing the occupants of the original ancestral pueblos of the continent, prefer to conceptualize Latin America. Figueroa-Helland (2012: 247-248) offers a combination of "beautiful, flourishing, good, well, plentiful, luscious, excellent, blossoming, mature, in plenitude, sublime, magnificent, among others" as translations for the "*Yala*" in *Abya-Yala*, the Kuna people of Panama's name for 'the Americas' (Figueroa-Helland 2012: 2). The complete phrase named to mean something along the lines of "land in plenitude, blossoming, in full maturity, plentiful, flourishing, et cetera" (ibid.) humans play a part in sustaining this fertility.

and resource extraction for foreign markets (Batz 2017; 2022; 2024 forthcoming) and people-exclusive conservation projects as extending colonial legacies. Indigenous Peoples such as the Maya Ixil have historically defended the integrity of their 'more-than-human' world, often with their lives. Today they continue to do so by recreating reciprocal relationships with their lands, seeds, and territories through their food sovereignty and biodiversity conservation practices embedded in their traditional *milpa* agricultural system and farmer-to farmer based social networks.

I.   Research focus, questions, and chapter guide

This dissertation is a study of how the Maya Ixil, through their biodiverse agricultural practices, seed knowledge, and land-based pedagogies recreate and revitalize ancestral connections to the land and defend their territory through food and seed sovereignties, demonstrating at the same time how the revitalization of ancestral practices prove to be alternative models of conservation in the face of deep colonial and post-war legacies and power imbalances. The dissertation focuses on how the Maya Ixil find, through a process of reconnecting with more-than-human practices, knowledge systems, and ways of belonging, a site and means for reparation, restoration, and ultimately healing (Osejo and Martínez-Medina 2023) through the rearticulation of, connection to, and transformation from the soil (see Millner 2017; 2023). In its findings, the dissertation details from the processes of continuing and re-connecting with the lifeways of ancestors, how the Ixil strengthen the health of not just humans but a more-than-human existence.

With the example of the Maya Ixil, the dissertation focuses on how humans and their situated imaginaries within the world not only can relate to the more-than-human as a form of biodiversity conservation, food sovereignty, and a pathway to better more-than-human health, but that these more-than-human forms of community exist beyond human social inequalities that continue to multiply against them today. Indigenous movements to revitalize knowledge systems and resist colonization protect biocultural diversity through lifeways that reconstitute reciprocal relationships, a restoration effort that moves beyond the inequalities of colonialism to also recreate a collective and communal abundance in which all of life's beings can partake.

The dissertation and its empirical chapters posed the following three research questions:

1. What logics undergird top-down conservation models in Guatemala, and how and why do the Maya Ixil contest these approaches?

2. How have the Maya Ixil place-based forms of biodiversity conservation and food systems emerged out of historic pre-Columbian cosmologies and how do they enact alternative, non-anthropocentric models of relationships between humans and other species, both in theory and practice today?

3. How do these Maya Ixil biodiversity conservation models and food systems relate to the broader political defense of Indigenous territories and worldviews?

These questions aim to understand how food systems endemic to place provide a more sustainable model for society based on implicit cooperations and reciprocities across species that support these more-than-human networks when they are understood as communal food systems. Starting at these trans-species equalities to build back the structures of support for the more-than-human, in the chapters that follow, the research questions guide an analysis of local systems and food sovereignties look like from the territory of the Maya Ixil. As organized from, by, and for grassroots groups, and forming multispecies assemblages according to Maya Ixil ancestral knowledge embodied as biocultural performativity, the dissertation explores how food sovereignties relate to 'biodiversity' cultivation, stewardship, and protection as a part of the defense of Indigenous ways of thinking, doing, being, knowing, and, ultimately, relating to the world as *more-than*-human.

I address all three research questions by theorizing from a Maya ontological frame the human body as sharing Earth's, a perspective that moves away from colonial imposed divides creating a 'nature' and a 'culture' as separate. Blurring also possibilities thereafter of the human to claim ownership over land, seed, or any other living being necessary to the functioning of all, I situate Maya and Indigenous understandings of care of the Earth and its body as necessary re-orientation of the human into Earth's cycles of reciprocity, equal in relationality, and through the responsibility to be in this place, a reparation and restoration of health to Earth's ecosystem. The objectification and separation of land from a more-than-human world is central to the continued colonization of unequal, anthropocentric, and extractive society, but, as the Ixil also demonstrate, conflict at the site of this ontological difference in interpreting relationships to land has the potential to address global environmental change.

Using a method of inquiry that follows this theory and does not follow the hegemony of human superiority imposed by colonial frames of thinking, multispecies ethnography is used in the research to collect data from living within and connecting with the more-than-human experience from the perspective of the Maya Ixil as they advocate for the political recognition of their ancestrally-linked lifeways that they articulate as efforts toward food sovereignty. Addressing all three research questions, the multispecies ethnographic method interrogates the universality of the nature/culture divide while allowing Ixil ontological perspectives and epistemologies related to their place-based food systems to guide the scientific research on more-than-human communities where humans are oriented in trans-species roles of caretaking Earth to feed its collective living community. As Kovach (2009: x) notes "Indigenous struggles for autonomy and freedom from oppression begin at the level of epistemology". Refusing to adopt separations between humans and other beings, a method that includes a consideration of agency beyond the human is used to address the inequalities of knowledge production that exclude, erode, and de-value Indigenous Peoples and their lifeways (Kovach 2009).

Introducing the central problem statement of the dissertation focused on the loss of species diversity beyond the human and the transformation of the environments and ecosystems globally, I will provide a brief review of literature relevant to this issue to understand why addressing human social inequalities is important toward maintaining the possibility for a living future on the planet. Specifically, I trace the phenomenon of global biodiversity loss as strongly correlated with the spread of industrial agriculture and fossil fuel use/waste production associated with anthropocentric lifestyles characteristic of a minority of a global human elite. Locating Iximulew

as the central geographic focus of this research, I draw upon literature around pre-Columbian food systems to show how the very people-d history of the region generated high biodiversity in what are today Indigenous territories, linking the Maya Ixil with those ancestral peoples through worldview, beliefs, language, and practices that continue to be attached to their more-than-human food system of today, referred to as the *milpa*. Demonstrating the relationship of colonization and its cumulative effects of global change, before arriving to the central arguments of the dissertation I highlight the role of the Guatemalan nation-state in maintaining and furthering human social inequalities to demonstrate the continued forms of colonization that link to the lifestyles of global environmental change that jeopardize biodiversity by eroding its social fabric.

II.   Ecocide and loss of biodiversity

i.   The patterns of settler colonialism

Scholars of settler colonialism[5] have come to characterize what has emerged as a general pattern (Wolfe 2001; 2006) of the theft of communal lands and desecration of associated more-than-human lifeways, patterns that begin with claims of 'discovery', followed by invasion, occupation, and a final divulging of the commons (Ford 2010). Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson (2016: 251) define settler colonialism as "a structure of domination that is partly predicated on the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples' lands and the forms of political

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[5] Anthropologist Patrick Wolfe (2001: 868) describes settler colonialism as that colonial pattern which "seeks to replace the natives on their land rather than extract surplus value by mixing their labor with a colony's natural resources" in a "logic of elimination" that provides this as the "organizing principle" (2006: 388) of the settler colonial structure.

authority and jurisdiction that govern [Indigenous] relationship to these lands". American environmental law scholar Jedediah Purdy (2012: 182) notes the premise of *terra nullius*[ii] as providing a foundation for early settler accounts that reported 'discovering new lands' in the 'New World'. The concept of *terra nullius* re-defined encountered lands according to settler depictions of it as *without people* (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014: 2), effectively "empty" and/or "unproductive" (Moreton-Robinson 2005; 2015; 2019) and, thus, a frontier of total and complete remaking that included for the cultivation of wheat or other specific crops of the European diet[iii] (Earle 2012).

Settling further into the Americas with significant help from imported diseases brought by Europeans to the continent (Fenn 2001; Lovell 1988; MacLeod 2007; Koch et al. 2019), settler categorizations of such *terra nullius* lands repurposed for their utility became 'unclaimed' 'wastelands' and 'wilderness'[iv], marking new uses for them that mounted pressure on indigenous populations to relinquish what ancestral relationships they maintained with their lands (see Fixico 1994: 20-23; Deloria 1985) through deceptive/fraudulent/unjust treaties[v] and outright violence. Settler framings of land and its indigenous peoples as lacking 'civilization' self-justified settler colonial discovery, invasion, occupation, and a remaking of new 'commons' according to culturally made notions of nature and culture that made division and organized categories thereafter into hierarchies of inequality that have become a foundation for extractive practices. Wolfe (2006: 388) notes the hallmark of settler colonialism's "specific, irreducible element" as predicated upon settler-state territoriality, or a settler rationalization for how and why stolen land has been 'rightfully' reappropriated as an owned item for settler control. Kolia (2021: 7) asserts that coloniality in the context of the frontier, generally, "underpins the society-

nature distinction necessary to productively utilize the soil fertility, minerals, forestry, water of the 'unused' frontier environment."

Not just about re-defining land, the frontier also marked a site of forced culture assimilation, invasion, and occupation by swaths of migrating settlers naturalizing the 'earned'[vi] outcomes of their 'predestined'[6] and "manifest destiny"[vii] determined by their god and legal authorities[viii]. Advanced from spreading the 'frontier' and penetrating 'borderlands' (see Hamalainen 2008; Adelman 2019) as divinely and legally justified by manifest destiny and the doctrine of discovery (Borrows 2015), the "elimination of the native" is identified by Wolfe (1999: 2) as settler colonialism's 'determinate feature', where "[t]he colonizers come to stay—invasion is a structure, not an event"[ix]. Wolfe (2008) characterizes the rationality developed from the pattern as a "settler logics of elimination" where military-led logics of extinction and land expropriation adapted to work "through both structural impoverishment and spectacle violence to sever Indigenous peoples from their land" (Ybarra 2018: 2). Within settler colonialism "contests for land can be – indeed often are – contests for life" (Wolfe 2006: 388), as land and spirituality are themselves "the conditions of material possibility for indigeneity". In the international project of liberating capital, the "racialized dispossession" (Ybarra 2018: 17; see also Segato and Monque 2021) of settler colonialism and its forms of erosion (Caison 2024) remake lands and the people within them. Definitive of the border of the European arrivals with a non-white world, descriptions of the frontier by settlers were narrated as producing an entirely new people amid the mass, vast, and violent replacement of those existing ones[x]. The site of the frontier birthed new identities[xi] of "a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics" (Turner 1920:

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[6] With the term 'pre-destined', I refer here to one of the most inspired rhetoricians of manifest destiny, Governor of Colorado William Gilpin's words from 1874 (in Purdy 2012: 185).

23). Emerging to and in alignment with hierarchies of 'rightful' domination[xii] and settler-justified violence[xiii], across the western hemisphere, a different form of frontier was demarcated by the concept of race, "the cornerstone of the colonial order of the world"[xiv] (de la Cadena 2019: 481). In feedback loops, metaphorical frontiers collaborated with physical ones in the remaking of 'place' according to settler valuations.

Guided by European or settler interpretations of the nature/culture divide, racialized hierarchies were embedded spatially into the landscape[xv] as land cleared or labeled as devoid of humans became areas in need of 'protection'. A sentimentalism from 'romantic epiphanies' (Purdy 2012: 178) pacified natures and marginalized its former indigenous peoples while the abundance of those peoples' ancestral food systems erased their labors to then appropriate its living contents toward new 'uses' following different rules[xvi]. From this reorganization of the commons by the re-designation of lands and adoption of the imported[xvii] concept of 'conservation', settler colonization claimed more land in less overt violence through power structures that claimed to be 'protecting' and 'preserving' (Katz 1998) a socially-produced, "pristine"[xviii] and 'pure' (Cronon 1995; 1998; Braun and Wainwright 2001) 'nature' re-assigned as wilderness[xix] and, eventually, 'biodiversity' through the focus on its individuated parts. Providing a model for people-less conservation[xx] and 'protected areas' became a 'North American model of wildlife conservation[xxi] that has become ubiquitous also globally[xxii] (Spence 1999; Jacoby 2003; Eichler and Baumeister 2022), steeped in racist[xxiii] colonial fantasies and reproducing its heritage of inequality as law[xxiv].

The field of conservation is where much of the attention to mitigating biodiversity loss remains today.

Extractivism

The protected area model, the 'gem' of biodiversity conservation (Baldwin and Beazley 2019: 5) and hallmark of "fortress [style] conservation" (Brockington 2001; 2002; Duffy 2014) has become a favored model for managing 'wilderness' but reinforces systematic inequalities reproduced within and with the conversion of these spaces. Administered and governed most commonly (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020) by the nation-state (Cronon 1983; Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe 2008), which is often unreceptive to and excluding of input concerning their management from Indigenous Peoples from the outset (Nadasdy 2003), protected areas have led to the creation of inaccessible spaces in the landscape for many of those humans living in or around them as the spaces are cleared instead for *non*human conservation. Providing the basis for furthering human social inequalities from the materialization of the settler colonial landscape, the dispossession of the same historically marginalized populations, as 'natural resources' in their territories are claimed for new purposes, has had a "cornering" [xxv] effect (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020) on Indigenous communities as these top-down conservation models leave the same communities with a lack of access to alternative livelihood options after their displacement and little to no alternative or compensation for the changes after restrictions are imposed (Scheidel et al. 2018; Elías 1997). Shaped by hegemonic power structures of the state, these models of conservation correlate with increases in social inequality[xxvi] (Corbera et al. 2021), the erosion of democratic conditions[xxvii] (Kashwan 2017), and come to be through processes of often racialized violence (Navas et al. 2018; Vidal 2020; Middeldorp and Le Billion 2019).

Impacting most strongly humans with the least accumulated capital (Jorgenson 2007; Jorgenson and Rice 2007; Rice 2007, cited in Wittman and Caron 2009: 711) and a modality of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003; 2004), or 'development by dispossession' (Makki and Geisler 2011) tactics[xxviii], in the same way, conservation has often become a new front for speculative capital accumulation led by or validated on behalf of its state structures (Büscher and Fletcher 2015). Le Billion (2021) and other scholars (Gudynas 2013; Martínez-Alier 2004; Svampa 2013; Burchardt and Dietz 2014; Ybarra 2018; Lopez de la Vega 2019; Svampa 2019; Brototi and Schaffartzik 2021; Menton and Billon 2021) highlight the global phenomenon of "paradoxical yet increasing convergence" between conservation and its "growing mutual dependence" with extractive industries (Le Billion 2021: 879), often through the pairing of them with state neoliberal policy. Using terms like biodiversity, nature, wilderness, and wildlife in the discourses to articulate 'neoliberal environmentalities'[xxix] as policy, extractive industry becomes an easy partner with conservation organizations and governments as 'double profit' is collected from spaces of 'double exception' (Le Billion 2021) made possible by these protectionist conservation models (Western and Wright 1994). The partnerships between conservation and extractivism[7] conclude "legitimizing… rather than solving capitalism's contradictions"[xxx] (Le Billion 2021: 880), often exacerbating them[xxxi] (Büscher et al. 2012; 2014; Collins et al. 2021; Shapiro-Garza 2021) through direct and "spillover effects" (Gudynas 2021: 17-23) like the reappropriation of land titles and the removal of communal structures of land governance[xxxii] (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020; Le Billion 2021).

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[7] Extraction is defined by Le Billion (2021: 866) as the "transformative processes of dispossession and accumulation enabled by and exacerbating [of] inequalities at the expense of pre-existing socio-environments".

Simplifying life's complexity by condensing land down to a singular, quantifiable meaning, simply a factor of production, Kay (2019: 58) comments that the extractive, predatory, and exploitative business practices and unrestrained rent-seeking behavior from political and economic elites are exercised liberally across the globe in a range of large investment projects such as jade and copper mining, hydropower dams, deep sea ports, and the creation of 'special economic zones'. From that hegemonic control of nation-states[xxxiii] in designing distinct forms of conservation from the top-down and that overlap with the expansion of neoliberal policies and reorganization of social norms[xxxiv], locales home to high biodiversity are increasingly becoming commodified (Ali et al. 2018) in 'green grabs'[8] for international markets[xxxv], Guatemala included[xxxvi]. Exchanging conservation expertise through "environmental credentials"[xxxvii] and the marketing of subsequently 'green' brands in 'green economies', neo-extractivism places conservation in a position to benefit from funding from and connections to the ruling elite (Le Billion 2021: 879). Generating strong criticism of the field of conservation, that it cannot be understood apart from capitalism, critiques argue that within this 'neoliberal biodiversity conservation' (Igoe and Brockington 2007; Büscher et al. 2012) "*conservation and capitalism have intrinsically co-produced each other*" (Fletcher and Toncheva 2021: 3, emphasis in original, citing Büscher and Fletcher 2020: 72) and that conservation serves "as an ideological scaffolding supportive of a variety of opportunities for capitalist expansion and territorialisation by the state" (Margulis 2018: 187). Others identify the "managing, mediating, delivering, and producing the environment … [a]s a core and foundational feature of the modern, territorially defined, capitalist state" (Parenti 2015: 830), where "[f]ollowing that model, colonial powers established a system designed to extract as many natural resources from its colonies as possible

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[8] 'Green-grabbing' is the practice of setting aside landscapes from direct human use to encourage habitat for specific charismatic species (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012, cited in Prado Córdova 2021).

and sell those commodities back to them at a profit"[xxxviii] (Xiuhtecutli and Shattuck 2021: 80) in a politics of death that Achille Mbembe's (2003: 39; 2019: 66) refers to as 'necropolitics', or "contemporary forms of subjection of life to the power of death".

Specific to the Latin American context and widely studied from it, scholars use terms such as 'neo-extractivism'[xxxix] to describe the creation of these regimes where land and other natural resources are violently turned, with the help of neoliberal[xl] economic systems that influence policies regulating natural resources (Fletcher 2010: 171) and general conservation strategies (Heynen et al. 2007; Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe 2008; Finley-Brook 2014), into tangible and exchangeable units in a general phenomenon of wholesale extraction from communities (Martínez-Alier 2004; Gudynas 2013; Svampa 2013; Burchardt and Dietz 2014; Ybarra 2018; Lopez de la Vega 2019; Svampa 2019; Brototi and Schaffartzik 2021; Menton and Billon 2021). Brototi and Schaffartzik (2021) define neo-extractive endeavors as "resource extraction for the sake of export, subject to protest and conflict." Run through or facilitated with the assistance of the nation-state's structures of "command and control" relationships to land (Holling and Meffe 1996) and people, lands previously stewarded for generations by Indigenous Peoples are devastated by neo-extractive endeavors that, by definition, are associated with direct[9] and indirect acts of violence and conflict.

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[9] Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson (2016: 254) note the obvious relationship of direct and indirect violence, however, as violence toward Indigenous bodies is also an attack on political orders of Indigenous society: "The state-sanctioned murdering, assimilating, and disappearing of Indigenous bodies (asymmetrically distributed across genders) are, as the Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson says, a direct attack on Indigenous political orders because these bodies generate knowledge, political systems, and ways of being that contest the hegemony of settler governmentality and thus make dispossession all the more difficult to achieve."

A distraction to the underlying political context of the concept, founded on and in violence, the widespread adoption of the notion that biodiversity must be conserved separate from humans does further injustice to severe relationships of humans with the more-than-human living world while obscuring in its uncritical consideration the origins of the global environmental and biodiversity crisis. Despite its injustices, violence, and widespread criticism (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020), an international conservation agenda set predominantly by international conservation agencies, so-called experts, and policy-making platforms, prioritizes the protected area model[xli] and continues advocating for its expansion globally (Zhang et al. 2023: 574) through 'climate collaborations' (Collins et al. 2021). A most poignant recent phase of the 'conquestiality' characterized by these rationalities of the patriarchal-colonial modernity, Collins *et al.* (2021) discusses global discourses of 'climate collaboration' that, under the guise of a shared climate, continue colonizing lands of Indigenous and local peoples without addressing the phenomenon's core issues. This is particularly true in Guatemala, where resources devoted toward improving one of the worst percentages of malnutrition in the world through climate forecasting projects for decision-making in agriculture neglect unequal access to land and water and institutional racism, ultimately failing smallholder farmers (Bellanger 2024).

As of 2023, already 15% of the planet falls under some form of state-protected conservation regime (Zhang et al. 2023: 578). Through such discourses in support of a new international policy, advocates petition to increase that figure to 30% of land and oceans by 2030 (ibid.). In "[w]hat [i]s billed as a partnership to combat climate change" (Collins *et al*. 2021: 971), this policy and others like or supportive of it draw attention away from the industrial-sized extraction and need for a *reduction* of fossil-fuel consumption from a Global North as climate change

narratives favor convenient [unequal] 'partnerships' with a Global South that 'green grab' and stoke 'green wars' (Ybarra 2018). Drawing upon colonial structures of subjugation while obfuscating and obscuring the generation of the problem with roots deep in the poles of inequality, narratives of 'climate collaboration' stress conserving 'nature' while attending little to other aspects of the Global North's Westernized anthropocentric, fossil-fuel-heavy lifestyles that drive the phenomenon of climatic change directly (Collins et al. 2021). The regimes of rationality that these international discourses generate are connected to and built atop colonial era racialized inequalities that serve to further justify today's most common conservation regimes[xlii] that most often do not consult, include, or benefit Indigenous Peoples (EJ Atlas 2022).

Discourse of the vast transformation of the Earth's surface since the Industrial Revolution as simply 'climate change' furthers the legacies of colonial violence by obscuring fossil-fuel- and consumption-heavy lifestyles of *some* humans that endanger and jeopardize life in all its forms. In the making of the human as an 'unmarked' and 'neutral' category (Lakoff 1973: 74) is the furthering of settler colonial violence to make the human universally responsible for global environmental change on the planet. Completing a cycle of colonial violence that began from settler colonial projects to sever the connections of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands, objectifying life to parts and repurposing them toward long chains of re-organization that accumulate elsewhere on the planet, the gradual process and patterns of settler colonialism's exploitation have made even colonial strategies to conserve 'nature' into a modality for extraction fit to global hierarchies of inequality into today.

ii. Biodiversity decline and anthropocentric food and consumption systems

Scientific assessments of the current and sixth mass extinction (Kolbert 2014; Pimm et al. 2014; Ceballos et al. 2015; Ceballos et al. 2017) cite a loss of biodiversity happening at unprecedented rates (Loh and Harmon (2014; Ellis et al. 2017; Hallman et al. 2017; Seibold et al. 2019; van Kluenen et al. 2020; Wagner et al. 2021). In the last 300 years, and specifically since the Industrial Revolution, this alteration of global environments has been increasingly negative (Turner et al. 1990; Rockström 2009; Steffen et al. 2018; Goulson 2021). By 2017, more than 80% of the terrestrial biosphere had been transformed by some interaction with anthropocentric intensive land-use practices. Nearly ten years ago, Loh and Harmon (2014: 42) characterized biodiversity loss globally as jeopardizing 30 percent of amphibians, 21 percent of mammals, 15 percent of reptiles, and 13 percent of birds. As 51% of Earth's terrestrial areas could be considered 'intensive anthromes' of high human density, 30% as 'cultured' geographies, and 19% as 'wildlands' today (Ellis et al. 2021: 2), the "species-rich cultural natures sustained by past societies" (ibid.: 7) are increasingly being converted into anthropocentric spaces at the expense of biodiversity.

Specifically, industrialized agriculture and urbanization patterns associated with industrialization globally[xliii] are cited as responsible for the continued land-use changes that threaten biodiversity and jeopardize sustainable futures (Tsiafouli et al. 2015; Beckmann et al. 2019; Ellis et al. 2021) from centers of biodiversity (Weis 2010). Agriculture is identified as the primary threat to more than 80% of species at risk of extinction (Wittman 2023: 474). Conventional or industrialized agriculture is the largest single source of environmental degradation and the largest driver of

biodiversity loss, responsible for over 70% of the world's freshwater use (Ingrao et al. 2023), 30% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and 80% of the earth's land conversion (IPBES 2019; Willett et al. 2019; Wittman 2023: 474).

Many scholars have noted the radical decrease in cultivated plant diversity and the increasingly precarious situation that monocultures of industrialized agriculture have left global food resources[xliv] (Jackson et al. 2012; Perfecto, Vandermeer, and Wright 2019), the conversion of land around the world for anthropocentric food systems as losing habitat and food for a more-than-human world. Since 1900, some 75 percent of the world's crop genetic diversity has been lost, leaving a meager 3 crops— maize, wheat, and rice—to now account for over 50 percent of the world plant caloric intake (Montenegro de Wit 2017: 181). The increasing homogeneity of these food systems in our global food supply[xlv] also threatens the nutritional content[xlvi] (Davis, Epp and Riordan 2004; Medek, Schwartz, and Myers 2017; Eberl et al. 2021; Mariem et al. 2021) and medicinal potential[xlvii] of our food, trends that continue apace with "no indication of slowing"[-xlviii] (Khoury et al. 2014: 4003).

The same global feeding regime (McMichael 2009) is also wildly inefficient and unproductive[xlix] (IPES FOOD 2016: 15) at feeding humans, producing little in the way of 'health' for those fed by it, and high amounts of instability[10] (Rosset 2008; Copeland 2018; Wittman 2023) for those

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[10] Rosset (2008) connects the building issues mounting with the free-market food system to tangible effects that it materialized in the 2007-8 food crisis where global famines and riots in the streets could be attributed to skyrocketing food prices. In the aftermath of the 2007-2008 global unrest of food prices and availability, Copeland (2018: 4) summarizes the still dire state of the free-market food system that lingers on, particularly for farmers: "Farmers are dependent on expensive, and less effective, chemical inputs; soils are often nutrient depleted, contaminated and eroded; increasing land concentration drives landlessness while rural unemployment expands and wages stagnate; smallholder market integration exacerbates class divisions, increases chemical use and crowds out subsistence. Low price grain imports benefit food purchasers, but harm food producers, jeopardizing long-term food

who rely on it. Globally, nearly 2 billion people struggle with hunger[l] and malnutrition while another 2 billion people struggle with diseases related to overconsumption (Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition 2020). Nearly 30% of the global population continues to suffer from moderate or severe food insecurity, a figure that continues to grow (Wittman 2023: 474).

Noting the processes of this transformation, biodiversity decline is linked to global efforts to integrate farming into global commodity markets (Zimmerer and de Haan 2017). Neoliberal economic globalization and the opening of the nation-state to a 'free market' economy has propelled the expansion of the era of mega-agri-business[li] and its corresponding mega-industrial agriculture food chain that continues to gather mass and edge out many small farmers and alternative seed regimes that contribute to the seed exchange market (Bonny 2017; Chee 2018; Reuters Staff 2018; Wittman 2023: 474), changes that also provoke declines of local seed systems with detrimental effects on our resilience to climate change as agrobiodiversity[11] is reduced with their decline (Zimmerer et al. 2015: 55). Tamara Wattnem (2016: 852) points out that "[t]he formal seed sector is made possible by and dependent on the germplasm maintained by farmers in the informal one". She further highlights the importance of the commons and the informal seed systems that corporations exploit for seed patenting rights, systems used communally by farmers for millennia: "[n]owhere in the world – not even in the Global North –

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security. Altered rainfall patterns and prolonged drought caused by climate change pose additional challenges for farmers. Meanwhile, the rising prices of precious metals, land speculation and consumer demand in Brazil, Russia, India and China economies has led to land grabs for resource extraction, monocropping, cattle and real estate that displace subsistence agriculture."

[11] Brookfield (2001: 46) provides a suitable definition for agrobiodiversity as: "The dynamic variation in cropping systems, output and management practice that occurs within and between agroecosystems. It arises from bio-physical differences, and from the many and changing ways in which farmers manage diverse genetic resources and natural variability, and organize their management in dynamic social and economic contexts."

do formal seed systems exist without parallel and unregulated farmers' seed systems" (ibid.: 852-3). Jackson *et al.* (2012: 635) suggest that biodiversity use and conservation are closely aligned with aspects of human capital related to local knowledge and its exchange: "[a]cross the landscapes … individual knowledge of the social-ecological system (human capital) goes hand-in-hand with leadership and the maintenance of a dynamic set of social norms and institutions (social capital) that support ecological intensification".

iii.   Decolonizing a narrative: the politics versus the science of conservation

Magnifying harm to humans and nonhumans in cycles that share inevitably its traumas, colonial categorizations and the processes that emerge from their rationalities have yet to produce beneficial results for biodiversity like that from Indigenous food systems, their own forms of conservation. Research from conservation science has increasingly highlighted the environmental stewardship of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLC), groups critical in not only the creation of biodiversity hotspots but in marking the "long-term persistence of ancient cultural practices" (Levis et al. 2018: 1-2) that link Indigenous Peoples with ancestral more-than-human communities *in situ*[liii] from the locations of biodiversity today. The territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are credited with being some of the most biodiverse lands on the planet, holding a significant amount of the world's total remaining biodiversity that boast decreased biodiversity loss in areas managed IPLC (Garnett et al. 2018; Levis et al. 2018; Fisher et al. 2019; IPBES 2019; Fa et al. 2020; Tran et al. 2020; O'Bryan et al 2021; Reyes-García et al. 2021). While estimates vary, according to the ICCA Consortium Territories of Life Report[liii] (2021), the amount of land owned or governed by either Indigenous

Peoples or local communities is at least 32% globally[liv]. Indigenous territorial areas with legal tenure demonstrate particularly beneficial results for biodiversity[lv] (Barrow et al. 2016). The density of biodiversity found on Indigenous lands continues to be supported by scientific studies as equal to that measured on protected reserves (Schuster et al. 2019), with which they intersect with for about 40% of all of the world's terrestrial protected areas and ecologically intact landscapes[lvi] (Garnett et al. 2018). Multiple studies have found that Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and practices protect and conserve biodiversity[lvii] (Reed et al. 2020; O'Bryan et al. 2021) at the same, if not better, rates as protected area models[lviii] (Stevens 2014; Schuster et al. 2019; Bray 2020). Related to the world's remaining intact forests, some 36% of these are reported to lie within Indigenous Peoples' lands[lix] (Fa *et al.* 2020) with forests managed by Indigenous Peoples[lx] shown to shrink at slower rates than non-Indigenous forests[lxi]. Historical and current Indigenous garden-forests, mixed forests that also generate food, have been much better protected than other forests in the tropics from biodiversity loss (Porter-Bolland et al 2012).

Boivin *et al.* (2016: 6393) comment on the "strong link between present-day patterns of biodiversity and historical processes" that link the work of Indigenous Peoples to the densities of biodiversity today. Referring to these complex plant landscapes as a matrix[lxii] (Perfecto, Vandermeer and Wright 2019: 233), biodiversity's history as not a discreet series of objects but as collaborating interspecies webs of survival addresses the politics of conservation rooted in a history of colonial narratives (Hernandez 2022).

Pairing a focus on Indigenous and human rights with the decolonial lens, Collins *et al*. (2021), Krauss (2021), and Mabele, Krauss, and Kiwango (2022) advocate for conservation's inclusion of human inequality's historical legacy as context and the acknowledgement of human knowledges and practices that have historically and intentionally been repressed alongside their knowledge keepers[lxiii]. As worldviews that assume a distinct and separate relationship with a nonhuman world are themselves linked to biodiversity decline (Díaz et al. 2019), it is critical that research done on domains related to Indigenous Peoples and the living beings on their lands consider historical factors (Duran 2019) in the analysis of the rise and also more recent declines in biodiversity to make an accurate picture. Not only are settler narratives around the 'creation' of 'nature' being decolonized through increased understandings around how forests have been 'domesticated' through long-term processes of intentioned human interaction with them for the purposes of food and sustenance creation for pre-Colombian peoples (Levis et al. 2018: 9), but science has also begun to recognize parallels from Indigenous Peoples knowledge systems that point to an increasing need for their convergence (Starovoitov 2021; Hämäläinen 2022) in forming better policy to conserve a more-than-human world while addressing historical systems of inequality. Indigenous practices that relate to those of their ancestors push back against *terra nullius* narratives of land in the Americas from settler arrivals as vestiges of pre-Columbian lifeways continue to reside in the landscape and take on cultural significance for Indigenous Peoples of today who can draw reference to such practices to show their continuous residence within their territories (Armstrong et al. 2021: 11). The continued practices of care for the biodiversities of Indigenous territories is a multispecies rebuttal to politicized and racist omissions of Indigenous Peoples from the natural history of the Americas since the arrival of European settlers (Steeves 2021).

Addressing some of the misconceptions and false narratives from European settler accounts, Ellis *et al*. (2021: 7) write that "untouched wildlands [by humans] were nearly as rare 10,000 years ago as they are today". More precisely, "only about 17% of Earth's land was without evidence of prior human habitation or use over the past 12,000 years" (ibid.: 7). Boivin *et al*. (2016: 6393) conclude "'[p]ristine' landscapes simply do not exist and, in most cases, have not existed for millennia". Green and Perdue (2010: 10) comment that the Americas were "primarily an agricultural world" when human interactions with place are accounted for. Abundant and verdant landscapes of the Americas that Europeans arrived in from the late 15th and early 16th centuries (Bridgewater and Rotherham 2019: 295) were *managed* landscapes by human inhabitants.

Ellis *et al*. (2021: 1, emphasis mine) refer to this decolonial account of landscapes in the Americas not a 'history of nature' but as lands with 'long histories of use':

> "Lands now characterized as 'natural,' 'intact,' and 'wild' generally exhibit ***long histories of use***, as do protected areas and Indigenous lands, and current global patterns of vertebrate species richness and key biodiversity areas are more strongly associated with past patterns of land use than with present ones in regional landscapes now characterized as natural."

Tropical forest environments from pre-industrial times show that the adaptation of non-endemic domesticates generally ***did not*** result in significant or lasting environmental degradation (Roberts

et al. 2017: 17098), a difference that suggests recent 'degradation' is tied specifically to post-industrial patterns of human behavior introduced with settler colonial arrivals. Mass-scale deforestation, or "long-term, regional-scale deforestation", is "strictly a modern phenomenon"[12] (Watling et al. 2017: 1868) that likely occurred sometime after the mid-20th century[13]. These findings are based on a "lack of a pre-Columbian analog for extensive modern deforestation" (ibid.: 1872).

Prior to European contact, Indigenous horticulturalists across the Western hemisphere co-evolved in reciprocity with plants and animals of the same geographies. Some scholars have argued that the beginning of food production began initially from several localities in tropical Central and South America in the early Holocene (between 11,000 and 7600 B.P.) when the Neotropical climate and vegetation experienced a profound change in the wake of the end of the Pleistocene era[14] (Piperno 2011: S453). Allaby *et al.* (2021: 61) cite other scholars who have demonstrated independent domestication trajectories for crops of the *milpa* food system such as beans (Schmutz et al. 2014), chili peppers (Kraft et al. 2014), squashes (*Cucurbita* spp.), and others[lxiv] that began from several western hemisphere localities (Kistler et al. 2015), possibly the result of processes of not destruction but plant *intensification*.

Further countering narratives of the nature/culture divide that implicate humans as universally destructive[lxv], we have many examples of how humans have helped to create plant functional

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[12] These findings from Watling *et al*. (2017) support the conclusions of Ellis *et al*. (2021) that suggest cultivated forest gardens are enduring biocultural Indigenous food systems in Acre state, Brazil, Amazonia.

[13] The researchers (Watling et al. 2017) highlight that "at least some of Acre's surviving forest owes its composition to sustainable pre-Columbian forest management practices", where "short-term, localized deforestation, maintained a largely forested landscape until the mid-20th century".

[14] The Pleistocene is generally cited as a period of great transformation of ecosystems by humans from the burning of vegetation and hunting of megafauna (Boivin et al. 2016).

diversity globally (Smith 2011; Cook-Patton et al. 2014; Bliege Bird and Nimmo 2018; Champion et al. 2021) through cultural practices (Smith 2011; Boivin et al. 2016; Fletcher, Hall and Alexandra 2021) that shift carrying capacities of ecosystems to sustain higher species densities through practices of intensification that intensify more-than-human processes[lxvi] (Denevan 1992; Zent and Zent 2002; Heckenberger 2003; Arroyo-Kalin 2010; Lombardo et al. 2011; Ellis et al. 2013; Ellis et al. 2021) while participating in the global ecological system's seed dispersal (Guimarães, Galetti, and Jordano 2008) and creating resilient[lxvii], sustainable, multigenerational ecosystems (Kareiva et al. 2007). Ancestrally transmitted cultural practices show people as important facilitators of ecosystem nutrient recycling through their practices that help to improve soil nutrient density and availability (Marshall et al. 2018; Palace et al. 2017). Diné (Navajo), Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), and European heritage scholar Lyla June Johnston refers in her doctoral dissertation (2022) to Indigenous pre-Colombian cultures as "Architects of Abundance", providing a valuable compendium of examples of Indigenous reciprocities with the land and the engineering of food through dozens of case studies of Indigenous food systems/bioregional design techniques in Turtle Island and *Abya Yala*. Johnston argues that such landscape-scale food systems are indicative of an 'Indigenous Regenerative Ecosystem Design' and cites a variety of ecological systems of abundance from this geography to provide ample evidence of the active and intentioned cultivation of the same landscapes that hold today's biodiversity[lxviii]. Armstrong *et al.* (2021) point out that the species richness from ancestrally managed Indigenous food landscapes provides, very importantly for us, an abundance of food for humans. Their findings conclude that the forest gardens of historical Indigenous peoples provide more functional trait diversity than surrounding forests and that plant communities in forest gardens of Indigenous peoples contain higher functional diversity, or species richness, than

peripheral conifer forests more than 150 years after humans left these villages in the wake of colonial-settler invasions[lxix] (Armstrong et al. 2021: 9).

iv. Food sovereignty for biodiversity conservation

As Russian botanist, plant breeder, geographer, and geneticist Nicolai Vavilov (1992) noted long ago, most of the world's genetic diversity is concentrated in what could be understood by today's inequalities as the Global South. Estimated at a number of 2.0–2.5 billion globally, smallholder farmers predominantly in the Global South with lands of less than 2 hectares (IFAD 2013) are critical to the majority of the world's food plant and livestock biodiversity that is produced and consumed (Zimmerer and de Haan 2017) in food systems across the world today. Despite their important role in cultivating and preserving biodiversity, however, increasingly farmers of the Global South are shadowed out of the structures of benefit founded in and directed by countries of the Global North like the United States of America (USA). In these global food systems, small-scale farmers are not compensated for the preservation of what agricultural diversity remains in the genetic pool of resources but their roles in maintaining the fundamental stability of the global food supply are taken for granted (Boyce 2004). In response to the increasing accumulation of strength and appropriation of the global food commons, however, small-scale farmers and Indigenous Peoples who also caretake the land have begun to find each other around the concept of food sovereignty that contests these unequal structures of exclusion and marginalization.

Aligning human lives with the more-than-human, the global food sovereignty movement combines themes of environmental justice, Earth and territorial defense, *buen vivir* forms of exogenous development, and a perspective of reality that regards itself as beyond the human. These terms are addressed collectively from a more-than-human frame within the concept of food and seed sovereignty.

The term 'food sovereignty' initially arose as a translation from the Spanish term '*soberanía alimentaria'*, used in 1979 by the Mexican government in documents related to the National Food Program[lxx] (Programa Nacional de Alimentación, PRONAL) (Edelman 2014). The term's popularization, however, is attributed to what is now a transnational organization of farmers or peasants called La Via Campesina (LVC) that emerged around the same time as a parallel farmer-to-farmer, or *campesinx-a-campesinx,* movement (Holt-Giménez 2001; 2006; Rosset et al. 2019). Formed in 1993 as a small-scale farmer's organization, LVC gained international attention in 1996 when it represented 148 organizations in 69 countries to demand the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food for all people, a right that includes the ability to oversee those food systems nourishing them. This, the inception of the food sovereignty movement, began in Tlaxcala, Mexico, where LVC brought 'food sovereignty' as a concept to the Tlaxcala Conference. Since then, LVC's coalition of farmers has been challenging the root of the issue in the 'food security' problem by naming those in control of global food production and distribution as generating the real issue. With a hidden agenda aiming to dispossess farmers in the development of a global food supply chain, LVC called out transnational corporations' attempts to consolidate power over the global food supply chain by dispossessing smallholder farmers all over the world.

In a manifesto developed in 2007, the Nyéléni International Forum for Food Sovereignty in Sélingué, Mali marked a critical moment of affiliation for movements challenging neoliberal globalization as they presented a solidified version of the food sovereignty concept in the Nyéléni Declaration[lxxi], linking together farmers and Indigenous Peoples. Naming food sovereignty as "a reality in Mali and by extension in all of Africa" (Nyéléni Village, Sélingué, Mali 2007: 3) the definition of the term that appeared in that declaration is still commonly referred to today: "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. … the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. … rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. … implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality …"[lxxii] (ibid.: 1).

The political activism of food sovereignty has been an anchoring point for the decolonization and revitalization of indigenous societies around the world as forms of dispossession are connected to long histories of colonization. Figueroa-Helland (2018: 182-183) notes that food sovereignty produces food but is not simply an alternative "food system" but is an intersectional tool for social justice that confronts inequality and provides solutions at a point where crises converge:

"[w]hile it produces "food," it fosters (agro)/biodiversity, polycultures, closed metabolic cycles and ecosystem restoration, coupled with labor and decision-making based on communality, reciprocity, consensus, equity, and intersectional social justice. … In sum,

food sovereignty enables alternative socioecological relations thereby tackling the convergence of crises (Altieri et al. 2015)." [lxxiii]

Distinct from food security, a commonly used narrative by industrial agriculture to argue for a further intensification of terra-scaping the Earth to address what are actually problems of unequal food distribution, food sovereignty gives the necessary materials and access back to smallholder and Indigenous farmers all over the world to *feed themselves*. Stepping away from the patriarchal colonial modern structure that *does not* feed the world, and based on the devastation it has caused trying, food sovereignty is a model for food equality that, particularly for Indigenous Peoples, also models an equal society. Scholars cite a lack of research on diversified agroecosystems as creating "a vicious circle" where the models of smallholder food systems around the world receive less resources (Fonteyen et al. 2023: 12) to demonstrate their importance toward a different model of 'food security'.

Confronting unequal food systems and echoing these words, Gutiérrez Escobar (2019: 187) writes that food sovereignty and autonomy also defend a commons that includes knowledge production, practices, and territories of food-producing peoples where diversity produced and solidarities among actors keep communities thriving from within and because of networks of co-dependence[lxxiv]. Protecting the necessary inputs for food sovereignty, a defense of this commons includes a defense of seeds[lxxv], land, water, knowledge, biodiversity, and all other material, symbolic, or spiritual phenomena in a territory that are declared collective and inalienable (Gutiérrez Escobar 2019: 187). As a useful frame to orient the *in situ* seed conservation discourse that food sovereignty implies, Coté (2016: 2) suggests that food sovereignty be "indigenized", *in*

situ, with a 'decolonial praxis' that can 'decrease dependence on a globalized food system';

"revitalizing Indigenous foods systems and practices through the reaffirmation of spiritual,

emotional and physical relationships to the lands, waters, plants, and all living things that have

sustained Indigenous communities and cultures". Solidarity and the means of building social

relations free of oppression and inequality, as set forth by LVC (2007), are a politics of food

sovereignty[lxxvi] that reinforces the strength and momentum of this agroecological movement that

reclaims connection to Earth among and between producers and consumers around the globe

(Gutiérrez Escobar 2019: 187).

Writing of the concept of food sovereignty as uniting a global agroecological movement broadly,

Desmarais (2007) notes the range of struggles that the concept of food sovereignty addresses,

including issues related to the privatization of land, water, seed; inefficiencies and inequalities of

food distribution in the global food system; corporatization of food and the racialized inequalities

of workers within these systems; the use of technologies; and many other issues that stem from

the unequal and inefficient transformation of food systems around the world. Simply advocating

for this global disparate community with the perhaps well-known fact that farmers favor a rights-

based ideology of 'food sovereignty' as opposed to the corporatization of the food system

(McMichael 2009; 2013), the organization of LVC has been critical in mobilizing and uniting

various fronts of the issue against the corporatization of the food system, representing farmers, to

laborers, to women and other marginalized or dispossessed groups. As a result, food sovereignty

and autonomy constitute an analytical framework, a social movement, and a political project

(McMichael 2013, cited in Gutiérrez Escobar 2019: 186; Menser 2014) that contests the

transformations of the global food supply into the models of industrial agriculture.

Inspired originally by Paulo Freire's (1970) horizontal pedagogy, food sovereignty's *campesinx-a-campesinx* (CaC) movement[lxxvii] with its method, or a 'peasant pedagogy' (Bunch 1990; Holt-Giménez 2006; Machín-Sosa et al. 2010; Altieri and Toledo 2011) and movement, is spread widely in Latin America (Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho et al. 2018) as a means of transmitting knowledge of both Indigenous bioculture of the region and practices that regenerate through care the reciprocities of a more-than-human existence, in equality. As Millner (2023: 30) notes, farmers are already not just individuals but communities of practice, communities that include soils, fields, animals, microbial allies, and insects, among others. In the context of Guatemala, where the oppression of Indigenous communities in the 1980s dispersed a budding CaC method to other grassroots projects in Mexico, Honduras, and Nicaragua (Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho et al. 2018: 640), the skills and knowledge spread across Central America in the cross-pollination of their interactions are the horizontal, equality-based, participatory, and multispecies forms of activism that decarbonize, decentralize, and decolonize *with* and *behind/in support of* the Indigenous Peoples of the region. Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho *et al.* (2018: 648) describe the CaC methodology as based on methods that begin slowly with simple practices that are "likely to give rapid results", giving early success that motivates participating Indigenous caretakers to keep with the process as more complicated practices are introduced incrementally and gradually. CaC methods do not just transfer technologies of agroecology/forestry, however. CaC methods and its land caretakers also "make culture" in this cultural matrix (Holt-Giménez 2001: 27), using the pedagogy in their own 'schools' and peasant organizations that sponsor farmer-to-farmer processes and agroecology schools themselves (Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho et al. 2018: 645). Significant elements of the land-based pedagogies (Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy 2014) of

the CaC movement include the "use of materials suitable for local conditions, mutual visits among peasants, and practical activities in meaningful places – such as their own fields – that make learning meaningful" (Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho et al. 2018: 648). Accessible, parts of the body, such as the "head, heart, and hands" are elements of the CaC method meant to represent bodies of knowledge that originate from different ways of knowing, from the cognitive, the emotional and spiritual, to applied or technical elements (Holt-Giménez 2006). Polycultural farms, particularly underpinned by Indigenous ancestral knowledge systems, demonstrate how "farming is a diverse way for cultivating a 'practicality' of life within the cycles of the land" (Ghelfi 2023: 195).

Changing the trajectory of the ongoing mass extinction event (Kolbert 2014) by detaching from the sticky hegemonic structures enabling colonialism to continue through the consumption of anthropocentric lifeways, food sovereignty knits the human back into the fabric of multispecies cooperation and care (de la Bellacasa 2017; 2020), making the defense of access to food and human lives also a defense of all more-than-human life. For Indigenous Peoples, the political activism of food sovereignty protects the diversity of all aspects of a living food system, from the seeds, animals, and food, to knowledge, labor practices, kinds of markets, landscapes, and ecosystem (Gutiérrez Escobar 2019: 187).

With its focus on the *milpa* food system of the Maya Ixil in Iximulew, this research fills a research gap between food sovereignty literature, Indigenous literature, decolonial and feminist studies, and critiques of biodiversity conservation.

Understanding biodiversity conservation in Guatemalan Indigenous territories

Proving a long history of co-evolution, co-dependence, and significant historical context for understanding from Mesoamerica an early and independent possible "cradle of agriculture" from connections between Indigenous landscape management and the engineering of foodscapes for multispecies consumption (Piperno 2011: S457), the influence and significance of Mesoamerican food systems is a food system appreciated globally today (Piperno 2011). Mesoamerican peoples are cited as having domesticated 15% of the plant species that make up the world's food system (CONABIO 2008). Maize is one of the world's most common staple crops (Montenegro de Wit 2017; UNCSN 2020) and together with companion plants such as beans, squash, potatoes, and chili peppers from Mesoamerican *milpa* food system provide up to 60% of the food for people all around the world today (see Park et al. 2016). Recognizing the biodiversity of the region, the whole country is part of the Mesoamerican biodiversity hotspot, one of 36 globally (Myers et al. 2000) and one of seven global 'centers of origin and diversity' (Bukasov 1981; Vavilov 1992; 1997).

One Spanish account from the Ixil Region in particular, cited during the late colonial period (1768) by Piel (1989: 220, cited in van Etten 2006: 696) from its main municipality today of Nebaj, provides a picture of the historical fertility of the region. The passage identifies the intensive management of the Indigenous Maya Ixil, able to grow "a very abundant harvest"[lxxviii], their lands "drown[ing] in its excess of cereals". As the mountainous lands of the Maya Ixil were difficult to access for the Spanish and its people difficult to colonize (Palacios Aragón 2005), the ancestors of the Maya Ixil were able to preserve many of their traditions longer than other

Indigenous Peoples in the area due to this smaller amount of contact with European civilization and its forced changes (Veblen 1978: 430), [colonialism]. Partially for these reasons, the Ixil Region continues to retain its own form of biological diversity as pre-Columbian economic, political, and cultural systems have been maintained longer than any other Central American country today (Paige 1997). One of the most conservative Maya groups of highland Guatemala (Romero 2018), from their Maya ontological perspectives that do not separate humans from maize are also identities tied to biological conservation in the region.

As one of the two remaining Latin American countries with a majority of its population of indigenous origin (MacNeill 2014), most people in Guatemala generally identify as either *ladinx* (or *mestizx*) or indigenous with heritage from one of the country's 22 Indigenous Pueblos[15] from three distinct indigenous nations (the Maya, the Xinka, and the Garífuna) that speak among them 21 different languages[lxxix]. Nearly 60 percent of Guatemala's population is of Maya origin (Elías 2015: 80; MRGI 2018). For most of these groups, the cultivation of maize is a staple agricultural food and lifeway, linked from their Indigenous territories through the *milpa* to many points of overlap with the land and ways of ancestral Maya relatives. When the food systems of pre-Columbian Peoples are seen as material biocultural landscapes and agricultural systems at the root of *generating* biodiversity and preserving it, the localization of food to specific Peoples becomes extremely relevant and important context to site the work of building and conserving biodiversity.

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[15] As the term used in Spanish for the UN concept of 'Indigenous People' is 'Pueblo', I use that term here as it also provides a connotation of place that also locates the Ixil to their Ixil Territory.

A material foundation marking this point of ontological divergence between Indigenous and settler groups and directly tied to biodiversity outcomes is the topic of land tenure. As a part of the Indigenous structures of societal organization, communal lands in Guatemala continue to provide a well-documented and positive connection to high biodiversity[lxxx] (CONAP 2020: 158). Elías (1997; 2008; 2009, cited in Elías 2012: 153) demonstrates that the highland forests of Guatemala[lxxxi] are worth the formal conservation designation today *because of* traditions in the region that recognize kinds of collective wealth[16] that comes from communal forest tenure. The Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales (2009: 70) notes that specific studies demonstrate that "the condition of natural resources on communal lands is much better than on private lands" in Guatemala, citing also those studies done by the Facultad de Agronomía de la Universidad de San Carlos that demonstrate communal forests as maintaining a 'good' condition (FAUSAC 2002; UVG 2007; CIFOR 2008). Not the exception, deforestation rates across the tropics support these conclusions as researchers find that community-managed forests better manage and conserve forest resources than protected areas (Porter-Bolland et al. 2012). Critical in achieving well-managed forests and spaces with high biodiversity on communal lands, Elías (2012) identifies the best biodiversity conservation outcomes as achieved when communities can benefit from the services and products of forests, optimizing these outcomes when local communities participate in designing their own rules of use, access, forms of self-governance, and mechanisms to monitor and control the space[17] (Elías 2012: 153). Globally, in 2019 and from reports of both the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2019) and IPBES (Shin et

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[16] From Guatemala, communities "benefit from the products and services that these forests provide for family subsistence… So these communities understand well that it's also in their interest to preserve them." For their spiritual beliefs strongly associated with the forests, the forests are conceived of as a form of "collective wealth, which transmit from generation the goods, knowledge organization and relations that are fundamental to local livelihoods" (Elías, cited in Fraser 2013).

[17] I present my findings on the community's bottom-up organization processes to demonstrate their own rules, regulations, and norms across the Ixil Region according to Ixil ancestral knowledge systems in Chapter V.

al. 2019), the importance of formally recognizing and securing the customary lands of Indigenous peoples was identified as part of an effective strategy for addressing biodiversity loss and combating escalating and unequal carbon emissions, Indigenous and local Knowledge (ILK) playing a 'key role' in these processes.

While customary or communal land is recognized as a material best practice when paired with the complement of Indigenous knowledge systems and management, the formal recognition and protection of forms of communal 'ownership', pivotal toward securing protections for biodiversity, is notoriously lacking in practice. These fundamental issues related to protecting biodiversity's stewards and caretakers create significant vulnerabilities for biodiversity
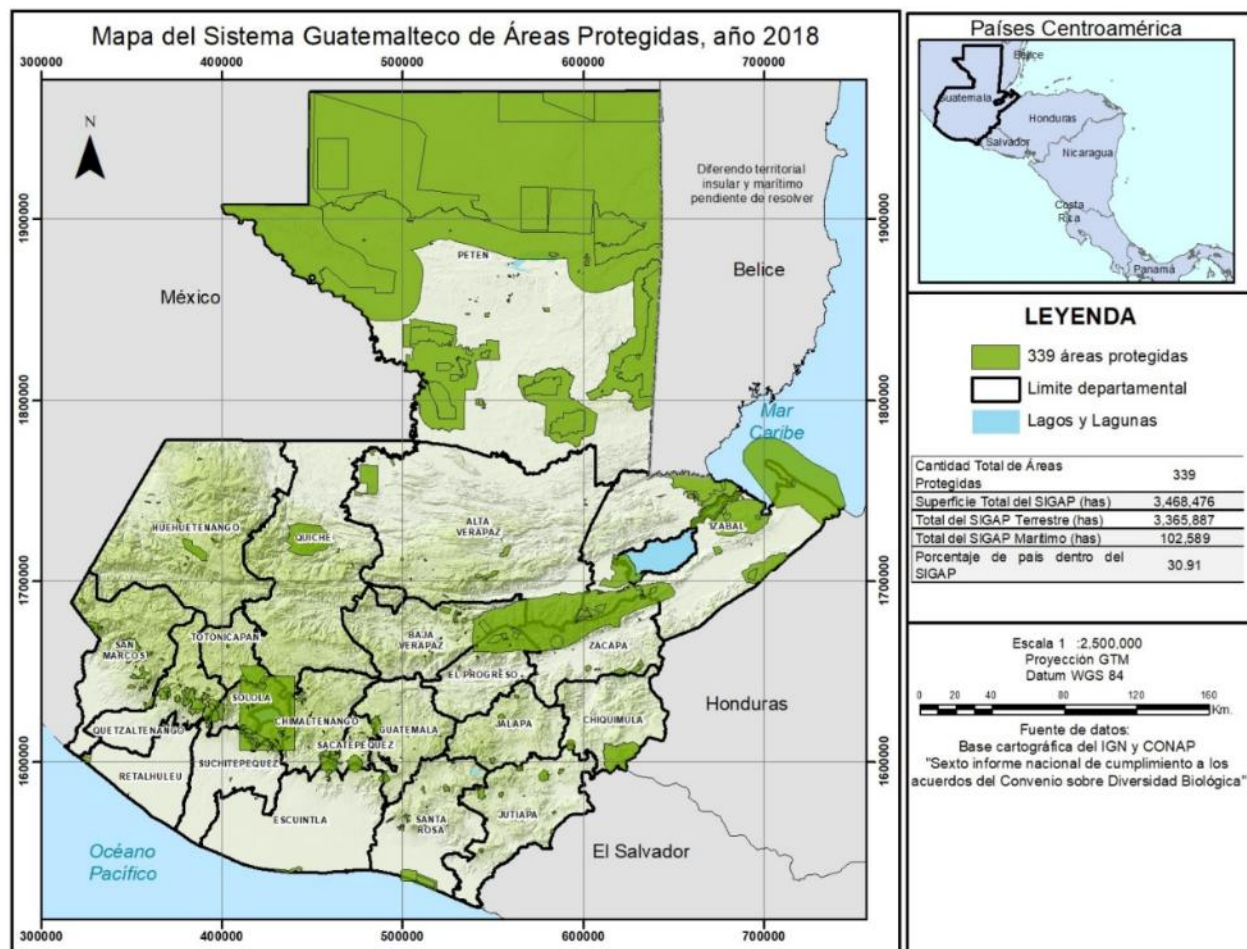
Figure 1 (above): Map of Guatemala's 339 protected areas from CONAP (2020: 53).

preservation. In Guatemala's case, according to the last assessment in 2018 (CONAP 2020: 52, 140, 158), of its total 339 national, municipal, and private protected areas[lxxxii] (Figure 1) that occupy a total of 3,468,476 hectares, or 30.91%, of Guatemala's national boundary[lxxxiii], *none* of the 6 different management categories that protected areas are categorized into (according to categories from international conservation groups) (MARN, MAGA, INAB, and CONAP 2018) recognize or harmonize with forms of communal land tenure. As a total of 1,307 cases of communal lands had been identified by 2009, covering an area of 1,577,129 hectares throughout the country, or 14% of its surface area (Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales 2009, cited in CONAP 2020: 141), the amount of land under communal land tenure in Guatemala is not insignificant. Pointing to the power inequalities and enduring marginalization of Indigenous groups by settler colonial structures embedded in the design of the current nation-state, communal lands are found present throughout the country but the highest number of cases uncoincidentally come from the highly Indigenous-populated departments of Alta Verapaz, San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Chiquimula, Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, Quiché, Baja Verapaz and Sacatepéquez (Figure 2). Relevant to the Maya Ixil, the department of Quiché, specifically, holds among the highest total *hectares* of communal land in the country (Figure 3) with 82 communal land areas and 205,819 of the 1,577,129 hectares of communal land in total (Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales 2009: 45).
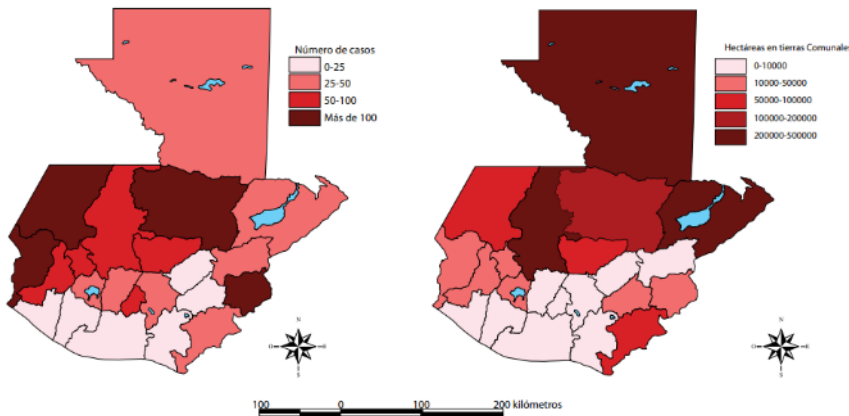
Figure 3: (left) Number of communal lands and surface in Guatemala by department, Quiché high for both accounts (Source: Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales 2009: 44).
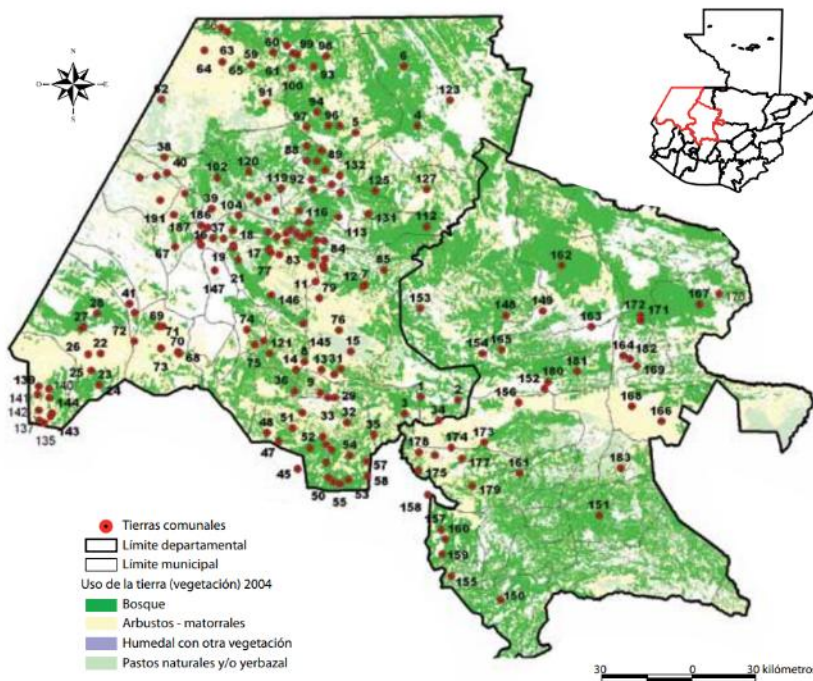
Figure 2 (left): location of communal lands in the western highlands, points numbered 148, 149, 153, 154, 162, 163, and 165 are within the Ixil Region (Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales 2009: 61).

In Guatemala, the absence of any instrument to legally categorize or protect communal forms of land tenure is one clear starting point to understand how human social inequality intersects with the erosion of biodiversity[lxxxiv]. Successive State investment in private 'ownership' land transformations (Tramel 2019; Elliott 2021) and changes in authority over communal lands to the municipality, instead, have had the opposite effect, as occurred after a 1999 change in Guatemala's municipal code that vested municipal governments with comprehensive jurisdiction

over the natural and cultural heritage within their municipality. Exclusive control of municipal governments over the administration of protected areas, restricted harvest of timber and non-timber products, restrictions over pastoral activities within protected areas to traditional forest users, and a standardization of norms and sanctions for offenders of the new norms are among the critical changes ushered in by the change in municipal code (Elías 2012: 157). In the context of communal forests, Elías (2012) describes how the adoption of formal regulations in protected areas by the Law of Protected Areas has caused "customary norms and the role of the traditional indigenous government [to] gradually disappear" (Elías 2012: 156) as new norms over the governance of natural resource use and access must conform to requirements set out by CONAP[lxxxv] that mandate their jurisdiction and control be seated within the municipality. Forced to adopt prescribed management models from the State that lean toward privatization, these new norms of land tenure and use from the State weaken the sphere of traditional use rights, local institutionality, local participation in collective management, local economies, and local systems of resource and territorial governance (Elías 2012: 157). As 80% of forest cover in the Guatemalan western highlands is found on collective lands under either communal or municipal tenure (Elías 2008, cited in Elías 2012), the lack of regulation and legal definition for the use of or decision-making processes surrounding communal lands[lxxxvi] to fit Maya traditional systems of governance perpetuates inequalities of power between Indigenous and settler forms of societal organization, strengthening the latter at the expense of the former and interrupting societal designs connected to the generation of biodiversity.

Regarding the land tenure in the Ixil Region specifically, all three communal areas are now governed by the municipality, and only 10% of its 15,137 hectares hold a different communal

tenure 'ownership' status (Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales 2009: 116). Thus, granting the three municipal mayors strong power over communal lands by re-assigning their authority to the municipality, the imposition of nationally 'protected areas' or other forms of collaboration that divulge authority over communal lands in Indigenous territories to the state is common. Having the opposite effect of best biodiversity conservation practice that allows local communities to participate in designing their own rules of use, access, forms of self-governance, and mechanisms to monitor and control the space for conservation, as identified previously by Elías (2012: 153), the Ixil report feelings of marginalization and dispossession led by the State from these new norms.

"The other system always sells our lands. They say that working the land is always poverty, something of those of the bottom. But if we realize that throughout history, here, historically, the Ixil region has existed since before this system. The problem is that when the armed conflict came, the entire army came to settle in this area. From there, the landowners with the power had to evaluate where lands are and who are their friends, the *encomiendas*[lxxxvii], so they recommended people [settle in] different regions. So we do realize that here, with land, we have lost. We were forced to understand that the economy is what moves—that is, the farmer[18] at a global level— is what moves everything." [19]

Identifying communal management as a "mechanism that complements SIGAP for the protection and conservation of biodiversity" and the maintenance of "community management schemes …,

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[18] Though he used the word '*campesino*' here in Spanish, as many Ixil have a frame of reference from their worldview and experience that everyone they know is a farmer, here what would likely be a better translation is 'businessperson' or perhaps 'capitalist'.
[19] Words from an interview with one middle-aged Ixil *campesinx* from the Ixil Region's Chajul municipality.

highly influenced by the historical and traditional forms of organization" (CONAP 2020: 141), government regulations and practices are scarcely built in support of these structures of biodiversity. Policies at the national level that encourage land privatization through neoliberal reforms while failing to provide the same support for communal land tenure regimes (Ybarra 2018; Tramel 2019; Alford-Jones 2022) and the lack of attention to funding biodiversity conservation efforts, an enterprise left largely to foreign development or NGOs[lxxxviii] (Sundberg 1998: 407; Gonzalez-Bernat and Clifton 2017), demonstrates inconsistency in conservation theory and practice designed by the patriarchal colonial modern nation-state.

III. Historical background on the violence toward Indigenous Peoples of Iximulew

To understand the evolution of the very different narratives of history from and development within Iximulew between indigenous populations and settlers, the following sections will detail the most relevant background on the violence of settler colonialism that Indigenous Peoples such as the Maya Ixil continue to experience in their ancestral territories where a history of Guatemala is cited as divided into five notable periods. Elaborated in detail by Gere and MacNeill (2008), MacNeill (2014), MacNeill (2020), and Batz (2022), Annex II provides an expanded depiction of these periods, categorized into the early colonial period (1518–1821), the period following Guatemala's independence from Spain and exclusive nationalism (1821–1945), the Ten Years of Spring (1945–1954), 'La Violencia' (1970s–1980s), and the postwar period (1990s–present). As much of the violence of the colonial period was shared for Indigenous Peoples of Iximulew, the historical background that will be in focus in this introduction aims to present briefly the two most recent periods of this violence. Specifically, the 1980s genocide by the State, which

impacted four indigenous groups with particular violence— the Maya Ixil as one of these—, and the postwar period after the signature of the 1996 Peace Accords will be critical history to link the relationship of ancestral Maya, who endured centuries of violence, with violence by similar perpetrators that their successors fight to survive against today.

i.   'La Violencia' (1970s–1980s)

After the pivotally important U.S.-backed coup d'état in 1954[20] that allowed the U.S. government to tamper with Guatemala's budding democracy, the enduring power inequalities in Guatemala today have strong links to the period after the coup d'etat when Guatemala was engineered for subservience to U.S. corporate interests through the installation of several dictatorships favorable to U.S. interests. Military dictators put in place by the coup d'état to quash threats to capitalism in the territory fed a cycle of escalating tension, at the same time inspiring public sentiment from the Guatemalan people[21] to veer significantly anti-U.S. (Schlesinger and Kinzer 1999: 189).

With the reversal of Guatemala's October Revolution/Ten Years of Spring and President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman's (1950-54) land reform in 1956, the local elite, backed by the U.S. military-industrial complex (Gould 2018), was permitted an opportunity to intensify control over land in Guatemala. Leaving inequalities from the failed land reform unaddressed, frustrations among a landless rural peasant population fomented along factions that most often represented as those

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[20] This is also discussed in Annex II.
[21] And the public of at least 11 other Latin American countries (Schlesinger & Kinzer 1999: 189).

with some stake in private and corporate investments and those without. Sensing the strong

tendencies of injustice from the overthrow of Guatemala's budding democracy, local peasant

farmers and ideologically leftist groups in Guatemala contested the sudden shift of political

power with uprisings that were met with further retaliation and escalation from the Guatemalan

military. The country's small but powerful landowning urban elite and their global alliance

feared a loss of power with the reallocation of land and labor (see Annex II: viii), responding

with the solidification of alliances between large landowners and Guatemalan military elites that

weaponized the military to protect both. The military vilified '*guerilla*' forces during the period

while support was pledged to private industries like those of the *finqueros* (see Annex II for

context). The issue of land reform was a central conflict and the origin of what became,

thereafter, 40 years of civil war in the country (Kuper 2014; Aguilar-Støen 2020: 68).

Due to previous cultural and geographic isolation, as the Ixil Region was undergoing "much

needed" land reforms in the 1950s, existing tensions between large landowners and subsistence

farmers made the region an attractive site for budding revolutionary movements into the 1970s,

also putting it on the map as a site of larger global conflicts between communism and capitalism

(Elliott 2021: 112). Caught somewhere between ideological narratives of the state and *guerilla*

rebel forces (Stoll 1999), the Ixil territory was a first destination for *guerilla* rebel groups

percolating into the jungles of Ixcan on Guatemala's northwestern border from Mexico. Bringing

ideas of liberation and resistance from capitalist privatization, *guerilla* fighters submerged

themselves into the civilian population living in the region, entrenching the Ixil hosts in this

neighboring territory into a war that, for the Ixil, from either side could only be lost.

From 1960 to 1996, tensions raged in Guatemala and engulfed all in the country in 40 years of internal armed conflict/civil war. The Indigenous population at large became the explicit target of the Guatemalan military apparatus during the period's particularly genocidal peak in the 1980s. This period, from 1981 to 1983, commonly referred to within the country as 'La Violencia', or 'The Violence', was the most violent of what was already the longest and deadliest civil conflict in the Central American region (MacNeill 2020: 122). Identifying and targeting Guatemala's rural, Indigenous peasants, the Maya Ixil in particular as the "internal enemy" according to Guatemalan military documents of the time (Brett 2016a; CEH 1999: Conclusions; Sanford 2003: 153), Indigenous Peoples were sought by military campaigns for total elimination. Sanford (2003: 155) notes that as early as 1982, "it was clear to human rights observers that the Guatemalan "Indians" were the target of the army's campaign of terror", the Ixil identified explicitly[22]. Whole communities from the Ixil Region were forced to flee from the violence of both groups, taking shelter in the dense forest cover of the mountains as several dedicated state military campaigns were executed against them (these included Campaña Victoria 82, the Plan of the Sofía Operaciones, and the Plan Firmeza 83). Targeting whole populations of regions deemed 'communist', or areas where *guerillas* became considered indistinguishable from the general indigenous population, Indigenous territories like those of the Ixil were devastated by structural violence perpetrated by the State[lxxxix].

The transformation and violent reassembling of the Ixil's societal structure by the military's counterinsurgency strategy, especially from 1978 to 1983, was "to remove the water from the

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[22] A declassified cable sent in 1982 from the United States' Central Intelligence Agency, assisting the Guatemalan military during the conflict, stated it a "well documented belief by the army that the entire Ixil Indian population is pro-EGP [creating] a situation in which the army can be expected to give no quarter to combatants and non-combatants alike" (Sanford 2003: 153, noting comment four from the cable).

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fish, to transform the milieu"[xc] (Nelson 2009: 220). Emulating a style of warfare once used by the Spanish, this, the 1980s "Scorched Earth" campaign (see Annex II) of the Guatemalan State, combined all weapons together in a strongarmed, U.S.-backed, communist-paranoid Guatemalan government that employed soldiers from other regions[xci] to enact violence upon its own population (Yates 1983; Sanford 2003). Unlike the Spanish scorched earth campaigns that left apart those Indigenous populations in places too difficult to access, however, this period in the 1980s sought out indigenous populations like the Maya Ixil with particular fervor (Warren 1998), massacring people in their villages and pursuing them into the mountains. For the Maya Ixil, this second 'scorched earth campaign' saw the annihilation of 70 to 90% of the community (CEH 1999: chapter 2, paragraphs 3310-3311) as villages were razed to the ground with their crops (Crowe 2014). Half of the Quiché department's forest cover was lost during this period from fires set by the Guatemalan military (Schimmer 2006, cited in Hallum-Montes 2012: 111).

Within Quiché broadly, the Ixil Region and others from the municipalities of Sacapulas, Huehuetenango, and zones of the department of Baja Verapaz (Las Vegas etc.), were the regions to suffer the most acute violence from large-scale military assaults that bombarded communities from the sky and ground (REMHI 1998). From 1980 to 1996 alone, Maya Ixil villages endured 114 massacres[xcii] (Fernández and Marcos 2012) that killed an estimated 1,771 Maya Ixil between the worst years of 1978 to 1985[xciii]. Kidnapping, torture, murder, and massacre (Sanford 2005; Viaene 2011; Brett 2016a) caused the destruction of an estimated 15 to 26 percent of the Maya Ixil population in the violence (Brett 2016b; Drouin 2016). According to Sanford's (2003: 158) statistical analysis of the CEH's findings, from 1960 to 1996 a total of 14.5 % of the Ixil Maya

population was killed during the La Violencia. As many as 120 hectares of their territorial lands were taken during the same period (Abbott 2020).

Others who survived and could not escape the military were forcibly relocated into involuntary conscription in local militias that collaborated with the Guatemalan military forces, the only survival option that remained for those who did not flee to the mountains. By early 1985, Ixil society as the Ixil knew it before the war had been converted into at least eight Development Pole villages[xciv] that were established or in the process (Krueger and Enge 1985: 30). These villages were supported in later stages by the Evangelical and Catholic Churches (Manz 1988). A few years later, by 1988, the Ixil Region had become one of six 'development poles areas'[xcv] in Guatemala broadly. In these development poles, model villages relocated Ixil within their own territory and concentrated the population into towns, replacing the previous Ixil model of settlement of homes and *milpas* dispersed throughout the landscape (Manz 1988: 254, footnote 131). The PACs, affiliated with these model villages, were a piece in a larger architecture of violence from the Guatemalan State (Doyle and Kornbluh 1997) to annihilate the rural population interspersed with *guerilla* fighters by directly infiltrating the local population also with the military. For some Ixil, the PACs were seen as an uncertain opportunity to survive the war from within the ranks of the military.

To escape the military and local PACs, many local Ixil residents were forced to flee their villages, hiding in the jungles of the Ixil Region's[xcvi] mountainous landscape during the war to survive (Gonzales R Foundations for Education 2005; Colectivo MadreSelva and Asociación Luz Héroes y Mártires de la Resistencia 2014). Somewhere between approximately 15,000 and

20,000 people[xcvii], predominantly Ixil, took refuge in the high and midrange mountains of San Gaspar Chajul and the jungles of Ixcán and the Sierra during the worst of the conflict (Brett 2006: 202), residing far from any of the Ixil municipal centers (IACHR 1994). Other sources cite a figure as high as 50,000 people total who fled to these communities during the war (IACHR 1993). Some of these communities identified themselves as the Comunidades de Población en Resistencia de la Sierra, or Population in Resistance of the Sierra/Ixcán (CPR-Sierra and CPR-Ixcán) (see Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 31-32)[xcviii], and were composed of reassembled Indigenous Maya families and individuals who fled from Ixil lands[xcix] during the conflict. By mid-1992, information from CPR representatives indicated that the CPR-Sierra community was composed of some 17,000 inhabitants, mostly Ixil. The CPR-Ixcán branch consisted at the same time of some 6,000 mostly K'iche inhabitants (IACHR 1993). Forming new, hidden communities as their previous villages were razed, regrouped into concentrated 'model villages', and repurposed as civilian extensions of the Guatemalan military in the PACs, the groups sought to survive the war by staying hidden in their own lands. Many of these groups had no formal weapons (Gonzales R Foundations for Education 2005). This is documented by several different groups, as the IACHR (1993: no pagination) reports:

"In 1992 [and 1993 (IACHR 1994)], many national and international observers visited the CPR, both in La Sierra and in Ixcán. All have come away saying that the people in the CPR are unarmed civilians who live in great poverty and eke out a meager living by planting corn, beans and raising farm animals like chickens and pigs. After his visits, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Guatemala, Christian Tomuschat, said that he had not seen any evidence of weapons or hostile activity on the part of the people who lived

in the CPR. The Deputy Attorney General for Human Rights reached the same conclusion. Local and foreign church authorities who have visited the CPR also report that they have not seen any evidence that the CPR are involved in military or paramilitary activities."

Those who survived the extreme conditions of the mountainous jungles did so with the help of knowledge of the land and its provisions (Gonzales R Foundations for Education 2005). Still marginalized at the time of the Peace Accords, many of these communities chose to remain in their same lands in the transition out of formal wartime. Today these CPRs are located in the villages of Santa Clara, Amajchel, Cabá, Paal, Los Cimientos, Xeputul, Xaxboj, Santa Rosa, Chaxa (Del Águila 2021: footnote 19, page 76; Colectivo MadreSelva and Asociación Luz Héroes y Mártires de la Resistencia 2014: 22) and Xecoyeu (Brett 2006: 202), many of which in or around the post-Peace Accord creation Visis Cabá[23]. After being forced to flee their villages with their lives, spending months to years hiding in the region's dense forests to escape persecution in the war, State-sponsored landgrabs after the war[c] have been able to steal land and resources post-conflict.

The transformation that the Ixil survivors endured is documented in a white paper from Cultural Survival in July 1988. Having "always lived in dispersed households, spread across the landscape, rather than nucleated villages" (1988: 23), the design of these human settlement patterns allowed the Ixil "to have fruit trees and gardens about the central house complex, as well as land for raising animals, and their farms were close by, within easy distance" (1988: 23). The

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[23] This is relevant for understanding the Ixil defense of territory movements discussed in Chapter VII.

paper documents how the thread of inequality sewn initially by the first Spanish arrivals continues to negatively impact Ixil traditions of diversity and Indigenous management of the landscape. Bluntly, it concludes in July of 1988, "[i]n every sense, the Ixil Indians are people who have totally lost their rights as human beings" (1988: 24). The forced remodeling of the landscape by the Guatemalan military's development poles, remade the Ixil Region into a structure of surveillance and control by disconnecting them from their forms of traditional agriculture: "under the present arrangement [the Ixil were] so jammed together that they c[ould] not have fruit trees and gardens, it [was] difficult to raise patio animals, and they must often walk 3 to 5 hours to their farms" (1988: 23-24). Despite the enormity of traumatic change undergone in this period, however, Steinberg and Taylor (2003: 453) caution of its invisibility to most afterward: the "intangible, yet palpable, memories of the mind, [are] memories that have not left an obvious, permanent mark on the visible landscape-at least to the outside observer."

A total of 200,000 people, primarily Indigenous, were killed or "disappeared" during the civil

war and an additional 1.5 million people were displaced (CEH 1999). Among the intangible

damages, cultural traditions/social fabric were irrevocably lost or damaged with the loss of seed

and landscape-scale trauma as sacred Indigenous food systems were systematically destroyed

(Falla 1988). In total, the Guatemalan army is cited in detail in the *Recuperación de la Memoria

Histórica (*REMHI*)* (1998) report and its companion volume the *CEH* (1999) reports as

responsible for razing 626 Maya communities to the ground. Targeting communities with strong

ties to a different way of life, as was the case for indigenous identities generally, latent racism

was evident from documents and outcomes of the atrocities (Grandin 2004: 189; Ybarra 2011),

difference taken as a threat to the Guatemalan state and its military interests and used to justify

their policies of removal (CEH 1999; Brett 2016a). The high Indigenous-populated department of Quiché is cited as the site where most of the registered massacres from this period took place (REMHI 1998: 263) (see Figure 4).

Guatemala's indigenous communities have remained particularly traumatized and fractured in the aftermath of the war

Figure 4 (above): Number of massacres in the Guatemalan civil war by department, Quiche as the department with the most massacres (CEH 1999: Chapter 2, Volume 4, page 100)

as little reparation or reconciliation efforts have been allowed to materialize justice for them.

Figure 5 (left): Cotzal Exposition documents the mural of crosses from within San Juan Cotzal's Catholic church memorializing the lives of Ixil victims, martyrs (see also Steinberg and Taylor 2003: 454)

Foto 1
Violencia durante el conflicto armado interno 1960 1996.

Dentro de la iglesia católica del municipio de San Juan Cotzal, este mural de cruces hace memoria a las víctimas del conflicto armado. A dicha obra le llaman "Mártires".

Figure 6 (right): Memorial in Nebaj's Xoloche village recalls those murdered in the internal armed conflict as they tried to save Ixil and the milpa.

Memorials in Catholic churches (Figure 5) and villages (Figure 6) in the Ixil Region inscribe the names of the lives lost into stones and walls, speaking out against the injustice of their premature departure, human and more-than (Steinberg and Taylor 2003). Lurking around the corner from the large Catholic church, its own reminder of the first Spanish invasion, one reminder sits in the center of Nebaj. A mural of faces, most of them young, is plastered in many papers onto a long wall, one of few public memorials (Steinberg and Taylor 2003). Staring back at human eye-level in smile-less mugshots, the message above each face reads: "JUSTICE FOR GENOCIDE". A homage and shared memory inscribed on this wall in the municipal town, the mural gives passersby some scale of the trauma that sits in the community's consciousness after these decades of violence perpetrated against them. The writing in yellow above and below the many

faces on the wall of murdered and forced disappearances reads: "*caminar por este pueblo es desaparecer del presente y despertar en la historia'*--for us to go forward, we must awaken our history" (Figure 7).

Figure 7 (above): The wall of murdered and forced disappearances near to the main central square in Nebaj reads: "caminar por este pueblo es desaparecer del presente y despertar en la historia" --for us to go forward, we must awaken our history.

Addressing the trauma of a race-based war against Indigenous peoples, the Truth Commission, one of several measures to come out of the 1996 Peace Accords in Guatemala, declared the Guatemalan State's actions between 1981 and 1983 as acts of genocide that stemmed from latent racism harkening back to colonial Spanish arrivals. Supporting information presented in the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH 1999) report, multiple authors have written about the violent campaigns of the State that terrorized the Ixil and other Indigenous *Pueblos*

during the conflict, racism as "a key structuring factor of atrocities" (Brett 2006: 221). Guatemalan economic and political elites involved in and benefitting from the violence, however, were ultimately able to interfere with processes of justice and reconciliation[24] (de León et al. 2007) and Indigenous populations continue to suffer the effects of violence adapted since the first colonial arrivals that also preserves the small economic and political elite it continues to serve. Casaús Arzú (2002: 90) notes the undercurrent of racism as "a fundamental part of the official discourses and ideology of the state" throughout Guatemalan history. On this point, de León et al. (2007: 18) writes:

> "Social, political, economic, and cultural relations have been developed and kept in place by discriminatory and exclusionary structures that took different shapes accords to the historical context, but have changed little in essence. Reconciliation in Guatemala, therefore, has not been about dealing with the effects of an extraordinary period-- the war, but rather about dealing with the social and political legacy of a historical state-building process."

ii.   The postwar period (1990s–present)

Since the 1950s and the onset of political tampering of the U.S. into Guatemalan politics (see Annex II: viii), political scientist Rachel Sieder (2003: 141) comments that the feeling many Guatemalans have toward the state judiciary after the civil war is that of a "historical legacy of

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[24] Nevertheless, the written findings of the REMHI (1998) and CEH (1999) reports stand as important testimonies and documentation of the crimes and orientation of the Guatemalan state toward labeled 'enemies'.

citizen mistrust of the law", law that is now "bereft of legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of the population. Most Guatemalans rightly [tend] to see the law as something that operates to the benefit of powerful individuals and groups". As de León *et al.* (2007: 19) point out, political elites have considered human rights violations during the internal armed conflict as "excesses committed in the context of a justified defense of threatened political institutions", demonstrating the first hurdle of accountability for the crimes committed during the conflict as still lacking. Other scholars note that injustices only from the conflict have been compounded and amplified as inequalities increase with each passing generation. Though the Peace Accords make specific references to the efforts going forward to elevate the status of Maya languages (Helmberger 2006: 65-86), Spanish remains the official language of legal, juridical, medical, business, and other formal state affairs, and many regard the peace agreements as only an end to the overt physical violence; to "calm the war" and allow the state to "do nothing"[ci]. de León *et al. (*2007: 19) go on to conclude, "In brief, neither has justice been fully served, nor does any consensus exist concerning historical truth, nor has reconciliation been achieved." Brett (2006: 232) writes that the conflict has since evolved "from mass killing, to silent, invisible, starving murder."

Viaene (2010) discusses the difficulty of establishing a healing process in a country where the culpability of those in the PACs, tasked with executing orders against neighbors, community members, and even family members, is not clear. From power inequalities maintained since the colonial period, the post-accord period has been marred by a trouble with 'truth'[cii] (Lerner 2007: 1) as violences are manipulated by a powerful internal *criollo* elite. The division of sentiments among Guatemala's populace are referred to popularly as *pensamientos divididos*, 'divided thoughts' or *aq'olaj iyol yansa'm*, the 'decomposing opinions' of a person's mind (Olson 2016).

The memory of allegiances from wartime and the complicated past of a conflict that took up residence in the jungles of Guatemala's borderlands with Mexico remains an unresolved trauma (Olson 2016) that inevitably manifests into political divides and consequences that still prevail as antagonisms in these communities today. Olson (2016: 352) writes that the trauma of the war and the effect of its authorized violence on the fabric of Ixil society:

> "means that a particular kind of pain is at the centre of Ixil life. It is often treated, in books or court cases, as a series of events—a death, a massacre, a rape. [But] [w]ho and what is silenced in these discrete instances can be insidious, veiling the entanglements of a long war. Authorized violence distorts the conduct of everyday life, and twists ordinary ethical behaviour. No one is immune".

Standing in the way of a complete healing process, these on-the-ground complexities of 'Guatemala's yet unresolved dilemma' (Brett 2006: 294) exacerbate and further systemic and massive human rights violations in the absence of structural reform for Guatemala's Indigenous population.

i. Neocolonial relations and CAFTA-DR, impoverishment 'from above'

Abuses of unequal power continue today through the same actors and alliances as policies have been created in the aftermath of direct war to incentivize the transformation of Guatemala according to the interests of a colonially-linked, settler and *criollo* elite. Although Guatemala entered a supposedly new period after 40 years of internal armed conflict and a peace negotiation

process in 1996, Granovsky-Larsen (2017) discusses the Guatemalan military's reestablishment after these Peace Accords as a guarantor of neoliberal development for an elite whose foreign instruments and government intervention have partnered with an oppressive and violent internal elite to reestablish colonial power hierarchies and guarantee 'transnational capital accumulation' for the country's burgeoning 'neoliberal [political] right'. Granovsky-Larsen (2017) highlights economic futures and private economic interests within the country (see also Stavenhagen 2003; Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020) as being manipulated for the benefit of the economic elite and active and former members of the military, highlighting the outstanding main issue in Guatemala now as one of this power inequality. Though an 'independent' nation-state, power inequalities carried over since colonial times have created a small *criollo* elite, or the *criollo* or corrupt oligarchy[ciii], who have not been brought to justice for their violence and further weaponize their interests and priorities over an increasingly subjugated and largely indigenous population.

Continuing into post-conflict, clever maneuvering by this elite during and in the peace accord negotiation process[civ] (Granovsky-Larsen 2017; Seay-Fleming 2019) was critical for positioning an economic restructuring in their favor, leaving economic reforms notably unmentioned in its direct negotiations. Later organized by the "almighty" (Alonso-Fradejas 2015) Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations (CACIF)[cv] (Granovsky-Larsen 2017), known in the country for its key role in manifesting economic inequality[cvi] (Krznaric 1999, cited in Tramel 2019: 184), lingering and extreme inequalities from the violent conflict were left unaddressed (Brett 2006; Olson 2016; Granovsky-Larsen 2017). With this arrangement, political figures situated in the neoliberal political right, assuming their colonial-inherited powers, were allowed to continue exercising the strength of the military for

domestic repression and control of the population (Granovsky-Larsen 2017: 54-55), threatening and killing civilians protesting resource extraction and the neoliberal opening of the country to transnational businesses (ibid.; Solano 2015; Alonso-Fradejas 2015). An incremental tightening of control of the structures of violence, the power to structure the post-peace negotiations and processes have carried over colonial violences into the post-conflict period. Ultimately, critical scholars postulate that neoliberalism and the radical structural reform needed to escape the powers of the internal armed conflict period cannot escape this issue of power (Hale 2011; Granovsky-Larsen 2017), one linked to the history of violent European colonization and the active and former military officials to the economic elite of today (Hale 2011; Granovsky-Larsen 2017) that carry this legacy into the present.

Before and throughout the internal armed conflict, local actors aligned themselves with economic interests in the Global North, the U.S. specifically (see Annex II: iii). The introduction of free-trade agreements (FTAs), as further and broad neoliberalization of the Guatemalan economy after the conflict has served to further benefit U.S. agribusinesses while magnifying the negative effects of neoliberalization for most of Guatemala's population. One of the most notable FTAs for Guatemala, Grandia (2014) points out the importance of the formalized seed systems through their incorporation into the Dominican Republic–Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). As a binding agreement enforced via the threat of trade sanctions, the ratification of DR-CAFTA, advertently or inadvertently, opened member countries to 'undisclosed' dangers of food as they became subject to the rules and values of a neoliberal economic and political system[cvii].

Since the opening of markets in Guatemala, the agriculture sector has changed substantially for most of the country's small farmers. As the supplier of 100 percent of the yellow maize imports and 71 percent of the white maize imports to Guatemala (Gauster and Sigüenza 2008), the U.S. and its companies benefitted greatly after CAFTA-DR's opening of Guatemalan markets as companies were permitted as a consequence to dump highly-subsidized excess grains from the U.S.'s massive industrial agribusinesses into Guatemala without tariffs, thus undercutting prices for the small farmers in the process. Unable to compete, many small and medium-scale farmers in the central and northern highlands of the country shifted from subsistence yellow maize production to the production of vegetables and fruit for foreign markets (Isakson 2014). For many farmers formerly focused on maize production in the south of the country, changing priorities in the agricultural sector forced shifts toward the production of more profitable crops suited for international markets like sugar cane, rubber, and African palm. Aside from being the world's largest exporter of cardamom and green peas, in this shift Guatemalan farmers have come to cultivate many other non-traditional crops in large quantities like mace nutmeg, broccoli, cauliflower, mangoes, palm oil, African palm, pineapple, and cantaloupe (FAO 2004; Isakson 2014). Agricultural exports to its main trade partners, the U.S., Mexico, and El Salvador, primarily consist of bananas, sugar, coffee, and palm oil (FAO 2014), other nontraditional crops. Investment toward largescale irrigation in Guatemala under CAFTA-DR was magnified after its introduction (FAO 2014), despite the country's high smallholder farmer population subsisting on maize and the milpa food system. Directly linking these agricultural policy changes to biodiversity loss, Isakson (2014) points out a fairly clear correlation between international development funding from USAID for the irrigation of non-traditional crops and the decline in genetic diversity of maize in the regions where financing has been provided for irrigation. The

irrigation boom and campaign for non-traditional agricultural exports, he points out, overlaps

closely with the same areas of the country where genetic 'hotspots' for maize biodiversity have

historically been concentrated (Isakson 2014: 373). Critical of the motivations of USAID and its

influence on the structure of Guatemala's food and agriculture sector, Isakson (ibid.) argues that

the interest in *assisting* the people of Guatemala toward food sovereignty or food security is

highly suspect based on the reality from the ground and neoliberal policies. Citing policies

within the U.S. that prevented USAID from supporting agricultural activities that would compete

with domestic agricultural profit and security potentials within the U.S., he notes contradictions

in the 'aid' of such systems of supposed 'support' of the existing and local crop in Guatemala,

maize, as according to these policies food sovereignties are those explicitly compromised.

For a culture deeply and spiritually connected to maize, the shifts in the agricultural system also

incrementally shifted the behavior of farmers, and, therein, the social structures of their

communities around the country. Causing many farmers to shift focus to regional markets,

different spatial factors began also to dominate in social relationships as centrality to a provincial

market or access to particular desirable innovations in seed (van Etten 2007) began to decide

success, instead of reciprocal systems of exchange and care within Maya communities with long,

shared histories together and Maya gender norms based on the notion of complementarity[25]. The

local rise of non-traditional agriculture reverberated through society to shift gender relations

around the production of food as non-traditional agriculture and work of managing these crops

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[25] Quoting text in an El Centro publication, MacNeill 2014: 313) highlights gender complementarity as always
having been a central part of the Maya cosmovision. "In Maya culture there are philosophies, theories, in relation to
the life of men and women, such as: the collective work, mutual help … to look for council [from both genders] …
values that should orient personal life, family life, community life, social life and political life. Taking as the base,
the principle of duality: in Maya thought, differences [in gender] are complimentary. That is to say that opposites
(for example day and night, fire and water, happiness and sadness, man and woman), cannot exist without the
other." (MacNeill 2014; 313).

and their marketing process was seen as 'a man's job' (Isakson 2014: 352). For the cultivation of non-native plants such as snow peas, one of many NTX crops introduced since the 1980s and that require 1000 percent more labor days than a plot of beans and maize, the additional labor demands, however, predominantly fell upon women's shoulders (ibid.). Masson *et al.* (2017: 59) refers to the added burden of many of these crops as a 'feminization of subsistence production' where rural and peasant economies are disrupted locally by a global food regime's capture of male migrants into urban centers to be repurposed for work as women accept jobs close to home that are underpaid, require less skill, and accepted largely to meet subsistence needs.

In the shadow of regional hegemon U.S.A., Hellin *et al.* (2017) draw a comparison between Guatemalan and Mexican farmers and their pull into the increasingly influential neoliberal market as they are impoverished 'from above' in exchange for food sovereignty. Worse off than their counterparts in Mexico, where surpluses generated from the sale of traditional farming has created a specific specialty market and demand for traditional maize varieties (Keleman and Hellin 2009), farmers in the western highlands of Guatemala were found by Hellin *et al.* (2017) to be unable to accurately use the term 'subsistence agriculture' for their food systems as they are no longer able produce enough maize to feed themselves for a full year[cviii]. To keep a steady availability of food, farmers in Guatemala were seen adapting to subsistence deficits by selling their maize in exchange for cash to buy cheaper maize from the market, thus illustrating the produced cycle of poverty that can be traced back to CAFTA-DR-enabled neoliberalization of the agricultural sector as agribusinesses in the U.S. benefit while farmers (hereafter '*campesinos*') become poorer (ibid.).

Since the introduction of CAFTA-DR in 2006, extreme poverty in the country has rocketed skyward by 10 percentage points from 2006 to 2014 (Copeland 2018: 6). A previously quite food secure population, the engineered poverty that has resulted from these changes has hit the Indigenous population particularly hard. Of the indigenous population, 21.8% are impacted by extreme poverty in recent years, compared to only 7.4% of the non-indigenous population (Elías 2017; 128). Many in the country rely heavily, and often solely, upon remittances from relatives residing and working in the U.S., foreign aid (FAO 2014), and predatory microloans that generate further debt (Heidbrink, Batz, and Sánchez 2021).

Ultimately, for the majority of Guatemala's population, neoliberal restructuring has been severely negative and with direct impacts on their simple access to healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. Isakson (2014: 375) summarizes "[r]ather than expanding choice, neoliberal restructuring has constrained the economic autonomy of the Guatemalan peasantry, conscripting it into an economically and environmentally vulnerable food system that is rendered even more so by the peasantry's very conscription."

ii.   *Land grabbing after the Peace Accords*

Neoliberalism's redefining of land and articulation of forms of 'ownership' of it has also generated forms of transformation furthering inequalities that began the escalation toward Guatemala's internal armed conflict. The destruction and/or appropriation of Indigenous land is identified by scholars of the region as a key component of larger campaigns of Spanish colonizers and later *ladinx* elites to force-assimilate or eliminate Indigenous populations (Colop 1991; Grandin 2000). Perfecto, Vandermeer and Wright (2019: 248) note that land appropriation

is one of the normative consequences of paradigms that designate land as both 'useful' and in need of protection from humans, making the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples common as governments adopt "protection" schemes that cooperate with wealthy donors and lead to the corrosive effect of widening social inequality and furthering uneven power relations (Peluso 1992) from these redefinitions. Although most of the world's land area, some 65%, is under some form of customary collective land tenure (Bassi 2017), the lack of formal acknowledgment of these arrangements by State government structures (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020) allows land to be redefined according to commodification or privatization schemes, an effect also damaging former community bonds in the process[cix]. Countries with medium- to high-intensity conflict or institutional/social fragility also tend to be the same ones with relatively high rates of perceived tenure insecurity (Corral et al. 2020), a point that stresses the importance of recognizing land tenure legally as a lack of secure land tenure can create further negative cumulative effects for everyone[cx] (i.g. Peng 2014; Wilkie and Painter 2021). Wilkie and Painter (2021) highlight the importance of territorial or resource access rights clearly and formally defined as an essential first step for any successful community-based conservation project and/or common pool resource management regime.

In Guatemala's case, land tenure inequalities and insecurities are identified as the leading or 'root' cause of increasing violence toward Indigenous peoples and local communities who contest the erosion of their rights to land and its provisions (United Nations 2016; Tauli-Corpuz 2018) and who continue to maintain different relationships to it[cxi] that conflict with land use and ownership definitions (Elliott 2021: 112). Part of a larger trend, the intensity of resource extraction from Latin American countries since the mid-1990s has increased significantly, the

occurrence of socio-environmental conflicts[cxii] corresponding with these increases (Muradian et al. 2012: 564). Mobilizing inequality as the result of power differentials to shape and configure material reality, Scheidel *et al.* (2018) assert that the structure of the systems we imagine are not innocuous but fundamentally configure the biophysical flows within ecological systems, thus also through the materialization of land-use mentalities contribute to the rise of 'ecological distribution conflicts' in spaces of extreme inequality. Underscoring the continued importance of the unaddressed causes of the internal armed conflict rooted in the continued settler colonial project to accumulate more land from Indigenous Peoples (Brett 2006), land-grabbing in Guatemala continues through the overt conversions of land tenure and from projects thereafter that bring ecological degradation unevenly to already marginalized communities.

Demonstrating the scale of the problem, Guatemala is cited by its scholars as having the most skewed land tenure system in Latin America (Gleijeses 2016: 305, cited in Prado Córdova 2021; Sundberg 2003: 720). Land inequality figures from 2014 attest to the severe inequality of land distribution in Guatemala where only 1.86 percent of the farms owned 52 percent of Guatemala's arable land and 45% of all land holdings totaled less than 0.7 ha in size (FAO 2014). Castro and Picq (2017: 799) characterize the Guatemalan state as fully founded upon the principle of occupation, writing that "[t]he making of Guatemala through the invasion of Maya territory and elimination of Maya peoples is not an event of the past: it remains the structure of today." Revisiting the most recent earnest effort to address the issue, for many rural and peasant Guatemalans given title to uncultivated portions of *fincas*[26] reallocated under Decree 900 (Elliott

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[26] The term 'finca' in Guatemala usually denotes a large farm or area of cultivated plants with a single owner. The connotation often of colonial heritage can often be read into the term, though not in all instances. It should be noted that during different periods and in different regions of Guatemala there are specific connotations for changing

2021:131, citing Handy 1984: 123-147) in 1952, the hope of reform that came from Guatemala's Ten Years of Spring (1944-54) ended abruptly in an enduring confusion and frustration that has been most memorable as inequality has widened since. During the years that followed, the internal armed conflict, a variety of means were used with with "tragic regularity" to dispossess *campesinxs* from their lands in Petén department (Gould 2006: 404, citing Clarke 1997; 2000) and, for many peasants, the lack of access to land titles and therein legal tenure security before or during the war meant that they had little to nothing to return back to in its aftermath. Carrying the violence from the war into peacetime[cxiii] as many smallholder farmers are forced to rebuild in a context without secure land tenure (Mingorría 2021) challenges are only further compounded by landgrabs of foreign actors permitted entry by neoliberalism, as Liza Grandia (2012; 2020: 110) documents with the Q'eqchi' who found themselves losing their farms "to land grabs induced by a World Bank project" after the war. Neoliberalization regimes have also been linked to patterns of migration that result in raising local land prices (Heidbrink, Batz, and Sánchez

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meanings for the term *finca*. Palencia Frener (2021: 210) documents the alliance of Cotzal Mayor Gaspar Pérez (occupying the position from the end of 1960 to the first years of the 1970s) and Enrique Brol who "Joined forces to impose their power on and seize land from other Ixil and Ladino political rivals and labor contractors", producing one of the biggest coffee and cattle plantations in Quiché during the period of their alliance. Mingorría (2021: 3) documents from the Polochic Valley where the Maya-Q'eqchi people live, that *fincas* are "large estates owned by oligarchic families" (in this case many of such as oligarchic families of German descent) that connect also to a *mozo-colono* system, which is described as "servile relationships between working peasants and landowners". Konforti (2022: xxi) simply defines *finca* as a "farm" where, from context of the Polochic valley, it also generally refers to "larger farms, such as cattle ranches and coffee estates". Drawing upon these historical systems, the connotation associated with *finca* in this region of Guatemala more directly references the process of continued accumulation of these same oligarchic families that owned large farms in the past and the designation of these lands recently for the production of monocultures such as oil palm and sugarcane. Anthropologist and worker for the Ixil Fund from 1978-1991, Elaine Elliott's well-cited and republished 1989 work on the history of land tenure in the Ixil Region (2021) documents the origin of a history of conflicting and overlapping land titling schemes that trace inequality in the Ixil region, linked to *finqueros* and land tenure. Elliott's (2021) valuable work from archives shows how *finqueros* arrived to the Ixil Region were able to effectively establish themselves, aided by a confusion of land tenure that has been a continued source of displacement for the Ixil in their ancestral territory. Identifying "forced changes in the land" as recurring motifs, accompanied by "superior weaponry of the winners, forced labor, *campesino guerrilla* revolts… and coercion of labor through land pressure", Elliott (2021: 131) utilizes historian George Lovell's characterization of the several invasions of the region to show how foreigners have consistently taken advantage of colonial strategies of dispossession to further dispossess the Ixil from their territory in the last 500 years.

2021). Squeezing Indigenous populations from formerly communal lands, the conversion of land into private parcels has also reduced land sizes for each family for those who remain in the territory[cxiv].

Maintaining control of the country by maintaining power over the definition of its lands and their use, efforts to revisit land reform since the internal armed conflict have been tightly controlled in the contortions of power exercised through multiple land cadestre projects. Flowing into the inequalities of the postwar period, the Accord on Socio-Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation negotiated after the war provided provisions for a "market-assisted land reform" (MALR), but, in effect, has largely served only to confirm inequalities of land tenure and reaffirm elite capture of land in the country through its provisions (Granovsky-Larsen 2018 cited in Aguilar-Støen 2020: 68). Created in 1997 to oversee and coordinate a market-led land reform rooted in an autonomous decentralized but State affiliated body, the Fondo Nacional de Tierras (FONTIERRAS) has been criticized as exacerbating problems, largely due to the fact that "land reform" referred to in the 1996 Peace Accords's establishment of a cadastre did not actually require land *redistribution* (Fox Tree 2011). As a result, and since the establishment of the cadastre, the land sold by the Guatemalan state has gone to actors such as corporate interests and was sold on competitive terms without providing access to or any form of direct benefit for the country's landless poor (ibid.). Citing the work of anthropologist Bill Maurer in *Recharting the Caribbean* (1997), Fox Tree (2011: 94) comments on how modern cadastres — or centralized land registries vested in the nation-state — have become mechanisms for making land distribution intelligible by identifying, marking, and fixing the discrete parcels of lands under forms of individual landownership, carved out from what may previously have been collective

space but that little substantive change has been made. Hastening change in the opposite direction, Fox Tree (ibid.) adds that cadastres not only redefine land as something neatly itemized and measurable, but that such conceptualizations of land from a Maya context also "redefine personhood itself". As people become assessed in terms of property, becoming legally atomized individuals who can own by what Maurer refers to as "cadastral logic", both people and their landscapes are restructured into commodities for utilization by the neoliberal global economy.

Unclear land title remains a central issue plaguing land reform[27] (Fox Tree 2011: 97, citing Cabrera del Valle 2002: 28), as many different systems and eras have inadequately addressed the problem, doing likely more harm than good as rather than clarifying or organizing they have created overlapping and conflicting titles to land. Receiving the blame for these issues as the state paints Indigenous communities as "illogical and disorganized" inconsistencies are even boldly pinned on Indigenous communities (Fox Tree 2011: 97). Losing on almost all fronts, of the many land reevaluation projects in Guatemala all have been less than successful in bringing any form of land reform that benefits Indigenous or smallholder peasants. Not withholding Indigenous territories in the Guatemalan state's inscription of land into a national registry, however, identifying land as if it were newly created, Ybarra (2018: 16) cites as an act of "epistemic violence". Though directly linked to the 1996 Peace Accords and with the mandate to prioritize land access for Guatemala's rural poor, Tramel (2019: 176) writes that the "entire process [of the RIC, another land registry] and its outcomes were dominated by a powerful

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[27] Citing Cabrera del Valle (2002: 28), Fox Tree (2011: 97) quotes the words of the former director of the National Cadastre identifying the confusion throughout the land ownership system in Guatemala: "The core of the agrarian conflict stems from undefined boundaries and rights, and the lack of legal instruments to address the whole set of national agrarian problems".

Guatemalan elite and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, among other

international financial institutions, leaving out real structural reforms to address the root cause of

poverty in the rural agricultural sector."[28] Among the major issues of these land reform projects

is that they have left less formal protection for communal land compared to the recognition given

to private land in these neoliberal land definition projects. Within these schemes, communal land

tenure is often held as an example of 'partially' available land where it cannot be recognized in

all areas, protected areas as one notable exception[29]. Having had no significant major changes to

this logic since its inception with Decreto 170, the political will to address land-related matters

and the confusions between communal systems and private individual ownership forms is

"consistently lacking" (Kuper 2014: 64), leading to conclusions that "[p]ut simply, land and

resource access have often been supported in principle on paper, but not honored in practice on

the ground" (Tramel 2019: 8).

Kay (2019: 57) notes that the neoliberal globalization trend that has land and territories pursued

for their financialization is "strongly tied to the discourses of green and blue growth" with

policies and programs encouraging these kinds of natural resource conversions to build 'green'

economies. Restructuring funded by international lending institutions such as the World Bank,

Holt-Giménez (2008) asserts that these forms of land reform should be considered "territorial

restructuring" for their redesignation of whole tracts of land and its contents to be reallocated for

the designs of corporate entities, agriculture included[cxv]. Under pressure to sustain themselves,

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[28] Tramel (2019: 176) writes of Order 41-2005, the Law of the Registry of Cadastral Information, that "defines collective, or communal, tenure as it applies to lands in ownership, possession, or tenure of Indigenous or peasant communities as collective entities, with or without personal jurisdiction" as overtly recategorizing Indigenous territorial lands while allowing legal claim to them to remain ambiguous [and thereafter also easily exploited].
[29] This will be discussed at length in Chapter IV in the case of the Maya Ixil's Visis Caba Biosphere Reserve.

since the signing of the 1996 Peace Agreements in Guatemala, market-based land redistribution programs that resulted in the National Land Registration and Cadaster Program have encouraged as much as 30% of *campesinx* smallholders to sell their land titles to cattle ranches, palm oil growers or other industrial agricultural pursuits in the next ten years, further concentrating inequalities as land was further condensed into the hands of a small wealthy elite (Kuper 2014: 41; see also Ybarra 2008 and Grandia 2012). As the cadastre system begins only with those with registered land titles or the right to registered land title, the legitimization of past expropriations (Kuper 2014: 43) through these land reform schemes most often further entrenches inequalities, as has been the case for many Ixil[30]. Holt-Giménez (2008: 7) writes "[t]he World Bank's lending in Guatemala is an example in which land reform, environmental projects, and infrastructure projects are all part of a bundle of institutional and financial interventions that favor the development of foreign-based extractive industries in the country's Western Highlands." Not coincidentally, Holt-Giménez (2008: 15) also comments on the parallels for World Bank projects for infrastructure, economic development, environmental services, and land reform also map onto the same locations in Guatemala which suffered acutely the violence of the civil war, and which are predominantly agricultural, Indigenous, and economically disadvantaged.

In a context where many Indigenous smallholder farmers in Guatemala are increasingly unable to co-exist with the pressure from oppressive neoliberal regimes and their creative modalities to extract life from their Indigenous territories, biodiversity, or the integrity of the more-than-human world becomes ultimately the largest loser in the violence of inequality. While Iximulew's Maya Ixil have demonstrated a long and difficult history resisting the violence and

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[30] For the Ixil, though many documents outlining land claims managed to survive numerous periods of violence since early colonial period, including from the K'iche' (Elliott 2021: 113), not all of these are recognized and granted title deed through the modern cadastre system (Elliott 2021; Banach 2017: 5).

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exploitation of settler colonialism, the dissertation identifies these problems faced by all of the Maya Ixil more-than-human world in order to show how the rearticulation of connection to the land, aided by Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and living, is not just a form of decolonization from systems of human social inequality but restores the health of the more-than-human world through processes of food sovereignty that restore, repair, and heal beyond the human.

IV.   Chapter overview and central arguments

In the following chapters of the dissertation, I present a theoretical frame outlining the processes of knowing, doing, being as rematriation and its politics of *feminismo comunitario*, a feminist, decolonial, multispecies methodology around care, followed by four empirical chapters and a conclusion. The dissertation's first empirical chapter, Chapter IV explains the failure of the traditional biodiversity conservation model that assumes ontological separation of nature/culture to conserve biodiversity. The chapter focuses on these processes of failure with the example of the Visis Caba Biosphere Reserve, a recently established protected area that has effectively separated Ixil from ancestral care relationships with the *milpa* from a prioritization of nonhuman biodiversity. In the chapter, I argue that these forms of people-less biodiversity conservation widen human social inequality through these forms of separation that, thereafter, make the same spaces vulnerable to complex forms of extractivism as coalitions of local, national, and international actors engineer a politically-led disassembly of living systems, ultimately intensifying threats to biodiversity.

Turning to alternative models of biodiversity conservation, the focus on the *milpa* food system of the Maya Ixil in Chapters V and VI contributes to addressing the research gap[31] on diversified agroecosystems such as the *milpa* (Fonteyen et al. 2023: 12). Specifically, Chapter V delves into the more-than-human identities of the Maya Ixil that articulate from their language, articulations of identity and cosmology, and biocultural practices a model of biocultural diversity conservation based on trans-species reciprocities that recognize agency beyond the human and that the Ixil seek to protect through calls for food sovereignty. Drawing upon Ixil knowledge systems that guide Ixil relationships beyond the human, this chapter aims to understand how interactions across species in the Ixil *milpa* food systems are based on multigenerational inherited and Indigenous knowledge systems, co-evolved and specific to place, which caretake biodiversity in their multispecies caretaking practices of the Earth. Chapter VI utilizes the theoretical frame of Indigenous rematriation to respond to how institutions built in the more-than-human and Indigenous processes of connection to the land decolonize from systems of inequality that impoverish the Ixil more-than-human world, while, through their growth, they also grow the structures of support for biodiversity by materializing Ixil more-than-human identities from performances of the *milpa* food system. The chapter demonstrates that the institutional structures of Maya Ixil society that circulate knowledge as biocultural institutions are themselves pedagogies of creating more-than-human abundance, focusing on the *milpa* and its more-than-human agencies as a food system of biodiversification and restoration, reparation, and healing of the more-than-human. Together, the two chapters argue that the most effective and equitable models for biodiversity conservation are based in *in-situ* structures of reciprocity

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[31] One that contributes to "a vicious circle in which the lack of academic career and experience opportunities and paucity of literature and reference resources inhibit new researchers from entering the area" (Fonteyen et al. 2023: 12).

between living systems and Earth, a more-than-human world that is articulated and embodied through Indigenous theory and praxis.

Chapter VII demonstrates how the lifeways of the Ixil and Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala are connected to political, decolonial, and material more-than-human social movements that defend seed, food, and life sovereignties as performances of more-than-human identity and political expressions of a politics of equality connected to the concept of food sovereignty that constitute the basis for more-than-human and multi-generational justice. Supporting and leading to the dissertation's conclusion, I argue that the recent progress of these movements in Guatemala as movements for food and seed sovereignty led by and in support of Indigenous Peoples have materialized an opportunity for transformation through national power dynamic shifts and politics built upon the mainstreaming of these political movements in the pathway of food and seed sovereignty.

II. Theoretical framework: rematriation as more-than-human justice, restoration, and conservation

In this theoretical framework, I will argue that the Guatemalan state biodiversity conservation models follow a colonial regime of rationality that perpetuates state violence against indigenous peoples and excludes them from conservation approaches while furthering processes of erosion and decay of the more-than-human world. In contrast, food and seed systems endemic to place, such as the Maya Ixil *milpa*, generate abundance for and beyond the human in an equality-based model of biodiversity conservation that addresses patriarchal-colonial-modern structures of inequality based on implicit cooperations and reciprocities across species that support these

more-than-human networks. The local systems of food sovereignty in the territory of the Maya Ixil, as organized from, by, and for grassroots groups, form multispecies assemblages according to Maya Ixil ancestral knowledge embodied as biocultural performativity, contesting colonial and patriarchal models while investing and building local and Indigenous ones. These food sovereignties use biodiversity cultivation, stewardship, and protection as a part of the defense of Indigenous ways of thinking, doing, being, knowing, and, ultimately, relating to the world as more-than-human and a form of what is called 'rematriation'.

I.   Decolonial critique of the epistemic and political violence of patriarchal colonial modernity

Rooted in the same struggles for equality that the Indigenous Peoples of the so-called Americas have had with European conquistadors, colonizers, and their imposed systems for 500+ years, the separation of nature and culture[cxvi] is a construct that has allowed and facilitated the commodification of land since the colonial era. As an ideological tool, the nature/culture divide has been central to the privatization, and, most importantly, the claiming of human 'ownership' over land, a notion made possible and spread with the dissemination of colonialism's anthropocentric economic system, capitalism. The theoretical frame of this research situates the separation of nature and culture as a violence that begins cycles of human social inequality[cxvii], and, through the hierarchies of privilege established in that inequality, it is a violence that impoverishes and degrades, collectively and locally, the living world beyond the human[cxviii].

Easily appropriated by the emerging global systems of inequality established through colonization processes and solidified into capitalism, the slow process of converting living

beings into de-subjectified, inagentic, *commodities*, the modernization[cxix] of the divide between nature/culture and the adoption of Lockean[cxx] definitions of land as private property are fundamentally representative of the transition away from a *more-than*-human existence, the very root and point of facilitation for human social inequality. This identification of the period of history just prior to the age of European colonial expansion is noted by some scholars as the beginning of an age of capital, the "Capitalocene"[cxxi] where man's agency was situated as displacing the labor involved in life's structures and its abundance and became claimed by the white human male[cxxii] and him alone.

Segato and McGlazer (2018: 201) use the term "colonial-modern" after Aníbal Quijano to underscore the "discovery" of the 'Americas' as generative of "the condition of possibility of modernity, as well as of capitalism", a means to exploit inequalities discursively created by the capture of agency to the white man and his labors defining ownership and characterizing a new means of control. In lieu of the establishment of this, what Segato and McGlazer (2018: 200, emphasis in original) refer to as primitive patriarchy, is the foundation of "all inequalities and expropriations of value, or of *the universal surplus that sustains the sexual capital of men* and supports the edifice of all powers, given that *potency* in some form—sexual, military, economic, political, intellectual, or moral—is the precondition for qualifying as virile"[cxxiii] within this created "patriarchal-colonial modernity" (ibid.). The subversion of non-Europeans and women through the categorization of "colonizer" and "colonized", is argued by Stoler (1989) to have oriented not only the myth of nature[cxxiv] but also relationships of domination to it. First introduced as a means of control over women and nature, the nature/culture divide is an ontological tool to capture the means and modes of reproduction within and beyond the species

from an ontology that arose in Europe's Enlightenment era, spread with the spread of colonialism[cxxv], and has since become a great machine "minoritizing anomalies of every kind"[cxxvi], replicating the privileges of patriarchal colonial modernity's benefactors from economic, political, colonial, and racial categorizations (Segato and McGlazer 2018: 204) that categorize an 'other' by degrees of lacking humanity[cxxvii]. The objectification of 'nature' and claiming of agency and the bodies of Earth through notions of ownership also narrated claim with its "possessive logics" (Moreton-Robinson 2015: xii) over all newly marginalized or 'othered' categories, designing anthropocentric society in the shadow of human social inequalities.

Hierarchies of inequality justified by the introduction of secular science and its regimes of rationality, from the perspective of *long durée* decolonial[cxxviii] and feminist political ecology[cxxix] Collins *et al.* (2021: 971) cite the work of a well-known Latin American decolonial scholar and eminent thinker establishing the field, Anibal Quijano (2000), who describes in his doctoral dissertation these ways of knowing and thinking as forming a 'colonial matrix of power' where places are remade according to the

> "persistent impact of colonialism on contemporary society as a matrix of intersecting power structures that perpetuates colonial patterns of producing benefits for certain actors in the West while disenfranchising other actors".

During the same Enlightenment and subsequent globalization with colonialism (Collins et al. 2021), science became a tool to 'penetrate depths' and 'pierce veils' of Nature's feminized

spaces[cxxx], a "male power-fantasy" (Said 1978: 207) that also designed "gendered erotics of knowledge" (McClintock 1995: 23, citing Farrington 1964: 62). Organizing purges according to the 'colonial matrix'[cxxxi], a "great digestive process" (Segato and McGlazer 2018: 204) that gave new, colonial, ways of relating and being (Collins et al. 2021: 868), the colonial matrix used the tool of science to claim universalizing control over 'truth' in a singular '*uni*-verse', or 'world'[cxxxii]. Rámon Grosfoguel (2007) argues that the hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms, undergirded by 'Western'[32] philosophy and science, form the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (2005; 2006) from this Cartesian logic and the self-proclaimed superiority of Western 'settler' mentalities (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Coté 2016).

For the last 500 hundred years, this system has assumed a universalistic, neutral, objective point of view that forces its categorizations globally from systems of interlocking oppressions that influence, and are influenced by, racism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, nationalism, etc.[cxxxiii]. The battle for ownership and claim to this 'truth', perhaps for the normalization of a new 'unmarked' category (see Lakoff 1975), is described by Kahnawà:ke Mohawk activist and scholar Taiaiake Alfred and Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2005: 598) as a useful tool to "eradicate [Indigenous Peoples'] existence as *peoples* through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundation for indigenous cultural identities and sense of self". Indigenous scholars cite the subordination of their worldviews and land-based knowledge systems as critical in maintaining the hegemony of the nature-culture divide[cxxxiv]. Secwépemc scholar Dawn Morrison (2011) compares the philosophical roots of EuroAmerican philosophy

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[32] For decolonial theorists, with the use of the term "Western" there is greater significance than simply geographic origin, as Álvarez and Coolsaet (2020: 51) note the term denotes more broadly "a mode of life, a system of values, and a political and historical project that emerged with the colonization of the Americas".

with Indigenous philosophies, naming European philosopher Rene Descartes's nature/culture philosophy of separation as the critical difference between Indigenous philosophies and those of EuroAmerican traditions. Wahpetunwan Dakota scholar Waziyatawin (2012: 72) writes that the disconnect between nature and humans "was key to the process of colonization" and a chief goal of 'settler' projects: "[c]olonial governments worked systematically to break our ancestors' connections to our homelands" connections that focused on "[t]erritoriality [a]s settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element" (Coulthard, in Hallenbeck et al. 2016: 118, citing Wolfe 2006: 388), citing "the persistent role that land dispossession plays in the political and economic reproduction of settler-colonialism" in settler colonial nation-states (Coulthard, in Hallenbeck et al. 2016: 118).

To understand these colonial regimes of rationality as forming the unequal power structures that oppress and marginalize Indigenous Peoples such as the Maya Ixil, I examine the dynamics of these structures, linking them to the institutionalized forms of oppression and violence that are channeled through the state from local to international actors. While the often gradual and invisible violence of anthropocentric society produces phenomena such as climate change, toxic drift, deforestation, oil spills, and the environmental aftermath of war, as described by Robert Nixon (2013: 2) with the concept of "slow violence", where time and space are dispersed in "a delayed destruction", or with Lauren Berlant's (2007: 759) concept of 'slow death' to describe the gradual acclimation to these forms of violence as they are rendered "ordinary"[cxxxv] within the living within and beyond the human, I relate the analytical frame of these regimes of rationality to the explicit violence of dispossession of the Maya Ixil from their lands to the forms of violence that dictate a death through political coalitions mobilized through patterns of

disassembly of living, more-than-human systems in a conservation area. The chapter uses this theoretical frame to understand how the regime of rationality guided by Cartesian divides connect with patterns of land or resource dispossession and displacement of local groups, thereafter clearing a path for the conversion and transformation of landscapes ready to be consumed by extractive industry[cxxxvi] (Scheidel et al. 2018) creating conflicts over land from asymmetries in power, property, and income influence that have historically influenced global development and global economic interactions after the colonizing interventions from Europe that began in the late 16th century but that persist in the inequalities on the ground in Indigenous territories today.

Foucault (1977: 27) made the point that ecologies of power are intrinsically related to the creation of knowledge: "power and knowledge directly imply on one another …. [such] that there is no power relation without the co relative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations". Taking the rationality of 'natures as a consumable good', formerly 'natures as our surroundings and life force', transformation resulting from ecologies of power must be problematized, reconceptualized, and re-organized to restore possibility for a living future (Ingold 1992). The meanings and values associated with the simplification and commodification of land, rendering land and the living beings dependent upon it as objects at the same level of importance as any other disposable object[cxxxvii], is a "cultural baggage" that must be "made strange" [cxxxviii] (Li 2014). This decolonization of imposed colonial structures, the defense of the 'village world',

"entails confronting dilemmas"[33] Segato and Monque (2021: 784). Thus, the categories used by

the nature/culture divide and from it, are those same ontological points of redress that Indigenous

theories provide an alternative to ontologies that begin and arise from the land or more-than-

human.

II.   Interpreting a politics of regrowth from Indigenous and more-than-human ontologies

Building from the idea that some form of power can also arise from the synergies of the

abundance of the more-than-human world, inclusive, nonhierarchical, built from cooperation,

and strengthening relationships between constituent parts, Indigenous theories collaborate with

decolonial, feminist, and multispecies perspectives in not a hegemonic 'universe' but a

'*pluriverse*' (Stengers 2005; 2010; Kothari et al. 2019: xxviii[34]; Escobar 2020) where worlds

may coexist in dualities[cxxxix] of non-dominance instead of binaries that must replace alternatives

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[33] Deleuze writes that "the real problems … are problems of organization" (2004[1953-74]: 279-80) and sociologist Erving Goffman aptly pointed out in his book Stigma (1963) that not all categorization has to do the work of stigmatization.

[34] As Escobar (2011: 139) defines it "The modern ontology presumes the existence of One World—a universe. This assumption is undermined by discussions in TDs [transition discourses], the buen vivir, and the rights of Nature. In emphasizing the profound relationality of all life, these newer tendencies show that there are indeed relational worldviews or ontologies for which the world is always multiple—a pluriverse. Relational ontologies are those that eschew the divisions between nature and culture, individual and community, and between us and them that are central to the modern ontology. Some of today's struggles could be seen as reflecting the defense and activation of relational communities and worldviews […] and as such they could be read as ontological struggles; they refer to a different way of imagining life, to another mode of existence. They point towards the pluriverse; in the successful formula of the Zapatista, the pluriverse can be described as 'a world where many worlds fit'." Kothari *et al.* (2019: xxviii) echo this root of the concept from the Zapatistas of Chiapas, repeating the definition as "a world where many worlds fit", elaborating upon it that "[a]ll people's worlds should co-exist with dignity and peace without being subjected to diminishment, exploitation and misery. A pluriversal world overcomes patriarchal attitudes, racism, casteism, and other forms of discrimination. Here, people re-learn what it means to be a humble part of 'nature', leaving behind narrow anthropocentric notions of progress based on economic growth. While many pluriversal articulations synergize with each other, unlike the universalizing ideology of sustainable development, they cannot be reduced to an overarching policy for administration either by the UN or some other global governance regime, or by regional or state regimes. We envision a world confluence of alternatives, provoking strategies for transition, including small everyday actions, towards a great transformation."

and exist in relationships of competition (Segato and Monque 2021). Identifying energy of the living systems of Earth as collectively supporting and fueling its social interactions, the counter-subjectivation processes set in motion by thinking of sociality as multispecies aligns with the communitary citizenship/rights from *pueblos*[cxl] (Segato and Monque 2021) where connections to land prescribe different, more-than-human ways of knowing, doing, being[35]. I use these categories of analysis adapted from Balàsz and Aistara (2018) to analyze the values of relationality, reciprocity, care, and equal distribution that compose a broader process of the rematriation of Indigenous Peoples, their more-than-human forms of community, and knowledge systems to the Earth as colonial systems of inequality and domination are drained power through the presence of these 'abundable'[36] (Youdelis et al. 2021: 2001) alternatives of the pluriverse.

i.   Knowing: relationality and the more-than-human

Tracing origin back from the many severed connections of "doctrines of individualism and predatory capitalism" (Alfred and Corntassel 2005: 598), at the root of the intersectional problems created by human social and structural inequalities is the identification of a central need to repair and restore relationships[37] (Buck 2019: 244, cited in Cavillo 2023: 138). Arguing

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[35] Still working within the domain of food sovereignty, this lens is adapted from Balàzs and Aistara (2018) and knowing, doing, framing, and organizing in the context of seed exchanges as sites for social innovation. Beyond just the traveling bodies of the living land by way of its seeds, relationships to land, in the context of Indigenous Peoples, entail a different rationality or mode of thinking, doing, but beyond framing, and by a consideration of more-than-human agency, also understand these relationships as ways of being. Furthermore, I characterize the social processes throughout the community around the sense of more-than-human identity as ways of knowing that entail power relations and political dimensions.

[36] Tla-o-qui-aht Elder and Nuu-chah-nulth knowledge carrier Joe Martin and Tla-o-qui-aht citizen Eli Enns (2019) use the term 'abundability' (CRP 2020) in place of 'sustainability' to highlight the abundance creating and striving practices of Indigenous land management.

[37] Specifically, the quote is: "It's the relationships that must be repaired and restored" (Buck 2019: 244, cited in Cavillo 2023: 138).

for a new ethos of multispecies cooperation and collaboration, feminist and STS scholar Donna Haraway (1995: 70) attests to this as the need to "find another relationship to nature beside reification, possession, appropriation and nostalgia… [where] all the partners in the potent conversations that constitute nature must find a new ground for making meanings together". Indigenous scholar Taiaiake Alfred (Mohawk) (2005: 45) writes of the distinction in discourse between the Western academe philosophy and indigenous philosophy, distinguishing the latter as addressing this issue as it eschews an ethic of 'partnership' that is common to many indigenous groups and means that "Indigenous philosophies are premised on the belief that the human relationship to the earth is primarily one of partnership". Though originating from different knowledge traditions, Lemke and Delormier (2018: 1)[cxli] point to a bridging of Western, or EuroAmerican, and indigenous philosophies around a "focus on the principles of respect, responsibility, and relationships, and an openness to different worldviews, [that] can facilitate a bridging of Indigenous and Western approaches in research and community action conducted in partnership with Indigenous Peoples."

Indigenous Peoples provide examples to ground new meanings for finding relationships at the point of connection to life itself, redefining land as having agency and humans in relationships to it of service to it that characterize ways of thinking that become, thus, 'more-than-human'. Coulthard (2014: 13) re-defines 'land' around these relationships as a "system of reciprocal relations and obligations" that engineer "a mode of life based on a territorially fluid notion of land as a multidimensional social relation" (Coulthard 2014: 59–65, cited in Hallenbeck et al. 2016: 115). The relational and reciprocal ontologies, borne from these worlds of relationships from the land, "avoid sharp divisions between nature and culture, individual and community, and

between us and them that are central to the modern, Western ontology"[cxlii] (Escobar 2011: 139).
Theories from Colombian-American critical anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2007; 2013; 2015;
2018), Thayer-Bacon (2017), and others identify these as broadly "relational ontologies", or
"worlds" (Blaser et al. 2010), from the equality-focused feminist frame where knowledge is
constituted from the shared grounds that trace origins back to them: "a relational ontology of this
sort can be defined as one in which *nothing preexist the relations that constitute it.* Said
otherwise, things and beings are their relations, they do not exist prior to them"[cxliii] (Escobar
2015: 18, emphasis in original). These ontologies are the foundation of different relational
regimes (de la Cadena 2015: 134) as they design an economy of relations before and beyond
capitalism, as documented from the western hemisphere's Abya Yala[38] where this occurs in the
Andean *ayllu* and its notions of 'property'.

Particularly relevant in this research, as mutually constitutive relationships between people and
place are proven to create resilient socio-ecological systems (Sterling et al. 2017; Briggs,
Steadman, and Krasny 2019), the wisdom within Indigenous conservation paradigms begin with
these relational ontologies. Though many Indigenous communities may see their practices less as
an overt form of conservation and more as lifeways or lived practices, Sterling *et al.* (2017) use
the term 'biocultural' to refer to these modalities of biodiversity conservation practiced by
Indigenous and local communities that utilize a 'systems' perspective. Sterling *et al.* (2017:
1800) explain this as "explicitly starting with and building on local cultural perspectives—

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[38] The Indigenous Kuna name for what 'the Westernized' call the "Americas", translating to "land in plenitude," and a name that many Indigenous movements today, particularly of Southern America, have agreed on the use of, according to Figueroa-Helland (2012: 2).

encompassing values, knowledges, and needs— and recognizing feedbacks between ecosystems and human well-being.”

Defining 'indigeneity' and Indigenous perspectives broadly around these reciprocal connections with land, Harris and Wasilewski (2004) write of the relationships that emerge from this redefinition of land as relationships rooted in the "four R's and their ensuing obligations". These four Rs, relationality, responsibility, reciprocity, and redistribution, are 'core values' that manifest in a core obligation in Indigenous societies that cross generation, geography, and tribe, and that emerged in initial meetings of Indigenous Peoples in the 1980s and early 1990s (ibid.: 492). Several Indigenous scholars have since cited the 'four Rs' as also guiding Indigenous research (Kirkness and Barnhardt 2016; Pidgeon 2018; Weber-Pillwax 2001; Wilson 2001; 2008; 2013, cited in Peltier 2018: 3; Williams and Shipley 2023) that must be done, with these values, horizontally and in right and equal relation.

On the first 'R' value, relationality, Harris and Wasilewski (2004: 492) articulate the thinking from the more-than-human frame by breaking down the species boundary of the human and feeling beyond her from these co-dependent living relationships across species:

> "Relationship is the kinship obligation, the profound sense that we human beings are related, not only to each other, but to all things, animals, plants, rocks—in fact, to the very stuff the stars are made of. This relationship is a kinship relationship. Everyone/everything is related to us as if they were our blood relatives. We, thus, live in a family that includes all creation, and everyone/everything in this extended family is

valued and has a valued contribution to make. So, our societal task is to make sure that everyone feels included and feels that they can make their contribution to our common good. This is one reason why we value making decisions by consensus because it allows everyone to make a contribution."

Other Indigenous scholars have since resonated the importance of the concept of relationality from Indigenous perspectives as "culturally specific and gendered axiologies, ontologies, and epistemologies that are connected to the earth" (Moreton-Robinson (2017: 71) and "the main and fundamental principle of reality, [where] everything is related, nothing can be and abstraction or exist on its own. This principle rules over any other natural/social/spiritual law", according to Querejazu (2016: 9) from the Andean cosmovision. Discussing the worldview of her people on the Northwest Pacific coast of Turtle Island, the Nuu-chah-nulth, Coté (2016: 11) quotes a Nuu-chah-nulth chief Umeek who summarizes such perspectives as existing in an otherwise worded pluriverse from these relationships where "the universe is regarded as a network of relationships" (ibid.: 12). The fourteen Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations follow the Nuu-chah-nulth philosophy of *hishuk ish tsawalk,* which provides the guidance that "everything is one [...] everything in life is connected" (Coté 2010: 42). Citing Starblanket and Stark (2018: 177, cited in ibid., emphasis in original), Gray (2022: 5, emphasis in original) articulates relationality as "*understanding* our place in the world as situated within relations of interdependence with all of creation" and "*living* in a way that carries out our responsibilities within these relationships"; "the key to Indigenous resurgence". While distinct in its various situated place-based contexts, Blaser *et al.* (2010: 8) write that relationships are central to many Indigenous knowledge systems, globally, and extend across space and time:

"In effect, Indigenous knowledges are built upon relationships — with oneself; with one's family, community, or nation; with other nations; and with the other-than-human (Cajete 2000; Cornelius 1992; and Clarkson, Morrissette, and Regallet 1992). These relationships are not limited by space, place, or time. They are spiritual, often extending back to ancestors and into the future to those yet born".

Not exclusive to Indigenous perspectives, however, and finding the commonality between many Indigenous philosophies (see also Cajete 1994), the Deleuzian 'assemblage', rhizomatically connecting and recombining (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) various dynamic relationships of the pluriverse, also identifies relationships as existing prior to the nature/culture division across feminist, decolonial, and multispecies scholarship. Expanding agency or disentangling it from the exclusive domain of the human with the concept of relationality, distinctions between the theoretical and the empirical become "troubled" (Williams et al. 2019: 637) as theory becomes practice and practice, a "form of theory-in-the-making" (Williams et al. 2019: 639)— what Thayer-Bacon (2017: x) characterizes a relational epistemology that "call[s] for active engagement, aim[s] at democratic inclusion, join[s] theory with practice (praxis), striv[es] for awareness of context and values, and tolerat[es] vagueness and ambiguities." Relationality, thus, is not just a manner of conceptualizing the world but corresponds closely with a *care* of relationships that compose 'the very fabric of reality' (Blaser et al. 2010). Relationships within the more-than-human world are central and respect is demonstrated through the care of and for them[cxliv].

Theorizing from the space of the pluriverse, the concept of relationality reanimates land and agencies beyond the human, assigning him, through the value, a new identity in partnership and cooperation with the Earth and its processes and where the human is brought also into a relationship of accountability to a more-than-human community through "our societal task … to make sure that everyone feels included and feels that they can make their contribution to our common good" (Harris and Wasilewski 2004: 492). Giving him a new task or job of the responsibility to care for life's networks that rely upon one another, relationality is a new common ground for meaning making that can reorient human relationships to land by thinking, feeling, and considering its agencies beyond the human. Beyond hierarchies of inequality, relationality makes the dimension of place relevant as networks of trust and interdependence across species are developed *in situ,* without exclusion or need to universalize, and are inherently anti-capitalist/anti-colonial by a different shared goal in survival of life, a necessarily shared and cooperative more-than-human endeavor.

ii. Doing: the responsibility of care and taking relational accountability

Under what Ybarra (2018: 14), after Coulthard (2010) characterize as simply a 'noncapitalist' ontology of territory by identity, in this way many Indigenous perspectives are continuing to resist Lockean valuations of land by continuing to live in reciprocal relationship with it and according to responsibilities to it from ancestral knowledge systems that never separated its peoples from it.

Implicated in the definition of relationality is a pairing with other 'R's as an epistemology of reciprocity puts care into practice with the 'R' of responsibility and the concept of 'relational accountability' to become accountable to "*all [of one's] relations*", as Shawn Wilson (2001: 177, emphasis in original; 2008), Opaskwayak Cree from northern Manitoba, Canada, writes[cxlv]. From the knowledge systems of many Indigenous Peoples, it is possible to find language describing these responsibilities of the human as becoming 'human' from this relationship of service to the living community that they originate from[cxlvi] (Kelly 2021). Nicholas J. Reo (2019: 68, citing the Seven Generations Education Institute 2015) discusses this as the principle of relational accountability from Anishinaabe teachings of *inawendiwin,* broadly translated as the concept of 'relating', and Anishinaabe i/*enawendawin* as

> "our way of relating to each other and to all of Creation. It is an all-inclusive relationship that honours the interconnectedness of all our relations, and recognizes and honours the human place and responsibility within the family of Creation. Anishnaabe *inawendiwin* is a way of relating to spirit and to one another that honors the interconnectedness of all our relations—*kina enwemgik*. Relationships based in *inawendiwin* teachings are respectful of the individual, as well as the integrity of the collective."

Relational accountability, or 'ethical relationality'[cxlvii] (Todd 2016: 18) takes ownership of the collective by becoming accountable *to* it, a stance that requires action—a 'doing'. Displacing the Western notion of 'rights' from within these Indigenous ontologies, Elder Albert Marshall articulates it as "nature has rights, we [humans] have responsibilities" (Reconciling Ways of Knowing 2020b), where the more-than-human subject must be active, not neutral or passive

(Kimmerer 2003: 161), in her responsibility to provide care. Simpson (2017: 21) refers to such engagement as adopting "accountable relationships with other beings". As put forth by the Indigenous Zapatista movement of Mexico through their statement '*Mandar Obedeciendo'* (to command by obeying), sovereignty is interpreted as coming with an obligation and process to care for the living world. This obligation of care also sites an obligation to place that is articulated in various Indigenous conceptualizations of environmental citizenship (cited in Camilo Cajigas 2023: 219) ontologically different from those of a Western world where 'freedom' is a common objective. Extending this notion of obligation from the Zapatistas to agroecological practitioners in the Tequendama region of Colombia, Camilo Cajigas (2023: 219) cites the phrase to '*obedecer la vida'* as referencing "an obediential form of power, which crystallizes a collective self across the human and non-human realm" (ibid.: 219) and defines "a form of co-constitution where people and place unfold as modes of the same intimate relationship. Such a relationship is the determination of [the Indigenous *campesinx's*] active emplacement. … obligation is based on active emplacement more than on individual responsibility and duty" (ibid.: 217-218).

While the ways of being accountable to all of one's relations depends upon the specifics of context (Wilson 2008: 99), such accountability stems from the centrality of respecting relationships— "a connection to spirit, land, environment and all of creation" (Reo 2019: 68). Responsible for continuing a legacy of these generationally-linked, multispecies cycles of responsible care, forming belonging based on reciprocity rather than hierarchy (TallBear 2011; Whyte 2017), Harris and Wasilewski (2004: 492-493) articulate the second 'R' of the four

around this value of responsibility which is tied directly to community obligation to not just

recognize relations but to care for all of those relatives from this ethos of care:

> "Responsibility is the community obligation. This obligation rests on the understanding
> that we have a responsibility to care for all of our relatives. Our relatives include
> everything in our ecological niche, animals and plants, as well as humans, even the
> stones, since everything that exists is alive. Many North American Indians refer to the
> subsistence triad of plants, corn, beans and squash, as the Three Sisters. Indigenous
> leadership arises from the assumption of responsibilities arising out of our relationships
> and the roles in society these relationships engender, not from an ability to exercise force
> over others. Responsible Indigenous leadership is based on an ethos of care, not of
> coercion. The most important responsibility of a leader is to create the social space in
> which productive relationships can be established and take place."

Not just defining leaders and dictating the creating of social space, de la Cadena explains within

the Quechuan concept of the *ayllu*, multispecies society, the concept of *uyway* that broadly

translates to "mutual caring" (2015: 103) or "mutual relations of care among human and other-

than-human beings" (2010: 356) where a lack of respect and care "has consequences"[39]. From

the Anishinaabe tradition, Reo notes (ibid.: 69) that from connections knowledge is formed, from

an interconnected network that "recasts intellectual pursuits and 'knowledge production' in a

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[39] Echoing feminist notions of intraactivity, de la Cadena (2015: 103) refers to this as "intra-caring" which is not the same or to be mistaken for altruism or egalitarianism but "follows a hierarchical socionatural order; failure to act in accordance with in-*ayllu* hierarchies of respect and care has consequences". Furthermore, people maintain the collective *ayllu* existence in "the co-emergence of each with the others" (De la Cadena 2015: 102) and are not *from* the ayllu but they *are* it, as its instantiation.

way that pushes ego out and creates space for humility", redefining knowledge itself as "alive and it is animate" as it is created through active and animate practice that defines the relationships themselves. The ethical relationality of reciprocal engagements (Kelly 2019; 2021), thus performed and theorized together, contribute to knowledge production that does not disaggregate reality from its lived context.

Advancing from the speci-ated feminist ethics of care first articulated by Tronto[cxlviii] (1993) and remaining critical of academia's pursuit of knowledge where curiosity is often divorced from care[cxlix] and free from responsibility (Ingold 2017: 73), the responsibility of care is also articulated, with similar connotation, in feminist, multispecies, and decolonial literature. In the shadow of Peter Kropotkin's book by the same name published over a century ago[cl], Copeland (2022: 866) refers to care as 'mutual aid' as it "embodies the values of caretaking, sharing, reciprocity, and prioritizes human needs and collective well-being over profit", thus combating the inertia of capitalism as it provides an alternative: "Mutual aid creates a refuge from the free market and brings people together for a common purpose and has considerable potential to weave community bonds, expand organizational capacity, and build critical common sense while protecting the vulnerable." Feminist or multispecies scholars such as Puig de la Ballacasa (2010; 2011; 2012; 2015; 2017) and Pershouse (2015) have begun to detail a return to ethical science with a multispecies feminist ethic focused around relationality, care, and difference (Braidotti 2006; Corman and Vandrovcová 2014), framed with a multispecies perspective[cli] (Puig de la Bellacasa 2015; 2017). Inherently refusing 'species' as distinct and separate bodies, these perspectives cite soil repair practices and restoration of the Earth, a multispecies body, for better health outcomes beyond (but including) the human (i.e. Gorman and Cacciatore 2020; Yamane

and Helm 2022). These feminist materialist perspectives are increasingly, and— particularly for the context of justice through equality— overlapping into shared space with decolonial political practices of Indigenous Peoples and life's support systems in general as they set "new horizons for care for species life"[clii] (Millner 2023: 27). The ethic of care, whether multispecies feminist or from Indigenous knowledge systems, works toward the repair of more-than-human relationships by recognizing the strength and agency of nonhumans engaged in multispecies efforts of care and cooperating with their relational processes with notions of solidarity (Gonda et al. 2021) as an intellectual practice[cliii] (Simpson 2017: 215).

Following the Earth caretakers and land cultivators, the *campesinxs* of the Ixil Region, in their practices of management and interaction in their *milpa* food systems, I apply this theoretical frame of interpreting the 'doing' of responsibilities to care to understand how the diversity in the landscape is a product of biocultural protocols, norms, and a philosophy where responsibility to care has been carried across generations, *in-situ*.

iii.   Being: reciprocity and becoming practices of care

Indigenous ontological perspectives bolster feminist notions of care with land-based and place specific systems for caring for soil and *giving back* to a more-than-human community with their energies, to keep food systems caretaking the more-than-human community, in reciprocity. Kuokkanen (2007: 38-39) describes care from a perspective of 'circular reciprocity and sharing' or "ceremonial reciprocity", a form of gift-giving[cliv] that is representative of 'radical sharing' and composes the basis of community well-being[clv] by encouraging people "to act responsibly

toward other forms of life"[clvi]. The third 'R' of Indigenous ontologies rooted in communities of the land is this value of reciprocity, closely related to the other 'R's, that Harris and Wasilewski (2004: 493) define as a *becoming* of the more-than-human collective through practices of reciprocity:

> "Reciprocity is the cyclical obligation. It underscores the fact that in nature things are circular: for example, the cycle of the seasons and the cycle of life, as well as the dynamics between any two entities in relationship with each other. Once we have encountered another, we are in relationship with them. … The Indigenous idea of reciprocity is based on very long relational dynamics in which we are all seen as 'kin' to each other."

Reciprocity-based worldviews (Salmón 2000; Reo 2019; Baker 2021) relate to the land and the more-than-human with a notion of identity that holds the self and the community[clvii] in iterative processes "learnt through reciprocity, obligation, shared experiences, coexistence, co-operation and social memory" (Salmón 2000: 16). Echoing Harris and Wasilewski (2004), Dudgeon and Bray (2019) explain how relationality and reciprocity form the basis of Indigenous social order, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their forms of law and government: "The law comes from the land, is the land … governed by responsibility and reciprocity towards human and more-than-human kin" (ibid: 25). From solidarity networks in local economies, it is the characteristic of reciprocity, not utility maximization, that has been cited as the main driver bringing these communities together (Rodríguez Crisóstomo 2015).

From Simpson's (2017: 184) settler colonial critique, relationships of care are articulated around a "core Nishnaabeg practice" of reciprocal recognition[clviii] (Simpson 2017: 184), a radical tool of reflection and care that replaces and resists settler colonialism's unwelcome legacy of shame[clix] in many Indigenous societies that holds the door ajar for further dispossession, displacement, and exploitation by colonialism's enduring structures of inequality. Describing reciprocal recognition as also a form of 'affirmative refusal', "forms of visibility within settler colonial realities that render the Indigenous vulnerable to commodification and control" are refused by Indigenous populations (Simpson 2017: 198) with the same way of being. Simpson provides this tool as one that must accompany decolonial motivations by also working to reorient relationships for active processes and practices of inter- and intra-species care that rebuild strong Indigenous [more-than-human] societies[clx] (Simpson 2017: 180, 184) and heal in the wake of the violence of settler colonialism. Tethered to human societies rooted in communal understandings of life and its forms, by investing in these communal structures and bonds that are tied in reciprocity and communal rootedness, subjects are pulled out of the "magnetism of things" (Segato and McGlazer 2018: 209) and made dysfunctional for the historical project of capital. From research in the Achi Territory of Guatemala, Bakal and Vásquez Reyes (2023: 14) cite Fermina who phrases these cycles of reciprocity with the land as simply: "[w]e care for the land, and the land cares for us"[clxi].

Where the colonial governments "[sought] to 'manage' the land that provide[d] us with our food", Morrison (2011: 99, emphasis mine) writes that Indigenous philosophy "reinforces belief that humans *do not manage land*, but instead can only *manage our behaviours in relation to it*". Internalizing this understanding, Indigenous societies and knowledge systems live from the

reciprocity of living economies that care for and are cared by the more-than-human, without elevating the human in a hierarchized relationship to achieve that goal (Kheel 1993). Thinking of interdisciplinary connections of soil, gut, and reconfigured agentic bodies together[clxii] (Puig de la Bellacasa 2015; Pershouse 2015; Lorimer 2016), stories of the restoration of Indigenous foodways (Arthur and Porter 2019; Lunsford, Arthur, and Porter 2021) provide notions for how the "sacred responsibilities to nurture *relationships* with our land, culture, spirituality, and future generations" (Morrison 2011: 111, emphasis mine) are a means of care *from* and *in* reciprocal relationship with living geo-specific communities. The revised practices that put humans back into reciprocal relationships and kinship with the more-than-human multispecies communities of the land while helping save our food systems with historical foodway strategies (Lunsford, Arthur, and Porter 2021) also represent the struggles for self-determination interwoven intricately with food sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples, re-connecting the human to land-based food and political systems (Simpson 2014; Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy 2014; Martens et al. 2016: 18; Perfecto, Vandermeer, and Wright 2019: 243; Aistara 2011) with the performance of practices of mutual benefit for all species (Kamal et al. 2015).

Claiming the connectedness of life to place and the living communities around the planet that inhabit place through the reciprocities of care networks and their ecologies (Pershouse 2015), food sovereignty movements put forward an alternative politics of matter (Papadopoulos 2018, cited in Ghelfi 2023: 194) that draw upon Indigenous and feminist situated and embodied knowledges to contest the nature/culture divide and reclaim relationality to and responsibilities to care for the Earth while asserting at the same time alternative more-than-human lifeways. As articulated by Indigenous activists and scholars, food sovereignty combines with political

projects that decolonize from oppressive structures of inequality while revitalizing ancestral knowledge systems and practices as a part of the design of their food systems.

Amplifying Indigenous thought and struggles defending alliances of people and ecologies while also asserting the inseparability of Earth/place belongings with cultural belongings (Gilio-Whitaker 2020; Whyte 2022), well designed food systems require care guided by knowledge of place[clxiii] and the needs of actors within them, connections also defended with Indigenous calls for food and seed sovereignty. Masson *et al.* (2017) argue that the food sovereignty movement and its corresponding World March of Women are intersectional and transnational movements[clxiv] built from the marginalized, from bottom up, to unite and strengthen women's grassroots struggles, among other protectors of life. Beyond the solidarities in popular women's movements[clxv], other feminist, Indigenous land and food defense movements like the Zapatista Movement in Mexico and the Idle No More Movement in Canada, Coté (2016: 7) asserts, are successfully linking "local issues of cultural marginalization, racism, and inequality" with existing movements demanding land rights and attention to environmental issues compromising Indigenous Peoples by bringing the different more-than-human and land-based lifeways and ontologies to the attention of social media and other places of societal attention/focus while noting the tendency of these movements to be led by women[clxvi]. Global feminist and more-than-human social movements confront the inequalities of a singular world and its forms of oppression under the neoliberal phase of capitalism today (Berlanga 2022) as women are often influential actors in the sharing of seed and support of a food economy. Connecting attacks on seeds with an attack to Indigenous territories and Peoples in them, Masson and colleagues (2017: 55) write that the further commodification of land through its seeds continues to threaten women

and aspects of society connected to them[clxvii] (i.g. Chiquin 2014, cited in Grandia 2017: 69-70[clxviii]).

Masson and colleagues (2017: 58) provide support to the "genuinely novel, feminist re-significations of food sovereignty" that feminist movements such as these provide internationally in the struggle of land caretakers and indigenous groups to maintain relations with the more-than-human world by maintaining land, food, and seed sovereignty.

With their languages[clxix], sense of more-than-human place, and knowledge systems, Indigenous Peoples across the world preserve perspectives of humans situated within a world of collective, multispecies relationships that manifest in material food systems. Sharing an ancestral link to the Mayan civilizations of the historical past and to an extended Indigenous community across the Americas, the Maya Ixil align themselves with the lives of other-than-humans and participate in this global food sovereignty movement that combines themes of environmental justice, Earth and territorial defense, *buen vivir* forms of exogenous development, and an ontological perspective that builds the more-than-human from reciprocities. Interpreting their participation locally, and according to their Maya Ixil ways of being, in this research I mobilize the concept of food and seed sovereignty to analyze the reciprocities of the more-than-human, documenting Ixil more-than-human practices and philosophies and linking them with the *in-situ* and biocultural forms of biodiversity creation and conservation as the Ixil biocultural becoming of the practices of care in reciprocities of the more-than-human.

As these care processes in and for food systems allow relations of the human to be 'right-ed' with the more-than-human in the creation of these reciprocal spaces, the final 'R' of the theoretical framework seeks to delve into a form of justice[clxx] also beyond the human (van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster 2016). In place of the accumulation of anthropocentric wealth that focuses on giving within human generations, the stewardship of more-than-human communities and human participation in food creation as continuous reciprocal acts of care across species and generations seeds a lifeway that brings equality for all species, and, through this change, creates forms of justice from the repair of modes of enacting care that are a part of new kinds of knowledge politics (Millner 2023: 23) that bring new ecologies of power (Foucault 1977: 27).

III.   The rematriation process: sharing abundance as redistribution and justice for the more-than-human

'Becoming' the more-than-human through participation in its land-based reciprocal economies, the processes of justice that bring food and seed sovereignty in practices of land and more-than-human care are also justice in the form of restoration, reparation, and therapy (Gorman and Cacciatore 2020; Sus Sola Corazon et al. 2012) in the revitalization of Indigenous lifeways connected to biodiverse abundance (Johnston 2022).

In the final 'R' of Indigenous ontologies, Harris and Wasilewski (2004: 493) articulate this as 'redistribution', where there is an emphasis on balance through shared wealth:

"Redistribution is the sharing obligation. Its primary purpose is to balance and rebalance relationships. …[40]This obligation means sharing, not only material wealth, but information, time, talent and energy, one's total self. … this kind of sharing, of giving away, contribute[s] to each person in the community feeling that they [ar]e valued. Knowing the protocols of receiving, as well as of giving, are equally important. The Indigenous sense of giving/sharing should never, ever, even have a hint of superiority or imposition. … 'Charity' creates a status difference between giver and receiver, with the giver in the higher position. Creating such a status difference devaluates the gift. In Indigenous society every giver and receiver is aware of a larger context in which roles might be reversed in the future. Thus, redistribution interacts with the R for reciprocity."

Stressing the nature of each of the values "integrally related to all the others and build[ing] on the others", at this last 'R', Harris and Wasilewski (2004: 493) summarizing that the connections between them leading to redistribution as tangible transformation in the tangible and intangible systems of wealth;

"Indigenous peoples understand that relationships define our roles and shape our responsibilities. We realize that these relationships, roles and responsibilities are reciprocal in nature and lead to the redistribution of both society's tangible and intangible assets."

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[40] At this point the example of Comanche society is given from the authors' own Indigenous traditions: "Comanche society, for example, was an almost totally flat society, socially, politically and economically. It had many, many ways of redistributing material and social goods. In principle one should not own anything one is not willing to give away. Possessions do not own you. The point is not to acquire things. The point is to give them away. Generosity is the most highly valued human quality. The basic principle is to keep everything moving, to keep everything in circulation. To mark one's accomplishments, one sponsors a 'give away'. Instead of receiving gifts, the person who has accomplished something gives gifts to all those who have helped them along the way to their accomplishment."

Theoretically moving beyond 'decolonization' as a process of undoing colonial era structures of inequality and implicating the necessary 're-matriation' of a *more-than-human life,* the structures I articulate in the dissertation's theoretical frame are operationalized through an analysis of the 4Rs and interpreted in the materialized relations, practices of care, and becoming of the more-than-human through the relationships of the *milpa* food system that I highlight without abstraction or metaphor (see also Tuck and Yang 2012) as bringing material dimension to this 're-distribution' of wealth through a politics of food and seed sovereignty. Following the connections between the values, and through the activism of care embodying processes of reciprocity that decolonize from colonial structures as local reinvestment is made in Indigenous ways of knowing, the dissertation's theoretical frame connects the materialization of this redistribution of wealth connected to more-than-human living and localized economies growing abundance as a '*rematriation' process*.

i.   An alternative territoriality, rematriation in Iximulew

Rematriation, a term popularized in Indigenous discourse and activism (Gray 2022: 1), is a term that I adapt after Gray (2022) as an alternative way to conceptualize territoriality in Maya Ixil ancestral and territorial lands. In this adaptation of Gray's theory, I stress rematriation as a process articulating more-than-human forms of healing, reparation, and restoration that, particularly for Indigenous Peoples, are land-based, multispecies, and connected to social justice movements from an interdisciplinary, intersectional[clxxi] context. Referencing the reconnections happening to bring Indigenous and ancestral communities of more-than-human caretaking back

to reciprocal lifeways, the term, used in English from Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, relies

upon a reconceptualization of land that I adopt after Indigenous Maya Xinka scholar and activist

Lorena Cabnal as the 'body-earth-territory'. Addressing the "possessive logics" of settler laws

that rely upon the objectification of 'nature' and that underpin structures of "patriarchal white

sovereignty" (Moreton-Robinson 2015) that include extractivist and destructive industrialized

food systems, rematriation focuses on, in Simpson (2011: 32) words, "rebuilding our own

[Indigenous] house" in parallel with a dismantling of 'the master's' (decolonization). Gray

(2022) contends that the concept of rematriation, borne from Indigenous discourse[clxxii] and

activism, ventures beyond the purview of decolonization to recognize and implement Indigenous

laws and protocols that invest in Indigenous knowledge systems and lifeways. Rematriation is

defined by Gray (2022: 24) more specifically in this sociopolitical sense as

> "an Indigenous feminist paradigm, an embodied praxis of recovery and return, and a
>
> sociopolitical mode of resurgence and refusal. Rematriation is more than a play on words;
>
> it is the antithesis of repatriation. Rematriation recasts questions of nationhood,
>
> personhood, law, property, ownership, and rights on new terms. Reminding us of the
>
> sociopolitical power derived from matrilineal societies, rematriation celebrates the
>
> leadership and labor of Indigenous women and affirms matriarchal authority."

Thus, proposed as an alternative to the more conventionally used 'repatriation', rematriation does

not just 'return *objects'* or refer to restoring Indigenous relationships to land from #Landback

movements[clxxiii]. Echoing Gray, Rowan White (2008: n.p.) of the Mohawk Nation writes that

rematriation extends beyond repatriation with its reference

"to reclaiming of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and resources, instead of the more Patriarchally associated Repatriation. It simply means back to Mother Earth, a return to our origins, to life and co-creation, rather than Patriarchal destruction and colonisation, a reclamation of germination, of the life-giving force of the Divine Female."

Nesting the research of this work with *campesinxs* and specifically *campesinxs* of a majority women Ixil collective focused on seed and food sovereignty and Ixil organic markets where primarily women sell food from the *milpa*, the work of women and women seed keepers restoring connections to land by connecting Peoples with their native and heirloom seeds[clxxiv] (White and Hoover 2019; Kutka et al. 2022) is a materialization of the rematriation process analyzed in this research. Beyond just the material, in these same spaces with the sharing of more-than-human materialities and connected to the maintenance of biocultural diverse seed kin, the interlocutors of this work are connected through this frame to the restoration of "landscapes of remembrance" (Nazarea 2005) as land-based pedagogies in practice reinforce the revitalization and relevance of Maya Ixil, more-than-human knowledge systems. Recognizing other-than-human agency as participant in the labor shaping any 'economy' on the planet, in the theoretical framework of this research I adopt these definitions of rematriation and expand them, together with the dimensions articulated from the 4Rs of Indigenous ontologies, to frame an embodied praxis of recovery and return that reorients the *anthropos* to the matriarchal structures of life itself, Earth. Reorienting the human to the wealth cycles of the collective as shared health from shared abundance, the 4Rs guide an understanding of the processes of rematriation that,

together, articulate how more-than-human thinking, doing, being, and knowing relinquish control of Earth's agencies back to the collective where humans can 'become more-than-human' in the performance of reciprocal relation.

Articulating a theory for reconnection to the Earth, the space for life's collective projects, with my use of the concept of rematriation, its processes do not stop at seeking justice for only historical inequalities (decolonization). Yielding humans engaged in reciprocal engagement with a more-than-human future and a decolonial pathway of 'sustainability' (Bagga-Gupta 2023), the politics of growth around rematriation processes through redistribution extend abundance as a benefit beyond Indigenous Peoples who, as I argue as a central argument in the dissertation, provide currently the only already existing, effective, coherent, place-based, landscape-scale design for biodiversity conservation and protection. Recognized as an important theory of change by Tuck and Yang (2016: 9, emphasis mine), rematriation is regarded alongside reparations, regeneration, sovereignty, self-determination, decolonization, resurgence, the good life, and futurisms, as a term that articulates a theory of change that brings justice, "[e]ach approach … born of specific *material* concerns that refuse the abstraction of justice and its limits in the nation-state". A process of "revitalizing the relationship between Indigenous lands, heritage, and bodies based on Indigenous values and ways of knowing, being, and doing" (Gray 2022: 5), rematriation is also a performative politics to view the more-than-human social justice movements around the world contesting subject/object divides of capitalism by *living* its alternative and expanding wealth of its living systems that all may benefit from in its redistribution.
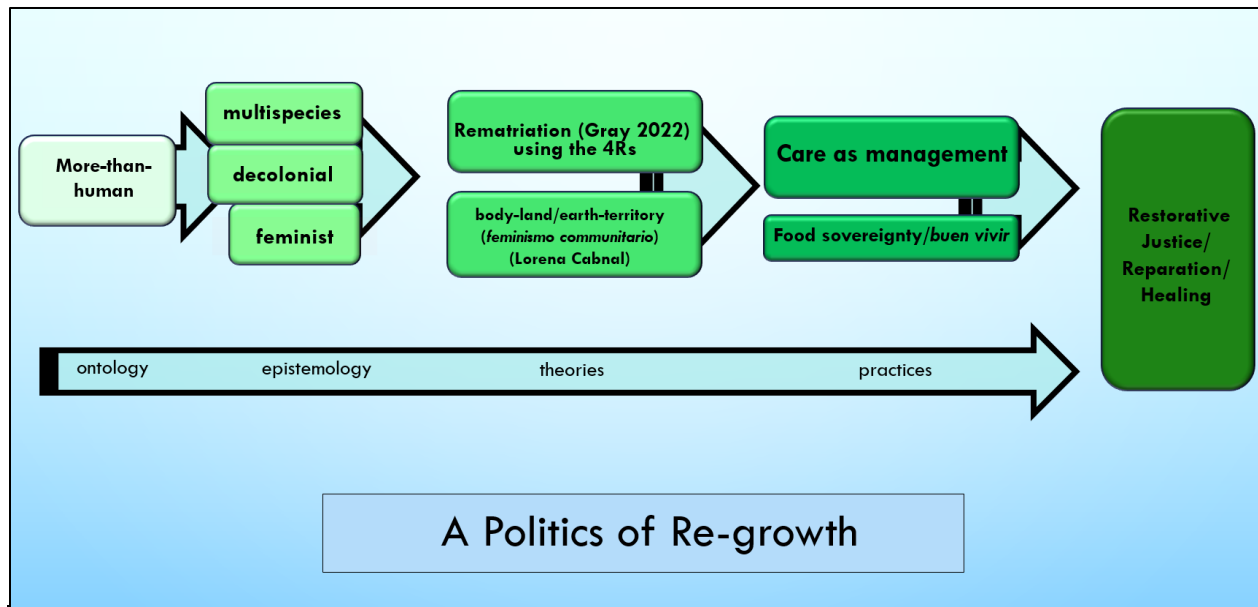
Figure 8 (above): A visualization of the politics of regrowth and the dissertation's overall theoretical framework

Rendering a justice of reconnection, the politics of regrowth identified by rematriation is a justice that redistributes health as wealth by healing that transcends simple physical wounds to the individual or degraded land. These forms of healing are connected to the Indigenous feminist paradigm of embodied praxis of recovery and return and sociopolitical performative politics of resurgence and refusal that Lorena Cabnal, from the Iximulewan context, articulates as the politics of *feminismo comunitario*.

ii.   Politics and power of *Feminismo Comunitario*

The relationships with the more-than-human world, for Indigenous Peoples such as the Maya of Iximulew, are pathways to forms of sovereignty that rely on interspecies reciprocities and refuse objectification and commodification from the nature/culture divide central to the invasive colonizing biopower of patriarchal-colonial modernity's structures of inequality. Lorena Cabnal

(2019: 122, cited in Rodríguez Aguilera 2022: 33) explains this from her Indigenous perspective as "body and territory are spaces of vital energy that must work in reciprocity". Theorized by Latin American feminist scholars as making the 'territorial-body'[41] (López de La Vega 2019: paragraph 2), the site of a shared body, Earth, among Indigenous territories, has been a uniting motif for Indigenous movements advocating for equality and a breaking down of the nature/culture construct that perpetuates further human social inequality. These struggles are both those to decolonize from oppressive systems and to protect investments in growing Indigenous recovery, and "from there[,] the approach of recovery and defense of the first territory is born, that is the territorial-body" (Cabnal 2013, cited in Ulloa 2016: 134-5).

Extending connections between land, territory, and a shared body, or collective organization of existence, the various conceptions of 'the body' are theorized as places of memory[clxxv] (Martínez Velarde et al. 2020; Cabnal 2010) where colonial violence has left scars of intergenerational trauma (Duran 2019), that, due to the connections of Indigenous Peoples, land, and the more-than-human lifeway, has damaged communities, 'bodies', at multiple levels. Leaving that circle of violence, revitalization efforts made with the guidance of pre-Colombian knowledge systems articulate, necessarily, a healing from the body-territory (Cabnal 2019: 115) where connections between physical bodies of the human connect to the body of Mother Earth through food systems that bring to life all bodies articulated within Indigenous knowledge systems. This is the collective/communitarian reorientation and reprogramming of human interactions and behavior in Abya Yala, reconnecting embodied relationships to place by localizing a self that is woven to

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[41] Original version reads: "*hacer cuerpo-territorial*" (López de La Vega 2019.: paragraph 2).

the specifics of Indigenous territories central to Indigenous identities and the relationships of the more-than-human within them.

Addressing that violence through the decolonial feminist multispecies perspective, the postcapitalist and decolonized politics of *feminismo communitário* from Iximulew, Abya Yala (Cabnal 2013; 2017; 2019; Claudia and Dias Flores 2021; Patiño 2023) comes from everyday life[clxxvi] before it is an academic theory, according to Cabnal (and Quince-UCR 2014: 8'). A new form of resistance that began in women's bodies and from the need to address the everyday and accumulated traumas of a patriarchal colonial modern system that pose the first barrier to reconnecting with ancestral knowledge systems and the land[42], Cabnal cites the politics as arising from the "outraged bodies, from bodies impoverished by the capitalist, racist and heteropatriarchal system". The Maya and Xinka women like Cabnal who live the experience of violence from the legacy of colonialism, "often painful and other times powerful, of being in the communities they inhabit" with this politics are a part of a "continuum of resistance, transgression and epistemology of women in spaces and temporalities, for the abolition of patriarchy" (Cabnal 2010: 12, cited in Patiño 2023: 4) that addresses the forms of colonization that sought from the same origins to subvert women and nonhumans. Cabnal speaks of the

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[42] Forming the Red de Sanadoras Ancestrales del Feminismo Comunitario desde Iximulew-Guatemala in 2015 (Cabnal 2017: 100), Cabnal explains that, as a group, the 'Sanadoras', or Healers, wanted "to change the world, the patriarchal system, but – here – our bodies [were] politically alienated from the ancestral healings that sustain bodies in the face of resistance" (Cabnal 2020, cited in Patiño 2023: 14). Those who participate in the communal process of healing individual bodies (see also van der Kolk 2014; Patiño 2023: 15-16, citing Cabnal 2018) reclaim new spaces to become into, in the words of Cabnal, where "Healing for us is a personal and political act to dismantle oppression, victimization, to free ourselves and emancipate the body. An act that drives us to recover the new time of liberation of the body to reclaim joy and, without losing indignation and in the midst of the complex world, celebrate life, resistance and plural wisdoms, as well as the fact of being alive and embodied."
Capturing this idea, the name Red de Sanadoras Ancestrales del Feminismo Comunitario desde Iximulew-Guatemala is the group's Spanish name but from the Maya Quiché language, the name 'Tzk'at' translates to something along the lines of "web of life in reciprocity for life and by life" (Cabnal 2017: 100) in English.

intersectionality of oppression from the patriarchal colonial system, saying, "what that story, that body, suffers, hurts ['me' emotionally] and hurts my body" (cited in Patiño 2023: 16). The body-earth territory that *feminismo comunitario* references addresses these injustices (Cabnal and CISCSA Ciudades Feministas 2019) and the liberation and "h]ealing [of] ourselves in integrity", rooted in the same bodies (Cabnal and Quince-UCR 2016: 7') as

> "all oppressions have been built on our bodies, *machismo*, racism, lesbophobia, misogyny [. A]ll of the oppressions and all of the effects of the oppressions are on the body but they also make the body where the political energy lives to free oneself as well."

Combining these perspectives from Indigenous ontologies at an intersection with feminism and environmental struggles, these territorial-environmental recoveries find political energy for freeing bodies by focusing on the intimate, reciprocal relationships of care, for and in defense of territory, the body, and 'nature' (Ulloa 2016: 134). This space, the *territorio-cuerpo-tierra* (Sweet and Ortiz-Escalante 2017), or the water-body-territory (Zaragocin Carvajal 2018), is the dimension of *feminismo comunitario*, an articulation made political and led by Indigenous, Black, and peasant women (Ulloa 2016: 134) who pose their critiques against capitalist and extractivist processes of capitalist development (Ulloa 2016: 123) and form different networks globally in these networks of life flowing through reciprocities. Collaborating within and beyond the species, the more-than-human community is politicized by their politics as its own site of resurgence and resistance, refusing separations forced by colonial trauma as marginalized bodies collaborate to design ecologies of power in this framing of an alternative.

Cabnal brings together these forms of resistance against the violence toward individual women's bodies and their Indigenous territories with an 'emancipatory political proposal'[43] launched to recover the territorial body, relevant *before* 'human rights'[clxxvii].

> "For us, defending the body territory entails assuming the body as a historical territory in dispute with ancestral and colonial patriarchal power, but we also conceive it as a vital space for the recovery of life. In that sense, the struggles against multiple forms of violence against indigenous women, but particularly sexual violence, territorial violence and feminicide, are historical struggles, but still current. Recovering the body to gain dignity and joy in relation with nature is an emancipatory political proposal." (Cabnal 2017: 102)

Articulating definitions of justice according to their knowledge systems and intersectional experience of colonialism's violence, Cabnal (2013: 4) cites *feminismo comunitario* as

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[43] Cabnal (2017: 102) articulates this form of healing bodies as the political project of the Red de Sanadoras: "The political objective of the Red de Sanadoras is to start from our ancestral cosmogonic and feminist territorial community to collaborate in the emotional, physical and spiritual recovery of indigenous women defenders of life in the communities, who currently suffer the effects of multiple oppressions in and through their bodies. The objective is to heal as an act of personal and political vindication and to enrich the fabric of the web of life."-Cabnal's emancipatory political proposal is encapsulated by the phrase (2017: 104) "By healing you, I heal; by healing me, you heal: such is the reciprocity of healing. Healing from my body-earth territory" (The original Spanish version reads "Sanando tú, sano yo; sanando yo, sanas tú: tal es la reciprocidad de la sanación. Sanar desde mi territorio cuerpo-tierra") which has been echoed in the songs of popular Guatemalan musicians like that of Rebeca Lane in her song entitled 'Tzk'at'. The lyrics of the song echo Cabnal's words: "Con la energía vital de las ancestras, De las mujeres que caminan con mujeres, Las sanadoras que usan sus poderes, De las que tejen con su energía de selva, Las que convocan libertad cont su palabra, Las que convocan la defensa de los cuerpos, Las que unifican la energía de Abya Yala, El agua, la tierra, el cielo el fuego, Las que caminan entre valles y montañas las que escuchan el espíritu del río, Las que nacen con el sol cada mañana, Y siguen vivas a pesar del genocidio, La sabiduría en la red de la vida, La energía que transforma odio en alegría, La valentía de mujeres combativas, La fuerza que da equilibrio y alegría, Defendemos la vida, los ríos, los lagos, los bosques, la luna, la noche y así como defendemos la tierra defendemos los cuerpos de las mujeres. Nuestro cuerpo es nuestro primer territorio de defensa. Mi cuerpo es mi primer territorio de defensa, La sabiduría en la red de la vida, La energía que transforma odio en alegría, La valentía de mujeres combativas, La fuerza que da equilibrio y alegría, Sanando yo sanas tu yo soy tu, Sanando tu sano yo tu soy yo, Sanando yo sanas tu yo soy tu, Sanando tu sano yo tu soy yo".

recognizing the differences between the different feminist and Indigenous movements, but coming together for "something we have in common: the fight and defense for life." Astrid Ulloa (2016) refers to the relationships within these communities as "*feminismos autónomos", "feminismos comunitarios"* (autonomous feminisms or community feminisms), or *"feminismos territoriales*" (territorial feminisms), where a political proposition ('cosmic-politics', in Cabnal's terms) (Patiño 2023: 4) to defend bodies, territory, and life runs parallel to the embodied and organized "defense and recovery of the body-earth-territory" (Cabnal, cited in Ulloa 2016: 133-4). Making particular distinction from other feminist interpretations, "[f]rom the perspective of *feminismo comunitario* [community feminism] of the Sanadoras, the political is personal but not individual" (Patiño 2023: 18). Using the term *feministas comunitarias[clxxviii]* for the first time in 2011 at the Declaración Política de las Mujeres Xinkas, Cabnal connected women's bodies and that of the Earth, saying "[t]hey violate our rights, when they decide about our women's bodies, our sexuality, and our land" (Mujeres Xinkas Feministas Comunitarias de Xalapán in Gargallo, 2015: 165, cited in Patiño 2023: 13). *Feminismo comunitario* reorients the labor of bodies in production, reproduction, and *collective* or community care as a part of a reciprocal, communal, multispecies, and equal exchange of energy that collectively powers an economy of abundance, knit and rematriated into the more-than-human social fabric of a healthy living world. As Cabnal and many others understand it, these are "the fight and the defense of life" (Cabnal 2013: 4) where the defense of one's own life also means a defense of the geographically-specific more-than-human ones. Identifying gaps in the various feminisms or feminist waves, the multispecies decolonial feminism that Cabnal articulates with *feminismo comunitario* seeks to build plurality, a plural feminism (Cabnal and Quince-UCR 2014: 8'-9') within the network of life.

Specifying those rematriation politics from Iximulew, the communitarian feminist concepts articulated by Cabnal and the Sanadoras arose with the principle of reciprocity and resonating the 4Rs of the Indigenous ontological perspective where the more-than-human contributes purposefully to the **NETWORK OF LIFE^{clxxix}** (Cabnal, cited in Patiño 2023: 4, emphasis in original). From personal conversation with Cabnal (2020), Patiño (2023: 4) quotes her underscoring of **THE NETWORK OF LIFE** as

> "one of the interpretative dimensions of life, from which it is assumed that everything is related to life. For example, a maize: for a maize to become maize, it needs air, fire, the heat of the hand, the bee, the sun, water, also the galaxies, the bodies, the ancestors, the spiritualities. etc. It is a relational principle that provides vital energy of existence to all plural manifestations of life."

Reciprocating energy toward healing the collective, with *feminismo comunitario* Cabnal links the individual's healing as one that extends beyond the individual as all within the collective are linked. Cabnal's (and Quince-UCR 2016: 17) use of the term '*sanar'*, to heal, extends beyond the individual body with the notion of body-territory where "the body territory is not conceived on the one hand and the land territory on the other; but in unity" (cited in Patiño 2023: 3-4). The forms of healing that link women to ancestral and intergenerational indigenous knowledge systems as communities, engage in revitalization and the rematriation process of reconnecting their bodies with their territories in practices familiar to ancestral Indigenous ways of knowing (Gray 2022) that claim themselves with notions of food sovereignty. Reciprocity is the connective tissue at work in the healing of individual Indigenous bodies and the Earth by way of

their reconnection, reuniting Indigenous Peoples with their ancestral Indigenous territories. These spiritual and territorial paths are guided, among others, by objectives (Cabnal 2017: 102) that link the healing of women with territory that include the defense of body-earth-territory, territorial embodiment[44]; healing as a political cosmic path[45]; and territorial alliances (Cabnal 2017: 103) to grow dimension to restore, repair, and heal the body of Earth itself. These are 'new forms of resistance' that make it possible to bring together different movements while maintaining their unique struggles, over "something we have in common: the fight and defense for life" (Cabnal 2013: 4).

Across Iximulew's Maya communities, the body-earth territory describes how Indigenous Maya relate to a more-than-human world as a way of life[clxxx]. As Martínez Velarde *et al*. (2020: 10) write, specific to their context, that these terms are

> "understood as part of their cultural knowledge, memory and collective hopes in relation to territory and politics. … the defense of the goods necessary to reproduce life in community, as well as their particular ways of seeing and organizing life in the face of experiences of displacement and threats from hydroelectric projects."

Patriarchal-colonial modern and anthropocentric separations of nature and culture as rationalizing hierarchies of domination and destruction that localize power with the human and externalize upon intraspecies communities the human social inequalities, the justice of restoring reciprocities between Indigenous Peoples and their more-than-human territories is political as it

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[44] Original versión is 'Acuerpamiento territorial'.
[45] Healing can occur along this, "a cosmic political path for those bodies in struggle" (Patiño 2023: 14).

usurps the universality of the authority of colonial power and inequalities set on categorizing, controling, dominating, and subverting the 'other' (Segato, cited in LITERAL Idees & llibres radicals 2024). More-than-human economies of the living world are designed in reciprocity where power is not contained but flows through living systems in exchanges of energy grown through the labors of more-than-human animacies. From this more-than-human perspective, being a good relative means assuring food and space to live, for *all* our relatives. In the final chapter of the dissertation, I incorporate common 'defense of territory' movements that build more-than-human Indigenous identities of the body-land-territory into calls for food sovereignty that constitute this politics of *feminismo comunitario* in the rematriation process that restores, repairs, and heals all of the living world where it is enacted as justice.

IV. Conclusion

Operationalized in what I propose as a rematriation process, to transform relationships and, through their material food systems, also transform life potentials directly, the dissertation specifically focuses on care practices between caretakers of the Mesoamerican *milpa* ecosystem of the western highlands of Guatemala, Territorio Ixil. Living in these lands and viewing the *milpa* lifeway[46] from the perspectives of its Ixil human caretakers and according to their more-than-human cosmovision, I apply this theoretical frame as I move through their lands and participate in their caretaking reciprocities.

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[46] I describe this in great detail in the analytical chapters, Chapter V in particular where I draw upon the Ixil term '*tiichajil*' as linked to the concept of '*buen vivir*' and a *campesinx-a-campesinx* Latin American and global multispecies social justice movement striving for food sovereignty.

Demonstrating their economy of biodiverse abundance through the materialization of food through multispecies, pre-Columbian care practices, referring to these collaborative and collective labors of selection are understood as behavior of the more-than-human that demonstrates the care of the collective (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017; 2020). When energy is ontologically understood as 'shared' and cared for with the same understanding, abundance can reproduce according to notions of wealth that value diversity and equality. From this frame, we can understand care as energy shared, a currency, individual amalgamations of Earthen bodies only *borrowing* potential and the investing in it as care-work, a valuation, thereafter, of labor according to feminist, multispecies, and, for the link to ancestral knowledge systems, decolonial interpretations. From this 'rematriated' perspective of the human, a citizen of communities doing carework with kin beyond species boundaries (Strathern 1992; Haraway 2015), this labor and work investing in food systems toward food sovereignty is done by all species; it *is* multispecies.

Addressing inequality and achieving justice by way of performativities that stress inclusion and care for the collective is an active process of new community making, new categories to describe them, and a return to land-based worldviews. As an attachment to place is cited as a "motivation for long-term stewardship" (Chapin and Knapp 2015: 38) the research focuses on the *milpa* food system as a more-than-human lifeway that caretakes Earth's body from a situated place on the planet, analyzing from a Maya Ixil food system built toward food sovereignty how these alternative economies of reciprocal and multispecies care are also a politics of Indigenous and more-than-human regrowth. As these more-than-human societies provide alternative design for food systems beyond the agricultural industrial model, the relationships of domination and

control characteristic of the latter are drained of their oppressive power in the presence of options, this research articulating one of those with this theoretical frame rooted from Iximulew. Linking the terms feminist, multispecies, and decolonial for Indigenous ontologies together under the umbrella of care, in the following chapter detailing the dissertation's methodology I outline the multispecies ethnographic methods used in the collection of data to account for the 'work' and 'labor' of this more-than-human food system, recognizing the alternative living economy as defined by *all* labor done to care for the larger project of life itself. With this frame, where food system are not a static products but composed of living beings with agency shaping the literal world and landscapes we all live in, I use methods characteristic to these ways of knowing that venture beyond the confines of global capitalism's perceived hegemony and the political anthropocentric inequality it creates. Epistemologically reorienting knowledge to be an embodied experience *of* the body, 'knowing' that emerges in this context[clxxxi] is connected to the material practices of health that my methods find and follow.

III. Methodology and methods

I. Methodology

i. Place-based knowledge systems

In much conventional scientific research, the researcher's standpoint is hidden and suppressed by the patriarchal-colonial modern construction of objectivity from singular notions of truth predicated upon the assumption of a mind/body split and a logic of 'discovering' truth (Haraway 1988; Collins 1990; Harding 1993; Hartsock 1998; Smith 1999). In this 'epidemic of placelessness'[clxxxii] (Johnson 2012: 830, citing Carolyn Merchant 1995), such forms of 'masculinist' social science (Nogales 2017) prioritize some forms of knowing while furthering an injustice of subversion of peoples and non-western knowledge systems, amplifying structures of human social inequality at various scales and amplitudes (Harding 1991; Sundberg 2003) in the process. Such 'Science', spread as a byproduct of the Enlightenment metanarrative and contingent upon the nature/culture divide, has subverted and devalued non-European versions of 'culture' that derive knowledge from lived experience with landscape.

All knowledge systems, however, those of Western science included, are local to somewhere and come from some place (Johnson 2012: 832). As such understandings of location are a starting point for any reflection of knowledge within feminist[clxxxiii] interpretations[clxxxiv], deconstruction of the hegemony of science from the void begins in this work with such feminist representations of the importance of place. Johnson (ibid.: 830) describes place as, first, "a way of understanding, knowing and learning about the world; and second, as the embodied location[clxxxv] of everyday

struggle for meaning; political, cultural and economic". In feminist interpretations of science on Earth, a place that denotes already multiple points of perspective, the 'worlding' process is a location, also, of knowledge creation[47]. Broadly, qualitative methods in scientific research are described as addressing power inequities by grounding their 'micropolitical analyses of power'[clxxxvi] (Braidotti 2017: 22) that have "the potential to disrupt structural hierarchies by democratizing the research process, thereby allowing meanings and categories to emerge from the research communities themselves" (Sundberg 2003: 188).

Geographers doing fieldwork in Latin America, as Sundberg (2003: 184) writes, are "constantly confronted by the complicated relationship between power and knowledge" that relates to Indigenous notions of place that form worldviews and relationships to land distinct from settler conceptions. Vine Deloria, Jr. (2003 [1973]: 62–63, cited in Carroll 2014: 32) writes in *God Is Red* that "American Indians hold their lands—places—as having the highest possible meaning and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind"; place as neither an irrelevant detail in citing the location of knowledge production. Johnson (2012: 833) writes of this, the political dimension of place for Indigenous Peoples as places are also the "political texts within Indigenous peoples' daily struggles" (Johnson 2012: 830) where defending place-based knowledges and Indigenous Peoples within them is "more than just a defense of resources and local economies but also a defense of history, knowledge and science". Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee scholar Vanessa Watts (2013: 13) refers to place containing its own agency, animating it and extending into its people as Indigenous Place-Thought[clxxxvii]. Bringing significance to the naming of place within Indigenous knowledge traditions, Bang *et al*. (2014:

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[47] See also reference to Foucault (1977) in previous chapter on the articulation of knowledge and power.

11, emphasis mine) write that "naming is *the* site at which issues with references between Western and Indigenous epistemologies unfold"[clxxxviii] (see also Bond and Lavers 2024). Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014: 13) uses a concept he refers to as "grounded normativity"[clxxxix] from Indigenous decolonial thought to explain the importance of place as representing a kinship with a more-than-human community.

Countering 'masculist' Science's impossible 'view from nowhere/everywhere' or the 'view of infinite vision'[cxc] (Haraway 1988; 1991), this research draws upon a 'place-connected approach' of scientific inquiry to engage with Indigenous knowledge systems and appropriately relate to the place-based struggles of Indigenous communities (Johnson 2012: 835). Using feminist interpretations of location and advocating for an equality in ways of knowing that contribute to the making of science, in this decolonization process that includes all knowledge systems, the research participates in "re-inhabit[ing] the storied landscape through 'reading' the ways in which Indigenous peoples' places and environment have been injured and exploited" (Johnson 2012: 829). In this process, I reiterate the words of Todd (2016: 17) who cautions that Indigenous thinking[cxci] cannot be "just a well of ideas to draw from"[cxcii]. This is not the intention of the work, but rather it follows and agrees with Johnson's (2012: 833) assertion that "Native, Indigenous, First Nations, and Aboriginal educational processes and epistemologies need to be at the center of place-based, culturally responsive teaching." (Gruenewald 2008: 151 quoted in Johnson 2012: 833).

Quintessentially, the task of humans immersed and saturated by anthropocentric, destructive, western lifestyles, is to become again people of place. People who care beyond themselves, for

Earth, from a place on it, wherever that may be. Unlike people of western knowledge systems, Indigenous Peoples preserve coherent knowledge systems, ways of being, and relationships of a more-than-human world that have not abstracted the concept of place. Expanding its conceptual role with that of 'placemaking' in human geography for many years (Amin 2004; Massey 2005), Indigenous languages identify and connect with the world from the more-than-human perspective (Kimmerer 2013) where 'place' is also a central and important shaping factor in the creation of knowledge and toward Indigenous understandings of identity as bodies situated, from, and responsible to place. Indigenous Peoples around the world continue to hold different relationships to the more-than-human world than settlers from western knowledge traditions, storing such associations in their languages and ways of inhabiting their ancestral territories attached to place[cxciii], connections that can be mapped[cxciv] within the living more-than-human kinship networks (Aistara 2011) and Indigenous cosmological perspectives. In the process of re-locating science as also particular and informative toward a shared goal of conserving and regenerating life through the cultivation of 'right relation' or "reciprocal appropriation" (see Cajete 2000: 67–72), place is the origin of situated knowledges and boundary identification (Haraway 1988) where placed histories are relevant and important to understanding ideological struggles in "power-sensitive […] 'conversation'" (ibid.: 589).

Locating also the observer and their location in the inquiry[cxcv], with my use of the feminist method I relate to place in the work by also locating myself, the researcher, within it. This is done to further address relationships of knowledge created from bodies, which, according to the feminist interpretation, is understood as also bringing further power dynamics to the act of knowledge creation.

Part of a politics suited to the cosmological realities of Indigenous groups where a more-than-human community may also participate in science and the making of political bodies in the fabric of a pluriverse[cxcvi] (Escobar 2012; De La Cadena 2010; Querejazu 2016; Blaser and De La Cadena 2018; Reiter 2018) and its cosmopolitics[cxcvii] (Stengers 2010, 2005; Blaser 2016; Latour 2004), science built from the land—or more-than-human reality— is an appropriate and necessary tool to *aterrizarnos*, or ground to land, strategies that address the issues created by settler colonialism's created structures of inequality, structures with their own material ties *to* the land.

Putting the Indigenous educational processes and epistemologies at the center of locating the place of this research, in the case of Guatemala, several Mayan languages in the country refer to it not as Guatemala but as Iximulew, or 'The Land of Maize', (see Cabnal 2017), a naming that defers to Indigenous knowledge systems and underscores the continued significance and politics of maize[cxcviii] for more-than-human cultures of the former Mayan civilizations in Mexico and highland Guatemala into today. Playing on Wallace's (2003) theory to outline Maya interactions with the world as guided by what he refers to as 'maizeways', Fox Tree (2011: 100) asserts that 'Mayanized science' "has never entirely displaced customary Maya beliefs and practices regarding language" and that "latent views of the world based in maize, including its life cycle, its cultivation, its anatomy, and its cultural importance" remain a dominant metaphor of Maya life. Furthermore, in his interpretation, he argues that the *milpa*[cxcix], or the maize field, "offers a latent Indigenous model for language that is especially intelligible to unschooled men and women, a model that is potentially more effective for language maintenance and promotion than

the phylogenetic model that Mayas have used in recent decades"[cc] (Fox Tree 2011: 100).

Through a communitary science connected to the land, connected to a politics of *feminismo comunitario*, that cares for the *milpa* as a care of self, my feminist scientific knowledge contributions in this research used methods of location that, from my situated perspective of knowledge creation, "re-inhabit[s] the storied landscape through 'reading' the ways in which [the Maya Ixil]'s places and environment have been injured and exploited" (Johnson 2012: 829). Focusing on restoration and reparation, however, in my methods I reinhabit the Maya Ixil storied landscape, past the palimpsest of colonization, to continue those stories that were created with and continue to be revitalized through the use of Indigenous science practiced over generations by many Maya in Iximulew. As one of 22 Maya groups in Iximulew, the Maya Ixil, who identify themselves in their language Ixil as the 'shellers of the maize', hold land-based knowledges that interact with their knowledge systems from the landscape, in their unique ways of naming it, together their ancestral *milpa* caretaking practices that maintain it[cci].

Including all beings in the material community-making with the land, the inclusion of nonhuman agency to define identities in the life projects (Blaser et al. 2011; and de la Cadena 2018) of these more-than-human *milpa* communities has the effect of also producing knowledge shaped by shared issues to a physical place and biotic interactions that bring together biodiversities of that place. Maya Ch'orti' and Zapotec environmental scientist Jessica Hernandez (2022) asserts that it is essential to interrogate hegemonic notions of science, not as objective accounts of 'how things are', but as subjective interpretations based upon European ways of knowing and philosophies. As it has been applied in STS's SF, the scientific method is a useful tool to investigate the cultural beliefs and philosophies that are necessarily included in Western science

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and create a space to include Indigenous ontological perspectives and their worldviews[48],

facilitating inclusive knowledge collaborations toward a science of life's future. As Indigenous

systems of organization and interaction with the world may categorize information in ways

useful to them (Rapinski 2018), such forms of grounded science are a critical resource producing

knowledge beneficial to humanity's largest problem today.

ii.   Epistemological pluralism and grounded normativity

Welcoming the diversity of cosmological[49] interpretations and evading a static, singular

definition for its acronym, Haraway (2013: 9-10) defines the open accessibility of SF[50] within

science as a tool[ccii] with the potential to model the creation of 'worlds' from places within the

one we share. Using the scientific method as a form of inquiry, where the tool can be adapted for

use by different knowledge systems, the tool itself remains neutral for its possibility to be used

by anyone to test hypotheses or theories within science to support theoretical conclusions.

Feminist SF in the scholarly mode[51] describes "the adventure in worlding, the adventure of

thinking" (ibid.: 7), articulating a form of scientific inquiry that has begun to push back[cciii]

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[48] Worldviews are defined as "the ways in which diverse groups of people create knowledge about the world around them and principles for engaging with it" (Martin 2012: 23). Depending upon the language of expression, the term also may have different connotations (Medina-Hernández 2001). In the context of the Maya worldview and cosmovisions, Cano Contreras, Page Pliego, and Estrada Lugo (2018: 17) identify the pan-Maya movement in the context of Guatemala specifically as the result of a relatively recent process of articulation of political and identity claims.

[49] For the purposes of this chapter, this term is defined broadly as worldviews that are embedded within cultural traditions, customs, ways of life and narratives or stories that guide them and are passed on between generations (Berkes 2012).

[50] SF, according to Haraway (ibid.), is "that potent material-semiotic sign for the riches of speculative fabulation, speculative feminism, science fiction, speculative fiction, science fact, science fantasy—and, I suggest, string figures. In looping threads and relays of patterning, this SF practice is a model for worlding. Therefore, SF must also mean 'so far,' opening up what is yet-to-come in protean entangled times' pasts, presents, and futures".

[51] Which, according to multispecies feminist theorist Donna Haraway, includes but is not limited to string figures, science fact, science fiction, speculative feminism, speculative fabulation, etc.

against the production of black box technological solutions attached and furthering

anthropocentric notions like ownership, control, or exclusive access to land (Raster and Gish Hill

2017). Acknowledging the colonial nature of any definition of science claiming full objectivity,

this research uses the scientific method in a wider effort of qualitative science to "break down

hierarchical objectivistic ways of knowing" (Nast 1994: 58), understanding methods of scientific

investigation to be complementary towards knowledge creation, many ways of looking and

perspectives as providing better triangulation of points for shared truth.

Indigenous traditions articulate from their embodied[cciv] understandings the need for this

'epistemological hybridity'[52] (Duran 2019: 15) and epistemic pluralism (Carter 2017) when

interpreting the world and to navigate the differences between Indigenous, place-based sciences

and western science. Drawing upon the Mi'kmaw indigenous tradition of Turtle Island[53],

Mi'kmaw Moose Clan Elder Albert Marshall is widely referenced by Indigenous scholars for a

popularization of the Mi'kmaw term *Etuaptmumk* to describe a theory within the Mi'kmaw

knowledge tradition for this epistemological pluralism, where multiple perspectives are brought

together to inform one another and provide better information in the context of complex

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[52] Duran (2019: 15) writes of epistemological hybridism that "Hybrid is a term that has emerged out of postcolonial thinking and basically means that there can be two or more ways of knowing and this can be a harmonious process. The concept of ideas existing without hierarchy is key to the liberation and healing process. Decolonizing is a process of liberation. In other words, we are going beyond colonizing, because colonizing is a dehumanizing activity. It is important to mention that I believe we must transcend the notion of "cross-cultural," "cultural sensitivity," and other such ideas that have been in vogue for some time in our field. It is critical that we engage in epistemological hybridism (literal translation: being able to think or see the truth in more than one way.) Epistemological hybridism takes the actual life-world of the person or group as the core truth that needs to be seen as valid just because it is. There should never be a need to validate this core epistemology or way of knowing by Western empiricism or any other validating tool. To do so is merely a form of neocolonization that will only add to the problem."
[53] The use of Turtle Island is common among many Indigenous peoples of the nation-states of U.S.A. and Canada (though not used by all tribes as many tribes have names for the continent from their own languages) as a reference to the landmass that they reside within, as based upon oral histories (such as Kimmerer 2013).

problems. Translated into English as 'Two-Eyed Seeing', Elder Marshall (2004; Bartlett, Marshall, and Marshall 2012: 335; Reid et al. 2021: 243) defines *Etuaptmumk* as

> "learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing, and to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all".

Elder Marshall's theory of Two-Eyed Seeing and many-eyed seeing of others[ccv] (Cajete 1994; Kelly 2021) insists upon the inclusion and collaboration of multiple realities that co-constitute and co-learn in the knowledge-making process, simultaneously interpreting reality always through a lens of multiple languages and systems of meaning-making[ccvi] (Bartlett, Marshall, and Marshall 2012; Marshall, Marshall, and Bartlett 2015; Vukic, Gregory, and Martin-Misener 2012). Opening the possibilities for scientific inquiry that respect the knowledges of place and Indigenous ways of knowing, the notion unsettles a colonial assumption that western interpretations of the scientific method alone produce authoritative knowledge (Johnson et al. 2016). Melding multiple perspectives toward the generation of science that does not colonize, hierarchize, and dominate, but unionizes agencies across species boundaries, there is a place of fusion identified by Indigenous scholars with Two-Eyed Seeing that also goes beyond feminist "democratic science" from the "cognitive democracy" of humans within a public commons (Longino 1993: 118) to understand that multiple epistemologies can work together (Mignolo 2018) through a 'community science'[ccvii] that frames community from the ecological, more-than-human perspective (see Kelly 2021). Reid *et al*. (2021: 243) position Two-Eyed Seeing as provisional of "a pathway to a plural coexistence, where time-tested Indigenous knowledge

systems can be paired with, not subsumed by, Western scientific insights for an equitable and sustainable future."[ccviii] The notion of epistemological pluralism through *Etuaptmumk* acknowledges that knowledges and the positionalities that reproduce them have evolved conterminously, and as such, should sit *together* in the collaborative process of 'seeing', being, doing, and thinking in the world. It conceptualizes a framework for how knowledge is produced within science from multiple, place-based, or Indigenous knowledge traditions[ccix] and how this collaboration results, through the pairing of function and meaning, in more robust science (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall 2012; Reid et al. 2021).

Thus, by acknowledging the 'interconnectedness of history, knowledge and beliefs' (Kumar 2021: 32), Two-Eyed Seeing and relationality are important in the descriptive science that and knowledge-making relevant to understanding the complex problems of environmental change. Using multiple perspectives, *Etuaptmunk*-informed science, makes possible places of convergence from the increasing agreement of indigenous and Western perspectives on the scale of the problem (Schlingmann et al. 2021), while also linking historical contextualization for, and a backward explanation of, global anthropocentric environmental change using scientific perspectives that identify processes that contributed to it. Linking the phenomenon of global environmental change materially and historically to processes of capital accumulation (Moore 2017) and a global 'disappearing' of indigenous peoples (Tuck and Yang 2012) and species (Haddad et al. 2015), inclusive notions of science with *Etuaptmumk* not only produce better understandings of environmental change and possible solutions but Indigenous science provides explanatory potential of change observed and described based on knowledge systems with a history of experimentation, testing, and maintenance over millennia. As an equalizing tool,

Etuaptmumk science also recognizes a greater possibility to identify the best solutions as they arise, no matter which scientific community brings them forward and beyond constructed inequalities.

Margaret Kovach (2010: 58) writes that Indigenous researchers face challenges to find "ways to explain how holistic epistemologies inform their research design in ways understood by Western academic minds"[ccx], to make Indigenous ways of knowing legible for western science. For Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard, 'Indigenous' implies place (Coulthard 2014), and Indigenous knowledges are made legible through a notion of "grounded normativity". First defined in *Red Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard (2014: 13) as a "place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought and practice", reciprocal relations to the land, both material and social, grounded normativity outlines Indigenous land-based scientific practice. Coulthard (2014: 13) explains the term grounded normativity as "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". Furthermore, grounded normativity

> "houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place. Grounded normativity teaches us how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive manner. Grounded normativity teaches us how to be in respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial

responsibilities or common political or economic interests." (Coulthard and

Betasamosake Simpson 2016: 254).

Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson (ibid.) cite "[o]ur relationship to the land itself" as

generating the Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge that

constitute that inform their Indigenous political systems as an ethical framework.

From such understandings of land-based traditions and obligations, these practices also serve, he

articulates, "as the foundation for our continued resistance to the "robbery, theft, enslavement

[and] murder" at the heart of primitive accumulation's drive to dispossess" (Coulthard, cited in

Hallenbeck et al. 2016: 118), orienting his Indigenous People to the responsibilities that emerge

not just from a science but also the laws of grounded normativity. Writing of Coulthard's

approach where science from the land is not separate or distinct from other knowledges of

Indigenous knowledge systems, Hallenbeck et al. (2016: 112) comment that

> "his approach to land, methodology, and theory building has the potential to crucially
>
> reorient, respatialize, and repoliticize dispossession within settler colonialism as the
>
> disruption, dislocation, and elimination of ways of being, systems of governing, and
>
> forms of life of Indigenous peoples and nations."

Fit to the methods of this research, the decolonial notion of scientific inquiry used in this research brings together place-based knowledge systems such as Indigenous knowledges[54] and western scientific understandings through notions of feminist and multispecies approaches to demonstrate how such methods, through their transformation of societal structures toward more-than-human (multispecies) equalities pertain to justice and restoration.

iii.   Operationalizing a care-based methodology

Combining both land-based, Indigenous and community science with the feminist politics of research from place, the methodological inquiry in this research stresses the importance of place and perspective for how the research was conducted and from where its knowledge streams originate. Forming a politics from praxis that I also characterize from the anticapitalist frame of care and the intention of the work, a discussion of its methods is preceded first with this section's explanation of how I articulate care as a feminist, multispecies, and decolonial method used during inquiry. Further locating myself, the researcher, in the place-based knowledge formation, I detail how co-created positionality from the field is paired with qualitative tools such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, field visits and work in *milpas*, homestays, and fieldnotes in the research's data collection. Related to my positionality, I delve into detail about my use of the term feminist, which I use to denote

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[54] While the terminology of TEK is common terminology for non-Indigenous scholars, I prefer to accredit the biocultural and avoid nature/culture distinction implied with the terminology of Traditional Ecological Knowledge by using the terminology 'Indigenous knowledge' or Indigenous knowledge systems. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). In many respects, however, the two terms are similar, Wilder et al. (2016) citing Berkes (2012) defining TEK as "Knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings, including humans, with one another and with their environment" (Berkes 2012, as cited in Wilder et al. 2016).

equality, within and across species. Within the use of the feminist frame is also provided an explanation of interpretations of agency that free knowledge creation, from the lens of grounded normativity based on relations with the land, from its colonial position as an anthropocentric activity. Moving to discussion on the specific methods used in the work, I present the multispecies ethnographic methods used, the modes and means of the data's analysis, and, finally, provide information on the use of oral histories and storytelling used in the presentation of the research's findings.

Care is a broad term with many possible interpretations. As Yates-Doerr (2014: n.p.) asserts, care "depends on context". While forms of clinical care tend to "localize, individualize, and cut off", in this context of ethnographic work, "care [aims to serve] as an expansion: the pursuit of connections" (ibid.) which I also frame as an extension of reciprocities that begin with the land, as articulated by Coulthard (2014). To this effect, Taylor (2014: n.p., emphasis in original) qualifies care as involving "an act of reaching out, in a gesture that seeks to comfort, to connect, to heal—to make whole. To *integrate*." Chosen with the understanding that, more broadly, "[t]he choosing of a methodology is a political act" (Kovach 2009: 53), the general methodology of care I use as an umbrella term for the associated terms 'multispecies', 'feminist', and 'decolonial' that address together an alternative knowledge building and materialization of an alternative to anthropocentric, unequal, and colonial ontological perspectives at the root of the erosion of life's structures of integrity, using engaged critical scholarship that is "inductive, grounded, contextualized, and collaborative[ccxi]" to counter extractivism (Shapiro- Garza et al. 2021).

When regarded together, these terms implicate a care that is active, an activism that strives toward forms of more-than-human social justice, as the worlds (Escobar 2007) they create transform, restore, regenerate, and rematriate more-than-human life to *Madre Tierra*'s soils (Earth). Care is also a political movement by what forms of justice it brings in reciprocity to its caretakers, a politics that I articulate as *feminismo comunitario* in the previous chapter. While the three terms multispecies, feminist, and decolonial act to modify the other, the terms also share the same pathways to conceptualize 'equality', and, through its plateaus, recognize justice while becoming its structures of collaboration across species, how the dissertation defines an inclusive 'power' beyond the human.

Reflecting the participatory model (Cotterill 1992) that "aims to produce non-hierarchical, non-manipulative research relationships which have the potential to negotiate the separation between the researcher and researched" (ibid.: 594), care participates in rendering change to address human social inequalities by righting relationships in equality, while participatory action research strives for shared mutual benefit and critical reflection with a focus toward change based on the direction of participants[55] (Kindon et al. 2007). Further acknowledging my own participation in responsibilizing 'active' change by composting[ccxii] (Hamilton and Neimanis 2018; Neimanis and McLauchlan 2022) the research participated in various projects in the Ixil Region aimed at materializing restorative justice as the regenerations of soils was connected, according to the interlocutors, with a revitalization and conservation of Indigenous knowledges through the practice of Indigenous land-based practices[ccxiii] (see also Millner 2023), notably, the

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[55] Participatory action research and methods use horizontal, trans/inter/multidisciplinary collaborations important to build collaboration between 'researchers' and actors/research interlocutors (Kindon et al. 2007; McIntyre 2008).

caretaking processes of and for the *milpa* food system with *campesinx-a-campesinx* pedagogies.

Discussion of terms under the care-based methods umbrella

Addressing central divides created in the colonial era between nature and culture[56], the term '*multispecies* '**ccxiv** references an understanding of 'agency' that is not just 'other-than-human'[ccxv] (De la Cadena 2010: 341) but denotes a collective, 'complex we' (De la Cadena 2019) by its synonym term 'more-than-human'[57]. Working from within the human/nonhuman binary to point out its narratives of escaping it, 'onto-epistemic openings'[58], the

Figure 9 (above): Approaches within the care-based methodology used in the research.

term multispecies takes after the work of Marisol de la Cadena to reference the political agency (2010: 341; see also Swyngedouw 2014) of more-than-human assemblages. As such, in the collection of data of this research, more-than-human agencies were included in my interpretation of the creation, management, and de/reconstruction of life in the Ixil Region[59] as the Ixil considered themselves co-creators of the *milpa* according to these agencies.

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[56] See previous, theoretical, chapter for this discussion.

[57] With this term, I take after the work of de la Cadena (2019: 479, emphasis in original) who writes of the term: "Displacing the anthropos through the "complex we," the human may reemerge *with* what the anthropos self-severed from: with nonhumans, and thus, as in the already classic phrase, become "more than human," with both bios and geos alike."

[58] Term from de la Cadena's personal website, among other places.

[59] This means also that I consider the ways in which other-than-humans are shaping life in the region, particularly by how Maya Ixil interlocutors identify those efforts.

As previously articulated, care is the more-than-human behavior underlying multispecies collaboration and produces structures of equality by its definition from an interest in the survival of the collective. As a place of equality across beings and a substrate with which to conceptualize, materially, the investment in more-than-human systems of life with our practices of care, food systems are both a material and conceptual space to understand the collaboration and equality processes that shape abundance (Johnston 2022) beyond the human. Relationships with 'food systems' and the interactions beyond species within them provide a tangible, necessary, and simply explained notion of a more-than-human commons where equality can be understood according to the same terms. Connecting the place-based knowledge systems of the Ixil with land-based and 'grounded' participant observation, the multispecies ethnography[60] (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010) participated in the care work managing their food systems in performances of food sovereignty and community-based or communal work[ccxvi] (Tzul Tzul 2018; Millner 2023). From the multispecies frame of 'doing Earth's carework', I followed how the more-than-human agencies of other-than-human characters, as articulated by the Ixil, participate in the shaping of living economies[ccxvii] of abundance. Thus, instead of focusing the research on only human labors with the assumption that only human agency is possible toward the shaping of a 'world', the consideration of agencies beyond the human shapes an alternative form of 'ownership' of the collective, across species, and a cosmopolitical space of a pluriversal politics[61] (De la Cadena 2010: 360) as a result. With the 'multispecies' frame that allows a food

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[60] The modification of ethnography with the term 'multispecies' is an important ontological marker to denote the use of methods beyond the Cartesian nature/culture divide, a common ontological distinction for many Indigenous Peoples that trace origins to pre-Columbian peoples of the so-called Americas, the Maya Ixil included.

[61] With this I take after De la Cadena's pluriversal political proposal (2010: 360; De la Cadena 2018: 12; Escobar 2020): "My proposal to think through the pluralization of politics is not intended to mend flaws within already existing politics—or "politics as usual." Rather, it aims at transforming the concept from one that conceives politics as power disputes within a singular world, to another one that includes the possibility of adversarial relations among worlds: a pluriversal politics". De la Cadena (2015: 281) proposes this politics as one which can open itself for

system, specifically the Mesoamerican *milpa*, to be a unit of analysis, an equal commons or community allows all beings share literal and figurative ground[62]. In the research, I learn about and make notes from my participation and observation on how the Ixil caretake their ancestral territories, caring for their food systems as also a revitalization their ancestral, Indigenous knowledge systems that support a politics of food for all species (food sovereignty).

The term '*feminist'* refers to the critical perspective of the structures of inequality/intersectional violence built within the anthropocentric worldview imposed by Europeans globally from the late 15th century onward. To reiterate an important cross-species use of the theory, I use feminist according to Indigenous *feminismo comunitario* theory articulated previously in the theoretical chapter where it is given a meaning of a politics of equality, both material and regarding power, across species. From this definition, and within the Maya tradition of gender complementarity where gender roles are not ordered in a hierarchy, human constructions of gender are beyond the scope of this research. Critical of the central framing of the human at the core of the social and cultural order (Palmer 2003; Wolfe 2003a; 2003b), with disproportionate "geological agency" (Chakrabarty 2009: 208), the feminist descriptor examines patriarchal, colonial, anthropocentric concepts of ownership that use gender and species divides to justify subverting other living beings[ccxviii] (hereafter the 'more-than-human') and their agencies under its control. At the foundation of the anthropocentric world's structures of inequality are thus methods of violence; methods formatted in violence that thereafter also produce it.

"relations among divergent worlds as a decolonial practice … with no other guarantee than the absence of ontological sameness", thus seeking to "open up life to a cosmos of worlds that would be intra-connected through respect" (ibid.: 285).

[62] As all of life's beings participate in the caretaking of Earth and all manage and care for the survival of life, none were regarded above any others in importance. With these diverse agencies in mind, this work is fundamentally oriented from the understanding that if any species can care for or 'manage' Earth then all can and do with their activities and projects of survival that are intrinsically intertwined and dependent upon one another.

Advocating for collaboration and cooperation instead of competition[ccxix]/violence[ccxx], the feminist descriptor modifies 'multispecies' by also asserting that all species share agency in relationships of equality through interspecies cooper/collabor-ation[ccxxi]. Working from within the tradition of Lynn Margulis, feminist interpretations of the complexity of life recognize survival as shared and determined according to the work and complexity of multispecies labor systems, Within such systems, energy is reinvested into life's material, cyclical flows, creating affluence from more-than-human abundance[ccxxii], a different valuation of wealth[ccxxiii] beyond the human and where all labor and works are equally important. Feminist methods also provide an instrumental and central tool for me as the 'researcher'[ccxxiv] to work in collabo/cooper-ation with consenting[63] interlocutors, which I detail in the following section's discussion of the feminist method. Protocols for consent with the 'more-than' of the 'more-than-human' were adopted for the research based on guidance for respectful interaction according to the experts on the topic in the region, the Maya Ixil.

In many ways, and similar to my use of the descriptor 'feminist' in my methods, the term 'decolonial' refers to my attention toward the political ecologies and oppressive power structures that structure the hierarchies of inequality. Taking a critical perspective on political structures and the 'politics' generated in the foreground of hegemonic colonial repression that has historically prevented the expression of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, thinking, etc.

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[63] Consent is instrumental and central to deliberate efforts I make as the researcher to avoid generating violence through my presence, form of inquiry, or any other unfortunate outcome possible when communication is not equally accessible. As an invited guest in the Maya Ixil Territory, consent protocols are an important feminist method of care with the Maya Ixil and other human interlocutors of the research to avoid furthering inequality, in any of its violent forms.

from appearing in a political landscape, the decolonial approach interrogates hierarchical designs

rooted in colonial logic— capitalism, patriarchy, competition, and the nation-state, as notable

examples. The process and project of decolonization confronts the hegemony of an 'ownership'

regime by asserting alternative valorizations of the world rooted in reciprocity and relationality

that are common among Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge systems. Sharing feminist

multispecies notions of agency, decolonial processes and projects harbor Indigenous definitions

of embodiment, tied to place, and that include land[64] (Tuck and Yang 2012) and all other

iterations of the 'more-than-human' living world. Rectifying the injustice of inequality and

violence received from anthropocentric structures of inequality that benefit only some humans in

the hierarchy, and at the expense of others, the 'decolonial' dimension of the methods of the

research *performs* the work of leveling inequality by linking the behaviors of care, that keep the

multispecies alive, with the political and procedural enactment of justice through rematriation.

In sum and in chorus with the lived performance of justice articulated by Dina Gilio-Whitaker

(2019) where 'justice' is linked with a resolution of issues of patriarchal societal forms of

inequality that destroy human and other-than-human worlds by destroying a more-than-human

one, modern 'environmentalists' must look to the history and present of Indigenous resistance for

wisdom and inspiration to site care-based practices and grow them from there in our common

movement for a just and sustainable future. Simply, a just and sustainable future is one

generative of practices of care that address and mitigate inter- and intra- species violence, the

patriarchal biocolonial hegemony sowing slow violence[ccxxv] (Nixon 2011; 2013), slow death[ccxxvi]

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[64] For the purposes of the specific material aspect of the methods involved in this dissertation, land travels in material forms that carry life which is redefined or decolonized by my understanding of 'seeds'. Seeds are beyond-the-human mediators of kin networks and thus represent also tangible iterations of a more-than-human social network, as identified in Aistara's (2011; 2018) work.

(Berlant 2007), and an everyday politics of death (Mbembe 2019) and erosion of health from the fears thriving in that environment of violence (Alfred 2005; Encinas 2024; Murray 2024).

Supporting processes of rematriation, the research utilizes a methodology of care intending to grapple with understanding the dimensions of justice to participate in building stronger structures of collaboration and coordination that serve it. Seeking to participate in rendering justice and equality, the methods of care used in this research help to ground change by identifying the violence of inequality 'from below' and confronting the systems and social structures of it by supporting societal alternatives that share wealth built from the materiality of the more-than-human-- our food. The much-repeated call for 'decarbonization, decentralization, and decolonization' (Gobby 2020) prepares fertile soil for justice served through networks of care, reciprocity, and *communalidad*[ccxxvii] (Guerrero Osorio 2013; 2016; Martínez Luna 2013) behind abundant food systems.

Unique as a place of gathering across species, food is "the material mediator, the key actor that allows the construction of new alliances and transversalities among producers, consumers and social centres, because here food brings with itself novel practices of care and commensality, solidarity and cooperation" (Ghelfi 2023: 199) across a diversity of actors. Eating with others can also be a way of knowing about the worlds of others, treating the experience 'reflexively' (Pink 2008; 181) and "generate[ng] practices of justice" that enliven new autonomies (Ghelfi 2023: 204).

In the following section, I discuss my interpretation of the feminist method as a frame of scientific inquiry focused on generating practices of justice and equality, noting its potential to address intersectional[ccxxviii] experiences of inequality by recognizing the situated knowledges of the pluriverse that inform it, from spaces of equality, creating change by performing it.

iv.   The "feminist" of *feminismo comunitario* = 'equality'

Situating the knowledge of the dissertation from some'body', according to 'place' and feminist assertions of positionality as a means to address power inequalities, in the following section I site my own location in the research.

Positionality of the researcher in the research

As this work contextualizes data with a frame including colonial legacies of structural inequality, in the service of 'justice' it is also important to me to identify my positionality within the work for its interpretation. From the anthropocentric framing, my positionality in the Maya Ixil Territory began as an invited guest (decolonial), a woman (feminist), and citizen of the more-than-human political entity [landcaretaker/farmer] (multispecies). Using my methodology to address what Sundberg (2003: 184) refers to as "the challenges of building trust with "research subjects" under conditions constituted by inequality. … building trust [as] one of the most challenging aspects of fieldwork", the dissertation's 'fieldwork' began with an invitation to partake in a volunteership with a local Ixil feminist organization working in 14 communities with 278 families in the Ixil Territory on topics related to seed sharing, community restoration after

the trauma of the internal armed conflict, nutrition, and health. Exchanging my labor to

participate in equality-striving exchange, in this volunteership, and as would be relevant for all of

the time spent in the region, the framing of foreign-ness by my 'white'-ness from my

interlocutors was "a source of privilege but also as an impediment to building trust in the field"

(ibid.). The color of my skin and perception of my gender both structured my appropriate

placement in relation to the hegemonic global colonial constructs and gave me a particular

relationship to the Ixil[65]. While the color of my skin marked foreign-ness, perceptions of my

gender opened invitation to me to view Maya Ixil society predominantly from the perspective of

women. In a similar positionality as Sundberg (2003: 185) to the structures of patriarchal

exploitation, I echo agreement with the assertion that

> "each of my encounters in the field is shaped by gender inequalities, and in Latin
> American contexts by *machismo*[66]. Depending upon the social position, gender, and race
> of the individual or collectives with whom I am interacting, my gendered position will
> enhance or restrict, but always shape, the gathering of information."

While Maya Ixil have a culture of gender complementarity, the influence and impact of

colonialism, non-specific or prescriptive, has meant that the structures of inequality impact the

lives of all actors, an effect that both restricted and provided increased access for me in different

circumstances. As my research grew beyond the volunteership through invitations from the

community beyond it, for this research on the *milpa* food systems my ubiquitously 'woman'-

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[65] On this latter point, as an 'invited' researcher, consent protocols will be discussed in detail in this chapter's discussion of my interpretation of the feminist method as these were very important from the Ixil to build trust and assure everyone's safety in the Ixil Territory.
[66] See the previous, theoretical, chapter for discussion on this term.

given gender by my interlocutors provided increased access to women-dominant spaces in the region such as the predominantly women's spaces such as the farmer's markets, family food storage and preparation spaces, and *milpa* gardens[ccxxix]. While possible to visit *milpa* forests and do this work that would be done planting maize or other *milpa* saved seeds in these spaces, this work was most commonly regarded as 'men's work' and was less accessible to me. As a foreigner to the region and relatively non-threatening as a 'woman'[ccxxx], a natural curiosity from some Ixil to interact with the foreigner allowed me to engage people in consensual conversation easily. Where connections were made in the second phase of my research, these conversations about my research in public spaces commonly led to invitations to visit *milpa* field sites and snowball sampling through *campesinx-a-campesinx* networks deepened connections from these public spaces.

After being an invited guest to Iximulew, the statement of positionality in this work matters to also identify myself as part of the multispecies communities of care, those making a choice to invest in a future where equity and justice may be achieved by way of a focus on the materiality of food, 'onehealth'[ccxxxi] (Stephen and Karesh 2014; Togami et al. 2018; Amuasi et al. 2020) as its indicator. Acknowledging from the same movements the "Madre Tierra"[67] as a multispecies mother we all share and care to keep alive, the soil as her body and the basis for our life, sustenance, and general condition for survival, there are multiple and diverse agencies imbued in the sharing of energy produced in labors of, to, and for her (Cabnal 2010; 2017; 2019; Ulloa 2016; Sweet and Ortiz Escalante 2017; Halvorsen and Zaragocín 2021; Zaragocín and Caretta 2021; among others). Following and participating in this acknowledgement of labors discredited

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[67] 'Mother Earth', term used for Planet Earth by the Maya Ixil interlocutors of this research and by those cited.

and stolen by capitalism, I participate in rematriation as a fellow kin-making guman— "that worker of and in the soil" (Haraway 2013: 8) where I understand not only my labor but all labor as of equal importance and none able to generate 'ownership'. Though I am not Ixil, this point of commonality where the politics of *feminismo comunitario* heals traumas designed by colonialism, allowed a substantive connection with interlocutors of this work beyond shared marginalization between women. From this shared space enter different dynamics. Margaret Kovach stresses (2009: 149) this point, that "(g)iving back does not only mean the dissemination of the findings; it means creating a relationship throughout the entirety of the research", thus, I also interpret the reciprocity of the methodology of care as extending in many ways beyond the traditional 'research' setting. Interested to be with others who share the general interest in becoming a better companion on/of Earth through practices of care-taking, I participate, wherever I am on Earth, in the food-making of more-than-human communities. Addressing human social inequality in the most direct and non-abstract form, diversity is not just beneficial for Earth but through diversity we share an abundance that we also quite literally become with our health that even western science cannot define.

For the Maya, the relationships of reciprocities in their *milpa* food system are an apt place where this I have articulated is a lifeway. Echoing the articulations of Indigenous scholars in the Mayan context, Millner (2023: 23) cites the presence of a primordial connection between 'madre' (mother), maize, and soil that "resonates across Central America, especially in the light of shared experiences of colonization"[ccxxxii]. As Ghelfi (2023: 197) explains of permaculture, organic, bio-dynamic, regenerative agriculture, and other food cultivation practices that bring "embodied, daily, hands in soil, material relationships with the land", "the return of peasants" is where

human activities meet interspecies engagement as "making food means acting in an ecological food web in which different species [make use of] the same class of environmental resources" (ibid.: 197-8), bringing with them 'a multitude of practices of care' (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017). While this research draws specific attention to one food system, of one Indigenous People, every *one* is from land some*where* on Earth. In this sense, and by this final understanding of my positionality, I note that here at the level of living beings native to Earth we can all be lowercase 'I' indigenous to Her should we care to enter back into care-cycling relationships to maintain that *other* form of citizenship.

The multispecies, feminist, and decolonial movement that I articulate here and participate in does not only question the axiology behind colonialism, capitalism, racism, and all other social structures for stratification and domination. It also engages in active change through transformation, caring to bring justice by reducing inequalities through shared wealth systems of the more-than-human world. Tla-o-qui-aht Elder Joe Martin refers to this as creating "abundability" instead of 'sustainability' (Youdelis et al. 2021: 2001). Also exerting force to trigger the responsibilization of care to those benefactors of unequal human social structures who must choose to enact change to invite the benefits of equality for all, direct actions with education, and reflection and refraction from forms of lived activism signal the efforts of the more-than-human community materializing the changes that are often unpaid, underappreciated, and full-time defense of life's systems in the capitalist frames that give less value to this work. The affect[ccxxxiii] of care within this community is not put on and taken off as a part of 'research' but, from an 'active'-ist lens, uses reciprocity as a ***way of being*** that opposes extractive relationships of unidirectional 'use' or utility. Being a responsible relative, an accountable

settler, and reciprocating citizen of the more-than-human commons, I incorporate this positionality when performing and documenting this research. As a part of the multispecies communities of care, I 'stand with' (Tallbear 2014: 2) the research's interlocutors in more-than-human defenses[ccxxxiv] that are also restorations.

It is also important in qualitative scientific research to signal the positionality of the researcher in the research as failing to do so contributes to the creation of a false, masculinist objectivity[ccxxxv] and, from it, contributes to the "masculinist culture of domination" (Kothari et al. 2019: xxii). In particular, this is important in highly unequal contexts such as many of those in Guatemala or Latin America[ccxxxvi] (Sundberg 2003: 183) and in scholarly work with Indigenous Peoples. Nêhiyaw-Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach cautions in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (2009: 109) that the researcher must conduct a "(p)reparation [that] assumes self-awareness and an ability to situate self within the research". In positioning academia toward making transformative change toward sustainable models, Bagga-Gupta (2023: 7) builds on Piller, Zhang, and Li's (2022) reflections on the global academic knowledge production scene to remark that "scholars privileged in terms of historical, material, or territorial markers need to understand their task in terms of greater responsibilities to contribute to global-centric multiversal scholarship". I accept these greater responsibilities by identifying myself from the settler positionality[ccxxxvii].

Written in English and citing Indigenous scholars globally, from my positionality in academia I also articulate here the audiences that the dissertation hopes to reach, audiences of the hegemon who benefit from anthropocentric, settler, white, Global North, cis-male privilege. With two

broad messages crystallized from results of this work, the work aims to communicate two main messages to this audience. The first message the work hopes to convey to that audience is that Indigenous ways of knowing and being continue to exist, and, where they do, can be supported to facilitate change beyond the human*, but, also, for his benefit*. This support, addressing also inequality at the root of global environmental change, is critical for restoring a future for the more-than-human collective. A second message conveyed in this work to that audience is that there is *no future for any human in the existing systems of human inequality as these are jeopardizing the integrity of all of life's systems by damaging our shared food systems*. The privileges of capitalism's inequality for the very few humans it purportedly benefits, and at the expense of very many humans and nonhumans, is a false one. The loss of life's integrity in the loss of its forms (Pimm et al. 2014; Ceballos et al. 2015; Ceballos et al. 2017) furthers growing instability in earth's environmental conditions, which impacts everyone.

The following section addresses further convergence between Indigenous understandings of place and feminist assertions of situated knowing to further comment on how labor is not owned in a multispecies collective. In my interpretation of 'place' as living, after Coulthard (2014) and others, and knowledge as coming from bodies, I move to addressing agency as more-than-human, giving back 'ownership' to the Earth by understanding the labor of all beings upon her, from the perspective of food systems, as owned by Her.

Agency beyond the human; defining more-than-human

In the place-d, geo-specific, more-than-human world of Indigenous frames of reference, communication across species (Deloria 2001; TallBear 2017) already acknowledges animals[ccxxxviii] are "not *like* persons, they *are* persons" (see also Hall 2011; Gagliano 2013; Chapron, Epstein, and López-Bao 2019; Eckstein et al. 2019), as Ingold (2000: 51, emphasis mine) articulates from his work with Indigenous hunters. Nadasdy (2007: 29) articulates in reference to the Ojibwe of the Great Lakes Region in Turtle Island, that this is also the "only way" to understand Indigenous societies, by these more-than-human relations[ccxxxix].

Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer, and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011: 111) articulates from the Anishinaabe perspective how these equivalent agencies across the more-than-human dimension form political agreements and respect protocols that Indigenous ontological perspectives recognize as doing this work already through historical treaties[ccxl] with other species[ccxli] forming a different relationship thereafter with them. These cosmopolitics affiliate from places of reciprocal care. Without clear divide between the nonhuman and the human, Indigenous scholars have long articulated other-than-human beings as kin whose reciprocal relationships with humans maintain both in equal importance and responsibility (Cajete 2000; Hubbard 2014; LaDuke 1994; 1999; Smits 1994; Salmón 2000; 2012; Nadasdy 2003; 2007; McGregor 2004; Robyn 2002; Turner 2005; Nelson 2009; Wildcat 2009; Todd 2023).

Addressing many of the same political and power inequalities, feminist and Indigenous methods converge in the critical assessments of ecocentric perspectives that comment on the omissions in narrative and highlight marginalized voices (Viveiros de Castro 1998; Haraway 2007; Kohn 2013; de la Cadena 2015; Tsing 2015; Amuasi et al. 2020). In particular, it is important to

recognize a point of agreement between these different traditions of knowing where expanded

notions of agency meet and animate a 'more-than-human' sociality, or, what multispecies

feminist accounts have referred to as a feral agency[ccxlii] (Tsing 2015; Tsing et al. 2021; Yoon

2017; 2020).

Though feminist scholars Åsberg, Koobak, and Johnson (2011), have asserted that it is possible

to interpret feminist research as "always already" 'posthuman', the separation between interior

bodies and external environments as arbitrary (van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster 2016: 14),

there is a wide and ever-expanding proliferation of feminist scholarship around deconstructing

the nature/culture divide and challenging the 'rigid partitions between humankind and nature'

(Grzywacz 2019) to critically refigure the 'human' while pointing out the dualism of

nature/culture thinking, using terms such as the posthuman[ccxliii] and natureculture[ccxliv] (Haraway

2016; Latimer and Miele 2013). Specifically, the feminist posthumanities[ccxlv] and critical

feminist posthumanities[ccxlvi] devote attention to more-than-human ethics, by "their conceptually

sensitive research into ontologies and epistemologies"[ccxlvii] (Neimanis et al 2015: 85), embracing

the unknown, and "thriv[ing] on *xenophilia*, as all academic research should" (Åsberg 2017:

196).

Displacing the *anthropos* and replacing it with the beyond-the-human 'multispecies', de la

Cadena (2019: 479) suggests through the use of a "complex we[ccxlviii]" the use of a term that I use

in this work the 'more-than-human' to reference a human that can "reemerge *with* what the

anthropos self-severed from: with nonhumans, and thus, as in the already classic phrase, become

"more than human," with both bios and geos alike." Contesting also the further masking of

historical nature/culture impositions and their deleterious effects on our biosphere with the use of terms such as Anthropocene[ccxlix], with the feminist notion of equality, multispecies, posthuman, critical posthuman, and ecofeminist theorists argue for bio- and anthropodiversity (Mies and Shiva 1993) in ways that dissociate from an 'Anthropocene' by acknowledging the already present diversities of the human experience and diversities in the ways we live in relationship to living ecological communities[ccl]. van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster (2016: 16) cite ethics as composing the 'core of multispecies accounts" which are "precisely about multiplying differences and modes of attention, about the specificity of lived natural-cultural entanglements in thick contact zones, with their own very particular histories and possibilities." (ibid.: 13)

Going beyond a critique of the 'human', theories that extend actor-network theory[ccli] from STS bolster the more-than-human with an agency in complement[cclii] (i.e. Iheka 2018: 4), deconstructing 'the body' with alternative understandings of agency. From this tradition and the material feminist science studies of Karen Barad, a physicist with a doctorate in theoretical particle physics and quantum field theory, posthuman performativity[ccliii] (Barad 2007) asserts that a subject cannot be separated from networks of intra-active material agencies[ccliv] (ibid.), breaking down any notion of complete ownership over agency even within the human. Understanding the metaphysics of performativity from a critical posthumanist frame, ontology and epistemology are thus given a relational ontology, which Barad (2018: 238, emphasis in original) describes as 'onto-epistem-ology'"[cclv], where ethics, ontology, and epistemology already share the same spaces. In this pluriverse of intraaction, interdependence, and interbeing (Bagga-Gupta 2023: 07), "[t]he primary ontological units are not "things" but phenomena[cclvi] – dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/relationalities/(re)articulations" (Barad 2018:

232) that deconstructs matter to practices/doings/actions[cclvii]. Within this notion of matter is "substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing, but a doing, a *congealing* of agency. Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity[cclviii]" (ibid.: 232-233, 237, emphasis in original). Accordingly, "[a]gency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world", not "something that someone or something has", nor could it be "designated as an attribute of 'subjects' or 'objects'"[cclix] (Barad 2018: 232).

Other feminist descriptions of agency as bodily and 'transcoporeal' envision materiality itself as agential[cclx] (Alaimo 2008; 2010), claiming a political place of responsibility obscured by anthropocentric accounts[cclxi]. From a multispecies perspective, Hamilakis (2017: 177) speaks of the 'human-food assemblage' with the point that every *body* is a food for some *body*, the process of 'becoming-food' as blurring inside and outside and the subject/object binary[cclxii].

From the place-based knowledges and perspective of Two-Eyed Seeing that notes better perspective from collaborating knowledge systems, the continued calls for convergence between feminist humanities, sciences, and decolonial literature[cclxiii] agree upon equalities of agency that are useful in my analysis of the *milpa* and its more-than-human caretakers. While feminist, postcolonial, posthuman, and indigenous scholars may use different approaches, from the feminist material-semiotic (Haraway 1991: 200), material-discursive (Barad 2007: 152), material transcorporeal (Alaimo 2018), to Indigenous or other more expansive, inclusive, and equal notions of agency, these notions of revalued and re-distributed agency "across heterogeneous assemblages of humans and nonhumans" (Blaser 2016: 547) make 'matter matter' to allow understandings to emerge for how other-than-humans shape the landscape through their equal

agency within it. The interpretation of the feminist ethic in this work is one in this direction that agrees with Indigenous and multispecies feminist conceptions of agency that embody performances of a 'more-than-human' and consider their practices from the analysis of one food system. Critical to the interpretation and analysis of this research done with multispecies ethnography where these agencies are considered, with a more-than-human definition of agency, the living beyond the human can be regarded as "an active presence and participant" (Nxumalo 2021: 9, cited in Bakal and Vásquez Reyes 2023: 13) and the agency of any is shared and communal as matter in Earth's biosphere is consumed and absorbed in processes that cannot be 'owned' by any body, only borrowed and recycled in the always common collective. Food, thus, both as an individual and group, is considered an actor in this work (see also Ghelfi 2023: 199[cclxiv]) as eating is a site of transformation through visceral engagement with more-than-human others[cclxv] (Yoon 2016, citing Probyn 2000: 8) and caretaking connects to the system of reciprocities that allows life to continue on the planet.

Articulating another space of convergence between feminist, decolonial, and multispecies scholarship, the final subsection of this expansion of the care-based methodology details my handling of consent protocols, critical to feminist and Indigenous forms of research. This interpretation of consent, according to my interpretation of agency, also extends beyond the human and is guided, in this context, by the Maya Ixil. Relating to the place-based knowledge systems of the Ixil, the recognition of more-than-human agency is a necessary a pre-cursor to allow also active engagement and communication with all of the Ixil's more-than-human world with consent processes that extend beyond the human.

Consent

Based on my care-based methodology, the methods used in this research require me, the researcher, to be in consultation with, heeding the affect(s)[cclxvi] of (Gould 2010), and working together to participate in resolving problems that *communities themselves* identify, and, in that, follow openings into those spaces where I am asked or invited to occupy. The feminist method, with its focus on leveling inequality, is intersectional and anti-colonial as it is operationalized only from those spaces of collaboration and consent, using care to invite collaboration and petition consent to avoid violence.

A critical pillar of not only feminist thought but a reoccurring motif from Indigenous wisdoms shared across Indigenous literature and, in particular, an anticolonial method, consent can also be interpreted as a measure of respect and care. The protocol of petitioning consent is a part of the consent processes at the core of this work and critical in its emergence, as I will elaborate on in the following methods section. Consent is a practice of equality, of equal engagement, and in the world of equal and horizontal relations, consent is the practice by which we respect shared agency. Furthermore, it is considered a norm of engagement with the more-than-human[cclxvii] for Indigenous lifeways participating in life's larger projects of reciprocity and sharing of energy that relate to food sovereignty (Kovach 2009; Wilson 2001; 2008), further relevant to this research. Broadly, as this research is part of larger ongoing and long-term intersectional feminist, activist/participatory communal work, the 'feminist' descriptor of the specific methods used in

the context of 'research' entails the use of equality-focused protocols that find equality at the more-than-human dimension where respectful engagement requires consensual participation[68].

For me as a researcher, consent began at where and when I was explicitly invited by the community and/or specific relevant community members. Starting from spaces of invitation with the Maya Ixil as a form of assuring explicit consent, this 'research' evolved with the Ixil in their territory and with the Ixil organization from shared motivation to protect Ixil biocultural diversity/food sovereignty. My research with the Maya Ixil began in this dimension of emergence via consent and ethical space[cclxviii] with that focus on Ixil food and seed sovereignty. Interested to investigate seed networks and agroecological interactions between the local, Maya Ixil-led, and Maya Ixil-serving Indigenous organization created by and for Ixil members of the community throughout the Ixil Territory, my research project evolved from the premise that I would assist the host organization in their process of memory banking (Nazarea 2005) through a volunteership[69] with them which consisted of the first phase of the research. Utilizing my own networks of affiliation that initially extended the invitation for me to work and volunteer with the Ixil organization in the Ixil Region's Nebaj municipality, consent protocols guided my specific placement and positionality within the community in ways that would allow me to reciprocate labor, time, resources, etc. with my interlocutors.

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[68] Explicitly, for any visitor and one to Indigenous peoples' territories in particular, consent processes are essential coordination tools and are regarded by the author as necessary since first engagement.

[69] While my research initially was planned as working exclusively with the local organization and its affiliated members in the region, my interest in accepting invitations of Ixil at the market opened political and, therein, challenges between the small collective and the wider Ixil community that became involved in my research through the reach of the market as the unhealed divisions in the social fabric of the Ixil community after the genocide remain uncompletely addressed. Hesitant to guarantee my safety should I network within the larger and mixed-affiliation Ixil community, the organization and I agreed that a less formal connection with the collective, as I set out on my own to explore connections made at the market, would be the most comfortable arrangement for the second phase of my multispecies ethnographic fieldwork in the Ixil Territory.

In the field, I devoted time and attention[70] to finding appropriate relation with my positionality in the research, allocating the first three months in Nebaj, Ixil Territory to getting acquainted with the organization and community (for them to get to know me and for me to get to know them), investing in building relationships. I remained receptive during this time and in the second phase of the research to community invitations demonstrating explicit consent for where I could go in the community and signaling about which themes were deemed by the community as appropriate for me to pursue in my research. Consent as also the respect of Indigenous territories and sovereignty, what I regard here as equality-focused protocols, these were important design elements of the research. Invitations were critical at each step in the research to guide where I went, what I did in the territory, and how I went about engagement with the more-than-human community[cclxix]. Therein, I deferred from the Ixil Territory to my Ixil interlocutors to mediate and guide any more-than-human engagements (Annex I) as also a measure to try to balance power dynamics. Allowing the research, thus, to 'emerge', the research was shaped and formatted around what work emerged as helpful to the community[cclxx], where I was shown to be by them[cclxxi], and what positionality was respectful in those spaces to avoid imposing and to thereby participate equally in those projects.

As an additional layer of safety and attention to care for the interlocutors involved in this research, as they have also done for me, except for actors who have been identified by other media sources, the names and select locations, where sensitive, have been anonymized in the

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[70] I detail this as a part of the formation of my methods further in Annex I, also describing why this is important in this work and my approach to it.

body of this dissertation[cclxxii].

II.   Methods

i.   Multispecies ethnography

Recognizing extinction as 'bio-cultural phenomenon' (Rose et al. 2017) this multispecies

ethnographic research was conducted with the Maya Ixil Indigenous People in the Ixil Territory

of Iximulew/Guatemala over a period of 14 months from October 2018 to March 2020. The

research was conducted around the theme of restorative and regenerative food systems of the

Ixil, the *milpa* in particular, as I lived and volunteered in the region during this time. Important

contextual reporting on the *in situ* and lived experience of the violence of top-down global

structures of inequality that constrain or marginalize Ixil 'culture'-d ecosystems of life by

systems of colonialism and extractivist development[cclxxiii] were included in its data collection.

Generally, I understood my role as an ethnographer as a caring observer, listener, and participant

(Watson 2014). The multispecies ethnographer does the same, beyond the human, as they study

"contact zones where lines separating nature from culture have broken down, where encounters

between Homo sapiens and other beings generate mutual ecologies and coproduced niches"

(Kirksey and Helmreich 2010: 546). Multispecies ethnographers are those "attending to the

remaking of anthropos as well as its companion and stranger species on planet Earth" (ibid.: 549)

and participate in the restorative justice that is the "(re) craft[ing of] modes of living and dying

on a richly varied yet fundamentally shared world" (van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster: 2016:

6). Closely attuned to interactions and relationships across species, in the words of Eduardo

Kohn (cited in Kirksey and Helmreich 2010: 562-563) the work of a multispecies ethnographer "force[s] us to radically rethink these categories of our analysis as they pertain to all beings." Immersed in the lifeways of the Maya Ixil who maintain more-than-human ontological perspectives from ancestral knowledge systems extended into today, as explained in the previous Section IV, any attempt to accurately situate knowledge with the Ixil necessitated such a frame into more-than-human categories of analysis.

While following connections from explicit invitations within the community to venture beyond Nebaj where the Ixil organization of my volunteership was based, this multispecies ethnography germinated from the networks of connection that grew from the initial volunteership organization in the first phase of research and, in the second phase, from my networked affiliations with the multispecies *milpa* assemblage that began at the market, the Ixil *Mercado Campesino*, which I discuss at length in Chapter VI. Learning about the dynamics of the Ixil community and appropriate methods for engagement with Ixil *campesinxs*[71] from Ixil hosts during the volunteership, the first phase of research gave me some familiarity with the specific more-than-human actors of the Ixil *milpa* and began establishing networks of *campesinxs* interested in working together. Also performing a volunteership with the organization for a few months, an undergraduate student from Guatemala City at the large public university USAC, was a helpful in these initial months for consultation on language and culture in Guatemala and provided some initial gauge for where Ixil practices faded into mainstream Guatemalan perspectives.

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[71] In alignment with Osejo and Martínez-Medina (2023: 414), throughout the dissertation I use the term *campesino* instead of peasant: "Peasant is the most literal (and frequently used) translation of the Spanish word 'Campesino'. However, this translation does not convey all the meanings involved in the Campesino category, such as different aspects associated with their ways of life, land ownership, characteristics of family work, values and cultural elements related to reciprocity and the redistribution of production in community relations, the conditions of marginalization and exploitation, among others. For this reason, some authors recommend using the term in the original language (Koopman, 2007, Wood, 2012)".

In the second phase of fieldwork in the Ixil Territory that began after 6 months with the Ixil organization (volunteership), the ethnography turned to focus on following relationships made at the market and following invitations from public predominantly female-populated market spaces out to the sites of the *milpa* for guided field visits and other excursions deeper into the territory. While the two phases had no distinct moment of separation and share strongly overlapping networks, due to certain associated risks of speaking to the greater Ixil community beyond the Ixil volunteership organization, the second phase of research is noted here only to comment on the greater independence in the community of the researcher and stronger reliance on networks of trust[cclxxiv] that the research relied upon in the second phase. Relationships with Ixil *campesinxs* began to emerge from these market spaces in the first phase of the research, and in snowball fashion, the second phase of the research led to new interlocutors from locations in the landscape and at smaller associated markets that were connected to the main, and largest, Nebaj *Mercado Campesino* ([Chemical-free] 'Peasant/Farmer Market').

Perhaps a non-traditional space, the markets were rich with knowledge, data, and pedagogical insights as a place where the more-than-human gathers and is gathered in more-than-human assembling. The promotion of Ixil notions of food sovereignty in and around the *Mercado Campesino* (hereafter also 'the market') and its activities gave compatible and fertile ground for collaboration on my research to explore Ixil *milpa* caretaking practices and forms of biocultural conservation. Interlocutors interested in working with me often self-identified themselves from these public settings. Generating relationships with several market vendors as I asked questions about the cultivars each brought to market, practices involved in creating products at them, and

caretaking practices involved in the cultivation of such cultivars from the *milpa* space made quite logical transitions for further discussion about these topics at the site of those *milpa* caretaking practices themselves which I refer to as 'fieldvisits'.

It became clear from engagement at food markets in early months of my time in the Region that the markets served as nodes for non-hierarchical teaching and learning. A rare point of collaboration between the local governmental municipality, *Alcaldia Indigena* or Indigenous local governance structure, and a general public, the market was also an optimal point for the research to affiliate with various groups beyond political affiliations and connected to Ixil biocultural tradition and knowledge systems. Thus, as a unique consumer at a market of primarily Ixil vendors selling to primarily Ixil buyers, despite often being quite busy with the transactions of exchange as they sold their cultivated items to others, many Ixil venders were very enthusiastic to teach me about their food system and the processes involved in caring for the *milpa* at the market and at the *milpa* itself. To some extent, joining the organic dynamics of the market where community knowledge exchange occurs simultaneously, along with gossip and conversation among friends, for the Maya Ixil women[cclxxv] who dedicate much of their lives to the cultivation, preparation, consumption, and sale of the crops at the market, my relatively simple questions in Spanish about crops and how they were grown, named, used, and related to for the Ixil and according to their knowledge traditions made open invitation to those who engaged with me to teach and articulate themselves by their expertise with the topic matter reinforcing efforts toward food sovereignty by my interest to research their practices and the relationships of the *milpa*. The questions were often welcomed as creating space to 'educate the foreigner' and engage in conversations about the more-than-human. While work just engaging in

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conversation could not necessarily be considered activism, joining various organizations in the community (NGOs, Ixil cooperatives, the Universidad Ixil and other education institutions, etc.) allowed a research project to continue in the second phase that gave further varied support to projects revitalizing knowledge and reasserting the importance of Ixil knowledge systems[cclxxvi].

In 13 months of experience attending the *Mercado Campesinos* of the Ixil Region (approximately 46 market visits[72]), my questions at the markets were also met by questions and comments from the Ixil in them, my placement as an apt place for others to initiate conversation with me as well. Very frequently in them elders could be encountered offering insights freely to those like me who seemed curious or uncertain about a cultivar or how to consume it. My receptive disposition to their commentary was experienced as an invitation for others within earshot to also chime in on whatever topic was being discussed, the conversation itself inviting others in its own networking of *campesinx* knowledges as they freely contributed to open discussions. I participated in and experienced countless moments of these forms of both solicited and unsolicited guidance identifying cultivars at the market, placing them in Ixil culinary traditions, understanding seed and harvest protocols, and exploring medicinal or other relationships of the Ixil with these other-than-human *milpa* actors. While these exchanges are common among the Ixil at the market, my positionality as a foreigner and as a 'woman' in this venue where work is done predominantly by women[cclxxvii], meant that conversations about food traditions and caretaking food systems gave natural pathway to rhizomatically affiliate with the

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[72] Although, it should also be noted in this total that some of these visits were during certain periods of the year where events related to the market (Concurso Campesino, Feria Campesina, etc.) take place at the same site and at the market. These events, sometimes the main reason for my market visit, are not distinguished from this single total number. For further information on how the markets are a site of Ixil biocultural restoration and revitalization projects according to Ixil knowledge systems please see Chapters V and VI.

"open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life" (Tsing 2015: viii) in and from these discussions at the markets.

Using my theoretical framework aiming to understand the ways of thinking, doing, being, and political practices related to knowing for the Ixil, the markets provided inroads to address and explore each of these points. As spaces critical to the *buen vivir* living economy, providing a form of income for many vendors, the markets also served as a hotspot for the exchange of the region's physical biodiverse forms of the *milpa* where the materiality of the relationships and their entangled ways of life could appear as seeds, plant parts, and edible prepared foods were also exchanged (Chapter VI). In the fieldvisits that allowed better communication about topics spoken about at the market[73], *campesinxs* were justifiably delighted at an opportunity to showcase their skill, elaborate on their practices, and discuss further the relationships and significance of the *milpa*. During these fieldvisits, I participated in various activities of caretaking the *milpa* with Maya Ixil interlocutors and walked with hosts as they gave me guided and interactive tours of the various *milpa* spaces. The activities of caretaking included, but were not limited to: sowing seeds, tending to plants, creating soil supplements, harvesting, seed storage, the preparation of non-edible milpa crafts, to food preparation and learning about the *milpa*'s more-than-human relationships according to ancestral Ixil knowledge traditions that help to structure those relationships. In total, 42 fieldvisits in the *milpa* were done with Ixil interlocutors. Due to the topic of our discussions, it should be noted that many informal

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[73] It should also be noted that this was often preferred by some vendors at the markets as it is not uncommon in the region that, particularly women, only speak Ixil fluently. In these cases, Spanish and other nonverbal communications were used where possible to supplement the conversation when no Spanish-speaking translator could be found.

conversations and several formal interviews for this research were also done during guided tours of the *milpa*.

Navigating consent processes through the growth of friendships from the *Mercado*, invitations from cultivators and land caretakers to visit their *milpas* that evolved as the main focus in the second phase of research became a form of explicit consent from Ixil hosts to explore interspecies reciprocities of the multispecies assemblage common to the western highland Ixil Territory, that I articulate in Chapter VI as the *Milpa* Maya Ixil. In the course of a total of 14 months in Iximulew, 13 of which in the Ixil Territory, I accepted invitations to visit *milpa* fields and forests, stay in Ixil homes with Ixil families ('homestays' in 11 Ixil homes, 6 homestays with non-Ixil Indigenous families or Ladinx Guatemalan families), and generally get to know the more-than-human world of the Ixil Region through the accompaniment and collaboration of/with Ixil counterparts from informal conservations (with approximately 170-200 people). A form of fieldwork referred to by Renato Rosaldo (as cited in Clifford 1997: 56) as "deep hanging out", informal conversations involved my participation in the basics of food preparation— from collecting it, to preparing, cooking, and eating it together with women and their families. My ethnoecological inquiries focused on the more-than-human and multispecies, and thus, were guided by those horizontal interactions with Maya Ixil human hosts. Seeking to investigate further connections and topics commonly discussed in informal conversations, I conducted formal semi-structured interviews with 41 interlocutors that most often lasted from 45 minutes to 3 hours at a time. Several interlocutors were interviewed multiple times, each interlocutor counted in this total, however, as a single 'interview'.

I also recognized from my positionality as inviting discussion over very rudimentary aspects of Ixil life that I could help to facilitate some knowledge sharing through my 'the [dumb] *gringa'* questions as some of these topics, for their proximity to Ixil traditions, have been discouraged by colonizers of European, religious, and economic origin. From the inclusive context of food sovereignty, thus foregrounding and paving a way toward healing by reframing practices of the *milpa* as valuable knowledge and political practices of more-than-human bioculturally Ixil wisdoms that strengthen and grow Ixil lifeways, discussions also opened doors to the discussion of topics not often publicly discussed, such as the internal armed conflict and histories of individuals during it. As traumas of the war are still marred into divisions in Ixil society that have not been addressed and therefore neither healed, the nonthreatening atmosphere created in discussions of food[cclxxviii] and the *milpa* had an effect of occasionally starting discussions on colonial silencing and censorship of the Ixil by state violence. Supporting processes of healing and participating in being the change, these performances also participate in supporting food sovereignties toward more-than-human justice.

ii.   Data collection, analysis, and coding

Working from a feminist and decolonial beyond-the-human frame for data collection and analysis (Haraway 2016), I note the words of Kovach (2009: 109) to identify the emergence of the research process when dealing with Indigenous related inquiry, which "involves specific multi-layered preparations particular to each researcher…There is no formula (nor could there be) for this preparation… [and] they are not preparations amenable to academic evaluation".

Utilizing an overtly feminist approach in my fieldwork, where I am committed to "subverting, rather than reproducing, inequality" (Sundberg 2003: 188), I followed Sundberg's recommendations toward this goal to note how the meanings and categories of this research emerged from the research community itself (ibid.), from the *milpa* and its caretaking actors, through CaC methods. The most important of these and a starting point to explain my interpretation of multispecies ethnography is the Ixil conceptualization of the word 'seed', or '*semilla*'. While I go into detail to describe how this word forms a national politics in Guatemala that links to international more-than-human political movements in Chapter VII, Annex I provides my first encounters with Maya Ixil (and Maya of Guatemala) uses of the word and demonstrates with this important example how the meanings and categories in this research emerged from the research community, were informed by them through embodied definition[74], and arise within my care-based methodology to serve as a form of 'careful equivocation' (Yates-Doerr 2019: 306)[cclxxix]. "*Words articulate worlds*" (ibid.: 301), which is why it is so important to this research that some words are given detailed attention for their explanation.

Developing an attentiveness to the categories and ways of defining the world (ontology) that originates first from the Maya Ixil cosmovision as much as possible, oral history and multispecies ethnographic methods[cclxxx] used in this work were particularly calibrated for deep listening to those who maintain practices of attentive observation and involvement with land,

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[74] The illustrative vignette in Annex I also gives insight into my methods of attentiveness that were *care*-full to allow space for the informed design of Indigenous categories that I encountered, incorporating them into my research and its interpretation once modified by my interlocutors. Guided by the notions of the care-based methodology outlined in the previous sections of this chapter, attention to Indigenous categories and constructions of reality was meant as a preventative step to avoid misinformed, inaccurate, or preconditioned results stemming from experiences lacking informed context. A part of the responsibility of the researcher (Kovach 2009), internal preconceived definitions that I arrived with in the Ixil Territory were examined in reflective processes of my research fieldnotes, Annex II as a compilation of those around the topic of **seed⬅➡land**.

weather, plants, and animals (e.g. Brice 2014; Tsing 2014; Overton 2018: 297). While the actors

considered in the work are regarded as more-than-human, informal conversations and formal

interviews were conducted and coded from human interlocutors for analysis. In the data

gathering process, an important consideration of the data should note that while I took Ixil

courses from the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (ALMG) to learn what was

possible during my stay in the region, I do not speak Ixil. Without fluent language proficiency in

Ixil, my interpretation of the Maya Ixil worldview is not authoritative (Battiste and Henderson

2000) and primary sources should be used instead for reference from the Ixil themselves[cclxxxi]. A

largely Ixil-illiterate guest in the Ixil Territory, my interpretation of the Maya Ixil cosmovision as

more-than-human, however, was confirmed from discussions with my interlocutors. With their

analytical assistance, categories to interpret the Ixil lifeway as it is shaped by this more-than-

human identity were compiled through the intermediary language between my human

interlocutors and I, Spanish.

Primary data sources considered for data analysis included but were not limited to the previously

mentioned semi-structured formal interviews and informal conversations with Maya Ixil

interlocutors, market visits, and *milpa* fieldvisits/tours with *campesinx* land caretakers.

Fieldnotes were also taken during the 14 months in Iximulew, from the *milpa* site and regarding

daily interactions, activities, and conversations during the initial several month volunteership[75]

and in the second more independent phase of research. Audio recordings were made of public

events (approximately 28, excluding any recordings made with video at the market) and ambient

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[75] This volunteership was done with an Ixil grassroots organization sharing seeds in the Ixil region since the early 1990s, the work of a predominantly female Ixil organization demonstrating the active use of campesino-a-campesino methods (Holt-Giménez 2006) toward the furthering of Ixil food and seed sovereignty in the territory.

sounds in a more-than-human environment for contextual reminding, and occasionally for animal/bird identification using free online AI software. Online archival resources (Digital Archive of Latin American and Caribbean Ephemera) were used in collaboration with my collected data in Chapter VII. Participatory observation took place in informal and formal settings such as home stays (6); private Ixil events like weddings (3); wedding-associated ceremonies such as the '*pedida*' (1); graduation parties (2); Universidad Ixil classes (roughly 3 hours, 5 different sessions invited to and attended) and day-long (at times, multiple day long) events (approximately 11); Ixil language classes at the (ALMG) (approximately 4 hours, once weekly during the academic year); caretaking work of the *milpa* in family food systems (refer to previous section's discussion of fieldvisits); NGO, cooperative, political, or community-wide events (approximately 24) and marches (approximately 5); and networks of collaboration that I helped to bring together such as the community-supported agriculture project that sent weekly boxes of surplus product from the *Mercado Campesino* to buyers in Guatemala City from the middle of February 2019 to early April 2019 when transportation between departments was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to categories that emerged from the data itself, as described at the beginning of this section, data collected from semi-structured interviews and various recorded informal conversations were reviewed and transcribed in various levels of depth. Thirty interviews were fully transcribed, 11 partially transcribed, and all remaining recordings were listened to for key themes addressed. All semi-structured interviews were transcribed and considered toward data analysis. Of the informal conversations recorded, all were listened to, and notes were taken on main themes and critical elements related to main themes were transcribed. Interview

transcriptions were analyzed using iterations of critical discourse analysis such as deductive thematic analysis and selective coding where open and emergent themes were coded first, followed by the grouping of such themes into more general themes that fit multispecies or more-than-human themes of care (Cope 2010) and defense of food systems/sovereignty. The identification and coding of transcriptions for recorded material was done with both emic and etic categories (Pike 1998: 154-155) within the more-than-human frame, performing this analysis from my various data sources to identify and validate trends and themes of importance according to emergent trends and themes considered to pertain to the 4R theoretical frame[76]. Fieldnotes were referred to for situational context and other relevant elements noted by the researcher during or beyond recordings. Multiple-coding of the data without hierarchy of themes or sub-themes was used based on what arose in informal conversations, interviews, and engagement in the community at large, etc. Multiple coding recognizes the different (sometimes contrasting, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes both) interpretations of the data. This, the interpretative process was only loosely "standardized" for reasons that Kovach (2009: 43) explains: "[b]ecause so much of Indigenous ways of knowing is internal, personal, and experiential, creating a standardized, externalized framework for Indigenous research is nearly impossible".

Furthermore, as Indigenous ways of knowing are "holistic" with emotional, spiritual, mental, physical, etc. dimensions, I do not attempt to interpret them according to a Western reductionistic analysis[77] as their dissection, fragmentation, objectification, or otherwise extraction would be inappropriate and not scientifically sound (ibid.). Understanding broad

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[76] See theoretical chapter's discussion of the 4Rs of rematriation.
[77] See Annex I for an explanation of the most central interpretation in the dissertation, that of land, which is divergent from Western models.

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themes and trends that answer my research questions across the various collected primary

sources enabled the emergence of my results and data were analyzed accordingly by categories

defined by the Ixil from transcriptions.

Important to the research questions and content of the data, it should be noted that the outbreak

of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the collection of data, altering slightly the

initial project inquiry by significantly limiting crucial formal interviews planned with elders and

community leaders during March 2020. Nevertheless, data saturation was reached with

recordings from informal conversations and formal semi-structured interviews with other

interlocutors by my time of departure. Also due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic,

emergent themes and specific variables from the data were identified outside of the Ixil

Territory. As some indication of the suddenness of changing realities in the region, a trip to

Guatemala City in early March 2020 became suddenly also a departure from the country. I was

unable to find reliable transportation back to the city should I attempt to travel back the many

hour trip to the Ixil Region to retrieve my belongings left there so remains a major limitation

with the analysis of the data collected here. In thus a slightly different research result, the

resulting perspective on the data collected reflects a situated but globally-reflective analysis,

informing conclusions from the research and framing its presentation in conversation with

relevant literature.

iii.   Oral histories/Storytelling

Just as Scheidel *et al.* (2018) note that inequalities have the power to shape also our narratives about reality, stories are influential in the creation of worldviews and the way we conceptualize the world around us. In the words of Kimmerer (2013: 179), traditional ecological knowledge of 'Indigenous harvesters' "is rich in prescriptions for sustainability. They are found in Native science and philosophy, in lifeways and practices, but most of all in stories, the ones that are told to help restore balance, to locate ourselves once again in the circle". While much of western science lacks the specific structure and language to articulate and thereby appreciate other species, Indigenous knowledge systems have long used stories and narrative from their oral traditions to transmit knowledge. Speaking on the gift of these narratives and the stories of Indigenous peoples and cultures, Kimmerer (2013: 179) writes: "The traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous harvesters is rich in prescriptions for sustainability. They are found in Native science and philosophy, in lifeways and practices, but most of all in stories, the ones that are told to help restore balance, to locate ourselves once again in the circle". Wilson (1998: 24, cited in Thomas 2005: 241) writes that "The historical and mythological stories provide moral guidelines by which one should live. They teach the young and remind the old what behavior is appropriate and inappropriate in our cultures; they provide a sense of identity and belonging, situating community members within their lineage and establishing their relationship to the rest of the natural world." A means of healing and a decolonial method, storytelling is a teaching tool and a tool of resistance[cclxxxii] (Thomas 2005: 252).

The narrative telling of the research findings, "multispecies storytelling in the feminist mode" (Haraway 2013: 2), is reflective also of many Indigenous language traditions where narrative functions as "an intergenerational knowledge transfer" (Kovach 2009: 95) in traditions that originally communicated orally (Thomas 2005: 242; Kovach 2009) and were only alphabetized

later through the creation of syllabics (see Maclean 1890). Fit to the epistemology of many

Indigenous knowledge traditions, Indigenous methods include storytelling and personal

narrative, and participatory action research, all of which focus on the development of

relationships (Wilson 2011). Wilson (2011: 178) notes that storytelling is helpful to also divulge

details of the relationship that develops between the person telling the story and the one listening.

Battiste and Henderson (2000: 77) write of this aspect of stories as also a part of the *process of*

knowing in many indigenous knowledge systems: "Stories are enfolding lessons. Not only do

they transmit validated experiences; they also renew, awaken, and honour spiritual forces.

Hence, almost every ancient story does not explain; instead it focuses on the process of

knowing*". This point is echoed in Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's *A Short History of the*

Blockade: Giant Beavers, Diplomacy, and Regeneration in Nishnaabewin (2021: 6, italics in

original) *s*torytelling with the Nishnaabemowin relative, Amik, or the beaver, explains

relationality through the oral tradition, where "the practice of telling stories is the practice of

generating a diversity of meanings. It is a practice of deep relationality, not a looking at, but a

looking with or a looking through or a *thinking through together"*.

Methodologically, Indigenous social research paradigms such as Simpson's articulated from the

oral tradition around relationality provide more-than-human and participatory approaches to

research that allow the visualization of connections with the earth and other living beings and

allow kinship responsibilities[cclxxxiii] to be continued generationally for many Indigenous Peoples

(Wilson 1998). Important beyond just the importance of Indigenous decolonization as a process

to address and confront created human social inequality, storytelling and story-making is

common sense-making of the world around us that gives its own positive effect (see Brockington

et al. 2021). The narratives that assume human supremacism as an unquestioned norm or that overzealously invest hope in rare-earth-dependent technologies too try to invent solutions better than existing more-than-human technologies like trees and plants; to restore and heal legacies of uncaring human behavior, stories also provide a context to explain reality and pattern behavior within it. Listening to stories beyond the human, hearing the calls and songs for change from the voices of a more-than-human world, justice and healing also lies in the articulation of theories of change that are, ultimately, also stories of a more-than-human reality[cclxxxiv].

Demonstrating the power of stories from one Indigenous tradition of Abya Yala to explain a more-than-human lifeway in the Ixil Region, the conclusions and results of data analysis in this research project draw upon the words and stories of the Ixil, using the oral tradition, or storytelling to weave the various data sources together. In the case of Iximulew and the Ixil Region where magical realism and stories like those in *Hombres de Maize* make fiction and reality indistinguishable within politics (see Chapter VII) the power of story to imagine change and/or shift perceptions of 'reality' is an important tool of care to enact change toward equal future for that world beyond the human, the more-than-human, and is a tool that can be used both by Indigenous science and by Western scientific methods. While the specific approaches of "…rematriation, reparations, regeneration, sovereignty, self-determination, decolonization, resurgence, the good life, futurisms. … are born of specific material concerns that refuse the abstraction of justice and its limits in the nation-state" (Tuck and Yang 2016: 9), material change would not occur without the parallel shift to recognize and respect those ways of knowing, doing, being, thinking, and relating of the pluriverse that regard all beings as active, in the collective process of living, our collective labors conceptualized as care work reinvested in

more-than-human. These are the stories of land caretakers and lifeways of the more-than-human. In the case of this research, those stories presented are those connected to the *milpa* food system.

IV. Biodiversity conservation? The case of the Visis Cabá 'Ixil' Biosphere Reserve

I. Introduction

In 1997, 45,000 hectares (344.98 km² or 1000 *caballerías*[78]) of Indigenous Ixil territory was converted under Article 1 of the legal Decree 40-97 of the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala into the Visis Cabá Ixil Biosphere Reserve (Figure 10). By legal decree, Visis Cabá became an IUCN Management category VI (UNEP-WCMC 2021) protected area, property of and managed by the Guatemalan State managing authority, the National Council of Protected Areas/Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas[cclxxxv] (CONAP).
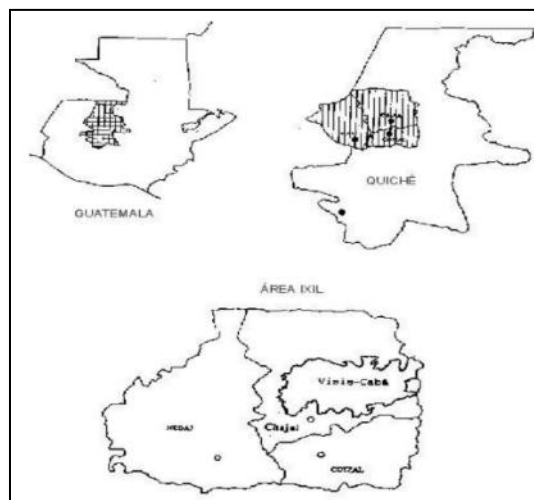
Figure 10 (above): Map of Guatemala, Quiché department, and the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve's location within the Ixil Territory (Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 125)

At its creation and by CONAP regulations, the Reserve was subdivided into three major

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[78] One *caballería*, a Spanish imperial unit of area, is equivalent to 45 hectares (Colectivo MadreSelva and Asociación Luz Héroes y Mártires de la Resistencia 2014: 35) and contains 64 manzanas (or roughly 44.72 hectares). A *manzana* is a Spanish imperial unit of area where the Guatemalan standard is equivalent to 0.6988 hectares (Konforti 2022: xxi).

conservation zones (Del Águila 2021: 68) (Figure 11), each zone equipped with a new norm for possible human engagement within its boundaries. Most restrictive to humans, a 'core' and innermost zone of the CONAP model became reserved at the heart of Visis Cabá for the exclusive and "strict protection of [nonhuman] natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems" (Diario de Centro
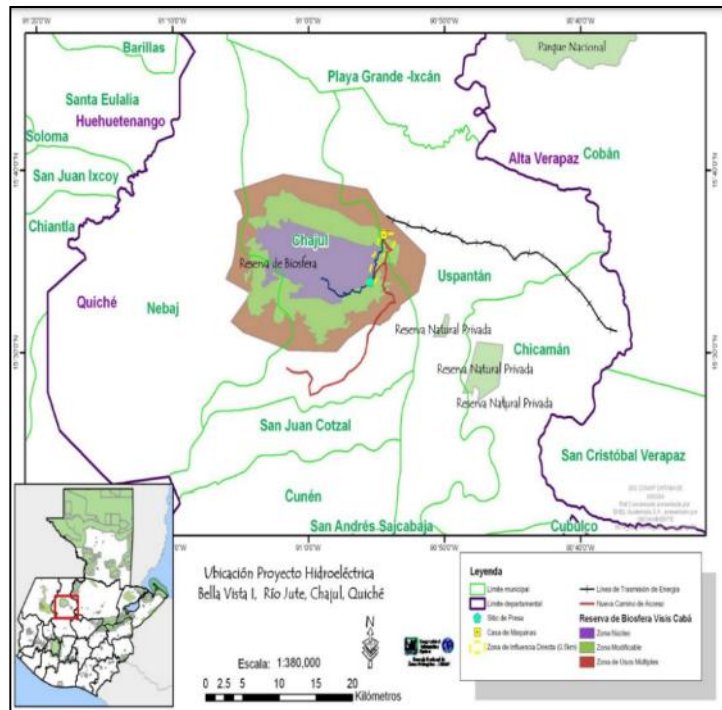
Figure 11 (above): Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 126, map of the three zones of Visis Cabá. Source: Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 126 and CONAP.

Americana 1997: 2433). Specifically, in all 10,000 hectares and 222.2 *caballerías* of this core zone, hunting and the cutting of plants and trees was prohibited and the removal of any of these *strictly* prohibited. The next layer from the core zone and of its same size was made into a 'modifiable zone', a zone permitting the activities of ecotourism and scientific research within its boundaries. This zone was followed by a 'multiple-use zone', a zone allowing the "rational and sustainable use of natural resources" (ibid.: 2437). Surrounding the protected area, a final 'buffer zone' allowed "resources" to be extracted by community forestry concessions or purposed toward business and sustainable agriculture, cattle ranching[cclxxxvi] included (CONAP 1996). "[A]ctivities that negatively affect the protected area are [to be] avoided" (Diario de Centro Americana 1997: 2437) in the buffer zone. The discretion as to what these 'negative' activities are and were, and as is the norm for all conservation zone categories, is determined by CONAP

in its interpretation of Guatemala's 1989 *Act on Protected Areas*, the sole regulatory instrument on biodiversity in the country currently in place (EC and UNEP [2022]).

After the RBM and the Sierra de Las Minas Biosphere Reserve, respectively, the Reserva de la Biosfera Ixil, Visis-Cabá is the third largest protected area in Guatemala. Its forests comprise a total of 31% of the 1,935,734 hectares of forest cover contained in the Guatemalan System of Protected Areas (SIGAP) (Del Águila 2021: 71). One of 5 biosphere reserves in the country that together occupy 2,591,540.45 total hectares, or 74.72% of the SIGAP areas (CONAP 2020: 52) and roughly 23.78% of the country's total land area[cclxxxvii], these vast swaths of land and the forests within them have been made into State assets or property after their designation as 'protected area'.

At first glance, the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve may appear as a biodiversity success story. As the Western narrative goes, the more land set aside for biodiversity, the less land converted into urbanized space for anthropocentric activities. Subsequently, lands and resources diverted away from 'development' are 'preserved' or 'protected' from the necessarily 'damaging' effects of humans and their activities. Building upon and further legitimizing a long history of inequality and colonization, however, the 'protected area' model mobilizes a myth central to colonization, that is: "nature" comes from 'pristine' landscapes devoid of human presence. Misunderstanding the landscapes Europeans encountered in the Americas, the notion of biodiversity arises from what is often an intentional redefining of the complex Indigenous food systems managed and cared for by Indigenous Americans; lands that were very much 'people-d'.

As in the case of Visis Cabá, before its designation as a biosphere reserve it was partially designated as communal lands settled by various Ixil groups during and after the war. Populated by many Ixil and other Indigenous Peoples who remained internally displaced within Guatemala, the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPR) a notable group living and growing food for themselves in these lands since, these people were forgotten or made unimportant in the process of rectifying land claims and restituting such groups for lost land and lifeways after the internal armed conflict (Viaene 2011). Groups politically opposite the local Ixil coalition in power from the lands' municipal office, in parallel processes 'communal' lands have become synonymous for those local coalitions in power with a lands 'available for re-designation'[cclxxxviii].

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how Visis Cabá and common protected area models like it fail people and fail biodiversity *by design*. Designed according to a rationality incongruent with the formation of biodiversity but in alignment with settler colonial power dynamics, these models fail to protect biodiversity by disarticulating life's support systems and human caretakers. Though an unremarkable example if its evolution and history are considered next to the creation of other protected areas globally[79], with the case of Visis Cabá I connect aspects of the theoretical frame around the continuity of colonial structures through the field of conservation and extractivism to make the point that ignoring the details of place in these models further jeopardizes biodiversity outcomes. A history and politics of inequality is overlooked in their design, while, at the same time, the models fundamentally misunderstand the role of interconnected, people-d, living networks in the structure, support, and care of biodiversity in the places where it is found today. Embedded and implicit in the assumptions behind these human-

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[79] See theoretical chapter for a discussion on the creation of the concept.

exclusive space designations is the colonial narrative of humans as anthropocentric, destructive, and linearly focused on becoming EuroAmerican or 'develop'-ing according to Western models of consumption.

In the case of Visis Cabá, the details of place counter each of these assumptions, demonstrating how a colonialization of what is consolidated now to a Global North continues despite what is best for 'biodiversity', through and because of rationalities facilitating inequality. Tethered to a history of colonial processes of dispossession, violence, and persecution toward Indigenous local populations, the politics of place at Visis Cabá demonstrate how important historical legacies of inequality remain for the outcomes of biodiversity or biocultural conservation within them. Contextualizing Visis Cabá by foregrounding it ahead of its historical legacy of colonization, the chapter reveals the conservation model at Visis Cabá as empowering collaborations behind its creation that feed from the inequalities that rationalize the human-exclusive models they create. The antithesis of 'neutral' political territory, as the State facilitates the political capture of 'resources' beyond that possible during wartime, uncritical models of conservation not only jeopardize a living future but they further colonial violence as they sever communities from themselves driving further inequality creation.

Colonial rationalities continue to erode life's living systems by further disarticulating its structures, even where such structures are specifically designed for supposed 'conservation'. I use the Visis Cabá case to draw attention to the existing threats to Guatemalan forests that become magnified through unequal access and management of formerly Indigenous-stewarded communal lands. I provide a dissection of the political ecologies involved in the Biosphere

Reserve's creation, to demonstrate how the creation of the 'protected area' re-writes norms of use and interaction or management of humans in spaces previously dedicated to the production of multispecies food systems. Relating local actors with collaborations licit and illicit, I position the actor of the State, through the creation of top-down conservation model, as initiating a politics of erosion and, at the same time, politically and ecologically disassembling the former more-than-human communities purposed toward food sovereignties.

Providing Visis Cabá as an example of top-down conservation and its exponentializing of inequalities, the chapter engages with the two following chapters that demonstrate how food sovereignties of the *milpa*, a food system and landscape-scale conservation tool that is both local and bioculturally relevant to place, have the opposite effect with their bottom-up processes of biocultural diversity conservation and equalizing of inequalities. Zeroing in on the main distinction between the two models, the location of the human within them, I articulate with this chapter and the case of Visis Cabá how rationalities of the extractivist model premised on assumptions brought by colonial benefactors continue to limit life for all life forms. Instead of providing *care*, they produce violence through spectacular impoverishment.

II.   The coloniality of conservation's most common models

Guatemala is one of several countries where the structures of settler colonialism have a long legacy of settler invasion (Batz 2022) that can be seen acting directly in the removal of Indigenous Peoples from the landscape as they are replaced according to settler valuations and try to eliminate Indigenous forms of expression[cclxxxix]. Foreign interests in collusion with local

elites have leveraged the Guatemalan State's underlying and unaddressed racialized structures of Indigenous oppression from the Spanish (Brett 2016a; 2016b) with the assistance of neoliberal policies that materialize a patriarchal-colonial modern world to colonize relationships, uses, and meanings of land that empower capital at the expense of civil and equal society (McNeish 2017: 500–501, cited in Sveinsdóttir et al. 2021). Unresolved conflicts into today over land were at the center of the genocide[ccxc] (Brett 2016a; 2016b; McAllister and Nelson 2013; Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2015) and remain central to projects of the State or its affiliations that make Indigenous Peoples an explicit target.

The *long durée* or decolonial approach "indexes how destructive racialized ecological processes are punctuated by the rise of colonial-capitalist civilization" rooted in the 'long sixteenth century' from 1450 to 1640 (Kolia 2021: 2). Collins (2019) demonstrates how privileges of unequal benefit (including across species) endure and reproduce from this base of colonial power since the rise of its colonial-capitalist civilization (Davis and Todd 2017). These approaches contextualize biodiversity as a historical product or cultural belief (Corbera et al. 2021) to highlight fundamental *causes* of the loss of biodiversity rooted in rationalities that continue to pattern inequality.

Transforming the very structures of reality, Collins *et al.* (2021: 971; 2019) refer to racism and other schemas to understand these inequalities by the hierarchies they create as enduring forms of 'colonial residue', where the "colonial constitution of race" guides "an inherited western, modern-colonial practice of violence, assemblage, superordination, exploitation, and segregation" (Resnick 2017: 226, citing Barnor Hesse 2016: xviii) that is cemented into

institutions of the nation-state and the organization of a Global North and South[ccxci] thereafter. Wolfe (2016: 2) argues that racialization works as a process in concert with colonialism where race is "a trace of history: colonised populations continue to be racialized in specific ways that mark out and reproduce the unequal relationships through which Europeans have co-opted these populations". This is particularly the case in Latin America where nation-states were founded by '*criollo* elites'[ccxcii] to carry out such mandates.

Suggesting biodiversity conservation modalities as inheriting this constitution, Collins *et al.* (2021) suggests that the models for implementing conservation are accordingly split between two different regimes of rationality. The first, which I focus upon in this chapter, is ordered from top-down interpretations that incorporate the nature|culture divide and understand it as politically neutral, timeless, and applicable universally. In its models, biodiversity is made into an object or series of objects that, according to nature|culture separation, is sterile of humans[80] in its prioritization of the conservation of the nonhuman. The second model, the focus of the next chapter, is the bottom-up[81] model, which is guided by a rationality that understands land as a living being and space for reciprocal acts of care among other living beings to sustain itself.

Though infrequently addressed (Zhang et al. 2023: 574), the unequal power dynamics and values that support the different models and prop up the common 'protected area' design of biodiversity conservation that emanates from top-down model, are critically important for understanding how and why the most common models for biodiversity conservation fail (Collins et al. 2021; Mabele

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[80] Within such understandings 'biodiversity' is exclusively a 'nonhuman' entity, devoid of agency, and occupying the category of 'nature' opposite 'culture', its exclusively human opposite.
[81] The following chapter will use the same region to examine the bottom-up biodiversity conservation modalities.

et al. 2021), as I argue with the example in this chapter. Where feminist or political ecology analyses[ccxciii] have helped *identify* legacies of exploitation and domination and name actors shaping conservation and development models[ccxciv] (Aguilar-González et al. 2018), more-than-human/multispecies justice approaches[ccxcv] go further to understand the oppressive nature of colonial-era power dynamics that flatten the living world into 'biodiversity', and thereafter shape extractivism today. As I will go further into detail in the following chapters, these approaches also prefigure the *justice* that international resistance movements work toward, reasserting and re-establishing Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, being demand as the power dynamics that control a narrative of human-exclusive conservation share the same rationalities that allow erosion of habitat and food for the more-than-human. Specifically, the field of conservation remains skewed to rely upon forms of knowledge that assume the nature/culture cultural construct, which is a design of settler colonial rationality, that, in its prioritization of the people at the 'top', jeopardizes the support structures feeding and 'housing' biodiversity from the bottom-up.

At the core of the distinction between the rationalities and the models they produce is a definition of land. In the bottom-up model, as articulated above, land is alive and supportive of life itself. In the top-down model, land is the first form of 'capital' (Li 2014). The ability to commodify living beings has been critical first step in the reorganization of society according to imposed settler hierarchies of inequality, as articulated in the dissertation's theoretical chapter. Laying a critical divide at owning 'capital' versus participating in existing systems of reciprocity across lifeforms, the conflict between ontological perspectives and axiological valuations of wealth from the spaces designed by the patriarchal colonial modernity versus those of pre-Columbian traditions,

unsurprisingly, chart radically different forms of economic exchange mediated by these

divergent rationalities that eventually interact with 'biodiversity' in ways that make it difficult to

have any other relation but extraction. From an Indigenous perspective, Aboriginal woman of the

Goenpul tribe, Quandamooka nation, on Stradbroke Island in Queensland, Moreton-Robinson

(2015) refers to the all-compassing nature of modes of claiming, owning, and possession of

capital that characterize 'the white possessive' and their "possessive logics"[ccxcvi] as (ibid.: xii):

> "a mode of rationalization … that is underpinned by an excessive desire to invest in
>
> reproducing and reaffirming the nation-state's ownership, control, and domination. As
>
> such, white possessive logics are operationalized within discourses to circulate sets of
>
> meanings about ownership of the nation, as part of commonsense knowledge, decision
>
> making, and socially produced conventions."

Logics that reinforce uneven power landscapes, the claiming and exchange of 'capital' for

cultural 'civilization' from a colonial era is a rationalization that remains central to the

governance of the nation-state after inheriting colonial systems of inequality, passing along its

privileges to its benefactors across generations since its inception. Segato and McGlazer (2018:

205) refer to this as "a continuity in which the government, now geographically proximate, set[s]

itself up to inherit the territories, goods, and people that had previously belonged to overseas

administrative powers", a possibility made so by an ability to 'own' land that did not exist in

Abya Yala before Columbus.

According to the same rationality of the patriarchal-colonial-modern top-down model of biodiversity conservation applied on the other side of its nature/culture divide, to preserve the 'purity' and 'pristine' characteristics of pacified 'nature', humans must be removed. The "jewel" of top-down conservation plans, the protected area model remains dominant in the field of conservation but is notorious for its exclusion of Indigenous communities[ccxcvii] (Baldwin and Beazley 2019: 5), the protected area design with direct origins in the violent, racialized past[ccxcviii] of settler colonialism[82]. Ahistorical and therein politically neutralized in settler narratives, from the decolonial, feminist perspective, the common top-down 'conservation' model is linked to this historical and racist narrative that erases or diminishes the presence and labors of Indigenous Peoples while still re-valuing their food systems as inert 'landscapes' (Bluwstein 2021), objects, or 'resources'[83] awaiting anthropocentric transformation. In *Global Coloniality and Power in Guatemala,* Martínez-Salazar (2012) argues that the sheer failure to include and understand the epistemology of oppressed 'Others' from the Guatemalan context provides a form of continuing colonial control where "race and gender thinking [are used] *as tools for social classification*" (Martínez-Salazar 2012: 5, emphasis in original) and are, thus, not harmless exclusions. The further development of colonialism and its genealogy carried on by liberal state-building projects and neoliberal expansion efforts, she contends, furthers injustices sown in the violence of the colonial era, producing – with Guatemala – a brotherhood of minoritized populations in the Global South subjected to new valuations of life itself.

In top-down conservation models across the world[ccxcix], Indigenous peoples suffer the compound inequalities of being unable to perform biocultural relationships to land that have historically

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[82] See the dissertation's theoretical chapter.
[83] Discussed at length in the discussion of coloniality in the dissertation's theoretical chapter.

provided care for biodiversity while *also* being barred access to alternative livelihoods to meet basic needs in the neoliberal economy (D'Alesandro 2017, unpublished; Counsell 2018), provoking conflict as the only remaining option to survive. Citing 474 environmental conflict cases that intersect with protected areas globally, Bontempi *et al.* (2023: 1) write that "growth-oriented extractivism and development are major drivers of conflicts in protected areas."[ccc] Fusing racist narratives of a *criollo* elite[ccci] at the helm of Guatemala's nation-building project structured as 'authoritarian corpopopulism' (Sveinsdóttir et al. 2021: 118), frontier colonization processes have claimed new space with such strategies, such as in Guatemala's Petén department, through the militarization of conservation since the 1960s. Sundberg (1998) points out from the history of the Maya Biosphere Reserve the displacement in Petén from 1958-1986 that was formal government policy during the Empresa Nacional de Fomento y Desarrollo de Petén (FYDEP; National Agency for the Development of the Petén). Politically lured away from ideologies and ideas of insurgent forces against a background of historical revisionism[cccii] "violently eras[ing] historical and existing indigenous claims and uses of the land" (Gould 2018: 142), counterinsurgent[ccciii] infrastructure forces the emergence of the "right sorts of subjects: agricultural entrepreneurs, not insurgents" (ibid.: 147) within the Guatemalan countryside while conservation transforms their territorial lands for other uses. Heralding a "racial liberalism" (Ybarra 2018: 15) from Guatemala's reinvented new settler state and the particular "racialization of inequality" after the radical transition of the 1995–1996 years in Guatemala (Sundberg 2003), agriculture and other activities pertinent to the neoliberal economy assist in the 'national civilizing project' (Ybarra 2018: 11) that happens opposite conservation.

Despite some attempts to include Indigenous Peoples in these models by acknowledging that protected areas should be created without human rights violations (i.e. Dinerstein et al. 2020), critical theorizations from political ecologists have long considered enclosures of conservation as instruments for state territorialization, resource privatization, and a means of institutionalizing divergence between "society" and "nature" (Neumann 1998; McCarthy 2001; Neumann 2004; Heynen and Robbins 2005; Robbins and Luginbuhl 2005; Corson 2011; Malhi 2011; Peluso and Lund 2011; Grandia 2012, cited in Carroll 2014: 32). Violence is often used to enforce recategorizations of land after they become 'protected areas'[ccciv]. Ybarra (2018: 17) investigates the fabric of this violence from Guatemala, identifying conservation in Guatemala as deeply political; "a global project that authorizes violence in protected areas", dismantling local systems of trust, notions of Indigenous identity, and forms of community consolidated from relationships of a more-than-human world/ecology (ibid.: 6). As Ybarra (2018) elaborates, these practices of designating conservation from the top-down in Guatemala (but also in many other protected area models) invite new forms of violence – neocolonialism— by the nation-state and benefactors standing to benefit in a Global North as conservation becomes a legitimate way to remove Indigenous People from their territories and use militarization as a means to enforce its new 'protections'. Reinforcing cycles of violence in Guatemala and elsewhere globally, the militarization of conservation has led to increased violence and extrajudicial killings against Indigenous Peoples in particular (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020).

In the following section, the human characters of Visis Cabá are introduced, their affiliations with power highlighted as they connect, or not, with the colonial patriarchal modernity. Making sense of actors connected to the creation of the Reserve, the section connects colonial

rationalities patterning ecological decay from global capitalism[cccv] (Mehta 2010; Mbembe 2019) with the design of the top-down model of conservation that distances food sovereign-striving Maya Ixil caretakers and seeks to replace them elsewhere with local agricultural and 'product'-producing subjects.

III. Allegiance to a flawed model

In practice, many of the protected areas in Guatemala are considered 'paper parks' (Gonzalez-Bernat, Clifton, and Pauli 2019:132), "areas legally designated as protected but contain forests at risk to human modification due to a lack of enforcement or oversight" (Bullock et al. 2020: 141), for how badly plans are implemented into material practice. Further troubling, including Indigenous conservation paradigms is cited by CONAP (2020: 81, translation mine) as a "main challenge" of biodiversity conservation models in the country[cccvi].

In Guatemala's protected areas deforestation is a significant problem. Habitat destruction and deforestation are cited as the leading causes threatening the Ixil Region in particular, now endangering its species and correlated with its biodiversity loss (Campbell and Muñoz-Alonso 2013, 2014; Acevedo, Ariano-Sánchez, and Johnson 2014; Vaz-de-Mello et al. 2014; Lim 2015; Mark and Rivers 2017; Solari 2018a, 2018b; Lyons 2019; Schmitter-Soto 2019; BirdLife International 2020a-d; IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group. 2020a-g; Matson 2020; Campbell, Luque, and Wilson 2021; BirdLife International 2023). Looking into these connections, data evaluating the situation on the ground suggests that forestry projects tasked with conserving Guatemala's biodiversity with money from the Global North's USAID are not

as "successful"[cccvii] as they claim. Using a database of satellite data, Bullock *et al.* (2020) conducted a time series analysis to map forest disturbance in Guatemala from 2000 through 2017. The NASA-funded study results (ibid.: 150, emphasis mine) "show that the protected forests in Guatemala are *more vulnerable* to disturbance than previously reported." Specifically, within Guatemala's protected areas, deforestation and deforestation/natural disturbance (D/ND) represented "10.9% and 8.6% of the total area of the parks, respectively, and stable forest represented 60.9%". Additionally, "[f]or nine of the protected areas, over 40% of the park area contained forest disturbance during our study period" (ibid.: 145). According to MODIS data (Leisher et al. 2013), the rate of deforestation in Guatemala's protected areas is twice as high as the Latin American average from 2004-2009 and occurs in over 40% of its protected areas. For comparison and outperforming other kinds of management that include the protected area model, the Indigenous traditional forest-management practices of the western highlands successfully capped deforestation at just under 1% per year from 1991-2001, under the national average of 1.46% per year during that period (Elías 2012: 153) and 1.43% per year from the 2001- 2006 period (Paulson Priebe et al. 2015: 433).

Bullock *et al.* (2020: 149) remark that "[u]nlike other tropical regions, most of the mature natural forest in Guatemala is [State] protected". As all protected areas in the country were declared only a few years before 2000 or after it, the data suggests that the adjective 'protected' may be incongruent with any area with that status if stewarded by the State.

The largest of these areas in Guatemala, Grünberg and Elías (2018: 22, translation mine) name the RBM as "the most emblematic, expansive, and known protected area in Guatemala" but also

its most "desprotegida", unprotected. Citing the reasons for this, Grünberg and Elías (2018: 25) highlight

> "the illegal logging of wood, the extension of extensive livestock farming, the expansion of African palm and teak plantations and of activities related to drug trafficking, the lack of security over property rights over land and a climate of confrontation with the authorities in charge of protected areas, a consequence of decades of weak and fragmented governance"

as the general reasons for the RBM's continued decline.

From Guatemala's most recent report to the Convention on Biological Diversity on the progress of its conservation models toward protecting biodiversity, the '6th National Report for the Convention on Biological Diversity' (CONAP 2020), Guatemalan State conservation organs confess directly to a less than effective implementation of its national biodiversity strategy and action plan, writing that protected areas are becoming prone to "other activities not friendly to biodiversity":

> "It is important to emphasize that SIGAP has had difficulties regarding the management of protected areas since, although it represents approximately 31% of the national territory, in some areas the management has not been the most appropriate for the conservation of biological diversity, having special challenges with respect to the issue of governance in the areas, which has resulted in invasions of human settlements in

restricted protected areas, deforestation, monocultures with poor agricultural and management techniques, drug activity, land ownership, illicit extraction of resources, starting fires, and mainly the change in land use that replaces forests with other activities not friendly to biodiversity" (ibid.: 81, translation mine).

While the models that patriarchal-colonial modern hegemon and international 'aiding' ally USAID supports do "strengthen existing and new forest *enterprises*"[84], these enterprises appear less beneficial for biodiversity as protected areas are cited by the organization (USAID [2023: n.p.] as having also become "breeding grounds", for that which makes it hard for biodiversity to prosper:

> "…limited [State] investment in the management or government presence within these areas [protected areas], has created breeding grounds for organized criminal activity ranging from drug trafficking, to illegal mining, wildlife trafficking, illegal logging, and other illegal activities that threaten the protected areas and the populations that live there."

As both the Guatemalan State and its international funding bodies USAID agree that current efforts are failing, areas 'protected', provokes the questions 'protected for whom, for and from what, and relative to what?' (Zhang et al. 2023: 578).

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[84] (CONAP 2020: 81).

According to the concept's intention and definition, protected areas were created to preserve ecological and cultural integrity at the level applied (Dudley 2008; Stolton, Shadie, and Dudley 2013). The top-down conservation models of the State continue to claim indigenous lands for protected areas but remain little effective (Ricciardi et al. 2021) at conserving biodiversity or the conditions in which they need to prosper. Nevertheless, little to no progress has been made in Guatemala to revise the existing top-down patriarchal-colonial modern model. Though failing to protect forests, biodiversity, or Indigenous Peoples, the protected area model has continuously been deemed successful by representatives in the Global North benefitting from patriarchal-colonial modern constructs (see USAID [2023?]). USAID boasts of the 'comprehensive approach' that they support, creating a market for these forests as "*products*"*cccviii*.

Creating "products" from forests without the consent of local Peoples within them may be "comprehensive", but the internationally funded chains of extraction that utilize conservation as a rationality for the theft of more-than-human lifeways, criminalization of its former caretakers, and profits from all, is a design incongruent with biodiversity conservation.

IV.   Visis Cabá's human actors: trespassing consent and the theft of communal wealth through politics

By CONAP regulations, the consideration of land for protected area status requires an application process, submitted on behalf of actors in the community and granted by the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala. In the case of Visis Cabá, as Chajul's municipal lands and resources are under the authority of the municipality, its application was submitted under the direction of Chajul's then municipal mayor, Manuel Asicona Rivera, on 11 July 1996. The

application was supported by the government's Coordinador de la Comisión Nacional de Medio Ambiente (CONAMA), the environmentalist group Madre Selva Collective, and the coffee-exporting cooperative called Associación Chajulense Va'l Vac Quyol.

Asicona, Former Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC) member (Stoll 1999: 139), was elected municipal mayor of Chajul in 1996 by the now defunct Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) political party, formed after the signing of the Agreements of Peace in Chajul and in the rest of Quiché, to address an electorate in support of the disappeared PACs (Del Águila 2021: 81). Organs of violence, its primary 'mechanisms of horror' (REMHI 1998), that originated from the worst period of the internal armed conflict as the military's response to *guerilla* efforts to engage local Indigenous populations in the conflict, the PACs were never neutral in the conflict or otherwise.

First formed in 1980 by the Guatemalan military, PACs assembled rural Indigenous men in their home communities to participate in the ground patrols as civil units in an extension of the Guatemalan military from heavily Indigenous rural areas across Guatemala like the Ixil Region

Figure 12: Image taken by Beatriz Manz of a PAC on patrol in the Ixil Region in March 1983, cited in Manz (2013).

during the conflict (see Figure 12 for one of these units on patrol in 1983). These paramilitary

groups consisted of Indigenous males aged 16 to 65 who were tasked with the job of "pacifying" and "protecting" Indigenous communities from the guerrilla forces (Brett 2006). This task often meant spying on inhabitants [neighbors] and taking action when any were suspected of cooperating with guerilla forces (Adelman 2005). At the height of PAC participation, there were 900,000 to over one million males fighting with the PACs (Manz 2013; Viaene 2010; Brett 2006). Formally militarizing rural communities like the Ixil Region and drawing them often non-consensually into the violence, the patrols were entirely composed of local villagers (Brett 2006) that, with these groups, were drawn into the full extent of the conflict. PACs were a first line of defense for the Guatemalan military and a means for the military to control a larger area without physically having to be present in all of them. Military strategy established so-called Development Poles that worked together with the PACs to systematically control and oppress the Indigenous population at the village level (Del Águila 2021: 83). As a local militia, the PACs were seen as stocked with dispensable soldiers for the military and served as a strategic buffer at the conflict's interface with Indigenous communities. In the words of one former PAC member, the PACs were used by the Guatemalan military as "pure cannon fodder" (Brett 2016a: 130). Beatriz Manz (2013) describes the PACs in her testimony before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, "Developments in Guatemala and U.S. Options," Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives on February 20, 1985 as civil patrols that were

> "especially noteworthy both because of their pervasiveness and their disruptive effect on communities. There are about 900,000 patrolmen… most of the patrols are concentrated among the 4 million people of the highlands who are overwhelmingly Indian… [this] system of compulsory policing and vigilante service…is unpaid and obligatory."

With this context in mind, a white paper written with the funding of the USAID Programa

Regional Ambiental para Centro América (Guatemala), under the Proyecto Ambiental Regional

de Centroamerica (PROARCA)/Central America Protected Areas Systems (CAPAS) project[cccix],

provides some insight into what former PAC member Asicona and his collaborators are focused

on re-designing at Visis Cabá. The document favors the legal designation of the Visis Cabá

Biosphere Reserve to "offer greater *security* in terms of a change in the decisions of other

municipal administrations that could have different interests in relation to the use of these lands

of unparalleled natural wealth in this region of the country" (Cabrera Hidalgo 2000: 1,

translation and emphasis mine). The shared timeframe of the protected area's creation and the

publication of the white paper links narratives at the time of the Reserve's designation as

protecting 'natural wealth' from locals and their maize that are cited explicitly as destructive,

threatening[cccx] (Cabrera Hidalgo 2000: 2), and forms of 'environmental crime'. Narrations by the

collaboration of investors in 'development', or State and international allies, further discredit

centuries of more-than-human caretaking and cohabitation of the Ixil in the territory by

characterizing these local people as, instead, "refugees, returnees and demobilized persons"

internally displaced by war (Cabrera Hidalgo 2000: 2) and people without land titles[cccxi], or

'legitimate' claim to land. Supporting the agenda of the Central American Commission on

Environment and Development (CCAD), words from this document allude to the way events on

the ground are shaped by a larger, complex assemblage of powerful nation-state and international

actors who shape the rationalities that provide infrastructure and funding to reorganize

landscapes and peoples by their interests, for private benefit[cccxii].

Though the partnership between these funding sources and their on-the-ground livelihood strategy implementation does not necessarily preclude the achievement of some biodiversity conservation targets and it has been argued by some living in the Region and able to benefit from these projects that they are helpful economically, two central issues should be considered in the case of Visis Cabá.

First, Visis Cabá did not and has not performed mandatory prior, free, and informed consultation with the Indigenous communities of communal lands impacted[cccxiii]. The application for the protected area was made and approved without the consultation of all communities that would be impacted by the area's changed status (Tiu López 2004; León-Pérez and Rodríguez-Suárez 2014). Discontentment and disapproval of the declaration of the reserve was voiced from the beginning by many in the community. At its announcement, community members demonstrated against the decree, demanding that it be repealed. Their chief concern of those protesting and the reason they demanded the decision's reversal came over the lack of any mechanism within the declaration for prior, free, and informed consent from the communities (Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales 2009: 30). Impacted communities argued that the newly established reserve did not consult them, betraying Ixil rights over communal land control, access, and use (Tiu López 2004; Elías 2012). Indigenous protocols for changes to communal lands that existed as a part of its previous governance, such as unanimous consent of all community members, were also left apart from the Visis Cabá application process, an omission that trespasses responsibilities of the State to comply with promises made in the Peace Accords (Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 69; Del Águila 2021: 78). Further weakening affected communities' ability to contest the land status change to a biosphere reserve, the cadastre system and process of

neoliberal land regularization, also yet to be completed in the area of the reserve at the time of its

establishment, provides uncertain legal basis for what land belongs to who within it (Del Águila

2021: 85; Elliott 2021) beyond the communal land tenure identifications at the level of the

Chajul municipality.

In a documentary made by the community impacted by Reserve (León-Pérez and Rodríguez-

Suárez 2014) and widely referenced by those I spoke to on the ground, representative of the

microregion Xeputul, Chajul, Pedro Lopez cites these main concerns shared by the

community[cccxiv] over a lack of consultation and consent, collecting "sufficient— signatures in

opposition to the hydroelectric plant and no to protected areas because the land is ours."

Despite the statistic that the Indigenous Peoples of the western highlands are the majority (Elías

2015: 80; MRGI 2018), and in the Ixil Region host populations with the highest proportion of

Guatemala's Indigenous population (ibid.), the valid discontents of the community in opposition

to the protected area over its lack of consultation are discursively spun by USAID representatives

as "pressures of the minority groups"[cccxv] (Cabrera Hidalgo 2000: 9). With the support of

Asociación Chajulense, the Municipal Mayor's Office, and others (ibid.: 4), efforts are not made

to substantively remedy procedural oversights regarding proper consultation and follow through

on the issues of consultation in the community. Instead, locals in opposition to the project are

identified as uneducated or misinformed[cccxvi], minimizing the central conflict over their rights to

consultation as an issue of 'education', despite a technical study indicating the community's

opposition[cccxvii].

According to the new norms of use and despite their local subsistence basis (León Pérez and Rodríguez-Suárez 2014) and practice for possibly millennia in the same lands[cccxviii] with the *milpa* food system (Banach 2016; 2017a; 2017b; Źrałka et al. 2020: 762), the declaration of the Visis Cabá and its land uses changes converted several traditional activities into prohibited ones. The collection of non-timber products like wicker plants for baskets; collection of medicinal plants; gathering of wood for family and community daily energy needs; hunting; the development of religious activities; and other activities typical of the Maya Ixil communities were among these, turned, in a moment, into 'prohibited' [illegal] activities in a protected area (Del Águila 2021: 81).

From his perspective, a resident and affiliate with the Catholic Church, Cornelio reflected to me a sense of frustration in the community from being suddenly excluded from access to their ancestral lands after designing biodiversity within it and caring for it for more than 500 years:

> "That is the concern of the inhabitants because if that territory exists it is because of them, right? Because of our ancestors, more than 500 years ago. Our ancestral grandparents, we made it. Well, now they are being threatened by the [protected area declaration] because the state continues to guard, explore, and exploit for a foreign public. Why do they put the hydroelectric plants before the people, before the population? [Hydroelectric plants] that count on a fairly large flow of water. Those flows and the rivers [were averted from us]. This included places where they were sites of our [ancestral creation stories], of the cemeteries and sacred areas. Right now, we cannot enter there[cccxix]. If they let us enter, they say it as if it is a border with another country."

Poncho, advocate for Quiché communities from a local faith-based charity organization, pointed out the connection between the most marginalized communities and the most extreme violence they have received from the State during the war:

"Chajul is one of the municipalities which suffered the most during the war. They feel constantly threatened even now, for example, because they were very impacted [by the violence] of the armed conflict— because the communities that are close to the [Visis Cabá] reserve also resisted the violence of the war. After the war they settled there, they had no other choice. And now that [the State comes] and threatens them, to remove them from there, where are they going to live? After the war, they were left to live there—who and why live there? This is because they are they are the marginalized ones."
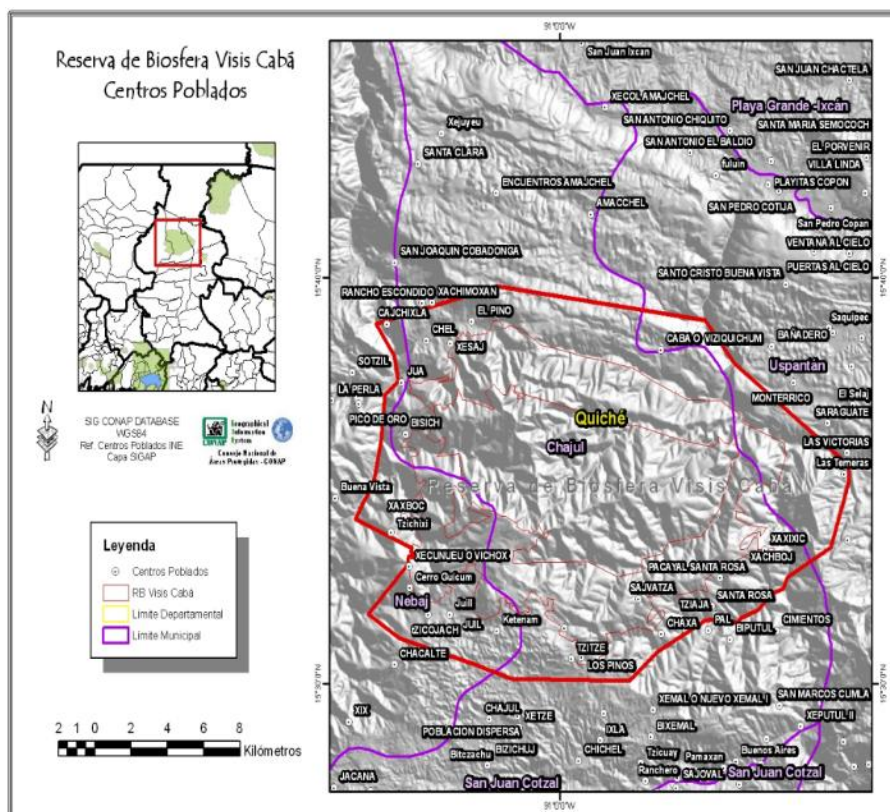
Figure 13 (left): villages within the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve. Source: Pelicó-Caballeros 2011: 126, and CONAP.

As a former PAC member, mayor Asicona's application to establish the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve with the support of his political allies in the community in 1997 could be seen as one 'distortions of ordinary ethical behavior' that Olson (2016) refers to, an outcome of 'divided thoughts' with deeply political motivations. Of the communities settled in the Visis Cabá area today[cccxx] (see Figure 13), six of these —Chel, Juá, Visiquichum, Paal, Xaxboq, and Cabá— were severely impacted directly by the violence of the armed conflict (Pelicó-Caballeros 2011: 33). Several communities of the CPR-Sierra groups, specifically those of Cabá, Paal, Xaxboq, Chexá, Santa Clara, Xeputul, and Santa Rosa, are also located within the boundaries of the designated Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve. As the Visis Cabá application came very shortly after the signing of the Peace Accords in only December of the previous year, and was done without the consent of all of the parties to Chajul's communal lands in agreement, looking at the political ecology of Visis Cabá in historical (and decolonial) context shows how tensions with the new settler state (Ybarra 2018) also now characterize local politics and development in the Ixil Region as those close to power mobilize corruption and a competition for the scarcities left from its divided, unequal society. Pelicó Caballeros (2011: 37) points out the relevance of this local political landscape, relating to former atrocities, as "very likely" motivating the application of the area for protected area status, legally approved under Decree 40-97 as Reserva de la Biosfera Ixil Visis-Cabá on 1 July 1997, published in the "Diario de Centro América".

The second central issue regarding the creation of Visis Caba is the large private benefit potential behind and incentivizing the power of disassembly over Chajul's communal lands. For Manuel Mendoza Asicona Rivera, the former Chajul municipal mayor (1996- 2000 and 2004-2008[cccxxi])

and his coalition applying for Visis Cabá's protected area status, the politics of the protected

area's actors and its use by them, for what purposes, are rendered clear when connected to their

international funding schemes.

Political collaborators and co-applicants for the Reserve, Asociación Chajulense Va'l Vac Quyol

is the largest cooperative in Chajul and is not far away from either Asicona or the streams of

development funding from foreign agencies (identified specifically in Cabrera Hidalgo 2000).

The falsely neutral political affiliation of the Asociación as representing the community in full

hides the issue of consent as those locals cooperating with the regime may benefit. Asociación

Chajulense was rejected by communities of the region as their only, and assigned, representative.

While the group may be composed of a consortium of local Ixil, just as divides during the

internal armed conflict placed many locals in PACs affiliated with the military, political

allegiances in a region where Indigenous governance has no formal structure often provide their

own means of survival[cccxxii].

Delving into these political affiliations, Del Águila (2021)

links the Association's political interests with their

participation in the application for Visis

Cabá. Funding from the Inter-American

Development Bank (IDB) has channeled

financial resources and marketing programs

to the Asociación Chajulense *Val Vac Quyol*

for activities related to the production of

Figure 14a and b (above): USAID Feed the Future program supports coffee cooperatives in the Ixil Territory, photo taken February 2019.

organic coffee; the development of a cultural tourism project; a small dairy processor; and the development of forest plantations, taking advantage of the PINFOR forestry incentive program[cccxxiii] (Del Águila 2021: 80). Referred to as the "most important line of the municipality's economy" (Cabrera Hidalgo 2000: 7) (Figure 14) and "one of the most effective actions" to "reduce pressures on the reserve and the general degradation of the area's natural heritage", Cabrera Hidalgo (2000: 9) confirms an expression of support for the continued financing of mechanisms to cultivate organic coffee in the context of the 'problems' at Visis Cabá. An October 1, 2022, post[cccxxiv] from the Asociación Chajulense "Va'l Vaq Quyol" Facebook page links its coffee production project with continued funding from these foreign financiers. From the group's Facebook page[cccxxv], frequent references to coffee in posts from the years since 2019 suggest that coffee for export has remained the focus of the group and its members.

The impact of coffee production on biodiversity is left unspecified in documents justifying the Reserve, except to identify an unsubstantiated 'decreased pressure' in the area[85] (Cabrera Hidalgo (2000); presumably a negative "pressure" from local Ixil communities. As many of the coffee plantations likely qualify for placement in the multiple-use zone of the reserve, despite practices that often include an initial clearing of forest, the double profit (Le Billion 2021) from such ventures by those facilitating these exchanges, after the municipality has been deemed as the ultimate authority for the area's management, poses critical conflicts of interest for biodiversity.

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[85] This, too, is questionable as multiple use areas of the reserve would allow this form of 'sustainable use' if permitted by the municipal mayor.

While 'development' is not inherently bad for biodiversity, top-down initiatives that offer little volition from the community, aside from trespassing their consent, diminish possibilities for the Ixil to transmit their ancestral or culturally Ixil practices across generations. Funding from USAID and other benefactors of the patriarchal-colonial modern rationality omit to mention or understand how predatory practices of land-grabbing from Global Norths have localized effects on communities that pull them further apart when the only option for survival becomes relying upon dependencies upon international markets. While politicians and their community colleagues are economically elevated by the Reserve, the inhabitants of Chajul's communal lands that the Reserve relocates are dispossessed and pushed further into poverty without any form of restitution. Through the rationality of conservation, the State and its infrastructure is empowered to adapt genocide by acclimatizing the *Pueblo* Ixil for harvest through local gatekeepers[cccxxvi].

Transforming previous violences from the State toward the Ixil into new, politically-driven forms that create opportunities for perpetrators to monetize that power with a predatory politics of replacing Indigenous Ixil stewardship structures with those of the State and its patriarchal-colonial modern rationalities, an exacerbation of existing tensions draw further division within the community according to power inequalities tethered to regional and international benefit regimes. Analyzing the circumstances of the Q'eqchi' at Quixpur and the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Petén, Ybarra (2018: 1) finds that "differential processes of ownership exclusion and inclusion played a major role" in the development of the new settler state, redesigned but built upon politics of racial whitening introduced by the Spanish (ibid.: 10). Writing about the national parks in the northeast of the larger RBM area, Grünberg and Elías (ibid.: 26) confirm that the

communities "…were invaded by CONAP, not the reverse". Furthermore, communities within the nuclear zone of conservation of the RBM "were divided … breaking the social fabric of the community for the impossibility of legalizing land tenure and obtaining services in the nuclear zone [thereafter]" (ibid. 27).

The [privatizing-heavy] dynamics and norms of communal land tenure are particularly relevant to the story of Visis Cabá and its evolution into a protected area[cccxxvii]. Within the same new settler state, top-down conservation that designated Visis Cabá as a reserve for 'biodiversity' provides another mechanism for exclusion and inclusion, exacerbating tensions in the Ixil community by dispossessing communities that suffered heavily in the genocide and threatening any who push against the new logic. In the words of one ex-PAC victim who compared the sense of community to a destroyed beehive, "now everybody is going their own way and you cannot bring them together anymore" (Viaene 2010: 294).

In the following section, I trace lines of political affiliation up to the State to show how the coalitions mobilizing anthropocentric conservation rationalities use militarization and violence to enforce their reorganizations of society and criminalize biodiversity's defenders and former caretakers.

V.   Militarizing conservation for whose 'green security'? 'Green wars' rationalizing violence toward Indigenous Peoples and criminalizing biodiversity's defenders and caretakers

A natural consequence of not consulting communities around and within the protected area about the decision to declare the land under a new status, the Biosphere Visis Cabá was not established without pushback from the communities excluded but impacted by its changes. Protests in the region erupted against the declaration once it was announced that Ixil living on the lands of the reserve at its establishment in 1997 would be required to vacate their homes and lands with their food systems located, now, in a protected area.

After the Reserve's establishment on July 1, by October 9, 1997, demonstrations against the reserve had culminated into social unrest[cccxxviii] in the region. Riot squads from the national police are documented by Stoll (2008: 192) to have arrived in Chajul more than once to protect the municipal mayor from angry crowds accusing him of giving away communal lands[cccxxix] for the designation of Visis Cabá.

In response to the protests and unrest on October 9, 1997, various defenders of the communal lands were criminalized in their resistance as Mayor Asicona initiated a lawsuit the following day in the Public Ministry. Antonio Laynez, identified as the leader of the 1997 action, was included in a grouping of 17 others from the communities of Chajul who were charged. Lawsuits were brought against a total of 17 community members, 9 of which were imprisoned[86] (Cabrera-Hidalgo 2010, cited by Del Águila 2021: 77). Accusations against the protestors ranged from incitement, theft, to destruction (Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 70).

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[86] From interviews in the field, others reported the imprisonment of only 3 of these.

Connecting the militarization of conservation with the 'green security' narrative[cccxxx] from Guatemala as a 'new settler state' (Ybarra 2018: 10), Ybarra (2018: 18) points out with the concept of securitization[87] from geopolitics and security studies that the concept works with double potency with conservation to further exclude and marginalize Indigenous populations. Drawing the attention of state planners and international conservation BINGOs during the later 1980s, Guatemala's transformation to such organizations as a site for rich 'conservation' potential is noted by changing narratives surrounding the tropical forests of Petén that became at once hotspots for conservation *and* "dangerous[cccxxxi] jungles filled with subversives" (ibid.: 11). From drug pushers or 'narcos' (ibid.: 20) to 'criminals' (Ybarra 2016) committing the newer 'environmental crime'[cccxxxii], there is a particular disavowal of politics in the arenas of conservation and land repurposing in Guatemala as a "structural politics of green security" draws upon depictions of 'narco imaginaries'[cccxxxiii] to justify the state's role 'securing' the Maya Forest through militarization regimes (ibid.: 194). Maturing from a previous counterinsurgency era into a configuration of the state as "one that seeks control of civil society by means of "security""[cccxxxiv] (López de La Vega 2019: 158), "militarized neoliberalism"[cccxxxv] (ibid.: 161) deploys security discourses to supply the infrastructure of violence to 'secure' threats to conservation (Ybarra 2016).

From interlinkages and collaboration between the Guatemalan national police force, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (U.S. DEA), and Guatemala's protected area agency CONAP, the geographies of Guatemala and the U.S. are linked in this physical infrastructure[cccxxxvi] of

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[87] Securitization, Ybarra (2016: 195) defines, is "the process where issues, spaces and subjectivities become targets of regulation and surveillance in the name of 'security', which serves to legitimize the use of force in ways that reproduce unequal economic and racial privilege."

violence[cccxxxvii] that expands into protected areas de-peopled by the 'green security' narrative (ibid.), constitutive of what become Guatemala's 'green wars'[88] (Ybarra 2018). In this manner, "imaginaries" of 'green security' develop physical infrastructure in the militarization of Indigenous territories and conservation areas at the hands of State and international actors who 'manage' lands through a precedent of violence.

In the 1+ year of fieldwork I spent in the Ixil Region, I could not find any CONAP or other State governmental official on the ground. I did, however, regularly come across a different State presence in the Ixil Region, despite a prohibition against it in the Peace Accords. The Guatemalan military is pictured in some of these instances in Figure 15. While what these forces do on patrol in the region is unclear and their patrol at all dubious[cccxxxviii], their presence could scarcely be said to generate feelings of 'protection' from at much of the Ixil population who recall or have lived the after effects of the genocide by the same uniform.

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[88] Green wars are described by Ybarra (2018: 6) as "limit[ing] life chances of Indigenous peoples in protected areas through their legal dispossession, denial of basic state services (such as running water, electricity, and schools), explicit military dispossession, and tacit sanctioning of private violence against "conflictive" communities. …[as] narco-narratives articulate with racialized dispossession to authorize violence in the name of conservation". Ybarra (2018) notes the localized effect of capitalist values in creating a fabric of violence in Guatemala that governs the land through these 'green wars' where national to international elites eventually compete for the highest stake in exploiting the Earth and 'natural resources'.

Figure 15a, b, c, and d (above): Instances when the Guatemalan military's presence were noted in Nebaj. Two sets of photos from two different days, the first (left two images) depict armed military soldiers in the main central plaza seen exiting the Catholic church on the 75-year celebration of Guatemala's 'October Revolution' and '10 Years of Spring'. The second (top and right images) see the soldiers driving through city streets, armed and with guns ready. As can be seen from the images, no protest or unrest was present either day.

I learned more from the community involved on one Saturday morning in October 2019 from the Ixil Territory's largest municipality town of Nebaj where I attended a *Mercado Campesino* event. One *campesino* answered a question about what had changed for the Ixil community since the end of the "internal armed conflict"[cccxxxix]:

"[Nothing,] it is the same. … there is no capacity on the part of the State, on the part of

those that direct the country for this—instead, they make action through weapons. So what happened after the signatures of peace? Yes, we have rights now [on paper], but to bring this into practice much is still lacking. Because there is still persecution against *campesino* leaders, leaders who defend the territory. This still continues. … Because in Guatemala our case historically has been of military regimes leading the state. … so all is a question of that which you maintain already."

The *campesino's* answer was echoed by other Ixil in the group; not much has changed and little, substantively, has been done to address land defenders' demands.

Xi'ben, a 44-year-old Ixil man and subsistence farmer, is from a village bordering Visis Cabá. For much of his life he has been an active member of the Ixil community, trying to reinforce cultural revitalization efforts throughout the Ixil Region like this community market. This was the first time I met Xib'en and my first conversation with him. Though we spoke about Visis Cabá and the issues associated with it after he introduced himself as a resident of Chajul, where I knew the Reserve was located, it was not until some years after that meeting at the market (2021) when he shared with me his story about trying to defend Chajul's communal lands against the Reserve. His words of resisting the patriarchal colonial modern structure came from his personal experience:

"[For many] years I learned to fight alongside my father, defending the territory. I tell you, at the age of 12 years old I was accused by the State. Many of the leaders were also imprisoned. And the problem also with the institutions that help in this is that sometimes

they have—or, they don't come with the group, with the people who really defend the interest of the community. Sometimes [they come] with many requirements and [with] the charlatans within the same system of the government. They help a bit with the aim of giving at least a little bit of support, giving, for example, legal advice, or simply to justify themselves. The government always goes hand in hand with these organizations."

Xi'ben was one of the 17 community members criminally charged in the initial protests against Visis Cabá. In 2021, he spoke to me about how the criminal charges pressed against him by the mayor made life very difficult for him and his family and that so many years fighting the state without support wore him down:

"… [T]hey have the system in their hands. For the protected area in Chajul I was accused and to save myself from an arrest warrant it took me almost 5 years. During that time I didn't have money to pay for a lawyer. It cost me. Not only me, there were 20 defensive leaders. And it made us wear down. They accused us of robbing the Muni, burning the Muni. But we were innumerable, thanks to the people [we were many]. We had their support, their moral support. But the riot police came and dispersed the people. The people accused, we did not pay a lawyer for ourselves. Yes, we mobilized against them for justice, but if we took them to court we had to pay for their food and transportation. There was a will to do it but the resources and power, no. These limited us. Believe me, it's not easy, it's not a speech. That is why I work very carefully now. I am exposed and so is my family. This is why I am always reserved and cautious. That's why maybe you remember a time in a meeting with [A Guatemalan businessman in the city]. It's easy for

him. But the state makes us tired and worn out. How to see it. How to think. How to attack. And the possible solution. Because I feel tired. Almost 23 years I have been defending without support. But now I'm getting tired."

Like Xi'ben, there are many precedents in Guatemala for Indigenous land defenders being wrongfully convicted and imprisoned without evidence for the crimes they are accused of[cccxl], an "erosion of the separation of powers" where criminalization is used as "a very powerful weapon against dissidence … the loss of your freedom and a very grave risk to your physical safety… silencing the voices that denounce corruption and impunity"[cccxli] (Tucker 2021: n.p.). These cases against land defenders leave them "absolutely defenseless" as they are often completely "fabricated"; accusations "inflated or invented"; and evidence "forged or fabricated"; "The situation in the country is very, very delicate"[cccxlii] (Paz y Paz, cited in Tucker 2021: n.p.). Amnesty International (2016: 53) reports that

> "the misuse of the criminal justice system in Guatemala by opening baseless judicial proceedings is a way of intimidating and wearing down human rights defenders. … for rights related to the land and territory and the environment has been seen as proof of criminal responsibility."

After being told by the State to evacuate from their ancestral and territorial lands without compensation, Xi'ben and other land defenders are served the additional injustice of being turned into 'criminals' by the State.

Xi'ben told me about the equipment the State uses against Indigenous Peoples like the Ixil, weaponizing the military, laws, and powers of the office to fit their own interests and to recreate existing inequalities:

> "The government, as they have the military power, makes the laws in their favor, and by the powers of the Guatemalan state, [has made it] in vain, our struggle. On the contrary [to helping us], they have criminalized community leaders, given arrest warrants, and, in the end, many of our leaders have fallen into jail. And fighting with the state is exhausting because the judges are corrupt and allow themselves to be bought in the cases.

> All the initiatives promoted by governments and companies protect their interests, generate instability and division through manipulation, violence, discrimination, buying out leaders, looting, and leaving communities naked. In this manner, poverty is generated. ..."

In a double violence, after state structures grab Indigenous territorial lands in the name of conservation, militarization in the wake of these transformations self-legitimate the continued patrol of the Guatemalan military in Ixil municipality streets (Figure 15) should they try to defend themselves.

Response from the State over public outcry in the Ixil Region over the Reserve to this day has

been minimal. Legislative Decree 128-97 from the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala was

brought about to address initial conflict in
the Ixil Region over the reserve after
another concentration of community
members appeared on May 3, 2000, in
front of the Municipal office of the Chajul
Municipality. Modifying Decree 40-97
and opening a possibility to include other
community representatives of the

Figure 16: On Dec 15, 2021, the community presents an injunction/amparo to the municipality for the misuse of municipal mayor's power to lease land in Visis Cabá.

community, beyond Asociación Chajulense Val Vaq Quyol, the modifications of Decree 128-97

remain unimplemented[cccxliii]. True co-management of this (Del Águila 2021: 77), and other

protected areas in Guatemala, remains yet to be seen (Gonzalez-Bernat, Clifton, and Pauli 2019).

Rights trespasses are allowed to remain unresolved (Figure 16). Instead, the two distinct

management regimes for conservation –the State's top-down protected area model and the

bottom-up Indigenous traditional conservation models— remain separated (Gonzalez-Bernat,

Clifton, and Pauli 2019: 133), and increasingly in conflict, by their different rationalities that the

State cannot or will not reconcile, even though it would be best for most involved.

Perhaps an aspect of his fatigue, this lack of support, a lack of resources once his telephone and

his neighbor's had both failed, for safety concerns, or some compilation of all of these, I lost

contact with Xi'ben in 2023[cccxliv]. The definition of injustice, Xi'ben told me that the government

is not only creating the problems and the laws, but they are also the ones that gatekeep their application and thus the justice that can or cannot be served in the country:

> "…the problem is that the government has all its equipment. And it uses the power that the people have given it to silence and persecute the entire population. So, here, for example, with us, everything that we had defended, what our grandparents had defended, now they are paying the companies instead of the companies paying the State [and the state paying us]. … Those who receive the benefits are the exploiting companies."

Following up on information from the interlocutors of this section, the following section explores the "the final stage of the re-valuation of protected area lands"[cccxlv] (Grünberg and Elías 2018: 27); their subsequent politics of disassembling living systems, or the re-valuation of their 'natures' for their utility to humans in the creation of deathscapes and acts of terracide (Ojeda 2022), as political leaders in control the area have facilitated since its declaration.

VI. Profit: protected area as protected profit

The prevailing environmental regime that conservation is situated within politically in Guatemala has been previously characterized as one of "verticality, lack of scientific substantiation, and proclivity to privilege exchange value at the expense of widening the metabolic rift" (Prado-Córdova 2021: 11). The issues with conservation models from the State fester from the top[cccxlvi], aggravated by global 'climate collaboration' discourses[cccxlvii] that reinforce cycles of inequality and exponentially reproduce fears of violence[cccxlviii]. A

biocolonialism[89] (Henry 2011) weaponizing a politics of death[90] a whole more-than-human

landscape, a process of the patriarchal colonial form described by Segato and McGlazer (2018:

202) as:

> "A historical project guided by the aim of forging bonds that might sustain mutual
>
> happiness turns into a historical project guided by the aim of acquiring things, by
>
> acquisition as a dominant form of satisfaction. While bonds produce community, things
>
> produce individuals, who are in turn transformed into things".

Poor organizational capacity, limited funding, and weak leadership are cited as general limiting

factors from the State[cccxlix] toward the effectiveness of its top-down conservation models

(Gonzalez-Bernat, Clifton, and Pauli 2019). Fragmented and weak legislation and legal

incentives (ibid.: 133) obfuscate jurisdiction over what legal measures do exist (ibid.: 9). A

preference for the international system of capitalist relations is manifested quite explicitly in

Guatemala's neoliberal energy policy (Alford-Jones 2022). The corruption of government

officials adds to a system already plagued with challenges.

The abuse of authority over 'resource management' by government officials has been a point of

contention for locals of Visis Cabá in the same pattern as in other parts of the country[cccl]. Where

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[89] Harry (2011: 702) defines biocolonialism as an "[extension of] the reach of the colonial process into the biomes and knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples in the search for marketable genetic resources and traditional knowledge." Furthermore, "[b]iocolonialism also provides opportunities for Indigenous peoples to be collaborators in the colonial enterprise – such as the providers of genetic materials and local knowledge, co-authors of joint research projects, or owners or co-owners of patents, and partners in bioprospecting or licensing agreements…." (Harry 2011: 714).

[90] Building from Mbembe's (2003; 2019: 66) interpretation of Michel Foucault's intention with the term 'biopower', this power of the hierarchical structures assembled to consume the commons to the death is what is referred to by Mbembe with the term necropolitics.

forests used to be managed for posterity by the communities themselves, the managing

relationship of municipal government and CONAP over forest management does not incentivize

its preservation, as laid out by Paulson Priebe *et al.* (2015: 427). As the Municipal Forestry

Offices (OFM) cooperate with monitoring and enforcement via a permit system through the

National Council of Protected Areas (ibid.: 438), and given the structure of decentralization

reforms granting higher autonomy to local governments in forest management, monitoring, and

enforcement (Primack et al. 1998, cited in Paulson Priebe et al. 2015: 427), forests in protected

areas under this governance structure are prepared less for protection than for extraction[cccli].

In the case of Visis Cabá, Felipe Mateo of the Initiative for Historical Memory (IMH)

commented on the interests around Mayor Asicona urging him and the municipality to permit

entry into the region to predatory timber companies into the area (Del Águila 2021), naming

powerful registered firms associated with the Guatemalan Association of Exporters

(AGEXPORT) as those deforesting timber trees in various obscured parts of the country with the

consent of CONAP employees. As this exploitation from those pressuring Asicona during his

time as Chajul mayor was justified by conservation representatives through a commercial

mechanism of the Agros Foundation that paid communities and *campesinos* for the products they

extracted (ibid.: 79), Mateo noted that mechanisms like these palliate the community as they are

invited participate in the disassembly of their territories through them. Gómez Ibarra (2011: 77)

comments from 2011 that corporations had already begun deforesting the protected area's

periphery. With the same 'natural wealth' in continuous residence with these Maya peoples for

millennia (ibid.) and little change in traditional lifeways and activities of the local Ixil population

who live caretaking the *milpa* in very similar ways as their ancestors[91], the introduction of extractivist interests is the main introduced change in the area; one that has put more —not less— pressure on more-than-human lives in Visis Cabá.
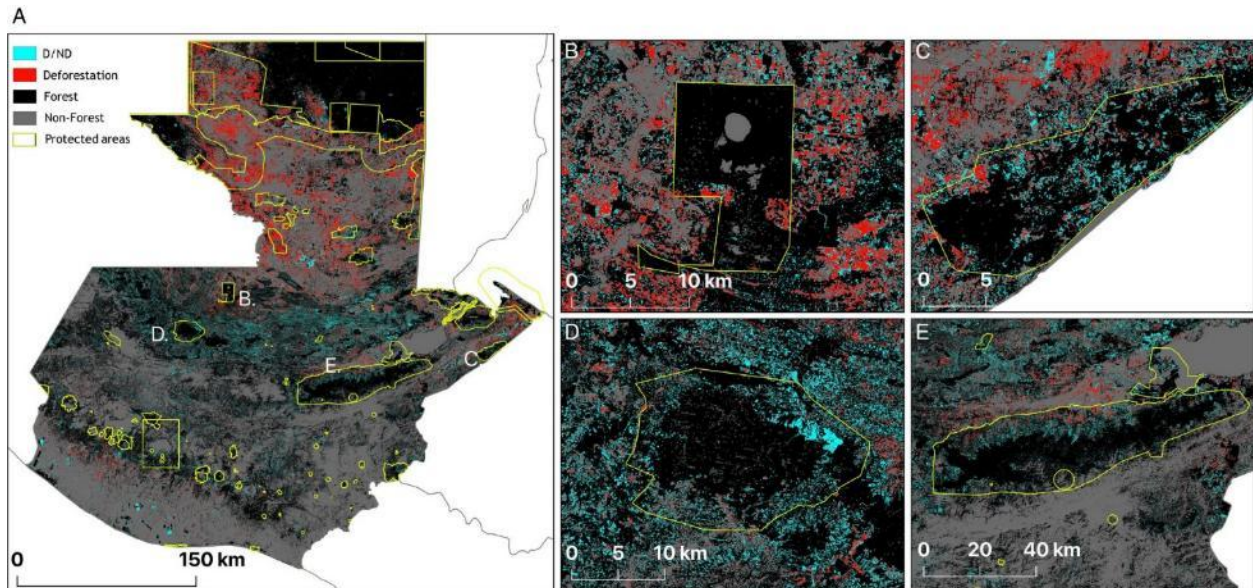
Figure 18 (above): Satellite data for four protected areas in Guatemala (A-E) from Bullock et al. (2020: 143) shows deforestation and degradation and natural disturbance (D/ND) from 2000 to 2017. The Visis Cabá Reserve is depicted in panel D.

Figure 18a and b (above): Topography map of Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve from Google Maps with outline accentuated (left), and (right) adapted image of Bullock et al. (2020: 143) depiction of the extent of deforestation in the protected area overlaid on topography map with outline of three zones of the protected area. The second Image depicts the locations of degradation and natural disturbance happening primarily in the 'modifiable zone' and within more isolated parts of the region.

The effects of these pressures have been noticeable. Collected satellite data from Bullock *et al.* (2020: 143) (Figure 17) shows the extent of forest damage within the Visis Cabá over the last

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[91] A discussion of this is provided in further depth in Chapter V and VI.

nearly 20 years from significant deforestation and degradation and/or natural disturbance (D/ND) happening within the boundaries of the protected area. At a total of 29,645.64 hectares of forest, Visis Cabá had 797.67 of these hectares deforested and 3951.36 hectares degraded and/or naturally disturbed, a 16.02% change in the last nearly 20 years (ibid.: Data S1 Supplementary Materials). A view of the Reserve from the researchers' visual data (Figure 17) shows the obscured regions where this degradation is taking place (Figure 18), primarily in the Reserve's 'modifiable zone' (Figure 18) instead of its zone of 'multiple use'[92].

Staying with a friend in one of the villages on the periphery of the Reserve, I heard personally from residents about the mass felling of trees. In November 2019, I traveled with Bixiq and her husband Papjux to their food forest in the multiple-use zone in the west of the protected area where Papjux motioned to clearings above on the hill as the reason for a stream that had dried, adding "they are cutting many trees there above"[ccclii].

Of the 'resources' in Visis Cabá, trees are not the only ones targeted for extraction. Removing human caretakers under the pretense of 'conservation' makes more-than-human landscapes fertile for the proliferation of illicit industries to feed the extractivist/consumptivist economy. The lack of government oversight after establishing a protected area and removing Indigenous peoples furthers the growth of these economies, if not establishing them in the first place (García 2011; Insight Crime 2011; Escalón 2017). Papjux confirmed to me that the State has few resources to guard the protected area from exploitation by these groups, making exploitation open for any with the right infrastructure or agility to do so.

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[92] By the designations of the conservation zones in Visis Cabá from this chapter's introduction, this is a violation of the protected area's designations.

Referring to mines owned by the state located in a rural area, Papjux tells me about one 'millionaire', or 'businessman' who expanded the size of the road just in front of his home. "Because he has the means, he made a large road. That new road continues now until the Mexican border. Now only 8 kilometers [without road to the border]. So that the *narcotrafficantes* can leave from Mexico." Describing the very real presence of drug traffickers interested in lands (Insight Crime 2011) very near to the border "suitable for [growing] coca leaf and poppy plants", Papjux adds that drug traffickers come to the area to scope the lands[cccliii], citing one offering 5 million to purchase it. Papjux explains that here in the "green area", far away from big cities, "there is no policy, there is no army. The drug trafficker wants to take advantage of it. Here you can land a helicopter, [and] who knows where it comes from."[ccccliv] He tells me further that trucks pass at 11 in the night to 1 in the morning, passing by his home along this improved road at 12 in the morning. As no municipality is nearby and the direction on the road from where they are coming from is not improved, he tells me that they must be transporting something out of the area[ccclv]. As part of the illicit theft of materials out of the community, whatever is coming out "they traffic under the cloak of night to deliver", because "there is money to be made".

Requiring a bureaucratic process and governmental buy-in, Papjux says that the way *through* the state is "not easy, not that easy" to enter the protected area for businesspeople but that the government is "the one to blame" for the trespasses against human rights and conventions for extraction from protected areas that do occur.

"For example, if a businessman comes and without permission begins to break the road,
coming with their machinery, and without permission, they get up, they go to investigate
in Congress who authorized it. [So] The first is in Congress. Then, after, they come here
because they pay there to the government first. That is why the government did not
consult the people. The government is to blame. … This is how it happens here, you see.
This happens all the way from Guatemala City. They only come to tell the mayor here the
news, bringing *papels* [money] so that they don't speak. You have 30 million [Quetzales]
and they start. The people don't know what is happening."

The literature seems to support Papjux's observations, that the protected area is not as protected
as it is *profited* from. Land, water, and political alliances of the Reserve appear to be available
for purchase under the right conditions of corruption[ccclvi].

In October 2019, I was invited to join a 'Defensa del Territorio' community '*assemblea*' with its
purpose to address some of the issues related to Visis Cabá. At the event, Cornelio explained to
me how the protected area model spawned a diversity of offshoot inequalities by dangling
incentives possible from profits off of 'green energy'. Pressuring both local political officials and
the community to sell or vacate their lands for a piece of the profits, the damage of this model
erodes communal lands from above *and* below by incentivizing locals to participate in their
community's disassembly:

"So, in principle, well, these companies were making a lot of promises— projects,
infrastructure, electricity to the communities— and for that the mayor also has a great

responsibility because at the beginning the people opposed the entry of the companies. It doesn't say how much money they gave to the mayor, but they made a trap— you give way to them, they give something to you. There is a place on this side, a flat land, it is close by there to the sign there where it says the hydroelectric plant to supply to Chajul .... So they started to excavate and plan, and the company came in and set up and started doing things and they couldn't stop it. And they let it remain there. In other words, it was nothing more than deception from the foundation of this issue because they were going to provide a hydroelectric [power] service. … So there are two hydroelectric plants and they are generating power within the territory here.

As Cornelio explained and is depicted in Figure 21, Enel's Palo Viejo I[ccclvii] and II are now built and operational from the manipulations of these waters on the east side of the reserve (Figure 19) (Escalón 2012a; 2012b). Numerous hydroelectric power plants operate on the Reserve's west flank (Figure 20) and others may still materialize around it (Figure 19)[ccclviii]. Cornelio says the erosion does not stop at the protected area.
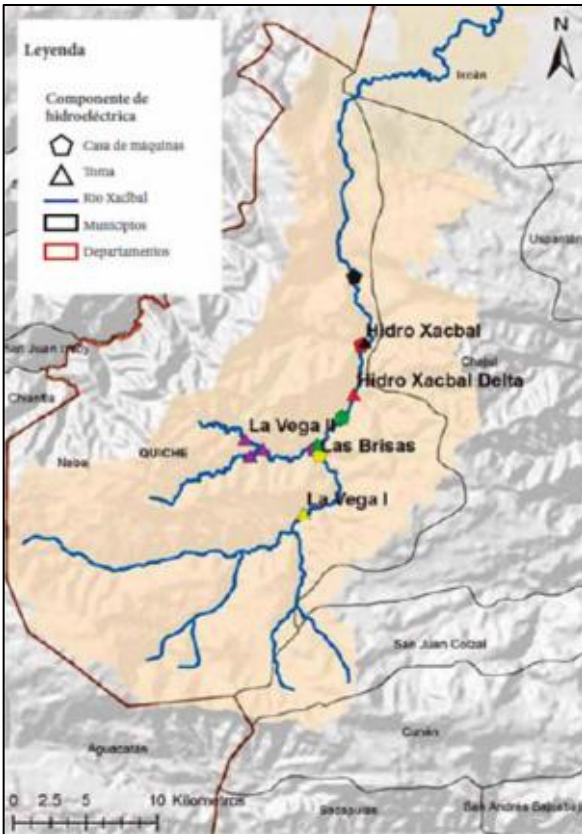
Figure 19 (above): Citing IARNA, Del Águila (2021: 94) depicts the locations of hydroelectric power plants in the Xacbal River Basin (Nebaj municipality) bordering Visis Cabá to the west.

Figure 20 (above): Landscape image of the Cutzalá-Cotzal River that runs on the east of the Reserve and its tributaries through it. Source: Iniciativa para la Reconstrucción y Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (2012: 89).

"Since these are also prolonged conflicts it generates a lot of bad sentiment among the people of the community. I think it is because they have generated a lot of individualism because those who work with the company receive more than those who do not. They use this strategy to look for all means to convince people to sell their land. And those who don't want to sell it, some have been threatened. If they don't want to sell them the land, especially [is this the case with] TRECSA[ccclix], in the places where the electricity construction towers pass, many are also threatened. [There are] more exploration licenses that are specifically even in the core zones of designated protected areas. This would be the part that cannot be touched by humans, according to the law of protected areas. However, there is an exploration license in the core, in the core protection area, it is

where the main sources of water originate and all the biodiversity that exists in the zones is also concentrated there."

As the declaration of Visis Cabá as a protected area was done prior to the installation of the operating Xacbal (Del Águila 2021: 94) and the Palo Viejo hydroelectric power plants, Papjux and other Ixil in the region who claim that the Guatemalan government is to blame for their systematic exclusion[ccclx] provide warranted criticism of protected areas that become, in practice, extraction areas.

Figure 21 (above): Source: Iniciativa para la Reconstrucción y Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (2012: 90) depicting Hydroelectric power plants in the Chajul municipality originating within the Reserve and from its waters running off its mountains to the northeast and southeast. Due to the secrecy of the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), it is suspected that Bella Vista I and II have remained in an authorization phase, not built as of 2021 due to community opposition in several acts that prevented them (Del Águila 2021: 44).

Biodiversity, without habitat and after resources are diverted for other purposes, has suffered within and around the area of the formal Reserve after the establishment of the hydroelectric power plants. Though the Cotzal River should maintain at least 20% of its water supply for migratory fish to pass, Indigenous leaders in the community question Enel's compliance (Figure

22). Dead animals found in the infrastructure and around it[93] suggest there are few structures to enforce these rules[ccclxi].

Changing important functionalities of the ecosystem in the region, the reorientation of the Cotzal River and its tributaries is lamented by a neighbor from the Reserve community of Santa Clara (León-Pérez and Rodríguez-Suárez 2014):

> "the protected area entered our territory, and [after] a company also entered. We want to remove [the protected area] but it has not been possible to do this. We want to remove it because it is in our land. … The protected area wanted to throw us out but they couldn't do it. The company

Figure 22 (above): Large rocks in the photo on the left-hand side indicate previous higher water levels in the river. Today the water shows lower volume due to the hydroelectric power plant's diversion of its water, also altering the ecology of the region.

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[93] Media reports cite Indigenous Mayors listing dead fish, otters, and birds killed by Enel's project and its construction (Hernandez 2013). Many animals, including deer, peccaries (*Dicotyles tajacu*), and tepezcuintles (*Cuniculus paca*), are cited by farm workers as drowning trying to cross a concrete channel created for the power plant (Escalón 2012a). Locals also argue that fish are killed by contaminated waters mixed with mud, chemical products, and fats that return to the river after passing through Enel's turbines (Escalón 2012a).

does not let the forests grow. Now they are killing the forest that is near to the water. The water also now is drying where the company is[94]."

For the Ixil, these losses of the more-than-human world have immaterial impacts. The loss of one carnivorous animal that once lived in the area is experienced as a loss of identity for elders as it was also inscribed into Ixil traditional clothing[ccclxii]. The loss of the creatures and stories of the *huipiles* are not just losses of 'biodiversity. These are fully biocultural losses for the Maya Ixil[95], who, like many Maya and Mesoamerican Peoples[ccclxiii] (Hernandez 2022), inscribe their more-than-human identities into stories of their huipiles.

When I first spoke to Xi'ben in 2019 he listed the consistent stream of negative effects from corporations like Enel that arrive with the permission of wealthy landowners and the state to rob the community. Creating a corruption at the top that trickles down to all other levels, Xi'ben called the law creating the reserve using the institutional policies around protected areas in Guatemala "a strategy so that transnational companies will arrive to destroy the trees, forests, and rivers." He called Visis Cabá an "imposition" brought by the Guatemalan government under false pretenses from a system designed to keep him and Indigenous People like him out:

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[94] Residents from Xeputul, a village just south of the Reserve and next to the Palo Viejo hydroelectric power operations, comment that the clouds used to come from the river. Now, because it is dry, these have dried up and generated strong winds and heavier rains than before. A list of endured stressors since Enel's arrival is listed off from Xeputul residents including more plagues and insects than 20 years ago, less honey from bees, and fewer trees as surrounding lands have turned to coffee plantations. Media reports cite the explosion of a hill during construction that destroyed the home of roosting vampire bats and led to livestock deaths as a number of animals in the community had to be euthanized over the fears of residents contracting the usually fatal rabies virus after livestock was bitten by bats. None of these deaths were compensated for by Enel (Escalón 2012b).
[95] See next chapter, Chapter V for discussions on the more-than-human Ixil identity.

"The history is of an imposition from the state. They implement a Protected Area but under the table are mega hydroelectric projects, the destruction of mountains and forests, the diversion of water. That is why they do not want the intervention of the indigenous communities. It comes already arranged. Here came an imposition, this protected area. But with the strategy that the government wanted, to extract and bring in multinational companies to install hydroelectric plants, that these were just strategies to impose what the protected area is [by their design]. Unfortunately, we have always heard different versions and different discourses [about the area].

What the government does is organize its friendships because the focus that they have is bringing ecotenders and ecotourism, money from outside. … If there is a *hidroeléctrica* there shouldn't it benefit the community? If you realize, the health of the community is decreasing because of what they have done, because of them. In this case it is about exploitation, nothing more, they never leave anything there in the community."

Compromising the health of everyone but those who stand directly to benefit, the perspective of Ixil on the ground in the Ixil Region near to the protected area or within it speak of conservation brought by the State protected area as less focused on biodiversity conservation than about ensured access for private corporations working with the State to a profitable supply of whichever 'natural resource' that will be most valuable to them on an international market. The 'protection' provided, and at the same time threatened through the State's military apparatus, refers to the protection of the investments of corporations and the power of elites of the patriarchal colonial modern hierarchy who enforce them. The objects of protection targeted by

the protected area model, showing its allegiances through colonial residues that materialize

violence on both sides of the nature/culture divide as new values are forced with the introduction

of the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve, are 'cheapened natures' (Moore 2017: 19) turned to private

profits. This model of biodiversity conservation, from the perspective of many Ixil, is yet another

form of colonization if Indigenous Peoples cannot *object to* but *only partake in* the disassembly

of their territories and lifeways from the top down.

VII. Conclusion

As this chapter documents, the designation of space as a protected area, as in the case of Visis

Cabá, does not inherently lead to the achievement of biodiversity conservation goals. Though the

flora and fauna of the Visis Cabá region does hold an abundance of biodiversity that would

benefit from preservation from commercial extraction, details of a protected area's management

regime, such as actors involved and benefits from it, are much more indicative factors to

understand what outcomes for biodiversity are possible. Addressing and protecting the structures

of biodiversity creation, the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights to land, benefit sharing,

and institutions are proven essential steps for meeting local and global conservation goals[ccclxiv]

(Roberts et al. 2017; Garnett et al. 2018; Ellis et al. 2021) and acknowledging the forms of

conservation that created the conditions of high biodiversity in Indigenous Peoples territories.

The critical relationships, namely of reciprocity, that Indigenous Peoples bioculturally maintain

with a more-than-human world, also maintain the structures of life that they take part in and

support with their food systems.

Where a bottom-up Indigenous Maya Ixil model of conservation understands conservation as the protection of biocultural space and multispecies expressions of agency, in this chapter I have argued that the State's top-down conservation, as exemplified by the Biosphere Reserve of Visis Cabá, builds from patriarchal colonial modern rationalities to expand threats to biodiversity while furthering colonial marginalization of Indigenous Peoples such as the Indigenous Maya Ixil. Replacing more-than-human conservation rationalities and a network defending food sovereignty from the bottom-up, a coalition of global elites uses top-down anthropocentric conservation rationalization to gain control of and capture Indigenous commons. Impinging upon basic human rights, these models of conservation do not address underlying and historical colonial structures of inequality, and, in their ignorance, permit the same or worse problems as what these 'solutions' purportedly ameliorate. Eroding a social fabric and therein relations and practices of reciprocity that formed Indigenous models of conservation and generated biodiversity in the first place, the objectification of 'nature' and exclusion of people from 'protected areas' is a practice that isolates biodiversity and makes it vulnerable to extraction and impoverishment. Contrary to claims from its proponents, the model contributes to biodiversity fragmentation and decline. The challenges to conserve more-than-human health[ccclxv] and vitality (Yamane and Helm 2022), thus, can be seen extending beyond the geographies of immediate protected areas themselves when the power dynamics of the actors involved are politicized next to their models.

Like the Maya Ixil, around the world Indigenous Peoples are being dispossessed and disappeared from their ancestral lands, along with the biodiversity that they have stewarded for generations. The effects of human social pressures on the degradation of landscapes are not what have caused

the most concern over conservation in protected areas like Visis Cabá. Conservation scholars are careful to emphasize the important point that conservation and human rights are not in opposition to one another. The mechanisms used to promote conservation are what provide the most concern to biodiversity (Elías 2012: 158). With the example of Visis Cabá, this chapter finds protected areas imposed by the Guatemalan settler state as an aperture for further Indigenous dispossession, endangering the structures of protection for biodiversity with its Indigenous Peoples and knowledge systems. As relationships of reciprocity with biodiversity are replaced with patriarchal-colonial modern top-down rationalities and processes of State control by way of 'conservation' models, historical violence is adapted into the present as these divides and hierarchies make the sites of a protected area the catalyst for the exact opposite processes toward biodiversity's conservation.

Introducing green wars with the adaptation of colonial forms of domination where "racialization makes some people expendable in the name of conservation" (Ybarra 2018: 19), an internal elite keen on integrating Guatemala into the global capital economy with little change to the status quo of entrenched elite networks backed by State and international funding schemes (Sveinsdóttir, et al. 2021), may use conservation as a means to exact violence of State and corporate landgrabs in Indigenous territories. Imposing the conditions of inequality that create green wars in the conflict over relationships to land and designing the scarcities presupposed by these models, green wars over biodiversity generating an economy for illicit industries to prosper by permitting and encouraging the private appropriation and commodification of 'natural wealth' within protected areas, as local structures are eroded by the influence of incentives from elites to collaborate in forms of extraction of the collective for personal gain. Locals are given a chance to

survive by outcompeting neighbors when traditional and cultural lifeways are made untenable in the erosion of more-than-human health. Leaving 'nature' thus stewarded by a political environment prioritizing capitalist accumulation, in the diminished human capacities that remain divides are sown with a new 'culture' of inequality where the only option left to locals is to participate in the slow politically-led disassembly of life from their community.

The model of conservation in focus in this chapter is a form of conservation that draws upon the same geographies, patterns of overuse and exploitation, and structures of inequality to mask priorities and beneficiaries of such systems in a Global North. Extending the magnitude of the exploitative relationships with land and fueling green wars in alignment with narratives of climate 'collaboration' from the Global North, support and international money streams fund veiled forms of extraction through the State. The chapter concludes that the threat to biodiversity comes from all sides when models for its protection do not first protect those who do the labor to live in reciprocity with it. As Indigenous People like the Ixil are further distanced from ancestrally inherited more-than-human worlds that sustain them, coerced into an unequal global capital economy and turned into criminals if they resist, what ends 'protected' from these models of conservation is the logic of coloniality by the new settler state.

To adequately protect biodiversity, Elías (2012: 158) writes of the reform needed: "[conservation effort] must have as its starting point recognition of the collective rights of indigenous peoples and of their efforts to protect nature". The processes of organization and collaboration from the Ixil that have been criminalized in the name of Visis Cabá are the same Indigenous structures that have conserved biodiversity into today, continue to do so, and must be integrated into the

Guatemalan System of Protected Areas (SIGAP, Sistema Guatemalteco de Areas Protegidas) to continue this work. In the following chapter, I will take a closer look at these Indigenous structures that constitute the *other* rationality of conservation referenced in this chapter, that of the Maya Ixil, whose definitions of conservation do not divide humans from nonhumans and create space for biodiversity by way of food sovereignty and the creation of diverse and, therein, healthy food systems. For the people who '*desgranar* the maize'[96], as the word 'Ixil' means in Ixil, the protection of *milpa* landscapes is an integral part of Ixil identity. This appears in concepts that demonstrate a more-than-human form of conservation adapted specifically to the Ixil Territory after years of biocultural evolution, knowledge systems embedded in the language and culture of human caretakers.

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[96] See description and elaboration of this in Chapter VII.

V. More-than-human conservation, understanding biocultural diversity conservation from knowledge systems of the Maya Ixil

I.   Introduction

In 2019, Xi'ben was in his 5th year at the *Universidad Ixil* studying Maya health systems to become a Maya health specialist. Studying in an Ixil higher education program, his university, the *Universidad Ixil*, has tried to bring Maya Ixil back into contact with the cultural customs and traditions of Maya Ixil knowledge systems based upon Ixil communitary norms and practices, relationships of reciprocity, and the revitalization and decolonization of Maya Ixil knowledge systems. Accompanying Xi'ben in some of his interviews with Ixil elders, Xi'ben confessed on our way to visit and interview a known medicinal plant knowledge holder in the community that the process, even for inquisitive Ixil students, has its challenges.

> "But now with the students of the Universidad Ixil, yes, they are entering [to be able to speak to elders], but the teachers tell them about traditional knowledge 'don't sell the information' — that [the students] should not make money by these ideas. They have their own recommendations for the students."

The concern of elders that their knowledge will be used against what is acceptable according to Ixil norms ('*txaa'*) is yet another residue of an injured *tejido social,* social fabric, from the internal armed conflict. Issues of trust continue to permeate experiences of even interested Ixil

students like Xi'ben who struggle to get beyond them to learn about Ixil knowledge systems and their traditional Ixil practices. In an interview with 72-year-old elder Don Jax, early in the conversation Don Jax pointed to our voice recorder, telling us that he too was 'recording' our conversation. Making a verbal footnote to us that our conversation adhered to systems of trust and value embedded in words and relationships of knowledge systems transmitted in the oral tradition. His words alluded to verbal compacts of reciprocity that adhere to an Ixil rationality:

> "Like this, I am recording, I record [our conversation]. I am not going to forget. Nothing [will be forgotten]. Tomorrow I will have it still because neither, though I am talking about my customs, this is a part of my work after all. I am not going to quit my work, this my work and tomorrow [it will still be saved]. Now we speak, but it will [also] serve me later. This is 'el respeto' … if you realize, from the background[97] to the deep meaning[98] of the word, there is a responsibility, maintain the responsibility [of respect]."

While many of the problems with trust and erosion of respect can be traced back to the centuries of violent colonization that continue to disassemble its traditional communal structures, as seen in the previous chapter, some of these problems stem from *ancianos,* elders of traditional wisdom, who have not been trained to share knowledge outside of contexts of reciprocity. The mixing of what the Ixil call '*vivir mejor'* ways of living with Ixil systems of reciprocity, the local

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[97] The word in Spanish used here was '*fondo'*, which has been given a literal translation with the interpretation of its meaning as 'background' but another translation could interpret his meaning here as meaning him to indicate superficial definitions of the word.
[98] The word in Spanish used here was '*el profundo'* which has been given a translation to signify 'to the depths' of the word's meaning.

notion of '*buen vivir'* (*'tiichajil'),* is seen by many as a socially unacceptable norm which can be a challenge to overcome.

Building trust by making efforts to learn, however, Xi'ben and I are told by Don Jax that the way in which we approached him for our interview was respectful and in accordance with 'the old ways', setting the stage and creating a good foundation for our working together. Hinting that we had passed a test that other young people seeking to learn from him do not, he told us

> "I don't like [the way in which young people have approached me], for this of all of the young people I don't like to chitchat with the young people of 20 years to 30 years, no. I like to speak with those who come [to me] as you have, … you come with your notebooks, pencils, and [respectful dress], like I am."

Turning to me, the foreigner, he made explicit his appreciation that I came with Xi'ben, noting the additional presence of trauma from foreigners who have also historically trespassed respectful engagement:

> "Because there are some also, there are some wealthy ones who speak of their wealth, but they aren't working, maybe they are thieves, is what it makes me think … but [it is clear that] you want to speak [and learn from one another]. You don't have Bibles, this is another thing."

Don Jax and *ancianos* like him have good reason to guard the knowledge as, for the same reasons other-than-human biodiversity is being lost or converted according to different and settler colonial value chains, the ongoing theft and privatization of traditional knowledge and biocultural information continues as biopiracy and illicit trade of material (i.g. Figueroa 2021) is encouraged and incentivized by a global pharmaceutical industry standing to benefit financially from such knowledges (Imran et al. 2021) while doubly harming conservation efforts (Maurya and Brahmacharimayum 2018).

Radical changes between living generations have also made it challenging for *ancianos* to connect across the sizable trauma of the internal armed conflict that never formally addressed after 36 years of war. For the sheer scale of influence that globalization has brought to the region, modern medicine, and a racialized stigmatization of Indigenous ways of knowing by the State that carries into today, top-down oppressive influences from ongoing institutions of colonialism create a hostile environment to try to bridge the disconnect between generations born before or during and after the war. In an interview with 78-year old Ixil elder of traditional medicine, Don Txichon, he lamented that the disconnect has widened between generations of Ixil knowledge holders and young people of today that he says have 'lost respect' for their Ixil ways of knowing and traditions:

> "Before they gave respect. … there are young people that don't respect now. Most those that they are going to an institute, a school, where they say 'now is not the time for this'. It's that they justify their growth because they also have many mediums bombarding them, including the institutions that they are in. So it is challenging for them because also

the memory is disappearing and many people almost have completely forgotten the traumas of the war, and now they renounce many Ixil customs. [Plus] the influence of the medical workers and more also by the State [continues to exacerbate these problems]."

In a place where land prices rise along with all of the other forms of inflation that make it more challenging to buy what one needs to survive beyond their *milpa* (Heidbrink, Batz, and Sánchez 2021), the loss of relationships with plants and the loss of value for Ixil knowledges and their knowledge holders as young people migrate or choose market-based livelihoods to survive, is seen by some elders as a cumulative outcome of the loss of respect for bioculturally Ixil relationships of that represent another way of being and knowing. The loss of connection to Maya Ixil traditions and ways of knowing reflects, for some like Don Txichon, the loss of respect as these knowledges put Mother Earth first: "… again, [it is] because we are losing all of this, the administrators [of these knowledges], the institutions, the same mediums [of transmitting information]. Now there is not respect [for our ways of knowing], now there is not respect."

Born in the worst part of the war, as Xi'ben translated from Ixil to Spanish, he added agreement to the words of Don Txikon on a kind of respect and celebration that he felt towards older generations for the collection, accumulation, safeguarding, and sharing of knowledge about plants and their medicines that Ixil of today could inherit across time.

> "...I imagine, he says, I imagine that growing from my grandparents – my grandparents said many [times] but I imagine that they also went through a great process. It is that what they discovered, they also saw the results of. They also had their stage to be able to

mature which is the medicine, if it works, which does not, because they went through some process. And if our authorities, our principals, our parents, discovered it, then yes, it is proven by the respected ones. But they also had to do lots of experiments, lots of processes to see to [arrive to conclusions] and [it is in] this way to keep the medicine. […] for this we [thank][99] them."

While western science is often challenged to grasp enough context from Indigenous ontologies and knowledge systems to accurately understand them as those from within the tradition may, the words of Ixil elders allude to a depth of knowledge systems that function from networks of reciprocity so differently that removing pieces from them or referencing them out of context renders makes them or these pieces incoherent. Connected to long traditions of experimentation and years of careful assembly and transmission, these wisdoms have their own protocols, codes of conduct, and ways of being within these knowledge systems that capitalistic, *mejor vivir* living, opposite Ixil *buen vivir,* simply cannot understand or be compatible with. As biodiversity conservation is always and only a more-than-human endeavor, overcoming institutionalized forms of inequality that threaten the diversities of human knowledge reflected in the expressions of Indigenous ways of knowing are critical first steps in achieving positive conservation outcomes.

While the depth of Ixil knowledge and its varieties of knowing and wisdom-holders is vast beyond the scope of this chapter, the aim of the chapter is to provide insight into some of the specific structures of Ixil ways of knowing that articulate notions of more-than-human

[99] The word used in Spanish here was '*saludar'* which can mean greet, acknowledge, salute, or a number of other meanings along the lines of acknowledging someone with positivity.

conservation from the Maya Ixil knowledge system that identify a different and opposing rationality than that identified at work from the top-down in the previous chapter. Contributing to the work of other conservation critics (Kopnina 2016) and scholars who are honoring and recognizing the axiological and ontological foundations of a more-than-human future, built *in situ*[100], from Indigenous conceptions of biodiversity conservation that invest in ties of reciprocity and communal rootedness to produce abundance for a multispecies organism, this chapter highlights the forms of knowledge transmission that are being revitalized in specific efforts within the Ixil community. The chapter aims to demonstrate the importance of Ixil knowledge systems in restoring and healing a more-than-human landscape. In conversation with the previous chapter, I focus on the revitalization efforts of Ixil knowledge systems to show that, not only do the Ixil very much have specific guidelines that regulate right relation beyond the human, but that their biocultural protocols and knowledges constitute an equality-based, *in-situ*, bottom-up model to restore biodiversity from an alternative rationality built from relationality and reciprocity.

In the chapter, I begin the analysis of this model by first historicizing the processes of biodiversity generation in the Maya Ixil Territory, linking processes of co-evolution between the Ixil and the maize. Articulating the more-than-human nature of how the Ixil regard themselves through these connections, I link claims over the sovereignty of their maize seed and food systems as a part of what I understand as a more-than-human identity. Focusing on the Ixil concepts of the *tiichajil* lifeway and a social understanding of *txaa* protocols and codes of conduct, the chapter identifies the expression of Ixil knowledge in their land-based pedagogies

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[100] *In situ* conservation references the continued cultivation of crop genetic resources from and in the farming systems where they have evolved (Brush 1991).

that substantiate these identities while decolonizing and revitalizing Ixil knowledge systems as a form of community-based conservation[ccclxvi] (Kothari, Camill and Brown 2013; Lopez-Maldonado and Berkes 2017; Wilkie and Painter 2021) that rematriates knowledge in restoring connections of people to land and a knowledge between. Bringing my outsider's but embodied perspective on the Maya Ixil knowledge system together with the rematriation process articulated in the theoretical chapter, I refer to these elements from the Maya Ixil knowledge system as evidence of the complexities of more-than-human forms of biocultural diversity conservation that appear as lived, more-than-human Indigenous identities. Demonstrating broadly how decolonization movements to revitalize the more-than-human identities of Indigenous Peoples are also biocultural diversity conservation projects that go beyond decolonizing conservation by addressing and equalizing global human inequalities from within Indigenous ontologies themselves, for the Maya Ixil, reciprocity *is* conservation, backward and forward. According to this rationality, humans do not exist beyond or outside of the rest of the living world. I argue that a recognition of Indigenous and human rights to define themselves and their societies, recognizing more-than-human agencies and laws and protocols with clearly defined territorial or resource access rights[ccclxvii], safeguards a form of 'conservation' with political dimension to address systemic inequalities with results for biodiversity with a history to prove it[ccclxviii] (Nybord et al. 2016; Sterling et al. 2017; Briggs, Steadman, and Krasny 2019; Pritchard and Brockington 2019).

II.   The significance of maize and the *milpa* for the Maya Ixil identity

Many Indigenous Guatemalans share an ancestral link to the Mayan civilizations of the historical past and to an extended Indigenous community across the Americas. With their languages[ccclxix], sense of more-than-human place, and knowledge systems, Indigenous peoples across the world preserve perspectives of humans situated within a world of collective, multispecies relationships. The descendants of the ancient Maya, like their predecessors, are expert maize farmers and seed savers because of their intimate relationships between them and their maize. Through its food system, the *milpa,* they recognize themselves as more-than-human. Relations of the Ixil with their maize explain how the Ixil understand themselves to be more-than-human after a long history of co-evolution together *in-situ*.

The Maya Ixil trace their history to the lands they reside on through ancestors in residence there since time immemorial. While archeological studies cite Ixil origins in their territorial lands back to at least the years of 100-150 A.D. (Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 57 citing Van Akkeren 1995: 39), previous groups such as the Olmec may share their ancestry[101]. A testament to their longevity and ties to ancestral Maya peoples, the municipality of Chajul/Ch'aj-ul/ is one example of a toponym, or place name, that occurs in Classic Maya texts by the same name used today (Helmke and Nielsen 2014: 79). An Ixil area also referred to as B'alamija in the K'iche' sacred book, the *Popul Vuh,* B'alamija translates in Spanish to the Casa del Jaguar/es, or House of the Jaguar/s (Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 57 citing Van Akkeren 1995: 56), indicating Ixil knowledge systems as also holding information within their biocultural traditions about the more-than-human composition of life in the region. Large mammals in the Ixil Territory have been common since these early accounts from the *Popul Vuh,* also confirmed since by local people from

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[101] This is documented in the Jade Museum in Nebaj, made from community initiatives to document Ixil history in the Ixil Region.

encounters[ccclxx] and oral histories[ccclxxi]. As an 'umbrella species' in this biodiversity hotspot, the jaguar's (Thornton et al. 2016; Figel et al. 2018) decline, that of other large cats in the region (Gómez Ibarra 2011: 52, 59 - 61), and decreases in several other once-common species listed as under threat by IUCN assessments today[ccclxxii] appear as more recent changes now threatening biological diversity in the region.

Inverting the common climate collaboration discourses that further entrench inequalities of climate change without addressing core causes (Collins et al. 2021), in the context of 'resiliency' and creating resilient ecosystems to climate and environmental shocks in an increasingly uncertain global future (IPCC 2023), the stewardship of territory and investment in it[ccclxxiii] are recognized[ccclxxiv] as often-ignored Indigenous agency, but also "a major driver of ecosystem resilience"[ccclxxv] (Armstrong *et al*. 2021: 11). Indigenous scholars draw out the critical stewardship role of Indigenous Peoples from their place-based knowledge systems that grew within these living webs of survival to insist that biodiversity conservation policy, should any exist at all, must begin first at the recognition of Indigenous worldviews that have evolved in reciprocal and responsible relationship with the more-than-human world (McGregor et al. 2018). United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples from 2014 to 2020, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and colleagues (2020) addressed this critical need as a justice for Indigenous Peoples. Shifting away from top-down conservation models[ccclxxvi] that most often further endanger Indigenous Peoples and their territories[ccclxxvii] can be done by adapting only right-based approaches[ccclxxviii] which necessitate the involvement of local people in landscape management (Kashwan 2017; Oldekop et al. 2020; Reyes-Garcia et al. 2021) from the fields of conservation and action to address global environmental change. Critical to such

transformations, however, and as is particularly relevant to our models designing biodiversity conservation is a move from people-less protected areas (Grünberg and Elías 2018); the adoption of a conserving-from-people rationale to a conserving-for-people one[ccclxxix] (Prado-Córdova 2021).

Necessitating a turn away from contemporary, market-based conservation initiatives and models that extend the temporalities and geographies of colonialism to further on-the-ground inequalities and global injustices, while forms of 'convivial conservation' may or may not decolonize (Collins et al. 2021), scholars critique that without addressing constructions of inequality rooted in colonialism[ccclxxx] (Krauss 2021; Mabele, Krauss, and Kiwango 2022) conservation leaves unaddressed central fractures for restoring material connections and ontological and epistemological processes of reciprocity essential to Indigenous Peoples co-evolved with 'biodiversity' and central to its existence today.

Without colonization's deliberate efforts to separate Indigenous relationships with land, many Indigenous Peoples acknowledge within their traditions a human existence connected to more-than-human kin. This is particularly the case for Maya people with maize, an integral feature of their identity as a People. Fox Tree (2011: 100) describes maize and 'maizeways' as offering "a folk model for everyday Maya autonomy and activism that fits Maya customs". For many Maya-originating groups today, like the Maya Q'eqchi' whose word for village in the lanugage, *ka'alebal*, means "place of the corn field"[ccclxxxi] (Briggs, Stedman, and Krasny 2019: 658), the significance of the plant in founding both physical and metaphorical connection to the land remains hard to overstate.

The origin and domestication of the maize plant itself is attributed to a long history of co-evolution in a more-than-human landscape with the teosinte plant[ccclxxxii]. A wild common ancestor with the largest grains of any annual Mexican grass (Piperno 2011: S466), and much variation and plasticity (ibid.: S463), the plant was gradually transformed into the domesticated maize (*Zea mays* spp. *mays*) species[ccclxxxiii] found throughout Mesoamerica from processes of human selection to select the largest grains for replanting, in much the same way that it is still done into today. In this way, maize was domesticated by the people of southern Mexico some 10,000 (Mann 2022) to 4280 years ago, as Smith (2005) documents from the Guilá Naquitz Cave in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca[ccclxxxiv] (Figure 23). Creating a monocot, or essentially an overgrown grass with fine fibrous roots (Kimmerer 2013), the plant co-evolved from its epicenter of biocultural partnerships with Mesoamericans (de Fonseca et al. 2015; Mann 2022), to becoming a useful and shareable technology for survival (Islebe et al. 2022) that may have connected humans in economies of trade[ccclxxxv] across landscapes in the western hemisphere[ccclxxxvi] sharing not just maize but potentially also companion plants of the its milpa food system[ccclxxxvii] (de Fonseca et al. 2015) with Indigenous Peoples throughout the hemisphere[ccclxxxviii]. Shared linguistics of the word 'maize' across North/Central America (Figures 24 and 25) provide support to these conclusions[ccclxxxix] (Staller et al. 2006; Merrill et al.

2009; Hill 2010: 236; Brown et al. 2014; Kistler et al. 2018) and demonstrate some connectivity
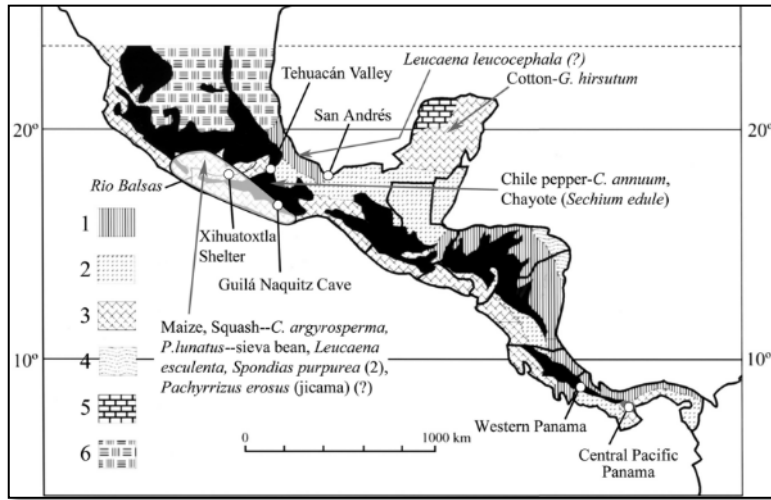
Figure 25 (left): Center of origin for species characteristic of the Maya milpa, image adapted from Piperno (2011: S456). Land classification chart description from Piperno (2011: S456): (a) 1, tropical evergreen forest; 2, tropical semievergreen forest; 3, tropical deciduous forest; 4, savanna; 5, low scrub/grass/desert; 6, mostly cactus scrub and desert; and (b) 1, tropical evergreen forest (TEF); 2, tropical semievergreen forest (TSEF); 3, tropical deciduous forest (TDF); 4, mixtures of TEF, TSEF, and TDF; 5, mainly semievergreen forest and drier types of evergreen forest; 6, savanna; 7, thorn scrub; 8, caatinga; 9, cerrado; 10, desert.
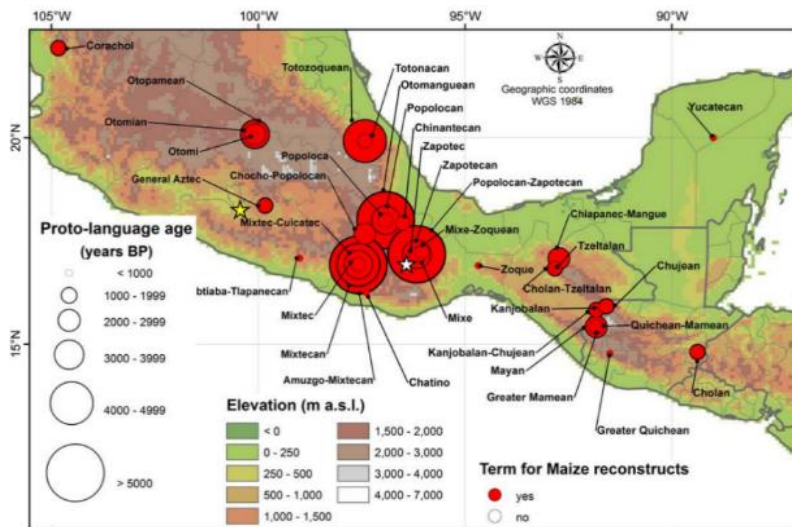
Figure 23 (left): Maize-term reconstruction adapted from Brown et al.'s (2014: 56) paleobiolinguistics of maize in Mesoamerica. The yellow star locates the Balsas River valley of the origin of the milpa crops and the white star locates Guilá Naquitz cave where the oldest maize fossils date back to.
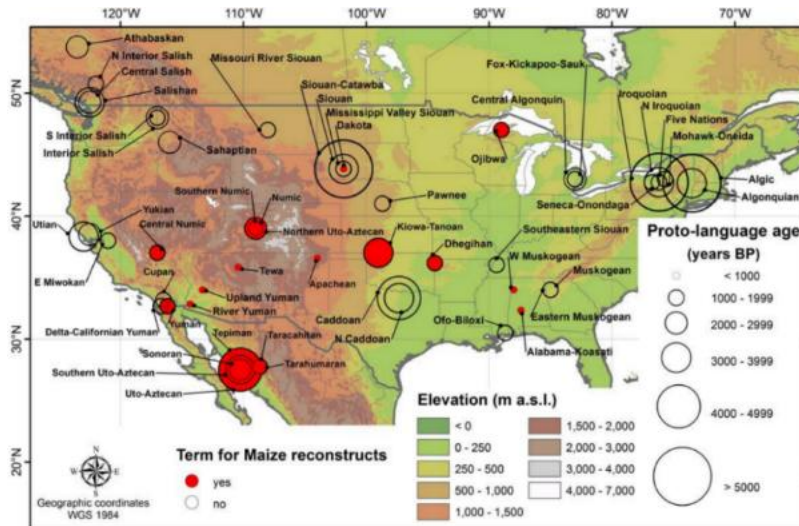
Figure 24 (left): Adapted map from Brown et al. (2014: 54) depicting of the major North American language families that have maize cultivators based on maize reconstructs from Brown et al.'s (2014) paleobiolingustical study.

of the knowledge systems connected to maize that may have been transmitted with it north and south of Mesoamerica[cccxc].

For the Maya Ixil, an Indigenous people descendent from the Mayan civilizations of Mesoamerica and regions of maize's initial domestication, maize of their *milpa* food systems holds central cultural importance as it is built prominently into their language, cosmology, and, perhaps most literally, how they call themselves.

I learned this from Xhaal[102], my Maya Ixil language teacher, on the first day of Maya Ixil language classes through the Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (ALMG). Dressed sharply from head to toe in the impressive full black and red handmade clothing ['*indumentaria'*] of the Ixil men, Xhaal told me and my Guatemala City peers that the word for 'maize' in Ixil is 'Ixi'm'. Xhaal explained the etymological roots of the word 'Ixil' as closely related to the word for maize in the language and other Maya languages in the region[cccxci]. Specifically, 'Ix', in Ixil, is the act of and verb for harvesting or shelling maize cobs— to "*desgranar el maize*", in Spanish— a verb also central to most maize's consumption preparation processes. When given the suffix '-vil', the act of shelling or harvesting, the maize is given an actor, bringing together the parts of the word for 'Ixvil', in Ixil, and 'Ixil' for the Castilianization of the term. The name 'Ixil', interpreted from this explanation, means 'those who harvest or shell—*desgranar—* the maize' (see also Iniciativa para la Reconstrucción y Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica 2012: 12). Not coincidentally, the people who call themselves the Maya Ixil get their namesake from their inextricable connection with maize.

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[102] No use of pseudonym used for this name as Xhaal's words reference his expertise on the topic from the ALMG educational institution.

According to Xhaal, as maize is sacred to the Ixil people[cccxcii], the hand that does its planting into the land is doing sacred work. Bassie-Sweet (2008: 19) confirms that the ancient Maya believed maize to have a spirit or soul. In alignment with this and of high importance, Xhaal cautioned that to depreciate the maize's seed is viewed by the Maya Ixil as deeply disrespectful. Bassie-Sweet (ibid.) confirms this utmost respect from study of the ancient Maya:

> "The Maya go to great lengths to ensure that the spirit of corn is not harmed, because they believe that without a strong soul the harvested corn and even the subsequent harvests will be diminished. They treat kernels of corn with respect, and every kernel is held in high esteem."

Ontological perspectives that link sacred relationships of maize and Maya peoples appear in archeological findings (Banach 2016; 2017a; 2017b) and the creation stories of sacred books such as the *Popul Vuh*[cccxciii], *Chilem Balam*, and other Maya codices[cccxciv] (Thompson 1970; Tedlock 1985; Christenson 2007). Linking humans with maize by their very material composition, the creation story of Maya people in the *Popul Vuh*'s Book IV illustrates the cosmovision of the Maya where humans were made first from earth and mud, then from *tz'ite* wood, which was credited with some ability to communicate (Banach 2017: 11), and, finally, from white and yellow maize (Tedlock 1985; Bassie-Sweet 2008: 7). Bassie-Sweet (2008: 7) writes of the origin of maize and humans from its telling in the *Popul Vuh* that tells the story of human bodies made in a third and final attempt from maize[cccxcv].

Detailing three generations of deities from the creator grandparents of Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, referred to by many names in the *Popul Vuh* (Bassie-Sweet 2008: 7), parallels with contemporary stories cite maize discovered by humans with the help of animals after being freed from a mountain for humans to access it, inside a cave or from behind a cliff (ibid.: 7-8) once a thunderbolt broke open a stone to germinate the maize seed (ibid: 8) or the rain god split open the corn stone with an axe (ibid.: 8). A story I found to be still referenced today by accounts from living Maya Ixil, the location in the mountains identified as the origin of the maize seed, Paxil Mountain [cccxcvi], is also cited as a maize origin across Mesoamerica (Recinos 1992: 62; Navarrete 2000; FAO 2001). Named *Cerro de Tonacateptl* (Maize Mountain) in other accounts (Thompson 1970: 348), the mountain and its maize seed is not just a story of maize and humans, but serves also to link the human to a situated multispecies community co-evolved after having learned to survive on the land in partnership (Thompson 1970).

For the Ixil whose cosmovision and names for themselves within their indigenous language tie them to place and their territory specifically through more-than-human relationships with the maize, identity is woven inseparably from partnerships with maize. Much more than just a food, long histories of co-evolution with the maize has repeatedly helped to define more-than-human notions of territory for the Ixil and many other Maya who defend the ancestral territories where these species have cared for one another across millennia[cccxcvii]. Isakson (2009: 751; 2011: 1449) and Mingorría (2021: 4) cite national and regional peasant encounters and in-depth interviews with communities as repeating that *"somos hombres de maize"*[103], "we fight for this land because we are made of maize", also performing the more-than-human collective identity connected to

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[103] English Translation: 'we are people of maize' where the ambiguous 'made-of' and 'stewards of' are both applicable.

the earth as a political identity[cccxcviii] that marks a history still connected to the stories of their ancestors from the same lands.

As is the case for the Maya-Q'eqchi' in the Polochic Valley, relationships to maize are also the reason also to defend the land: "maize is the fight and the reason to keep fighting" (ibid.: 13). Describing the relationships to the more-than-human as articulated by these Maya groups, Papadopoulos, Puig de la Bellacasa, and Tecchetti (2023: 2) write that Indigenous Peoples are "Standing for justice that does not separate human from non-humans, Indigenous thought and struggles are defending alliances of people and ecologies, and the inseparability of Earth/place belongings with cultural belongings."

III.   More-than-human conservation is grounded in responsibilities to reciprocate more-than-human agency

Highlighting a central principle of Maya ancestral knowledge systems, the *milpa* agricultural system that has developed around the growing of maize demonstrates not only the understanding of but the practice of more-than-human agency. Definitions of the *milpa* highlight these agencies synchronizing their energies. Figueroa-Helland (2012: 136-137) defines it as a

> "small self-sufficient multi-crop space that usually feeds an extended family. It is an agricultural space where Mesoamericans replicate the workings of the larger ecosystem in miniature, so to speak, to produce a great variety of crops in a small space without disturbing the biocommunal multi-species biodiverse logic of the biota. It stems from the understanding that all species are interdependent, and the continuity of vitality depends

on complementary diversities (hence monocrops are ecologically unsound). For instance, some plants and animals (like humans themselves) need the shade from larger plants to survive, while the larger plants need the residue of the smaller plants and animals. Together they all can produce a great diversity of nutrients. Separated in monocrops, they become 'lonely' as Mesoamericans say, and die. Mesoamericans have always understood that all species need other companion species to flourish—there are no exceptions (certainly not humans)."

In Latin America, where it is estimated that 60% of the *milpa* area is planted with maize of farmer-saved maize seed (Morris 2002), a focus on the maize seed makes these non-anthropocentric expressions of agency particularly pronounced. A phrase heard often and well-integrated into popular culture in Guatemala, "we are [people] of maize" (Isakson 2009: 751; 2011: 1449) helps to explain how landscapes of high maize biodiversity grow by individual farmer's complex, more-than-human, and embodied [performed] relationships to land. Going so far as to materialize the social fabric of the community, Isakson (2009: 751) writes that "[m]aize is often gifted as a means for fortifying social bonds", strengthening social bonds in the community from cooperations between species or beyond species divides. Badstue *et al.* (2006: 268) write that *"the mobilization of social relations is a crucial part of seed transactions"* and that, for this informal market, "[l]ocal seed supply in these communities is not based primarily on commercial motives. It is mainly part of a moral system based on trust and social responsibility" (2007: 1588). While a significant motivating factor for the exchange of seed could be related to another's genuine need for it (Badstue *et al.* 2007: 1587), Maya Ixil

performances and practices of interspecies care of the *milpa* and its seeds also relate to their more-than-human responsibilities and obligations to more-than-human ancestors and future kin.

For the 'Shellers of the maize', as the Maya Ixil refer to themselves in Ixil, inherited Maya cosmologies of the land and stories of maize give ambiguous separation between the two lifeforms that both come from 'Madre Tierra'. Maya Ixil realities reference life's parts according to a logic of multigenerational, multispecies relationships of place where agency is shared across species. Conserving the culture of biodiversity as a more-than-human one, for the Maya Ixil, giving the labors of our materiality credit for the work that they do by participating in their replenishment is Indigenous multispecies conservation; reciprocity *as* practice; care, in simple terms and in a more-than-human context. This is also a responsibility, one that humans share with other species to perform this work.

Maya Ixil *campesino* and Maya Ixil health specialist Xi'ben spoke of this responsibility[cccxcix] and role of the human from the Maya Ixil ontological perspective. Learned by elders through ancestral knowledge and incorporated at every level of Ixil society starting from the family, Xi'ben (emphasis mine) made the point to me that reciprocity is a process and that process is inherited across generations, along with the Maya Ixil responsibility to carry knowledge into next generations as it was guarded and stored by all of the relatives that came before:

> "I want to contradict a [misconception] … The obligations of the State and international
> organizations in where there is made mention of us as Indigenous Peoples that we are
> fortunate because we live in the mountains and forests [in 'nature']. This is not true

because our grandparents and parents have been ***responsible***. [They were] able to realize that any action, before focusing on nature, contains a ***process***. [Labor.] First, we talk in family to put ourselves into agreement and why we have to do a job, like, for example, cutting down a tree. These are the processes. We prioritize each of these [to perform], then we ask permission, and we take care of the new shoots. And their use is valorized by stabilizing their growth in exact times, and sometimes reusing them [once they have grown back]."

Like the Zapatistas just over the nation-state border into Mexico, from within the Maya cosmovision, Xi'ben explained to me that all beings rely on one another in a cycle where each is obliged to their role within it in order to sustain it:

> "If we look at the Mayan worldview, the Mayan worldview says that we are an element, we are an element of the whole. That is to say, we need other elements so that we can have life because one cannot live alone. So, for example, look, if there were no air, what would we live from? If there was no water, of what are we going to live from? All of that, then, is an element that is a cycle. So we depend on each other. And this must be done."

As a role of the human, Xi'ben stipulates that the human is responsible to continue social contracts in these more-than-human relationships, passing along storied affiliations [knowledge] together with their material parts[cd]. Toledo (2013: 269) refers to such recognitions the basis of "a new bio–cultural axiom", urgently needed, as "the world's biodiversity will be effectively preserved only by preserving diversity of cultures and vice versa."

Responsible to be in relationships of reciprocity that equally give and take, the following

sections will describe how relationships of reciprocity that place humans in roles of

responsibility are a form of multispecies conservation by beginning from a worldview that

conceptualizes more-than-human agency and has built synergies with it into the design of their

food systems and territory at large.

i.   More-than-human agency, lessons from the *milpa*

For Maya Ixil *campesinos* like Christopher, the *milpa* is composed of two categories of plants

that demonstrate more-than-human agency. As an important and distinct feature of the

Mesoamerican permacultural practice in the *milpa* food system, the first category of plants in the

milpa are those that the Maya Ixil say 'self-select' or arrive at placement in the *milpa* by their

own volition through more-than-human interactions. Among these mentioned by the Ixil are the

bledo[104], the *apasote* plant *(Dysphania Ambrosioides* or *Chenopodium Ambrosioides*), banana,

the *güisquil (Sechium edule),* and common herbs of the region such as Santa Catarina (*Dahlia*

imperialis) and *La Hierba Mora* (*Solanum nigrescens*). No less important than the *milpa's*

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[104] The *bledo* (*Amaranthus Hybridus/Spinosis*) plant, a member of the amaranth genus (family *Amaranthaceae*), is considered by ecologists as a riverbank pioneer, easily able to grow in disturbed soils (Fletcher 2017) and a plant that was once commonly seen growing in the Ixil Region (Morton 1981) in a variety of terrains of the mountainous bioclimes. Amaranth species like this one are likely less common today than during pre-colonial times as many named cultivated species are native to the region. Those species native to the region include species such as *Amaranthus hypochondriacus* (Prince's feather) native to Guatemala and Mexico (Fletcher 2017); *Amaranthus cruentus* (purple amaranth), native to Guatemala; *Amaranthus hypochondriacus,* native to Mexico; *Amaranthus caudatus,* found in Peru and Andes mountains (Bressani 2003), among others. The green colored *bledo* plant is distinguishable from the multicolored, yellow, pink, orange, or red appearance of these other amaranths. Unlike the cultivated amaranth that is harvested for its seed, the leaf of the *bledo* is the part of the plant eaten by the Maya Ixil.

second category of seeds, saved seeds, it is the orientation of the Ixil farmer to these processes that dictates the category.

Christopher drew out this point on nonhierarchical relationships with other nonhuman beings for the Maya Ixil as we walked together through his family's food forest in September 2019. Leading me to a verdant green hillside where a rich assortment of vegetables, fruits, and flowers all vied for space in his small 5 *cuerda*[105] *milpa* plot, he spoke to me about his *milpa* food system as one that hosted a variety of species exercising their agencies, sharing experience with and wisdom about each plant as we passed. Unlike other forms of agriculture that focus on controlling the space, often with chemicals, Christopher describes how care from the human enhances the potential of desirable plants in the space by way of a regular and constant attentiveness to each plant in the *milpa*. He gives some perspective for just how much other-than-human agency is at work in the *milpa* when he says that a *majority* of plants are "planting" or "modifying themselves".

> "If the people want seeds for what they don't have they have to go to the [less managed part of the *milpa*], the *campo*[106]. Almost the majority of the seeds, almost the *majority of the seeds* (*he repeats himself here for added emphasis*), plant themselves. Like the *hierba mora* [Solanum nigrescens], this plant the *bledo,* and this plant the *apasote*, these plants modify themselves. Most of the plants do not [need us to] keep their seeds. We do not save them and return them to plant. We don't keep the seed [as] there are plants that distribute their own seeds. There are plants that just come out themselves [after they plant

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[105] One *cuerda* is the rough equivalent to 0.108 acres (Horst 1989: 16).
[106] Term used to denote field in Spanish but meant here to designate less managed spaces that have plants.

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themselves] and there are plants that just-- that is, they distribute their own seeds and they themselves come out. *Tz'u'kun [zuk kun']*, for example, and the *vijow* leaf [vi how], we call it, also flowers. It also gives its seed, but it is rare that someone, let's say, prepares its seed [for saving]. These plants are in the *campo*. If you throw out the seed [to plant it], it's because, for example, here [*points to a nearby *vijow* plant*], there I threw the seed out and it germinated. It's not like I 'sowed' it though, it's like this. For example, the banana—, other plants in the *campo*, more these plants in the *campo*, [their seeds are not saved]."

He tells me that this majority of plants perform these processes by "feeling where is their terrain", demonstrating to him their own agencies as they respond to their environment, something that he the *campesino* must only observe, learn from, and then encourage in his *milpa*:

"There are crops that we are going to find in the plot that they themselves sow, let's say, and there are crops also that feel for themselves. They feel, let's say, where their land is. So sometimes when they throw out their seeds their seeds are planted themselves. There are plants that I have not planted anymore. For example, I put this plant here, it's a *bledo [Amaranthus Hybridus/Spinosis]*, the *bledo* that I commented on. Well, this plant I would be lying to you to say I planted it. No. What we do here, for example, when we make the harvest, we apply *brosa*[107], ash. So the ash, what the ash does first – more for these seeds of the *bledo* and even more the *miltomate* – is it prepares the soil."

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[107] *Brosa* is a term that refers to organic material or leaf litter.

Supplementing the self-planting tendencies of the *bledo* and the *miltomate* (*Physalis Ixocarpa*), a member of the *Solanaceae* family, Christopher situates his role as *campesino* and caretaker in the *milpa* as one of enhancing existing plant agencies so that they themselves can establish where they feel is best.

The opposite of regarding any plant as a 'weed', many of these plants that plant themselves are considered a blessing and are welcomed in the *milpa* by Ixil caretakers. Perhaps the best example of this, is the plant the Ixil refer to as the "herb of the Gods" by its translation into Spanish (see also Castillo-Crisóstomo 2014: 54). *Titz'atiixh*" in Ixil, *Taraxacum officinale* (L.) Weber ex. FH Wigg by its Linnean classification, and a 'dandelion' by its common reference in English, the Ixil recognize both the medicinal application of this plant and for its edible properties and nutritional benefits the plant is included in several recipes for Ixil soups, or '*caldos'*. For its easy establishment in the *milpa*, the Ixil give an appreciation for its presence to 'the Creator', a perspective diametrically opposed to industrial farming methods that seek to control and eliminate these plants with glyphosates that cause harm to human reproductive systems (Muñoz, Bleak, and Calaf 2021). Considering the *milpa* as a managed landscape where all soils

Figure 26 (above): Image of three apasote plants of different sizes growing in a patch of malanga and other plants in an Ixil milpa.

are generally covered with some form of plant, many of the volunteer plants like *Titz'atiixh* appear in the *milpa*'s unused space only once it is left open. While the plant plants itself in the *milpa*, Ixil *campesino* Xi'ben cautions that to get a good harvest of the plant "you have to take

care of it, you have to "*enforzar*[108]" it. For the regular

care that the Ixil tend their *milpas* with and as available

space in it is limited, early colonizer plants such as the

dandelion do not have a chance to become overly

dominant as a 'pest' or 'weed' in these carefully

managed food forests, particularly for the varied

temporalities of plants in spaces that may produce year-

round. The *Titz'atiixh* often appears in the *milpa* during a

time when other crops have been harvested.

Brought to harvest in reciprocity, care from the human in

the *milpa* is a central and more-than-human ingredient to

the productivity of the *milpa* – an ingredient for the

plant's success and a responsibility for the Maya Ixil to

provide. An art of attention allows the *campesino* to

Figure 27 (above): Christopher's small sample area of apasote.

understand these more-than-human agencies and respond accordingly to them, as Christopher

notes "it's only a question of maintaining them".

Gesturing toward a small unassuming blip of green between young tomato plants in the small

greenhouse, Christopher tells me his story with the small green medicinal *apasote* plant

(*Dysphania Ambrosioides* or *Chenopodium Ambrosioides*) (Figure 27). Medicine for the

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[108] Reinforce or support its growth, in reference to the plant.

treatment of worms and once abundant in the region when he was a child, Don Christopher explains that the *apasote* plant began to disappear in recent times as it "felt unappreciated":

> "This plant that we are looking at here is a deworming plant. … When someone has a worm in their stomach – parasites in their stomach – this plant, the *apasote*, is for treating them. This plant, before the internal armed conflict, for me since I was little, and after in the years of the 90s when I was walking along the bank of the roads, we were always finding this plant. Always. But many people did not give importance to the *apasote*. The plant feels [that]. There was a good time that importance wasn't given to the plant [so it went away]. [Now,] up to the present date, if we go, if you pass [by that road], still in the road you are not going to see any plant like this on the road. You don't find it [anymore]."

'Why not?', I inquire.

> "Because I imagine that the plant felt unappreciated, let's say. It felt that people no longer valued it. It felt that people no longer give it importance. And the plant is conscious, it feels. When the plant feels that you want it the plant will begin to grow out its flowers. It will begin to multiply. Only if the plant is not given appreciation, if you don't think of it, let's say, the plant feels it and it goes away. The plant has its— a relationship— let's say, between the human and the plant."

Expressing their more-than-human agencies in what Christopher is referencing as the bidirectional relationship between the plant and human, attention to our interactions with other-than-human beings can also teach us (Kimmerer 2013; Gagliano 2018). Haudenosaunee researchers Arquette *et al.* (2004) describe the animal nations as teachers about how to survive in the world, which medicines to use, how to hunt and store food, how to keep oneself alive among the other living beings, etc. Many Ixil cultivators and caretakers of the *milpa* expressed to me ways in which they learn from observations of multispecies agency. For his knowledge about the medicinal values of the *Apasote* plant, Christopher told me that these medicinal uses were learned from the dog.

"In the case of parasites, it's like, well, look at the *chuchos* [feral dogs], for example. We have dogs. When we go out in the field with the dog, sometimes the dog passes on the road and finds some grass, that is, pastures, and sometimes they begin to eat the leaves of the *Apasote* plant. They eat the leaf, let's say, but we don't ask ourselves the question of why does it eat the leaf? In my case, I just looked and thought because he is a *chucho*, that was why, as another person also said to me. But later we realized that when the *chucho* feels sick, the *chucho* himself eats this plant, the grass. When he has a stomach problem he eats their grass and from there he heals. So it is the same also with animals, that is, if they eat the *apasote* like this, they are healing themselves. So it is the same with us, how it is prepared for us if it is for deworming."

Guiding my eye in the *milpa*, *campesinx*s like Christopher maintain reciprocities with a more-than-human world where the human works together with other-than-human agencies to learn

how best to care for one another in the nonhierarchical and shared process of producing food and space to live. Seen from this perspective of diverse agencies, biodiversity does not arrive without these collective labors in collaboration.

ii.   Practices of reciprocity as a pathway to abundance

The second category of plant in the *milpa* is the plant whose seeds are saved year after year by humans. For many Maya Ixil, the most common of these plants include maize, *frijoles* (several species of *Fabaceae* family), *la arveja* (non-native peas, *Pisum sativum* L.), and *haba* (*Vicia fava* L.). This grouping was named by Don Christopher as those seeds most commonly prioritized by Maya Ixil families for collection, saving, and replanting for the following year.

> "[Other] plants, we keep their seeds. Of the plants that we keep their seed we are talking about maize [for example]. With maize you have to save the seed. The bean, you save the seed; the pea, the *haba* bean—for these the seed is kept."

Seed that is also passed down across generations of human caretakers as seed and land are inherited together, seeds like these are being stewarded by the Ixil across generations, connected through co-evolution by ancestors who used maize seed as a famine breaker (Islebe et al. 2022: 4). While much of this seed is stored in a *troncha* [109], cobs for seed are also traditionally tied together and hung to dry from the rafters or doorways (Figure 28), as a form of protection to

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[109] Spanish/Ixil word for seed storage silo.

newborns or women who have recently borne children (Bassie-Sweet 2014: 20-21) and to keep away from rodents.

Very specific processes are performed by the Maya Ixil, particularly for maize seed, to select which seed will be passed into next generations, another evidence of the meticulous care that the Ixil invest in maize and plants of the *milpa*. Bassie-Sweet (2014) writes broadly of some of these processes of selection with the Maya happening in several phases of its maturation. During the maturation phase of maize ears, stalks that have produced a single ear are favored over stalks that provide multiple ears as single ears are favored for their larger and better seed quality (ibid.: 20). For the stalks with multiple ears, by focusing on harvesting lower ears when the ears are in the green stage, this also allows the plant to focus energies and create a better single ear. Perhaps as a practice since the domestication of maize's teosinte ancestor, the largest ears of maize are still favored by the Maya for an expectation that these may provide better results for what kinds of seeds are best for the following year's harvest (ibid.: 20). Preparing the seed for better harvest, during the period of internal ripening and maturation of the ear's color, practices such as bending the corn-stalk over prevent rainwater from entering into the husk, discourage birds from consuming the kernels, help increase the amount of sunlight available to other crops of the *milpa*, and cut off the food supply of the ear from the plant's roots which results in the hardening of the seed in preparation for harvest (ibid.).

Figure 28a and b (left and above): Seed saving practices of Maya Ixil to hang maize cobs from rafters of Maya Ixil homes both to prevent their consumption by rodents and pests and as a form of protection.

Depending upon the amount of seed harvested, maize is sorted into categories for different uses depending upon the needs of each *campesinx* family. The best seed, once the final harvest is collected and a common practice of farmers including all of the Maya Ixil I spoke to about these seed-saving categories and processes, is saved for the next planting season to be given back to the Earth to grow again. Without always mentioning it directly, an intuitive and significant transgenerational biocultural practice, I observed the Maya Ixil still widely observing this fundamental practice of reciprocity happening at the point of connection with the soil and as a part of the active diversification on-farm of biodiversity happening in the care and human support of the *milpa*'s saved seeds. A lesson of reciprocity that all good farmers know, the best seed is not consumed by any animal, humans included.

Figure 29 (above): Witnessing the maize sorting process with Q'anil as she sorts maize into five classes based on quality.

Figure 30 (above): two different classes of maize being held to demonstrate the difference in maize quality during the sorting.

In December 2019 from the village of Pulay, I was able to witness and participate in one Ixil family's maize seed sorting process after all ears had been harvested from the *milpa*. As I observed her, she explained to me the differences between the maize being sorted into five separate piles (Figures 29 and 30). A new pile formed in each round of selection. The first round of selection took the best maize, those with the largest and most well-formed cobs, *mazorka*[110] to

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[110] The 'cob' of the maize, typically used for the maize that will dry and be saved as seed. Well-formed seeds that are dry and without damage from insects and birds are important to avoid the growth of fungi such as the *Aspergillus* spp which can produce mycotoxins harmful to humans and farm animals (Fonteyne et al. 2023: 09).

have seed to be given back to the Earth in the following year's sowing. Selecting these first,

Q'anil is selecting for and encouraging the best health of her maize population on-farm. The next

best maize—the second and third piles, were designated for human consumption, one category

for *atoles* or other fresh maize preparations and another for maize that would be ground and

nixtamalized for tortillas. The last two rounds of selection and categorization of the maize were

sorted to group the least healthy cobs. These would be designated as animal feed for animals of

the home such as chickens, turkeys, dogs, cats, and others. After maize is regrouped into piles,

each pile is collected and distributed to their respective locations in and around the house.

Exchanging agencies and labor in complex but interwoven and multidirectional shared networks,

biodiversity for many Maya Ixil is a responsibility also to keep inherited *relationships* going,

such as those of survival and protection between saved seeds of the *milpa*. Guided further by

structures from Maya Ixil knowledge systems, the following section links these responsibilities

with biocultural protocols referred to as *txaa*.

IV. Maya Ixil biocultural diversity conservation

i. *Txaa*

The practices of respecting the more-than-human world are not just individual to farmers but are

woven into Ixil cultural norms. Offering no simple definition from Ixil into Spanish or English,

as other scholars have pointed out (Banach and Brito Herrera 2021; Batz 2022), the word '*txaa'*

refers broadly to various protocols, norms, and moral obligation of the human according both to

ancestral wisdoms and group-agreed upon codes of conduct that provide broad social guidelines

for how people should behave and act. Giovanni Batz [personal communication, July 3, 2019]

explained from his research on the concept that *txaa* could be considered broadly as rules of

respecting nature. These include humans not relieving themselves of excrement or leaving refuse

in water sources as water is sacred, needed for life. More specifically or broadly, Banach and

Brito Herrera (2021: 52, translation mine) write of the linearity of the capitalist system as a

violation of these norms

> "the capitalist system and extractivism damages the structure of the norms of exchange of
>
> benefits provided by the other-than-human beings that inhabit the natural environment
>
> together with the communities. The violation of these social norms is denominated in the
>
> Ixil cosmovision with the term *Txaa*."

Citing Firmino-Castillo *et al*. (2014: 28), Batz (2022: 149, translation mine) elaborates that *txaa*

is an Ixil concept of "what not to do", behaviors or practices that are considered "transgressions"

that "recognizes a natural law of causes and consequences: when something happens to us

unwanted (illness or personal tragedy, for example)… *Txaa* can be understood within the cultural

values and Ixil norms that regulate behavior and interaction between people and the environment

as a way of respecting Mother Nature in accordance with the Ixil cosmovision" (ibid., translation

mine). Understanding these knowledge systems in the contexts of high biodiversity

environments, *txaa* is a structure of relation that guides Maya Ixil, *in-situ*, decolonized models of

biocultural diversity conservation. Fit into the *tiichajil* lifeway, it is a way of life;

"recommendations on a harmonious and balanced life" (Batz 2022: 24).

Ixil spiritual guide Angel tells me about how relationships with a spiritual world and a sociality of the more-than-human links to ancestral Maya cosmological perspectives, woven into the context and interpretations of *txaa* in the community.

> "When we arrive to a local place, we ask the Creator, the Shaper, to help us; to free us from all danger, [for the health of someone if] there is a person that is sick, all of this. So, sometimes there is something bad that attacks someone. They come to [perform ceremony in sacred] place [of the community] so that they release those people [from that illness or spirit], then we call that *txaa*."

It would be a further act of colonial violence[111] to pretend to describe Angel's words here. They have already been translated twice to arrive here. What is helpful historical context and supplement to note Maya cosmology and ontological perspective Angel speaks from here, is Duran's (2019: 10) work to explain or conceptualize the 'soul wound', intergenerational trauma, and historical trauma, trauma that has "occurred in the soul or spirit". A historical concept that reserves the space for explanation of how these elements come together from Indigenous frameworks after centuries of acute violence that Indigenous Peoples continue to live very present with (Duran et al. 1998), relations with a spirit world differ from colonial/Western [audiences] psychology or psychotherapy (Duran 2019). Biodiversity is a measurement of more-than-human health and wellness. For Indigenous realities, these are not conceived without spiritual significance. Duran (2019) offers an Indigenous framing of illness where life is also

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[111] I reserve space for the citation of Maya Ixil scholars and other Indigenous Maya to speak directly about the meanings of *txaa* and *tiichajil* as I am not Ixil, unable to speak it, and thus would be furthering "epistemic violence" (Spivak 1990) by claiming these explanations as conclusive.

shared with and across the spiritual realm. Illness can be understood in a metaphor of pathology that understands it as a living entity that we may engage with, as may be the needed context to begin to understand how Angel describes *txaa*.

Interpretations of *txaa* that reflect reciprocal relations with a more-than-human material world from Christopher point to improper protocols with plants, without translation from the Maya Ixil cosmological perspective:

> "The famous *txaa*, *txaa* that for us has no translation in Spanish. In Spanish it does not have a translation we can say, but *txaa* is something [like] what the elders say not to cut the plant for just cutting it, right? For example, that banana there, it starts to grow [fruit] and I harvest fruit, but without bothering the plant. So for the elders, they said that it's not good to cut into the plant because the plant has life, sap comes out, the plant cries— the plant cries. Something similar happens when some people get some ulcers, some welts on the body, well why do they come out? With the plant, [it is] now that we are no longer respecting the plant if we just cut it— like this [motions to cutting the whole plant]. That is what they say about the *txaa*."

Inducing physiological damage and recognizing agency in the complexity of more-than-human emotion, *txaa* engages an attentiveness to the affective lives of the more-than-human world that engender intra-species understandings of respect.

Something of an environmental and moral ethics code, txaa does not curse over the material consequences for human bodies of disrespect. Doña Petrona tells of *txaa* related to the incorrect cooking of *tomate de palo* fruits. Endemic to the region and common still in the *milpa*, insects or a virus has impacted fruits. Explaining to me that the fruit should be cooked in water instead of fried on top of the oven to avoid illness, Dona Petrona feels compelled to explain that *txaa* "is not witchcraft" but is a lesson learned from her 115-year-old grandmother who regarded *txaa* simply as "the respect". Norms of respect that weave closely to knowledge of survival in the more-than-human landscape, *txaa* also references a complexity of ever-evolving Ixil practices carrying knowledge and instruction regarding survival in a the more-than-human world.

Addressing gaps in these streams of knowledge after genocides have made a recent generational gap for the Ixil, the *Universidad Ixil* is facilitating processes of learning that use Ixil epistemologies to revitalize Ixil knowledge by placing value in elder knowledge of *txaa*. Christopher explains learning about *txaa*:

> "In the university is where we are learning what are the *txaa*. What we do is [we] visit each other [to inquire with these things in mind]. In my case, let's say, if I had a *tarea*[112] about the soil. They say 'find out or investigate what are the *txaa* that you have for the soil', or, 'what did people used to do with the soil?' You have to interview a person, an adult— more adult than me, right? Because his grandfather is already gone, he passed. So [this elder] starts to tell me 'this is what I used to do, this is what you should do'; 'you don't cut the soil just for the sake of cutting it'. Some people even say that we should not

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[112] English translation: task, job.

urinate just for the sake of urinating on the soil. In other words, there are several forms

[of *txaa*]. That is why the *txaa* is broad, it is a lot [of things]. There is *txaa* of crops, there

is *txaa* for our food. In other words, there is *txaa* for everything. It's respect. There is

txaa just in the way of speaking. If your speech tells a lie, that is a *txaa*. There is a *txaa*

that I cannot say *txaa,* but you already said it. So it's total [different world], let's say. Let's

say that the *txaa* are born from the research we do with [Ixil] people. When we talk about

txaa, we are working with people who are advanced [in age or expertise in it]."

The total other way of thinking that Christopher situates Ixil *txaa* as related to gives reminder

that these Ixil concepts fit into a larger cosmovision that is explained through not only the Ixil

language but lived into Ixil lifeways. Less spoken and more knowledge lived, responsibility

toward the more-than-human also is the passing of *txaa* as coherent ancestral knowledge systems

through generations of Maya Ixil.

ii.   Tiichajil

As an educator within the *Universidad Ixil* for expertise within the *milpa*, Christopher has

learned *txaa* while 'developing' the Ixil cyclical/reciprocal economy of *tiichajil*, an Ixil parallel

to *buen vivir* (Gudynas 2011), terms also learned with the *Universidad Ixil.* An alternative to its

opposite based in consumption, extraction, and general inequality, the linear economy of '*vivir*

mejor' is untethered to the conditions of life or more-than-human health locally.

"The *vivir mejor* is that I have good clothes; a good house; a good car; a good television; a good camera. In other words, [it is] *vivir mejor* for some people [but not all]. *Buen vivir* is different. *Buen vivir* is to live better with nature, to eat well. Because in the other system, the *vivir mejor*, for some it is eating a [processed] chicken, eating a hamburger, eating things from outside the home, let's say, but this is not eating well [/healthy]."

Speaking to an audience of Ixil *campesinxs* from the Sumalito *Mercado Campesino feria*, Farmer's Market Fair, in December 2019's prizes ceremony for the annual farmer biodiversity competition, Christopher's discourse about *tiichajil* and *buen vivir* connects biodiversity generation and its living abundance directly with "*alimentaria soberania*", food sovereignty. Not only does the presence of biodiversity equate to health and economic surplus from this model, but the reciprocities that benefit everyone within it form community without dispossessing or furthering social inequality. Living *tiichajil* lifeways as a result of multispecies care for the *milpa*, Christopher and other farmers show how biodiversity conservation occurs for the Ixil Region from decolonization efforts, from *campesino*-a-*campesino* networks (Holt-Giménez 2006) that become fertile ground for the pollination of Ixil concepts like *tiichajil*, seeds of knowledge that materialize 'restorative justice' by re-matriating more-than-human with a shared Mother.

LOQ'OLA TX'AVA

ITZ'B'A'N TIICHAJIL
CHOQ'OONAL
LEJEN QETZ
AQ'OL TEZT YOL
AQ'OL TETZ A'
AQ'OL TETZ XAMAL
AQ'OL TETZ TX'AKAB'EEN
AQ'OL TETZ TIICHAJIL
SAK'ATZ LA Q'AV KAT UXHCHIL

MADRE TIERRA

Creador del buen vivir
Nutriente de la vida
Creador de la vida
Creador de la palabra
Creador del agua
Creador del sagrado fuego
Creador de las montañas
Creador del buen vivir
En tu seno retornaremos

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MERCADO CAMPESINO IXIL
TIICHAJIL BUEN VIVIR

MERCADOS CAMPESINOS

En la región Lxil los mercados campesinos son un espacio donde interactúan los que se les llaman CHIKONAL en idioma Lxil que significa sembrador, ofreciendo productos traídos de sus parcelas y sembrados por las familias campesinas. Es un espacio donde se ofrece productos frescos, naturales y saludables.

RESEÑA HISTÓRICA MERCADOS CAMPESINOS

El proceso de los mercados campesinos nació en el año 2013 inicialmente en Nebaj, posteriormente en Tzalbal, y en el 2015 en Cotzal y Sumalito. El surgimiento de los mercados campesinos se dio después de los concursos campesinos desarrollados a nivel de la región Ixil, con la finalidad de promover el consumo de productos que se obtienen de una agricultura ancestral reivindicando el TICHAJIL (Buen Vivir) para el pueblo Ixil.

LAS VENDEDORAS Y LOS VENDEDORES EN LOS MERCADOS CAMPESINOS Y SUS PRODUCTOS

Las y los CHIKONAL llegan desde las comunidades de los tres municipios de la región Ixil (Cotzal, Chajul y Nebaj) a los mercados campesinos una vez a la semana, alternándose de acuerdo a los tiempos de cosecha, épocas de siembra y sus labores en el campo.

Los CHIKONAL son las personas que trabajan la tierra a diario, promueven la diversidad de cultivos fortaleciendo los cultivos nativos, criollos y el respeto hacia la madre naturaleza y el ciclo de la vida involucrando la familia.

Las familias que participan de estos mercados son de mas de 30 comunidades, con el objetivo de revalorizar los cultivos nativos, promover el consumo de los alimentos saludables y como primer consumidor la familia que lo produce.

Los productos que mas se pueden encontrar en los mercados son: hierbas, hortalizas, frutas, verduras, semillas, plantas medicinales, huevos, comidas preparadas, productos transformados desde las mismas comunidades.

BENEFICIOS DE LOS MERCADOS CAMPESINOS

PARA LOS QUE VENDEN:

- Aumenta los ingresos mejorando la economía familiar.
- Promueve la organización de las familias campesinas.
- Impulsa el consumo y la producción de alimentos locales.
- Enseña la importancia y el valor de sembrar como una forma de vida respetable y digna a los hijos de las familias campesinas.
- Promueve el cuidado de la naturaleza al restringir el uso de plásticos, y desechables para los que compran.
- Promueve el trueque entre vendedores promoviendo la economía solidaria.

PARA LOS QUE COMPRAN:

- Permite el acceso a productos de calidad, saludables y a precios justos.
- Promueve el consumo sin agro tóxicos y el cuidado de la naturaleza.
- Ofrece una diversidad de los productos en un mismo lugar.
- Crea confianza entre vendedores y compradores, entre familias urbanas y campesinas.

Figure 31a and b (above): Mercado Campesino handout emphasizing relationship of the markets to living the Tiichajil lifeway, or buen vivir.

Alcalde indigena and *Autoridad ancestral* of Nebaj by his identification, Don Diego tells a group

of visiting Colombian students and me in November 2019 about the Ixil *Mercado Campesino*

Ixil initiative linking Ixil knowledge systems with praxis, educating Ixil about Ixil lifeways

(Figure 31) while materializing support of the *tiichajil* economy and food sovereignty for

campesinos like Christopher at the market.

> "We prefer to strengthen that which is ours, and not for an authority to have the capacity
>
> to think how we have to be fed. When I say fed, it is not that it is like three times a day,
>
> every day. [I'm referring to] that which they call in South America as *buen vivir*. Here it
>
> is simply *tiichajil* in Ixil. *Tiichajil* is *buen vivir* in South America. But what is [it]? How
>
> [is it done]? For this, that is why we are *rescatando*[113] our *campesinx* agriculture.
>
> Yesterday, Saturday, there was a sale, a small [but] it is growing, market. This is a market
>
> [of the] *campesinx* who cuts her products that she cultivates in the morning and you see
>
> her selling them [there in the market on Saturday]. We are starting— it is very difficult
>
> still because they compete with the market of *commerciantes*, that's very difficult. But
>
> we are working in and towards this."

Banach and Herrera[cdi] (2021: 49-50) define *tiichajil* in reference to "freedom, peace, life without

violence, conflicts or any type of discrimination or persecution, because of the defense of goods

or life itself" (ibid.: 49-50), defending a collective[cdii] equity[cdiii] and understanding of onehealth

(Copper Jack et al. 2020) that each person individualizes as the "community or the *pueblo*[114]".

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[113] English translation: rescuing and recovering.
[114] *Pueblo* here refers to the Pueblo Ixil which is more definitive of 'the people' than its traditional translation as
town or village. Banach and Brito Herrero (2021: 49-50) write that the values represented by *tiichajil* are practiced

Without disconnect between the materialities of life's survival and spiritual relationships and obligations, Banach and Brito Herrera (2021: footnote 2: 51) write *tiichajil*,

> "[i]n its essence, … encompasses the freedom of access to nutritious food that is beneficial to health, as well as the possibility to sow and harvest in a healthy and uncontaminated environment, preserving spiritual relationships among the beings that contribute to it."

Though the *Universidad Ixil* was not the only group educating the community about *tiichajil*, its administrators and students have become ambassadors to the larger community, bringing reference to it in contemporary events that recognize and valorize Ixil lifeways *in-situ*.

Figure 32a and b (above): Maya Ixil Alcaldia Indigena and compesinx exchange with the Maya Mam group, Association de Campesinos Forestales (ADECAF)

---

as '*tiichajil tenam'*, where "the word tenam refers to the community or the pueblo. An inherent element of this thinking is that well-being among all beings, human and other-than-human, is necessary for the collective experience to allow *tiichajil tenam* to occur."

Exchanges organized through the University and its affiliated organizations, such as one between Maya Ixil of the *Alcaldia Indigena* on sharing lessons learned in the formation of their Maya Ixil B'oq'ol Q'esal Tenam, formed to defend the territory, and a Maya Mam community from nearby Cuchamatanes town Todos Santos at 3000 meters called the Association de Campesinos Forestales (ADECAF) working with grassroots communal forest regimes (Figure 32), demonstrate how these knowledge revitalization efforts network also within the broader Maya community.

A conversation with an alumni Xi'ben and a Universidad Ixil graduate from the current year, 2019, referenced *tiichajil* from this context as simply '*conocimiento*', or 'knowledge', "the root of Ixil autonomy" with magical effect. Xi'ben:

> *"Tiichajil is buen vivir,* the problem is that people are very reserved. Because our grandparents say that you don't have to -- you heard what the elder said if you use it [the knowledge] responsibly, it's not that you make it a book and you sell the books, no. So the responsibility and with a lot of respect by far -- is that it is the personality [the way in which you speak of it]. So that's why they don't share that because it's a magic word, a

Figure 33 (above): WhatsApp status of Maya Ixil technical educator affiliated with the mercado campesinos and Universidad Ixil and participant in the Escuela Campesina, among other involvements in this network. Status reads: "The harvest is a process that demands we involve ourselves so that nature can do the rest". The ethos of land-based pedagogy is both in theory and practice throughout the Ixil Region.

general word. It's a word of a book to explain all that. Just this word says it all. It is the—

like that as the root of Ixil autonomy. It is only the university through the [Ixil]

university and also [Universidad] Pluriversa is there where [we learn this].”

Demonstrating the wide reach of the *Universidad Ixil'*s efforts to also turn *tiichajil* into a concept

and pedagogical toolset that can interface with the larger *buen vivir* political movement, “based

on the analysis of the state of the environment and on the reflections on the norms and customs

of care since the time of the ancestors” (ibid.: 51), the work of scholars Batz (2022) and Banach

and Brito Herrera (2021) demonstrates the intangible abundance in the revitalization of Ixil

knowledge systems as terms like these are also connecting the Maya diaspora to the political

movements in defense of more-than-human Maya identities.

iii.   *Tiichajil* and reviving the Maya Ixil oral tradition, *tiichajil* as pedagogy

Connected to the material and networking multispecies community materializing from the *milpa*

and its institutions discussed in the next chapter, rematriation processes occur through the

revitalization of land-based pedagogies guided by the Maya Ixil notion of *tiichajil*, a common

theme encountered in courses and educational outreach activities of the *Universidad Ixil* as a

theory, philosophy, and lifeway guiding practice.

Beyond instruction about the land-based pedagogies (Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy 2014)

themselves, the *Universidad Ixil* is also reviving methodologies of Ixil pedagogy based in the

oral tradition. Attending a *Universidad Ixil* course on Maya Ixil agriculture and agroecology in

Chajul, I was able to see how *tiichajil* and *txaa* were concepts that could be found in the revival of Ixil land-based knowledge systems, teaching ancestral wisdoms that used Ixil traditional methods. In the class, *Universidad Ixil* instructor and practitioner Christopher shared with several Maya Ixil students in the first to third years of their degree about learning from and about the soil, the beginning and root of all agriculture, through stories. Teaching to a small room of Ixil students, he told three stories over the course of the 1.5- 2-hour class. Each story yielded a lesson about soil. In the first, a son misinterpreted his father's words of "gold in the soil". As the story went, the son performed an excavation of his land, thinking he would find gold. Excavating only soil and spending money on the process, he accused his father of lying and resorted to growing crops on what was left of the land. Yielding a great harvest, the son realized the lesson his father spoke of in the soil of its 'great gold', realizing that this 'gold' was found only with the application of care and labor with it. The 'riches', thus, could only be found through reciprocation with the soil. The value of the soil, Christopher's first story taught, came with the work that one puts into nourishing and feeding the soil, a lesson that drew upon Maya Ixil ontologies of value as rooted in bi-directional efforts and reciprocity.

In a similar format and adding to conclusions from the first story, the second story taught another lesson in the same fashion, that "*todos los suelos sirve*", or, ' all soils have a purpose'. In this story, Christopher told the young learners about a piece of land in the nearby Indigenous department and city of Totonicapan. A rockier geography than the Ixil Region for its positioning in the western highlands, the land in the story, Christopher explained, was "all rock"; "rock like the cement floor". As his story went, the rocky land was sold by a man who thought 'how could he get anything from this land?', a land with a large rock in the center of the space. Thinking he

could not make anything of the land, he sold it. The man who purchased the land chiseled away at the inside of the rock, turning bits of it into gravel to further shape the space created in the rock to build a house from it in the center of the land. Concluding the second story is this lesson that proceeded from the first that all land has value.

From Christopher's third story to the class, he shared from his own experience his dabbling with chemical fertilizers, an interesting experiment, but ultimately a path that led to misfortune. While there was no such thing as 'bad soil', there is 'tired' soil, Christopher's story messaged. Cautioning the students about the treadmill of inputs needed to replenish a tired soil once chemical additions are added, Christopher detailed the financial inputs he had personally invested in his own process, further cautioning that out of 100 liters of "*abono quimco*", chemical fertilizer, each bag gave only 25 % of the active ingredients needed for crops and another 75 % of "*pura piedra*", pure rock.

Connecting lessons about soils, cultivating them traditionally the work of Ixil men, Christopher asked the largely female audience at the close of the third story about the '*flor de mata*' plant of the legume family. A critical founding member of the *milpa* food system, the small red flower ('*flor*') of the plant yields a small black bean, the '*frijol de mata*,' common in Maya Ixil recipes and many foods of Mesoamerica. Engaging the young women audience by connecting soil to work traditionally of Ixil women, he asked the young women "can you eat *flor de mata*?". Repeating their hesitant replies, Christopher exclaimed "yes, *flor de mata* is edible!". Though most prefer to allow the plant to go to fruit instead, producing the bean the '*frijol de mata*', Christopher pointed out that the edible flowers of the *milpa,* such as the bean varieties and

squash varieties, are always in high demand and sell well at the *Mercado Campesino* markets. A handful of several small stalks of the flowers, referred to as a '*bulto'* or a '*manojo'*, Christopher tells the young women, sells for a high 5 Queztales at the market. A source of income directly from the soil, he connects the plant with tangible profits from the soil that can be exchanged for another food item or other need. From his own plot, I know Christopher grows several varieties of orchids that sell well throughout the year, particularly during Guatemala's religious holy week of Semana Santa in April that provide him and his family a steady source of income from his *milpa*. Elaborating upon his own experiences as a practicianer cultivating soil in his own milpa, his stories stress the reciprocal and sustainable exchange that one can have with the soil that may harvest 'gold' from the soil when in respectful relationship living the *tiichajil* life with the land.

Using the oral tradition, Christopher's three stories demonstrate the value of land and soil in three slightly different ways, all connecting and concluding with a connection to the *tiichajil* lifeway. Grounded fully in the use of food sovereignty's *campesinx-a-campesinx* methods (Holt-Giménez 2006), Christopher acknowledged to the students that he too is still learning, not just about the plants he cultivates, but is participating in restoring Ixil culture by learning, through another connected initiative of University with the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (ALMG), how to write in Ixil. A native Ixil speaker, born in the Ixil Territory and living there all his life, Christopher tells the group that he is proficient in reading Ixil and can write in Spanish, but has never learned how to write in Ixil. Due to the discrepancies and inequalities in the Guatemalan educational system that, conveniently, do not have resources or do not prioritize teaching Indigenous languages, many like Christopher are not formally taught how to write in their language in school as Spanish is still the dominant language, particularly

when the community cannot provide local teachers. Cooperating with the ALMG initiative, the *Universidad Ixil* is teaching about *tiichajil* not only in language and concept, but their involvement of Ixil knowledge-holders, elders, educators, and their methods of storytelling and practice of Ixil knowledge systems, both inside and outside of the classroom with land-based pedagogies (Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy 2014), educates the Ixil community where they are, restoring connections between people and the land by revitalizing Ixil knowledge systems. Providing the essential practical application of any theory of *tiichajil* with its manifestation upon the landscape, the next chapter connects the revitalization of Ixil ways of knowing with the initiatives that materialize the milpa in ways of doing that rematriate the Ixil also through an embodiment of their more-than-human identities as they strive to protect them with initiatives of food sovereignty.

V.   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have advocated for understanding biodiversity conservation as a process of reciprocal more-than-human relations with a history that, when included, addresses historical inequalities and allows a form of restoration with justice by way of rematriation. Revisiting the *how* and *what* of biodiversity conservation, should the term hold any meaning it cannot be done without historical stewards such as the Maya Ixil. Maintaining biocultural practices across generations from the same regions we continue to find biodiversity and these Peoples in today, neither can we ignore or devalue Indigenous knowledge systems that explain nuanced relationships *in-situ*.

Preventing the total loss of these knowledge systems that I give brief reference to with the Ixil terms *tiichajil, txaa* and their self-identified reference of these to a larger, Indigenous *buen vivir* movement, would be the loss of critical more-than-human relationships that Indigenous Peoples like the Ixil maintain. The change in conservation to accurately address this loss and 'feel' the agencies of those who 'modify themselves', in the words of Christopher, is another model of 'biodiversity conservation'. Cultivating more-than-human relationships of respect that originate from the complexities of a more-than-human worldview, passed down from Maya ancestors, lived into today from Maya Ixil knowledge systems, and designed as biocultural diversity conservation and more-than-human food sovereignty in reciprocities with the Ixil notions of *txaa* and *tiichajil* are complex, territorially-situated forms of biocultural diversity conservation. The concept and praxis of *txaa*, *tiichajil*, and *eela chil vatz* reference a way of life conducted in respectful relation with a more-than-human world and in the maintenance of its balance by including the needs of all as equal. Together, these terms reference a model of biodiversity conservation that features humans responsibilized to notions of more-than-human care and networks of reciprocity that understand well-being as unquestionably more-than-human.

Together with the global call to level human inequalities by decolonizing knowledge systems and relationships to Earth, these models also collectively dissolve colonial "boundaries that cordon nature from culture" (Tsing 2012: 141) that threaten all of us in a violence of inequality. Revitalizing Indigenous ways of relating with the more-than-human world in our human patterns of thinking, being, and doing, beyond relationships of control and violence that separate nature and culture, recognizes the multispecies understanding of agency exists that continue a tradition of more-than-human design for the future. We can design a global restoration and movement, a

more-than-human restorative justice, that decolonizes the health of our more-than-human world from inequalities that jeopardize all of bio's diversity. Inequality as biodiversity conservation does not serve any of us by serving a few. As the Ixil example, we are all stewards of the Earth and from this responsibility can create better forms of conservation. Indigenous Peoples continue in that relationship of stewardship, protecting not just the 'things' but all of us in-between.

The maize's people, people of the maize, people made from maize, all iterations of a relationship that ties the Maya Ixil directly to the land, is a motif which appears in their language, from depictions of their historical narratives as translated into word in the Popul Vuh, and, as my research followed through travels in many fields and homes, through multispecies relationships that are stories lived and cared for in practice with the land still today, providing food to the multispecies community in the *milpa*. The following chapter looks deeper into the biocultural institutions of this model of more-than-human conservation which I refer to as the *Milpa* Maya Ixil.

VI. The *Milpa's* Maya Ixil caretakers, multispecies biocultural diversity conservation, and designs for more-than-human abundance

I.   Introduction: multispecies biocultural conservation

The first, the largest, and the most formalized of a series of 'peasant markets' in the Ixil Territory, the Nebaj *Mercado Campesino* is located just off the central plaza of the Nebaj municipality, in the Quiché department of Iximulew, or Guatemala, a country with a majority Indigenous Maya population and high co-evolved biocultural diversity. In an otherwise verdant landscape of green on green[cdiv], each market features a flurry of bright colors. Distinctive for the western highlands' Ixil region, the bright red of the Maya Ixil women's long traditional skirts and the vibrant colors of their traditional woven *huipil* blouses seems to allude to the diversity of colors harvested from the land. At these markets *campesinxs* offer raw fruits, vegetables, tubers, flowers, chickens, and seeds while the smells of prepared and ready-to-eat foods such as cooked malanga, *boxbol*[115], and various prepared maize bites lure in hungry passersby (Figure 34). Artisan Ixil craftspeople bring skills with various traditional crafts into the collaboration, offering their knowledge, time, and workmanship in the form of clothing, baskets, hand-woven

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[115] *Boxbol* is a very common traditional Ixil dish very popular in the Ixil Region. While its contents often vary, its most common ingredients consist of maize wrapped in squash or point of the *güisquil* leaves, toasted and ground squash seeds, and a salsa from the *tomate de palo* fruit.

Figure 34a and b (above and right): Nebaj Mercado Campesino in December 2019

bags, pottery, soap, and cleaning or bodily care products sold at the markets. Biocultural hubs

assembling and disseminating the abundance of multispecies highland Mesoamerican food

systems referred to broadly as the '*milpa',* the markets are critical more-than-human gathering

points in a landscape stewarded by the Maya for generations.

As hundreds of Ixil, predominantly women, network enterprises together within a living

economy generated from the *milpa's* abundance, learning and re-learning Ixil land-based

practices for their more-than-human survival, it is possible to observe the grounded mechanisms

of a biocultural diversity conservation model in action. The Maya Ixil *Mercado Campesino,* a

peasant competition that preceded it called the *Concurso Campesino*[116], an award ceremony with

---

[116] English translation: 'Farmer Competition'.

prizes referred to as the *Feria Campesina*, and a network of village-based and accessible classes broadly known as the *Escuela Campesina* are some of the Ixil initiatives that constitute this model, forming a dynamic year-round coordination of land caretakers building multispecies collaboration *in situ*. From the broad Ixil participation and a renewed exchange of valuable Ixil cultural resources in these initiatives, investments, though modest, are being made to care for biodiversity's stewards as they maintain biodiversity and its abundance.

Creating spaces to recognize and appreciate a new category of entrepreneurs focused on materializing a revitalized patchwork of Ixil communal and cultural space, these initiatives draw upon the shared material landscape of the *milpa* to popularize and decolonize Ixil land-based culture while rematriating its actors in more-than-human collaboration. Gaining sufficient traction to have garnered legal and formal recognition by the Nebaj municipality in late 2019, the *Mercado* and its manifestations of a land-based and living economy is opening spaces where diverse Ixil and Guatemalan actors can invest from these spaces in this resurgence of a shared Ixil biocultural identity. Critically, the restoration of Ixil landscapes with the *milpa* not only regenerates and restores more-than-human abundance but it does so according to Indigenous notions of place[cdv] (Watts 2013). For the Ixil, development of and in the *milpa* (Gudynas 2011) is not separated from the Ixil lifeway that is *tiichajil*[cdvi] (see also Banach and Brito Herrera 2021). As the best antidote to losing is using (Nazarea 2005: 16), caretaking is a central structural principle in the *Milpa* Maya Ixil that designs biodiversity as a verb by embodying multi- and interspecies reciprocities in the food system itself. Materializing equality, abundance, and justice, the *milpa* food system in the Ixil Region is food and seed sovereignty for a future beyond the human.

Referred to by the Ixil as the revitalization of the decolonial *tiichajil* lifeway, these spaces of Ixil knowledge systems in practice[cdvii] are the most effective existing form of protection against biodiversity loss. Starting many of these now widely popular initiatives around 2013 with the help of local NGOs targeting biodiversity conservation and cultural revitalization, these initiatives have become central to the substantiation of *tiichajil*[cdviii]. Grown from the same soil as the *Universidad Ixil*[cdix], the initiatives are grounded in Ixil ways of thinking, knowing, doing, and being. Designed to complement and expand material space for the practice of Ixil methodologies, ancestral knowledge systems, and Maya spiritual beliefs, the most obvious impact of these initiatives has been their re-centering of shared multispecies collaborations around the multispecies technology of the *milpa,* linking *tiichajil* theory to the praxis of Ixil food and seed sovereignty.

Extending communal platforms from their shared roots in the soil, the rematriation of the Ixil to 'Mother Earth' after the immense trauma of State-perpetrated genocide (Grandin 2004; Sanford 2003), decolonizes beyond metaphor (Tuck and Yang 2012) and forms a politics of regrowth. Shared ancestral traditions of the *milpa* connect Ixil knowledge systems while centuries of its stewardship *in situ* substantiates the fertile ground to design more-than-human restoration as a form of justice and Indigenous existential and epistemic transformation (Bagga-Gupta 2023). For the Ixil, the *milpa* materializes Maya notions of the communitarian feminism (feminismo comunitario) (Cabnal 2010), or Community Territorial Feminism[cdx], and the *territorio-cuerpo*[117]

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[117] Reference to Indigenous ontologies, particularly those from knowledge traditions in Central America, that reassert a lack of division between nature and culture; nonhuman and human world. I use the term rematriation according to the theoretical framework to refer to processes acknowledging this reconnection between people and

(Cabnal 2010; Ulloa 2016; Sweet and Ortiz Escalante 2017; Halvorsen and Zaragocín 2021; Zaragocín and Caretta 2021), redressing colonial Cartesian separations by investing in land-based, multispecies, and Indigenous forms of organization from the bottom-up.

Multiple scholars, Indigenous and Western, have advocated for supporting bottom-up or 'grassroots' self-organizing models of biodiversity conservation (Strandby Andersen et al. 2008; Figueroa-Helland, Thomas, and Aguilera 2018; Calderón et al. 2018; Prado-Córdova 2017; 2021) but a "notorious" scarcity of studies that center "biodiversity productive systems with sovereignty and food security or local food systems concepts (<10% of studies analyzed)" (Moreno-Calles et al. 2016: 9) leaves these models undervalued. Supporting conclusions from the previous chapter about the need to centralize Indigenous knowledge systems in the design of conservation, from the activist or bottom-up approach this chapter aims to address this gap, advocating for the recognition, support, and compensation for the work of these more-than-human land caretakers, stewarding landscape-scale biocultural diversity in their ancestral territories. Applying Ixil land-based, more-than-human knowledge systems that structure biocultural protocols[118] (Bavikatte and Jonas 2009; Bridgewater and Rotherham, 2019) for the human as one of many in a relationship of responsibility to care for multispecies forms of community, with the example of the *Milpa* Maya Ixil the chapter responds to the questions 'how do Ixil initiatives created from the milpa serve as a model of biocultural diversity conservation, *in situ*; and, in what ways do these practices demonstrate a cultural notion of sustainability

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Earth's soils. The term also references the decolonial feminism of Maya-Xinka activist and scholar Lorena Cabnal (2010: 21) who urges "the conscious recovery of our first territory: [the] body".

[118] Bridgewater and Rotherham (2019: 301) define biocultural protocols (BCPs) as "protocols developed after a community undertakes a consultative process to outline their core ecological, cultural and spiritual values and customary laws. These relate to their traditional knowledge and resources and based on which they provide clear terms and conditions to regulate access to their knowledge and resources."

decolonized from historical inequalities by their materialization of Maya Ixil cosmologies and worldviews?'

In the following sections, I will relate the multispecies biocultural conservation model explored in the *milpa* and its management to a long historical precedent from the Maya, followed by a deeper discussion of how the contemporary *Campesino Mercado, Concurso, Feria,* and *Escuela* initiatives demonstrate the mechanisms of this model that see the Ixil performing their knowledge systems upon the landscape in the Ixil Territory today. With the use of multispecies ethnographic methods, I document processes like the diversification and exchange of native seeds; the re-establishment and strengthening of practices of co-creation of landscapes from connections and synergies between more-than-human kin; the assembly of new kin networks as species are introduced into the *milpa*; and the revitalization and re-valuation of the wisdom of elders and traditional governance systems from cultural traditions and norms that weave humans into the *milpa.* I assert that from Ixil ontologies the more-than-human responsibility to care for the *Milpa* Maya Ixil is a central more-than-human organizing principle that reciprocates abundance for all its caretakers while developing the foundation of a vibrant, land-based living economy that decolonizes the *tiichajil* lifeway as it rematriates.

II.   Processes of the *milpa's* biocultural diversification

A study from Guatemala's Petén department highlights a critical difference between Indigenous Maya and *ladinx*-mixed indigenous or immigrant indigenous groups: the Maya cultivate *more* crops than these latter two groups (Atran et al. 1999). The Guatemalan conservation arm of the

government, the Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas (CONAP), confirms that traditional agroecological systems are in fact *characterized* by the higher levels of biodiversity that they contain (CONAP 2008). The *milpa* food system, one of these traditional agroecological food systems in Guatemala and Mexico, is responsible for this biodiversity, scholars citing the *milpa* spaces within the region as identifying the sites of greatest biodiversity in the landscape (Heindorf et al. 2021).

Recent technological advancements to genetically sequence maize from the regions of Guatemala and Mexico have provided evidence of the mutual coexistence of humans and maize in these regions for thousands of years (Hanson 1984; Bretting et al. 1990: 215; Brush and Perales 2007). As the countries share varied mountain stretches known as the Cuchumatanes in Guatemala, the highland mountainous regions that run between southern Mexico and Guatemala also share a history of the maize and the *milpa's* people, the Maya, whose practices maintaining their *milpa* food systems have maintained some of the highest concentrations of maize diversity worldwide from the western highlands of Guatemala's 'megacenter of diversity'[cdxi] (van Etten 2006; Perales et al. 2005; Isakson 2011). Genetic diversity origins from southern Mexico and northern Guatemala are cited generally as forming an 'evolutionary garden' for maize and the *milpa* agricultural system, where domesticated species of plants have been confirmed to have coevolved together (Wilkes 1992). With more landraces or cultivars of maize in Guatemala than any other place in the world today, and high rates of endemism for many other species[cdxii], it is thanks to traditions between and across species divides that the historical origins of the seed (Wellhausen et al. 1952) can be traced back to these lands and the biocultural traditions of

Indigenous groups like the Maya and their maize food systems.

Scholars emphasize that the biodiversities characteristic to the Maya's *milpas* are created by its design. The *milpa's* design is noted as "complex of interrelated plots" (Ford, Turner, and Mai 2023: 5) in managed fields that average 1 hectare in size (Ford, Turner, and Mai 2023: 4) that form "horizontal matri[ces] with vertical variations" in the landscape (ibid.: 3). These spaces work dynamically as a complex mosaic designed by the Maya within forests they reside in with the cultivation of endemic crops to the region that are highly complementary, amplify productivities amongst themselves through the occupation of different niches, create synergies of resources, and a modify their shared microclimate (Fonteyne et al. 2023: 2) together to their advantage. Noting the skill and knowledge of the Maya on the placement of milpa crops in forest conditions to maximize diversity, findings from Oaxaca, Mexico (Robson and Berkes 2011: 845) are consistent with findings from rural landscapes in southern Mexico (del Castillo and Blanco-Macias 2007: 174) highlighting a mixture of forests of different ages and croplands most commonly exhibiting "a maximum diversity in situations in which agriculture is neither very frequent nor very uncommon in both time and space". In Guatemala, where the *milpa* is home to some 24,000 indigenous plants associated with the habitat today (Ford, Turner, and Mai 2023: 12), 'open *milpa'* crops such as maize, beans, and squash are seen as a foundation for the creation of these heterogeneous spatial dimensions and where trees are recognized within these systems as highly important managers of the space (Ford and Nigh 2015).

Plant remains recovered from ancient Maya sites show that the diversity of the *milpa* can be traced back to diets in the ancient Mayan civilizations, lands that held a broad diversity of food

(Atran et al. 1993: 676; Islebe et al. 2022). The diet of the ancient Maya included maize, beans, and squash, but expanded significantly beyond these to trace a lineage of many of today's domesticated crops from the territory (ibid.). Main foods for the Maya during the Preclassic and Classic periods centered around one tree species, *Brosimum alicastrum* (ramon nut tree), and *Zea mays* (maize), though both existed amid a hyperdominance of edible diversity of plant species (Fedick 2020, cited in Islebe et al. 2022: 4; Islebe et al. 2022: 5). Echoing understandings of productive agriculture today, the Maya also understood well the importance of soil health (Millner 2023) toward growing abundance as wealthy Maya were those with access to the best soils (Walden et al. 2023).

Linking the *milpas* of today to those ancient food and resource management systems of Maya ancestors, the managed systems are similar "both in the structure and composition of the Maya Forest and in the current resource management practices of the Maya [Peoples]" (Ford and Nigh 2009: 215). Cultivated or maintained in a variety of different sizes and scales, these pre-Columbian foodscapes are also referred to as "Maya Forest Gardens"[cdxiii] (Ford and Nigh 2009: 223; Ford and Nigh 2015) that stand as an example of ethnoagroforestry (Moreno-Calles et al. 2016) or permaculture/agroforestry/regenerative agriculture techniques from pre-Columbian groups. Armstrong *et al*. (2021: 6) define forest gardens as "ecosystems characterized by perennial fruit and nut tree and shrub species that continue to grow at archaeological village sites", using the term to denote a relatively recent phenomenon to refer to what they identify as "novel ecosystems that have been managed and maintained by Indigenous peoples and thus have no natural analog" (ibid.: 8). Maezumi *et al*. (2018: 540) use the term 'polyculture agroforestry' for the same phenomenon to describe historical Indigenous peoples "combining the cultivation of multiple annual crops with the progressive enrichment of edible forest species and the exploitation of aquatic resources." From their findings on four archaeological village complexes

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in the Pacific Northwest of North America, Armstrong *et al.* (2021: 11) note that the biological

diversity of their study sites examined provide further support to similar findings from other

Indigenous village and forest garden plots in other parts of the world, the Amazonian neotropics

(Heckenberger et al. 2007; Balée 2013), eastern Mexico (Gómez-Pompa 1987), and northwestern

Belize (Ford and Nigh 2015) among these.

Using the terminology of "millennial-scale polyculture agroforestry systems", Maezumi *et al.*

(2018) elaborate upon the findings of Levis *et al.* (2017), on the existence of food systems in

eastern Amazonia beginning some 4,500 years ago in today's Brazilian state of Pará that.

Cultivating multiple annual crops in complement with edible forest species and aquatic

resources, Pre-Columbian peoples are documented as having selectively started burning the

forest to plant crops, including a tool kit of domesticated annual crops — maize, squash, sweet

potato and manioc – while keeping the forest canopy closed with the additional planting of palm

and tree species that included cashews, cacao, açaí palms and Brazil nuts (ibid.). Using

integrated studies that connect palaeoecological methods with modern vegetation and

ethnographic data, the researchers' findings connect the reason for the "hyper-dominance of

edible plants" in the eastern Amazon to "closed-canopy forest enrichment, limited clearing for

crop cultivation and low-severity fire management", characteristic ecosystem and food

management practices of pre-Columbian peoples (ibid.: 540). All this abundance, they note, also

resulted in long-term food security for Pre-Columbian peoples, as evidenced by "an abrupt

enrichment of edible plant species in fossil lake and terrestrial records" (ibid.). Maezumi *et al.*

(2018) argue that these 'millennial-scale' food systems were extended and expanded as maize

cultivation to the Belterra Plateau grew fertile crops on Amazonian dark earth soils, the legacy of

the hyperdominance of edible plants in the eastern Amazon today as connected to Indigenous management practices.

Efficient and productive, these foodscapes are also resilient for their survival and use through time. Suggested by scholars as the resource-rich ecosystems that "underwrote the development of the Maya civilization", creating, intensifying, and maintaining this abundant food system in accordance with a growing human population (Ford and Nigh 2009: 214), the maize can also be seen as a technology created and used by the Maya to survive drought[cdxiv] (Islebe et al. 2022). Adding additional perspective to the significance of maize in Maya culture, maize's increased water use efficiency compared to *B. alicastrum*, together with cropping strategies such as increasing row count and planting density, may have been the reason the Maya were able to survive critical periods of drought (Islebe et al. 2022). From pollen maize data, it is possible to see increases in maize production after 300-200 BCE, likely connected to and resulting from the period's alternating precipitation levels and regional dry climatic conditions (ibid.). Food systems that are collectively cited as generally "more productive" than monoculture (Lopez-Ridaura et al. 2021; Fonteyne et al. 2023: 10[cdxv]), as its crops dispersed with trees in the *milpa* have been found to produce higher yields of maize from the beneficial microclimate produced by the trees (Molina-Anzures et al., 2016, cited in Fonteyne et al. 2023: 09), Fonteyne *et al.* (2023) and Falkowski *et al*. (2019) refer to the *milpa* food system as one resilient to climate change, a source of diverse, nutritious food throughout the year, and source of income from surpluses.

Ten years ago in Guatemala, a total of 70 percent of the total land area was involved in the production of agricultural or forestry activities (FAO 2014), the western highlands where the Ixil Region is and Oriente (eastern zone) representing regions of the country where more planted maize diversity was held than the northern lowlands (Grandia 2014). Across time maize was adapted over time to create different landraces/'varieties'/'cultivars'[119], sometimes identified by its different colors in the region that range from red, black, white, and yellow, the former least common today and the latter the most (Hellin et al. 2017). As different environments come with different cultivation needs between lowland versus highland regions (Bretting et al. 1990), these diversities of the maize itself are important flexibility to conserve in a changing climate as maize in Guatemala's western highlands is primarily rain-fed. In one study, only 14% of farm households surveyed had access to irrigation systems (Hellin et al. 2017),

In reproducing the structure and composition of the Maya Forest Garden, saving seed practices remain strongly

Figure 35a and b (above and below): Christopher teaching about his plants in his milpa.

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[119] A useful and broadly accepted definition of cultivar is "a variety, strain, or race that has originated and persisted under cultivation or was specifically developed for the purpose of cultivation" (Glossary of crop science terms [http://www.crops.org/cropgloss/]).

associated with "being a good farmer" for many Maya (Badstue et al. 2007: 1584; Almekinders, Louwaars, and De Bruijn 1994) in their *milpa's* into today and are critical toward its biodiversification processes (Fonteyne et al. 2023). Never having lost one's seed is a source of pride for *campesinxs* and a venue for biodiversification on-farm as seeds are saved and reinvested in the soil to reproduce the *milpa* food system on-farm, year after year. As roughly 90 percent of the maize grown by peasants in Guatemala is consumed at the household level (Isakson 2007; 2014; see also Hellin et al. 2017 for a similar case in El Peten, a department of the country's northern lowlands), a strong ethic of seed saving provides insight into how landraces generate great diversity from the food sovereignty practices of smallholder farmers. From the region Badstue *et al.* (2006: 267) note that "each farmer maintains and reproduces one or more landraces and only infrequently engages in a seed exchange", often as a strategy to replace lost seed[cdxvi]. Quoting ICARDA (2014), Coomes *et al.* (2015: 43) note that these informal seed exchanges maintain some 80–90% of the food grains exchanged by farmers from year to year globally.

On the farm of *Concurso Campesino*-certified™, biodiversity caretaker, and assessor for the *Mercado Campesinos*, Ixil *campesino* Christopher had many biodiversification processes on display from his *milpa* where *in situ* seed saving is done inside of the soil. As he guided me through his small 5 *cuerda*[120] *parcela* in July 2019, explaining to me the diverse growing conditions of the region, he pointed out the great variety of fruits, vegetables, trees, and flowers he kept in his *milpa*. Each plant with its own story, Christopher demonstrated the evolution of his

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[120] One *cuerda* is the rough equivalent to 0.108 acres (Horst, 1989: 16).

milpa space, the materialization of his processes pairing ancestral knowledge with an experimentation of its biodiverse potentials through his stewardship of *milpa* seeds *in situ*.

Pointing to an area on a lower part of the sloped *milpa* space, he drew my attention to a patch of the *milpa* where he was permitting space to "explore". The patch contained several different passionfruit plants that he stated proudly had all been adapted to his *milpa'*s *tierra templada* conditions[cdxvii]. Drawing my attention to one plant with a single small yellow fruit, he told me the story of its seed, acquired for 35 Quetzales after arranging the exchange with a human caretaker from its home palm grove patch in the nearby urbanized town of Xela (Quetzaltenango). Observing its growth in the Ixil *tierra templada* landscape of his *milpa* for several years, he is a patient observer and listener of the plants in his care.

> "This year I was going to cut it, [but] […] but my small child [showed me] that there is a
> small fruit here. That made me realize that I am not going to cut it down anymore
> because it already has one [fruit]. … [This is] the first time it has given me fruit..."

Each patch of soil in his *milpa* is prepared meticulously[cdxviii] in the hope plants will accept the space and produce abundance with others within it[cdxix].

Alluding to the support and additional value given to these experiments, the Ixil *Mercado*-affiliated competition, the *Concurso Campesino,* has incentivized Christopher to log the germination of new plants like these. Once they establish themselves, Christopher receives recognition by his community for his caretaking prowess as he becomes a reference for the now

annual Ixil biodiversity competition, producing certified farmers from those able to demonstrate the tangibility of their knowledge of biodiversity stewardship. Rewarding the experiments of farmers leaning toward the Ixil philosophy of *tiichajil*, processes that generate home and food for a diversity of more-than-human beings are celebrated in annual ceremonies of the *Concurso* with participants. From his own certification process, Christopher tells me that entering the competition compelled him to start documenting his experiments in the *milpa* 2 years ago, making a list of his plants. Proud of his effort and those across the territory supporting one another *campesinx-a-campesinx*, his certification is a political performance of Ixil identity that reclaims the body-earth-territory (Cabnal 2010). Strengthening his resolve to achieve food and seed sovereignty and doing so within the frame of ancestral Maya knowledge systems, he references this initiative as a reason why he feels empowered to enrich biodiversity and experiment with it in his *milpa* and diet. Recognizing him as an expert in this field, his certification through this initiative refers to him as a reservoir of knowledge for a network of farmers revitalizing the tradition of *tiichajil* in their territory.

Experimenting with seeds and evolving tastes, global processes that reach the Ixil Territory also exert a diversifying effect into the life of the *milpa*, as mediated by its human caretakers. Part of the inertia of inequality forcing physical migrations of many Latin Americans and global refugees into the Global North[cdxx] to survive, many Guatemalans (U.S. Customs and Border Protection [2024]) and Maya Ixil make the physical migration north (Heidbrink, Batz, and Sánchez 2021). With them, seeds travel. Bringing familiar kin of the *milpa*, experiments with new seeds from new lands also make their way back to the *milpa*. The *Mercado* initiative also

demonstrates how *milpa* assemblages continue to evolve from below and above as distant kin are introduced *campesino-a-campesino* to the *milpa* from the *Mercado*'s farmer networks.

At the *Mercado* Tzalval on November 6, 2019, an unusual fruit stood out from a basket of several similarly shaped and colored native *güisquil* vegetables (Figure 36). The unusual fruit was light green like the fruits of its plant sister, but the fruit's unusual shape and texture spoke of its recent integration to this patch of Earth's soil. The young woman with a baby on her hip offering the fruit for sale informed me that the plant's parent grew in the U.S. The seed had been collected by her father, sent to them, and planted by the family who looked after it for many years in Nebaj's Xemamatze village where it eventually yielded these unique green guava fruits. Initially unfamiliar with the fruit, they described its taste as pleasantly sweet, adding that the

Figure 36 (above): uncommon guava at the Tzalval Mercado.

plant has adapted well to the Ixil region's *tierra templada* climate. Farmer experimentation with novel seeds like this one yields new permutations in the *milpa* that influence the biophysical environment. Mediated by the evolving tastes of Ixil experimenting with and exchanging new varieties, Ixil initiatives like the *Mercado* are evolving with processes of global change as they materialize new biodiversity combinations from within the *tiichajil* pathway.

The expansion of the *Mercado* initiative to several locations across the territory has also diversified the *milpa* by building biocultural diversity between climates within the Ixil Territory.

Deepening abundance from above and below, seed networks woven across *Mercados* build biodiversity as they serve as stable venues for exchange and diversification between the region's slightly different microclimates. While the most common characterizations of the territory's climate fit into one of three categories— '*tierra caliente'* (hot), '*tierra fría'* (cold), or '*tierra templada'* (warm and wet)[121], Ixil *campesinxs* such as Christopher describe as many as 10 to 6 specific microclimates within the Ixil Territory.

Uniquely diverse for Central America, one of two areas in the region with a history of glaciation during the late Pleistocene (Lachniet 2004; Steinberg and Taylor 2008), the characteristic microclimates of the western highlands in Guatemala are indeed already ripe for biodiversity proliferation and Indigenous experimentation. From the territory's most populous municipality, Nebaj, one will easily notice consistently larger quantities and a higher variety of *milpa* offerings at its market. Simply, it is "a good place for *campesinos* to sell", says Christopher. Highlighting the strengths of the different markets, Christopher explains of the *Mercado* Sumalito how the kinds of plants grown and *how* they grow create diversities that can be exchanged by *campesinxs* between the different markets:

> "[In] Sumalito, their climate is temperate, between [*tierra]* caliente and [*tierra]* templada. […] [W]hat happens is that there is not much exchange [amongst themselves], but this is because they [already] have [what is being offered]. For example, let's say we are talking about bananas, *pacaya* [*Chamaedorea tepejilote; Arecaceae*], oranges, lemons, [etc.]. Almost everyone [there] has them, right? So, if someone brings bananas

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[121] A common reference system found for climate and general growing conditions among Ixil *campesinxs*.

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and enters the market, they almost won't sell [anything] because everyone [already] has [bananas]. Now, what they do [instead] is that they bring them from there—that is, they bring them from Sumalito, and sell them here in the Nebaj market. They sell them here because here in Nebaj there are no bananas, so here they have an advantage."

The Ixil recognize that climatic and orientation differences in the *milpa* also produce variation for the same cultivars, a variation that gets networked across the various microclimates. Christopher explains this differentiation for the malanga, a root vegetable, and maize.

"For example, if there is some land and it is one's vocation, let's say, [to grow] malanga, it is advisable to plant it on land that is *tierra templada*. Because if it is planted on *tierra fría* then yes, it is going to grow, the malanga will come out, but it will be there for a year or 2 years as the malanga becomes [ready]. […] In the *tierra templada* or in *tierra caliente*, [it is ready in] almost in 3 months or 6 months. In other words, *malanga* in temperate climates grows faster. The advantage of *tierra caliente* is [that it grows fast].

If we sow it in *tierra fría* and the *malanga* comes out, it's [also] that the time to eat it is something a bit tricky. I mean, it does not give the same flavor as in *tierra caliente*. [Also,] in *tierra caliente* the *malanga* arrives to this size [gestures a width of about half of a meter]. There, the malanga is of 5, 8, or 10 pounds. It changes in *tierra fría* because – you will see the *malangita*[122] but it will be of 2 pounds or 1 pound [only]. […]

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[122] Suffix of '*ita*' or '*ito*' is added in Spanish to indicate something as small or an affective relationship.

[T]he other advantage that the *[milpas]* have in *tierra caliente* is that there they harvest twice. They grow maize twice. That's a big advantage that they have. In comparison, in *tierra fría* they grow maize only once.'"'"[cdxxi]

Getting to know the strengths of one's *milpa* has tangible benefits for food and seed sovereignty and an awareness of biodiversity in the region makes the *Mercados* helpful assembling points for its exchange.

As the Ixil eat and use many different parts of the same plant, each type of *milpa* has its strengths, creating another layer of regional biodiversification that cross pollinates at the market. Cultivars and different plant *parts* that grow differently between regions are also recognized as opportunities for Ixil *campesinxs* who can specialize according to this demand (Guzzon et al., 2021: 8) or diversify their seed from the exchange possible between regions at the *Mercados*. Aside from the maize[cdxxii], beans, and squash fruits, the leaves of these *milpa* mainstays are an important part of the Ixil diet as well. Commonly used to wrap food in a variety of Ixil dishes, the leaves impart additional nutrition and flavor to food as it cooks. Highlighting the strengths of the different *milpas* by the best plant parts each microclimate produces, Christopher remarks:

"The *ayote*[123] in *tierra fría* provides a harvest, but only in herbs—only one [edible] flower and the leaves[124]. With *tierra fría*, there you are going to have [a lot of] herbs, let's say. I mean, the advantage of the *tierra fría* is that, for example, any kind of herbs

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[123] A variety of *Cucurbita moschata* with green inner flesh.
[124] The leaves of the *ayote* are very commonly eaten in the Ixil's most popular traditional dish called *Boxbol*.

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[grow] in *tierra fría*. Already in *tierra templada* herbs [are] difficult […] [to grow] there because there [is meant for] another crop.

In *tierra templada*, there it doesn't give much in herbs. What it gives [there] is fruit. And as the people say, it is fruit [that is most desirable]. Let's say there is *ayote* [and another of another kind of squash, *chilacayote (Cucurbita ficifolia)*], so there are variants. In the case of *tierra caliente*, for example, if you want your chilacayote in *tierra caliente* you won't get [it]. *Chilacayote* will only give a good fruit in *tierra fría*. [This is why markets like] Nebaj and Salquil have *chilacayote* fruit."

The stability of demand for the *Mercado* initiative has given many *campesinas* a chance to secure a steady weekly income as they balance local demand with the variety their *milpas* can produce. Having attended the market regularly for 4 years, Doña Reza's market strategy is focused on one market location where she supplies popular and traditional ingredients that her *milpa* grows well, such as *ayote,* supplementing these with a variety of abundance from her particular geography and climate. Her colleague, Doña Caban, attends at least one *Mercado* weekly, earning a modest income at the market by offering a variety from her *milpa* at different markets. She says she regularly brings "medicinal plants, leaves for tamales, sometimes cilantro, turnip, herbs, aloe vera plant, chile Chamborone, *cepaiche* [tomate de palo], everything. … I try to carry a little bit of an assortment". Generating a bit of income for her and her family in a period when her husband cannot work after a recent surgery, she tells me "Thank God, always my sales bring 100, 150, or 200 Quetzales per market visit." She says most of this money goes to the purchase of immediate family needs like sugar or her husband's medication. Surveys from a

youth group Red de Jovenes confirm these figures from participating *campesinxs* across the territory (Figure 37).

Figure 37 (above): An assessment of Red de Jovenes done to assess the land for 'buen vivir' providing two examples of total number of bushes/plants and animals for two households in the Nebaj neighborhood of La Libertad and Salquil Grande, respectively, and each family's consumption and sale of food in local markets, real-time market prices included in October 2019.

Settled in the warmer *tierra caliente* village of Sumalito in the Chajul municipality, some *campesinas* like Doña Melen and Doña Vujux profit at the *Mercado* from collected, non-domesticated plants of the *milpa* like zacate[125] and bledo[126]. Harvesting plants that the *milpa* 'plants itself'[127], the *Mercados* also compensate *campesinxs* for their labors. This is a specialization that *Mercado* facilitator Xi'ben explains happens "by area and by demand, also because everyone also specializes in what there is". Building upon a knowledge of the diversities of the region and "taking advantage of a space that is now strong to share them", according to Christopher, the formal *Mercado* venues are strengthening existing practices in the *milpa* by compensating farmers for their carework maintaining it while offering them space to benefit from its abundance in this living economy.

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[125] A grass common in Guatemala (Family *Poaceae*, species *Tripsacum laxum*) used most often as animal feed.
[126] A plant from the amaranth family that grows commonly through self-establishment in the Ixil Region's *milpas*.
[127] Phrasing from Christopher in multiple conversations from 2019.

One of the individuals of the Universidad Ixil-affiliated NGO FUNDAMAYA overseeing the contracting of funding for these initiatives each year, Juan spoke to me about the close connections between the *Concurso Campesino*, the *Feria Campesina*[128] and the *Mercados*. As he explained and as I saw in the 2019 cycle, the *Concurso* begins each year in September when several fieldworkers are dispatched each week to survey each of the four *Mercado* sites. These fieldworkers like Juan track the attendance of *campesinxs* in *Mercados* and count the quantity and number of different species using an Ixil classification

Figure 38a, b, c, and d (above): Assessor of the Concurso Campesino recording biodiversities from each farmer at the Nebaj market

system on a tally sheet with farmers' names until December (Figure 38).

A now annual competition among market vendors, results from participants at each *Mercado* are tabulated in the four *Concursos,* and preparations are made at the height of the harvest in December to hold a celebration, the *Feria Campesina* (Figure 39). Awarding prizes to farmers who appear in the *Mercados* most often, those who bring the widest diversity of cultivated crops to market, and those who cultivate the best *quality* (gastronomic and morphological assessments)

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[128] English translation: 'Farmer Fair'.

of cultivars at each, *campesinxs* receive tangible appreciation from the *Feria* for their carework in the service of biodiversity.

Figure 39 (above): Feria Campesina ceremony from 2019 where tree seedlings are awarded as prizes, demonstrating again the value of trees in the milpa with these prizes.

Working as of 2022 with some 300 families in 25 communities of the Ixil Region, more than 7000 *cuerdas* from registered *parcelas* in the region are reported by FUNDAMAYA has holding more than 80 different cultivars, according to figures recorded in the most recent *Concurso* from participating *campesinxs* (Universidad Ixil 2021). Incentivizing others in their communities across the Ixil Region, whether through social observation or word-of-mouth, winning *campesinxs* and the production of Ixil *Concurso*-'certified' farmers has brought momentum in the territory to value communal work (Tzul Tzul 2018) ongoing in the *milpa* (see also McCarthy et al. 2018). Through these initiatives, yet another layer of Ixil society can be articulated as supporting and helping to channel further societal investment into biodiversity as a cultural process grows more-than-human abundance with these feedback mechanisms.

While Ixil *campesinxs* are valorizing endemic biodiversity and networking multispecies energies to grow abundance through these initiatives, all rely on the critically important continued presence of native seeds, the building blocks for seed and food in the future. From an exchange of the *Escuela Campesina*, bringing together Ixil *campesinxs* in Xemamatze village with Mam *campesinxs* from Huehuetenango, Christopher reflected on the instrumental role of native seeds rooting all biodiversification processes in the territory:

> "…there are many *semillas nativas* [such as] *haba, güisquil*, maize, [etc. in our programs]. The idea is to have exchange between the group members. ... the idea is to valorize the cultivars and *campesinos*... Those with the highest quantity of cultivars, these are the ones that compete separately in the *campesino* contests. The objective of doing the *campesino* contests is the valuation [and valorization] of native crops, [to] value our native seeds. To value [this], that is the fundamental objective. And the other thing is to make food for the family, […] People realized that now we have some food to eat, some plants to eat, but still, we are poor, so what do we do? From there, they themselves made the farmers' markets, […] they organized the *Mercado Campesinos* and it was in this way they began. But the fight continues, the motivation of the farmers is that there is biodiversity. [...] the importance of biodiversity, that's where we are at."

Building back biodiversity by building back its biocultural structural systems of support, the Ixil concept of *tiichajil,* an Ixil development pathway diffused out to the community by graduates and current students of the *Universidad Ixil* who participate widely in all these initiatives, gives

situated cultural significance to the biodiversification processes within them. By complementing Ixil land-based pedagogies of the *milpa* with Ixil ontological and ancestral perspectives, Ixil of all ages are finding renewed access to Ixil knowledge systems, reaffirming their significance in the materialization of this decolonized Ixil lifeway in the *milpa*. Echoing Nadasdy's (2003) commentary from a Kluane First Nation member "(traditional knowledge) is not really 'knowledge' at all, it's more a way of life". As Todd (2016: 17, emphasis in original) succinctly puts it "Indigenous thinking must be seen as not just a well of ideas to draw from but a body of thinking that is *living and practiced by peoples with whom we all share reciprocal duties as citizens of shared territories* (*be they physical or the ephemeral*)." The next section will link the biodiversification processes of these initiatives with their cosmological significance for the Ixil.

i.   Linking the intensification of biodiversity with the shared responsibility of all to provide care for the *milpa*

Like Indigenous peoples of North America/Turtle Island, food sovereignty is intricately interwoven with struggles for self-determination. Literature on food sovereignty, referencing "a re-connection to land-based food and political systems" (Martens et al. 2016: 18) notes that the performance of practices of mutual benefit for all species (Kamal et al. 2015) is performed as a part of "sacred responsibilities to nurture *relationships* with our land, culture, spirituality, and future generations" (Morrison 2011: 111, emphasis mine).

Given deeper significance than just food sovereignty or economic gain, the *milpa* continues to serve as a dominant beyond-the-human metaphor for Maya lifeways (Fox Tree 2011: 100). Some indication of the *milpa*'s connection to Maya spirituality, even from the metropolis some Maya

"insist on planting corn in their communities to maintain a connection to the *rajawal*"[129] (Carey 2009: 285). As stated by farmer Pedro Guamche in the Maya Achí territory, farming the *milpa* "is so much more [than a food or economic exchange]. It's spirituality. It's a vital connection with nature" (Einbinder et al. 2022: 991); one that connects to the Maya cosmovision where all lifeforms in the web of life are equal (Cabnal 2020, cited in Patiño Niño 2023). As Maya Ixil health specialist Xi'ben explained, care keeps us in that equilibrium:

> "… [I want to] share with you our relation with the cosmovision and agriculture because we have to understand that agriculture is also cyclical. The cosmovision tells us that we have to have equilibrium. The system of life and whatever system in the universe is an equilibrium. To lose, not care for, destroy any of this equilibrium, this will generate disorder. For this, we have to understand as humans that we are an element in our cosmovision because sometimes we are told that to be human is superior, we are intelligent, we are the owners of everything. That is a lie."

Xi'ben explains to me from the Maya perspective how the responsibility to care for the *milpa* is a cultural obligation that today's Ixil will pass on to the next generation, as was done for them:

> "Here our contribution as an Ixil region is to explain a little about the relationship we have with nature, the relationship we have with agriculture. Without agriculture we cannot live. But it is important to deepen the study to understand that we are part of the Maya cosmovision. Why Maya cosmovision? We have to understand that our

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[129] The literal meaning of *Rajawal* is "the owner, or the protector" but could also be understood as a soul or spirit companion (LASA [2024]).

grandparents were very wise, they were thinking people, people who also took actions

with responsibility and that is what we have continued practicing."

Doing well throughout the year from the sale of periodic harvests that she brings to various

Mercados, Doña Caban tells me that the *Mercados* are not just about finding food to eat or

raising money to support family needs. She says she continues to harvest and attend markets

throughout the year out of a natural passion; that she "fell in love with the plants". As Xi'ben

translates from Ixil, Doña Caban interjects to expand on her point:

> "The idea is that we get value [from the *Mercados*] and possibly through you who come
>
> to visit us [at them]. It will explain to the people to become conscious that [they have] to
>
> give value [to] all of this. Also, that this is *work*. And not only this, but that this is not a
>
> hobby or [done for] ornamental purposes. Because I also like [this work], and I dedicate
>
> myself to it, only."

Paying *campesinxs* like Doña Caban to "get to know the plants" and to develop relationships of

reciprocal care with them, the biodiversity-conserving and food sovereignty-creating initiatives

designed with the *milpa* are contributing to the multispecies project of growing more-than-

human abundance and connecting the spiritual care work of the *milpa* with ancestrally informed

development pathways.

Figure 40a and b (above and left): Dona Caban and I walking through her milpa.

Specifically, and critical to the consolidation of these

initiatives as *in situ* institutions of biocultural diversity

conservation, the transfer of Ixil culture and knowledge

exchange within them has also strengthened the viability of

tiichajil by connecting them to it.

Forming the most notable assembling points for Ixil

knowledge revitalization together with Ixil practices in the

milpa, the adult, hands-on, and community-based *campesinx-*

a-campesinx self-education program referred to as the
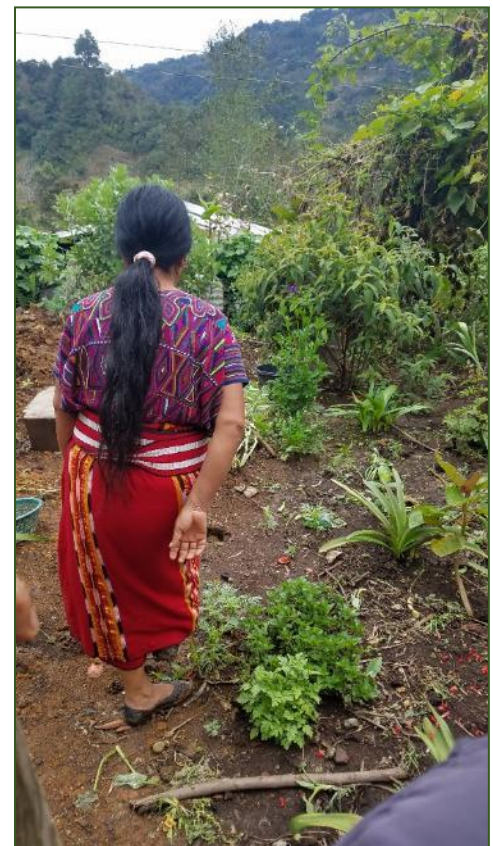
Escuela Campesina[130] necessitates the use of Ixil cultural practices and protocols from the *milpa* as a land-based methodology and pedagogy (Simpson 2014; Barbosa and Sollano 2014; Rosset et al. 2019) that complements material and technical exchange of biodiversity at the *Mercados*. Restoring and strengthening the '*tejido social'* around the *Mercado*, the *Escuela Campesina* initiative uses Ixil methodologies and epistemologies to construct an intensive village-level workshopping of knowledge, materials, and seeds that enhances *milpa* biodiversity and pulls Ixil *campesinxs* together in active engagement, learning with one another toward shared goals to enhance biodiversity on-farm all year long.

A facilitator, Juan was proud to stress how the initiatives to develop the *Mercados* and the *Concurso* had matured eventually into the development of this third initiative. Channeling Ixil epistemologies into a land-based Ixil pedagogy, the *Escuela Campesina* prepares *campesinxs* for the *Concurso* each year by providing a framework to explicitly collaborate and learn from one another *in situ* from their *milpas*. In the *Escuela*, certified farmers from each year's *Concurso* are paired with amateur *campesinxs* and grouped together in small village groups that visit one another's *milpas*, workshop methods and farming practices ahead of each year's *Concurso,* and further diversify each *milpa* in the micro-scale local seed exchange that occurs simultaneously from these collaborations between neighbors. Expert farmers like Christopher and Don Dominic who have gained certification in previous *Concursos* are recruited by the School, becoming themselves nodes of biocultural diversity conservation to share their expertise and resources between neighbors.

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[130] English translation: 'Farmer School'.

Meeting *campesinxs* directly at their *milpas*, *campesinas* such as Doña Reza can participate in the *Escuela Campesina's* "school outside of school" from her village as an adult learner, participating in its content creation according to her local needs and discovering amongst neighbors and fellow *campesinxs* what existing knowledge and skillsets exist in each learning group that can be put to use for common benefit. A member of Nebaj *Mercado's Junta Directiva*[131], Doña Reza says she has learned from workshops and market-tangential events in the territory how to create useful items from medicinal plants, which are now her specialty at the *Mercado*. Pointing to some of her bottles of handmade shampoo (Figure 41), she told me one market Saturday in Nebaj how she learned to make products with local plant recipes from other women in workshops in her community.

Figure 41 (above): Doña Reza's shampoo made from local plants.

Theorizing the Ixil notion of *tiichajil* from academia, the *Universidad Ixil* builds its theoretical teaching around these initiatives, also transforming them into institutions of *milpa* engagement that perform biocultural practices as more-than-human social justice. Encouraging young people to connect with Ixil methodologies and ontologies in action-based research projects through the University, the initiatives are situated as performances of decolonization that reclaim maize and the *milpa* as sacred. Reintroducing frameworks to guide Ixil ways of knowing, being, and doing to grow beyond historical injustice, the initiatives around the *milpa* and performances of *tiichajil* in Ixil lifeways interacting with them address historical structures of inequality (Wolfe 2006) and

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[131] English translation: 'Board of Directors'.

restore Ixil autonomy to live in their territory according to agreements made across generations and species divides. Xi'ben, Universidad Ixil graduate, elaborates:

> "Our work is that through our young people we can create some technicians, some professionals that respond to the needs of the communities, of the principals, of our authorities. What we want is to create young people that are functional, not [just] to graduate. Here what we want is that they learn our communitary norms. They must practice our norms, our ways of being. They must know their history. They must know their territory. In this way, they are going to give value to it, they are going to have the opportunity to think, to analyze, to discuss, and to propose what we need. The idea is to build to heal all the wounds to make everything better. [This is] how to return autonomy to our community."

Closely connected to the *Concurso* and the *Mercado,* and amplifying both by connecting Ixil theory from the students and elders of the associated Ixil higher education institution the *Universidad Ixil,* the network of *campesinx-to-campesinx* methods developed through the *Escuela Campesina* is the ready consolidation and access to active hubs of community-based and culturally-Ixil knowledge for Ixil seeking to connect or re-connect with the philosophy of *tiichajil* by practicing it as decolonial Ixil, more-than-human lifeway. Forming a *campesinx-a-campesinx* (Holt-Giménez 2006) latticework, the *Escuela* connects and extends roots in the soil, incorporating more-than-human teachers in education that gives autonomy, dignity, and collective justice to the Ixil as they strive for food and seed sovereignty from within their own traditions. Through these initiatives that connect in the *milpa* to a land-based pedagogy

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(Pinheiro-Barbosa and Gómez-Sollano 2014; Rosset et al. 2019) that draws Ixil elders

intrinsically into existential and epistemological notions of sustainability (Bagga-Gupta 2023),

Ixil knowledge systems are made accessible across the region as they are put to use growing a

local economy to cycle its reciprocities.

The next and final section will look at how Ixil norms with the *milpa* are finding new authority

regulating more-than-human protocols of respect in these initiatives.

ii.   Protecting biodiversity by performing biocultural protocols

The involvement and linkage of the living economy to cultural and Ixil social norms allows Ixil

'laws''cdxxiii space to continue evolving as they are given new authority in these initiatives,

allowing Ixil culture to also grow and evolve in tandem with the *milpa*.

From one visit to the Tzalbal *Mercado* on November 6,

2019, I was told about a woman near to the market

known throughout the Ixil municipalities for her

'*caña*'[132] baskets made from a native grass found high in

the mountains of the Ixil Region. As the *Mercados* have

a rule prohibiting the use of plastic bags, following the

lead of Maya neighbors in Sololá that initiated a similar

*Figure 42 (above): Vendor at Tzalval market
using plant-made baskets from the Ixil region.*

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[132] Referred to as *caña*, cane grass, but made of what is likely maguey, a native grass also used previously for traditional bags of the men (see Figure 42).

initiative and environmental restoration effort (May 2021), many families come to her to request hand-woven baskets that she makes in different sizes for a variety of purposes. Visiting the woman after the market with Christopher, she told us that she makes many baskets during the religious week of *Semana Santa* in March or April. Ordered well in advance, the baskets provide a steady source of income for the woman as demand remains constant from the many word-of-mouth exchanges that seem to grow as the *Mercado* Tzalbal grows. Demand that she bounds according to the availability of the plant, a seasonal item that the woman must also travel by foot several days to harvest, she tells Christopher and I that the location of the grass is a closely guarded secret because the plant must have enough for itself to regenerate the following year.

An important aspect of ancestral knowledge revitalization and the multispecies biocultural conservation model that includes but is not limited to the *milpa*, the woman is abiding by *txaa*[cdxxiv] Ixil cultural regulations. Ixil knowledge systems govern and safeguard biodiversity with the help of these, their own ethical norms or 'laws' that regulate more-than-human relationships and interaction after centuries of evolution together.

The Ixil initiatives are incorporating this framework of 'laws' into their design, requiring *campesinxs* to adhere to them if they want to participate. Christopher frequently reiterated a

central rule that arose with the formalization of the Nebaj *Mercado*: "People have heard that there is a market here [but] there are regulations. They are welcome here, but without chemicals[cdxxv]. This is the regulation, otherwise [they cannot sell their goods here]."
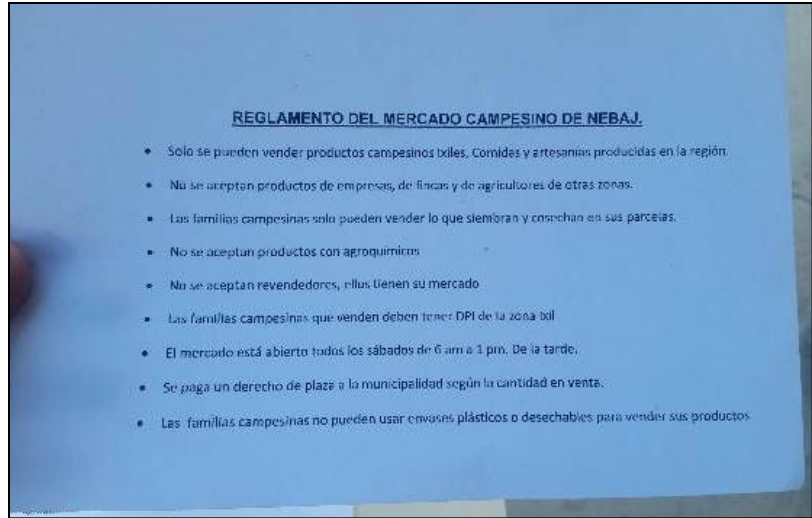

Figure 43 (above): Rules of the Nebaj Mercado as if November 2019 that include prohibition of agricultural chemical inputs and plastic bag use.

Rules formed through traditional communal decision-making processes that require the consensus of all members, new regulations at the *Mercados* (Figure 43) extend ancestral traditions of relation with a more-than-human world into the lived definition of sustainability through reciprocity. In achieving their food and seed sovereignty, the Ixil notion of *txaa* helps to keep humans focused on taking only what is needed and to give back in return so that all species can continue to be fed and cared for in the territory, cycling everyone's labor toward shared abundance.

Campesinxs who participate in the Ixil initiatives like Christopher speak proudly of what they are doing for the community, "breaking barriers" of oppression, he says, as they use what is theirs to conserve what wealth they have inherited from more-than-human ancestors. "MAGA[133] gives food as a gift. So with the *Concurso Campesino* we don't depend on gifts, [it is] breaking those barriers." Barriers that could be seen as the historical remnants of colonialism, the reciprocities

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[133] MAGA is the Spanish acronym for Guatemala's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food.

of the *milpa*, decolonized in and magnified by these initiatives, have made Ixil land caretakers like Christopher feel 'activated' to keep investing in the rich biocultural wealth they are creating together in their local living economy. "But the idea that we have is not that we are asking for a gift from the government. If you don't [beg], you [become] activated, look at what we have! This is a bit the idea."

Using and defining protocols that reinforce biodiversity by Ixil design, the momentum of these initiatives is keeping knowledge systems of stewardship alive into the next generation. Meq', a small-scale *campesino* from a younger generation who has been instrumental in spreading awareness and enthusiasm about these initiatives, has been inspired to learn more about his territory, how it came to be, and how to continue to care for it in the ways of his ancestors for his own children. He tells me that he has been inspired to "re-campesin-ize", recounting a recent exchange with an Ixil apiarist who lives 3 days away by vehicle and keeps 7 different types of bees on his farm. Further expressing his desire to learn to live like Ixil beekeeping mentors who not only tend their *milpa* but use traditional techniques to also look after its pollinators and collect honey, without a next generation of caretakers like Meq' the *in situ* decolonial biodiversity conservation of the *milpa* disappears **with** its biodiversity. In a time when the *milpa* is itself endangered as maize is increasingly grown without other *milpa* companions (Lopez-Ridaura et al. 2019), traditional knowledge systems and their protocols help to keep Indigenous peoples in relationships of care and stewardship with the more-than-human world while giving the rest of us decolonized models from the pluriverse to refer to.

III. A conclusion in support of the *tiichajil* living economy as a model for biodiversity conservation

Institutions of the *Milpa* Maya Ixil documented in this article, the *Mercado Campesinos,* the *Concurso Campesinos/Feria Campesinas*, the *Escuela Campesina*, the *Universidad Ixil*, and numerous other efforts from *campesin*xs across Guatemala (such as Einbinder et al. 2022), have created a popular movement using Indigenous methodologies and ontologies that continue traditions of care in the *milpa* that rematriate people with a model of biocultural diversity conservation that revitalizes Indigenous knowledge systems and provides a glimpse of what abundance a decolonial economy for a sustainable future can provide. Unsupported by nation-state governments and international policies with legislative capacity to determine international investment around the world, however, the Indigenous Peoples like the Maya Ixil cannot be expected to continue on this work on their own, nor should they.

Giving value to the wealth of biocultural diversity the Ixil maintain as they follow ancestral traditions to invest their labors toward the creation of an abundance of a more-than-human world, we cannot afford *not* to support these initiatives. The reciprocal relationships strengthened by these initiatives developed around the *Milpa* Maya Ixil mean more than ownership, control, or access to land (Raster and Gish Hill 2017). If we do not provide structural support to the systems in place, like those documented here, these reciprocal relationships will remain reciprocal only at the scale where caretakers are directly investing in them, if they can survive (Fonteyne et al., 2023). Without support from States, conservation organizations, and others, or a restructuring of the 'conservation' model to address human social inequality, no matter the efforts of biodiversity's caretakers, we will continue to lose biodiversity and the integrity of life itself.

The initiatives documented in this chapter show that the Ixil have created mechanisms of biodiversity conservation that are also a foothold to explore meanings of *tiichajil* while providing Ixil with a venue for its living economic exchange, reweaving the *tejido social* by *building from* the living economies of the *milpa* and thereby building the lives of all toward abundance. The *Milpa* Maya Ixil is one biocultural model of human rights-based biodiversity conservation, demonstrating in one example how humans have and continue to live in a relationship of equality and reciprocity with the other-than-human. Conserving all in the active performance of reciprocities as a way of life, for the Maya Ixil this biodiversity conservation model is simultaneously a revitalization of Ixil knowledge systems.

Figure 44 (above): milpa landscape, the patchwork of managed landscape stewarded and cared for as a part of a coherent landscape-scale food and conservation system of the Maya Ixil.

In situ, decolonial, human rights-based forms of biocultural diversity conservation like this one from the Maya Ixil expand biodiversity by supporting its Indigenous caretakers with the seed,

encouragement, and economic reciprocities to continue intergenerational traditions proven resilient over centuries (Islebe et al. 2022). The *milpa*, seen from this perspective, is not only a tool for biodiversity conservation, but it is also a tool for development that performs justice as it invests in doing the active change of leveling inequality and helping Indigenous Peoples like the Ixil perform community-led healing of relationships to land and a more-than-human world as their performances of identity decolonize from a global economy of exploitation to a living one of *tiichajil*. The *milpa* has no hierarchy of species importance or need of any to 'control' the others. It is in a different relationship to the more-than-human that this multispecies biodiversity conservation model links all species in reciprocal relationships of care to network abundance for the benefit of all.

VII. More-than-human social movements in defense of Earth, life, and food striving for environmental justice

I.   Introduction

In late 2019 I found myself meandering through the Ixil Region with an Ixil man and several of the city discussing Guatemalan writer Miguel Ángel Asturias's novel *Hombres de Maiz*, Men of Maize[cdxxvi]. A novel that received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1967, it remains relevant and of a mythical status for many Guatemalans today. A lesson in magical realism inspired by the novel came in a moment of laughter with the group as we walked, the Guatemaltecos from the city bemused at the coincidence of meeting a real-world Gaspár Ilóm[134]. Sharing the name of an important protagonist in the novel's first of six stories, we had come across this real-world Gaspár Ilóm while walking through *milpas* of the Ixil Territory moments earlier. Beyond just the name, however, as we walked through maize landscapes, many coincidences between Asturias's story and the Ixil Region could be found[cdxxvii].

For any reading the novel today and who might be familiar with Guatemala and its history, one might anachronistically interpret its storyline as a reference to Guatemala's 1980s genocide of the Ixil and other Indigenous groups (see Chapter I and Annex II); the many battles of Indigenous Peoples over stolen lands during and after the war; attempts to steal their seeds (see

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[134] Though a coincidence for the men from the city, in the Ixil Region generally, and perhaps many other Maya Indigenous communities in Guatemala, same names are not uncommon. As the municipality is named San Gaspar Chajul, where the village of Ilom with a long pre-Columbian history is located, the name Gaspár Ilóm is not so uncommon to encounter.

Grandia 2017); or the multiple waves of colonization that consistently have brought new threats to Indigenous forests, maize, the people, and everything in between (Batz 2022). Specifically, in the plot of the first of six stories, protagonist Gaspár Ilóm is depicted fighting to save his people's territorial lands against tyrants who destroy maize and all that it represents as sacred[cdxxviii]. Battling against invading land/hacienda owner, the main protagonist and the story of his community reside somewhere between fiction and reality[cdxxix].

In both the details of people and place[cdxxx], and in the content of the stories in the novel that that have feedback with reality[cdxxxi], the blurred line between reality and fiction in *Hombres de Maize* leaves it in a curious place in the memory of Guatemalans. Though its author's relationship with Guatemala's Indigenous population is not well-known and may have been initially troubled in his young adulthood[cdxxxii], Asturias is well-recognized for *Hombres de Maiz* and other similar novels for merging his politics and interest in Indigenous Maya cosmologies in a blend of fiction and reality that created the surrealist era-inspired literary genre of 'magical realism'. For the Ixil Region in particular, any affiliation between Asturias[cdxxxiii] and the Ixil Region is also not immediately apparent[cdxxxiv] but the novel's storyline and characters bear an obvious resemblance to the Ixil's history fighting to maintain presence in their ancestral territory. A novel written by Asturias during the important October Revolution period, or Guatemala's 'Ten Years of Spring', however, the publishing of *Hombres de Maiz* in 1949 places its fictional storyline *before* the 1980s genocide in the Ixil Territory, a point that draws attention to the cyclical nature of repeating violence in the experience of Ixil since colonial times across centuries.

For those who walk for generations in the footsteps of their ancestors fighting[cdxxxv] the necessary and costly defense of Maya lifeways and Indigenous communities in these repeating patterns of violence directed by colonization, the narratives from *Hombres de Maize* repeat in real-time. Unlike this lived nonfiction for the Ixil, the blend of magical realism in *Hombres de Maiz* has made Indigenous stories legible to a *ladinx* Guatemaltecan audience in a way that has transcended usual censorship of the *criollo* elite seeking to suppress Indigenous perspectives to maintain uneven power dynamics. As the laughter of the Guatemaltecans demonstrated at meeting Gaspár Ilóm that day, its stories are known and recognized throughout the country, across unequal sociological divides.

Much like Asturias's had designed for the diverse characters of the stories in *Hombres de Maize*, Goyo Yic, Hilario Sacoyón, and Nicho Aquino, who are brought together to carry off a harvest after having turned to ants in its conclusion, the *Movimiento Semilla*[135] political party's presidential campaign that elected Bernardo Arévalo on August 20, 2023 was also lead by a non-

Indigenous man narrating the sharing of a common culture able to benefit collectively from the shared harvest of a new spring. Given the "inextricable" connections between the policies of his father, President Juan José Arévalo Bermejo (1945-50) (Arévalo Sr.), and the prose of Asturias[cdxxxvi] (Prieto 1986: 355), in a country with a long history of institutionalized marginalization of its indigenous
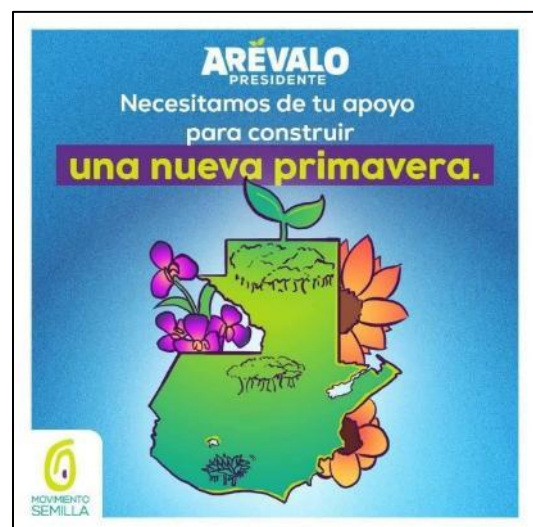

Figure 45: Semilla Movimiento campaign ephemera depicting a 'new spring'.

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[135] For the remainder of the text *Semilla* is used interchangeably with *Movimiento Semilla*.

population, both *Hombres de Maize* and *Semilla* show the recognition of *ladinx* people in the

country with some sense of shared cultural narrative from Indigenous traditions, knowledge

systems, and ways of being connected to the land that are central to Iximulewan identities.

Drawing upon Iximulew's Indigenous cosmologies and worldviews, in 2023 Bernardo Arévalo

and the *Semilla* political party campaign successfully campaigned with metaphors of a 'new

spring' (Figure 45) and its germination from seeds that galvanized a heavily Indigenous,

campesinx, and rural base of political support immediately ahead of the first round of national

elections. Opening a window for change to power structures for all Guatemalans, the motif also

carried— through its personification of the 'Ten Years of Spring' in its presidential candidate

Arévalo — a memorable reference for rural and Indigenous populations to a past substantiating

justice (see Annex II: viii) which took place partially during Arévalo's father's presidency.

Sharing both literal and figurative common ground, the democratic and anticorruption platforms

of the *Semilla* campaign connected to the "homegrown universal metaphor of Mesoamerica:

maize cultivation" (Fox Tree 2011: 100) making its platform echo themes of justice from

campesinxs, the Indigenous rural majority, and multispecies caretakers of the *milpa*[136] who have

long battled to substantiate justice from the patriarchal colonial modern state.

Adding a critical framing to other recent analyses of the *Movimiento Semilla's* ascent to national

government, this chapter seeks to draw into full focus the energies of Indigenous land and Earth

protectors who have long mobilized and used self-organizing strategies that have occupied

streets and spaces in front of political offices to protest and defend themselves, their territories,

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[136] I describe in Chapter VI how the Maya Ixil consider themselves as a part of the *milpa's* community through its more-than-human caretaking practices.

and their knowledge systems under threat. From their demands for food sovereignty as a more-than-human political movement in direct actions, protests, and lived daily efforts to defend their territories it is possible to analyze *Semilla Movimiento* as representing some small gesture towards justice for their movements, mainstreaming their much repeated themes and concepts into the domain of national political discourses. While many of the same oppressive power structures remain a significant obstacle toward substantive change, I bring to the forefront the mobilization of Indigenous and more-than-human identities behind *Movimiento Semilla* to show how surviving alliances from a period of Guatemala's October Revolution (1944 - 1954) (Forster 2001) have successfully forced a compact of the corrupt and inheritors of colonial privilege to respect a democratic vote (Perelló 2024). In what I argue as a demonstration of the political power of *feminismo comunitario* in Iximulew, materializing change from the existing and diffuse but active fronts of Guatemala's Indigenous land defenders and their more-than-human defense movements[cdxxxvii] throughout the country, while other scholars have characterized *Semilla* as using a "moderate, institutional strategy" of electioneering, among others, which has been "more effective than extra-institutional, radical actions" (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 33), I aim to show *Semilla* the political movement as built atop a history of demands for land reform[cdxxxviii] and defense of territory from Indigenous Peoples against neocolonial forms of further commons capture. While other scholars have contextualized the success of *Semilla* by characterizing it as the most recent advance of a progression of previous democratic mobilizations of the mid-2010s[cdxxxix], from the decolonial perspective I trace all of these movements and the success of *Semilla* to enduring, grassroots demands and efforts of the Indigenous rural population who continue to resist the colonial influence of unequal power structures at the top that influence all aspects of Indigenous access to the *buen vivir*, and in the case of the Ixil, *tiichajil,* lifeway.

Though *Semilla* has much work ahead to substantiate change, any of which shared by the country's entire populace, the percolation of food sovereignty narratives through *Semilla* into mainstream national political dialogues is a stride towards justice that must acknowledge the magnitude of grassroots Indigenous movements across the country and their self-organizing to defend themselves, their territories, and their ways of knowing that has become 'popular'; that has become national politics. In these more-than-human political performances of justice, I apply the Indigenous multispecies framing of the more-than-human and the 'defense of territory' masterframe (Yagenova and García 2009, Alonso-Fradejas 2015; Tramel 2019: 7; Batz 2017; 2022; Copeland 2019; 2023; McMichael 2023) to argue that *Movimiento Semilla's* electoral success is built upon centuries of Indigenous resistance and defense of more-than-human territory. Through the character of *Semilla,* the *campesinx-a-campesinx* social fabric of food sovereignty demonstrates some shared cultural notion for a politics of *feminismo comunitario*.

Seeking to ground the momentum of *Semilla* from its origins in grassroots, Indigenous territorial struggles over a defense of more-than-human lifeways connected to the *milpa*, this analysis will emerge in the chapter from a focus on various scales of this politics of the body-land-territory (Cabnal 2010; 2013; 2017) that begin in the Ixil Region. Drawing upon literature about the widespread and successful mobilization of Indigenous Peoples in the country and allies of the seeds during the same 2010s period, around maize in particular, the chapter begins with analysis of the 'defense of territory' movement as from the Ixil Region where a defense of territory

represents a common shared movement[137] mobilized under food and seed sovereignties that directly and politically contest patriarchal colonial modern structures of inequality and the settler colonial rationalities that guide extractivist interests in further exploiting Indigenous commons for private individual benefit.

From a scaling up to regional mobilizations that share these defenses against ongoing colonially-linked extraction, I connect the Ixil Region to groups of Indigenous land caretakers across Iximulew who also network through shared Maya cosmologies *campesinx-a-campesinx*. From local and regional movements, I draw into focus the daily and grassroots work of resistance and defense that is a constant toward the protection of a body-land-territory (Cabnal 2010, 2013, 2017) engaged in the revitalization of Indigenous ways of life in a context of multigenerational colonial trauma (Duran 2019). Networking lessons, resources, and energies from one another and from a global collective seeking environmental and more-than-human social justice, from these labors of the more-than-human collective that appear as daily performances of caretaking the *milpa* to defending it in demonstrations through their associated politics of *feminismo comunitario*, I contest analyses of *Semilla* that commit a form of neocolonial erasure by failing to highlight the bottom-up mobilizations of Indigenous people who were the first to defend the political platform Arévalo campaigned upon. The election is an immaterial acknowledgement of food and seed sovereignty movements defending democratic communal space created from these movements. With the Maya Ixil who perform these defenses in daily practices and frequent

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[137] Though I develop a defense of territory frame through the struggles of the Ixil that scale in this chapter, a succinct explanation of what a defense of territory umbrella frame and counter movement signifies from McMichael's (2023: 2128) citation of Copeland (2019: 22, and 2023: 8) is useful: "a mix of indigenous cosmovisions, place-based identities, and international indigenous rights law to unite grassroots resistance to mining, oil exploration, hydroelectric dams, land grabs, commercial logging, chemically intensive monocrops, and corporate biopiracy … . in a movement for an alternative model of territorial relations." The local and national organizations using this frame to oppose extractivist development emerged in the mid-2000s (Copeland 2023: 1).

public protests, the chapter will demonstrate how the political alliances of networks of the seed

and land mobilize from Indigenous territories but tie-in to global movements of food and seed

sovereignty, particularly from Indigenous Peoples,

decolonizing from colonial states through their

rematriation processes, and, therein, transforming them.

When viewed from a cosmopolitical perspective

(Stengers 2010) of the pluriverse (Kothari et al. 2019),

where decolonized Maya more-than-human identities

are bound to the land and defended in Indigenous land

defense movements, it becomes clearer to see how the

Movimiento Semilla could be analyzed as a potential

window for the political expression of ontological

perspectives of the Indigenous populations in the

country otherwise silenced politically by the *criollo*

state. While the rise of Arévalo and his party may

have materialized suddenly into the public national

discourses, a perspective of the movement from the

Figure 46 (above): "Solidarity with Standing Rock" say two small posters on the wall in the small Qachuu Aloom Maya Achi women's run collective seed and product shop in Rabinal, Guatemala.

Ixil Region's grassroots and bottom-up mobilizations gives view to how such national

transformations are rooted to land-based food sovereignty movements such as those from the

Indigenous and Maya land whose food/seed defense efforts span generations demanding

sovereignty and justice. The long history of Indigenous grassroots struggles in Guatemala that

have also powerfully fueled the rise of a global food sovereignty movement[138], connect *campesinxs* and land caretakers across the Americas (Figure 46), and indeed the world (Rosset et al. 2019; Rosset and Altieri 2017; Mier y Terán et al. 2018), from already political positions defending their lands, seeds, and lives therein. Departing from the anthropocentric analyses of the *Semilla* movement mentioned previously, the argument supports the position of Holt-Giménez (2001; 2006) and Rosset (2015) that "grassroots social methodology is the most effective way found to date" to mobilize transformation in these geographies (Rosset et al. 2019: 897), and, from Altieri (2009), that "rural social movements hold the key" to social justice transformations (Rosset et al. 2019: 897) at all levels.

I.   Defending territory in Cotzal and the plague of extractive industries

Walking through an exhibition curated by the Indigenous Mayors of the Ixil Region (*Alcaldías (Indígenas de la Región Ixil)*) (Figures 47 and 48) at the municipal center of Cotzal, years defending territory and Ixil testaments to a long fight to define that fight was on display, put together by those long stewarding its living communities. Fighting the same fights as their ancestors, the struggle to remain within the territory and continue in the lifeways of their ancestors has changed little. Perhaps only the origin of the invaders and the exact objects of their profits from the territory have changed over time (Batz 2022).

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[138] I discuss these roots not only with the neighboring Zapatistas often cited by food sovereignty movements but also with discussion of the origins of the *campesinx-a-campesinx* methods of the global food sovereignty movement that scholars such as Holt- Giménez (2001; 2006) and Altieri and Toledo (2011) cite as having arisen between exchanges between Maya Kaqchikel *campesinxs* and *campesinxs* of Indigenous origin in Mexico.

Participating in an educational group tour in October 2019, on the day of my visit a documentary was playing for an audience in the exhibition space. A documentary created by the Council of Maya, Garífuna, and Xinca Youth of Guatemala, together with the *Alcalde Indigena* of Cotzal, the film documented the good faith requests made by representatives and community members to the corporation behind the Palo Viejo *Hidroelectrica*, Enel, asking for a consultation on the hydroelectric power plant project. At the time of its construction, the Palo Viejo Hidroelectric Power Plant was the fifth to arrive in the country and remains the largest of
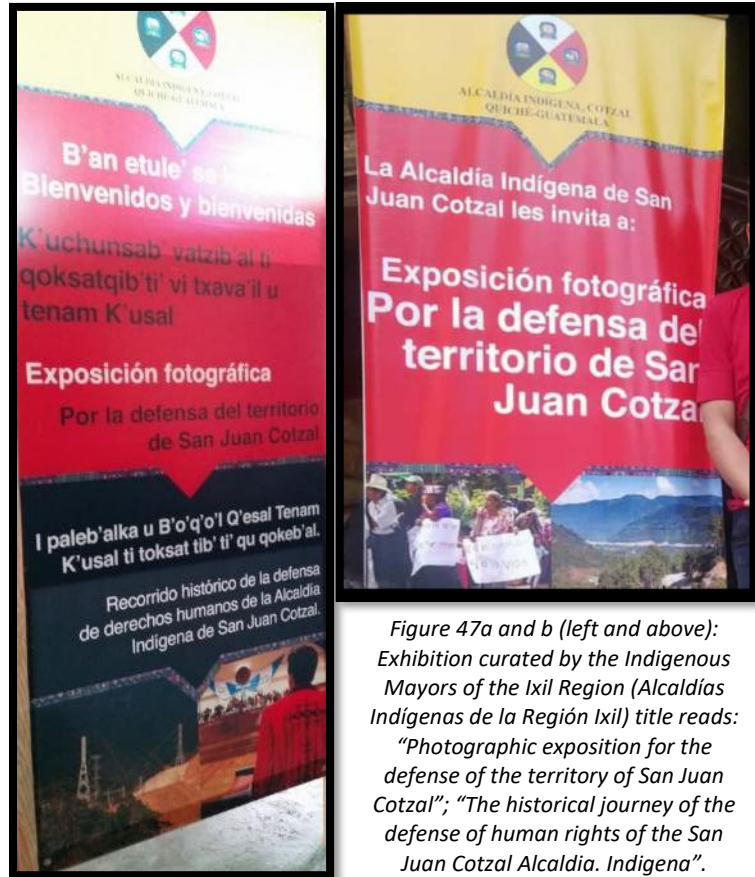

Figure 47a and b (left and above): Exhibition curated by the Indigenous Mayors of the Ixil Region (Alcaldías Indígenas de la Región Ixil) title reads: "Photographic exposition for the defense of the territory of San Juan Cotzal"; "The historical journey of the defense of human rights of the San Juan Cotzal Alcaldia. Indigena".
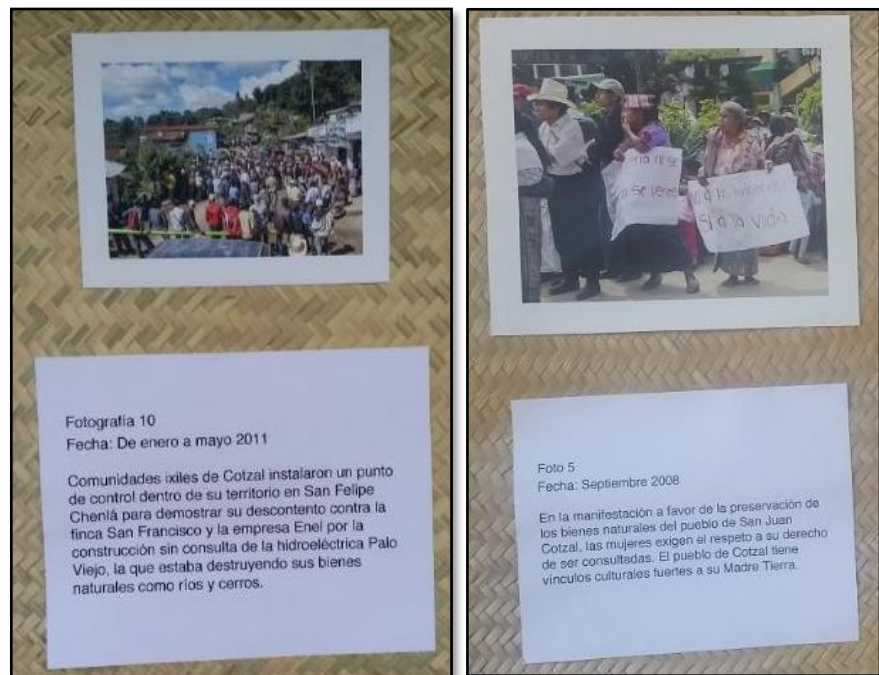

Figure 48a and b (above and below): Image from the Cotzal Exposition depicting Ixil women protesting the Palo Viejo hidroelectrica in 2008, holding signs saying "no to the hidroelectricas, yes to life" suggesting the critical threat that megaprojects pose to the lives of Indigenous communities often irrevocably changed by the arrival of such projects.

Enel's power plants within it (Escalón 2012b) as well as one of the largest in Central America (Batz 2022). The community requests, as the moving images report, were ignored. Miguel de León Ceto, a spokesperson for the indigenous communities in conflict with the project, claimed in the documentary that the failure to host community consultation meetings prior to the plant's construction were a violation of the Maya Ixil's human rights (ibid.). Baltasar de la Cruz Rodríguez, secretary of the local government structure Community Development Council (COCODE) and member of the Ixil indigenous authority the *Alcaldia Indigena* of Cotzal, echoed a similar sentiment to media: "they installed [the project] without informing nor consulting the communities, they are expropriating our rivers, privatizing them, buying them from the Guatemalan government" (Fernández and Marcos 2012, personal communication with de la Cruz Rodríguez, October 2019). In the documentary, Baltasar spoke about the challenges the hydroelectric power plant brought to his community of San Felipe Chenlá, one established already under the trauma of the genocide and forced relocation[cdxl]. Consternated faces of the Ixil public audience, as they watched and listened attentively to other members of their community speak about the project's effects on it in the projected images, made clear the significantly negative lingering public opinion of the project today.

Enel is not the first to ignore the resident and Indigenous community's right to consultation. Claims from the community of being shut out from Enel's project completely come after the installation of other, similar projects in the Ixil Region. The *hidroelectricas* Xacbal and Hidroxil failed to consult communities before their construction, actions that also provoked unrest in the Ixil communities at the time (United Nations General Assembly 2012: 13). United Nations human rights and Indigenous Peoples' Special Rapporteur S. James Anaya expressed concern for

these practices in Guatemala generally during his June 2010 visit where he identified, broadly, "a climate of high instability and social conflict in relation to the activities of companies in the traditional territories of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala", speaking specifically about the lack of consultation as "a fundamental factor, though not the only one, in the conflictive climate in Guatemala around extractive projects and others in traditional indigenous territories" (Anaya 2011; see also Aguilar-González et al. 2018).

While failing to consult Indigenous Peoples about projects in their territories are violations of international agreements and national laws in Guatemala, the application of these standards is problematic to enforce[cdxli], at either level[cdxlii], and competing state structures are set up to easily dismiss standards that do exist[cdxliii] (Kuper 2014; Larson 2008, cited in Prado Córdova 2021: 16), allowing projects to be built that offer the community little but a diluted 1% of the profits[cdxliv] (Batz 2023) in the end.

The exhibition bears witness to this history of failed protection for the local Ixil community against extractivist exploitation, reflecting on this invasion of hydroelectric power projects that have descended like a plague, or "cancer" (Vanthuyne and Dugal 2023: 252), into the region since the establishment of Palo Viejo. Seeking profit from their water sources and manipulating both local and national laws and agreements in their favor through local government officials, the companies bring further conflict, division, and devastation for most locals. In the travails of fighting megaprojects, the exhibit documents the long, protracted, and still inconclusive negotiation process against Enel and the Palo Viejo hydroelectric plant, still in operation today.

Not just corporations, though, the revitalization efforts to recuperate Indigenous governance structures, must also defend themselves against the State. Structurally, while the structures of the formal state apparatus allow Indigenous governance structures to exist, it does not recognize their authority. Thus, without any structural obligation for the municipality to recognize traditional Ixil governance structures, they are most often excluded and left out of consultation processes on the projects that will impact their territories. Due to these structural power asymmetries, Maya structures like the *Alcaldia Indigena* which link their forms of governance to pre-colonial institutions rally support from the community and educate members about their rights, but they cannot pressure directly for the creation of legally binding agreements that might protect their communities. This vulnerability is exploited by extractive industries that glean profits from the coercion and corruption of local government authorities for projects that ignore community consent to establish.

Furthermore, instead of protecting Indigenous communities, the state is also complicit in the violation of their rights through neglect, and, often, the direct facilitation of such violations, in the case of Guatemala (Nolin and Stephens 2010). Due to the diverging priorities of a Guatemalan elite, steering a disinterested state "indifferen[t] to the needs of the low-income population, [and] amounting to willful neglect" (Boerman, Aguilar Umaña, and Jones 2023: 2) toward its Indigenous populations and public where neither is prioritized (Ybarra 2018; Grandia 2022), conditions are left for Indigenous communities that make them vulnerable to basic human rights abuses and predation. Released cable 05GUATEMALA2250[cdxlv] from the U.S. embassy, made public by whistleblower pipeline Wikileaks, sheds some light on how the Guatemalan government facilitates these abuses. Appearing to favor corporate investments and profit over the

welfare of its people, such officials express concern in the cable over potential *lost revenues* that could result from consultations with communities; that "new energy investments could be stalled or made more expensive by a system of consultation with local communities". Leaving the ILO Convention 169 unenforced, the cable and other actions to grant further megaproject concessions[cdxlvi] show what forms of attention the Guatemalan State *does* provide to otherwise neglected regions of the country with high Indigenous populations (Dougherty 2011; Fernández and Marcos 2012).

Without the formalization of mechanisms of enforcement for international agreements on consent protocols or recognized structures within Indigenous governance systems, even strong and visible dissent from these Indigenous and rural communities becomes ***optional*** for corporations to acknowledge or address[cdxlvii] (EJAtlas 2022; Temper, Del Bene, and Martinez-Alier 2015). Accordingly, trends in the Central American region and increased documentation of environmental conflicts (ibid.) show the number of environmental justice conflicts in Guatemala outnumbering those in other countries of the region (Navas 2016). As of 2012, all hydroelectric projects in the Ixil Region had been objected to by the local communities (Escalón 2012b). As many as 75 community consultations against mineral, petroleum, agribusiness, and hydroelectric power plants and others across Guatemala, as of 2013, had disregarded the voice of the locals even when they did consult them (Cabnal 2013: 2). Though agreements exist to follow a protocol of consultation, without structures to bring compliance, these remain relatively meaningless at the level of enforcement and conflict over extractivist projects arriving to Indigenous territories is an inevitable result (Aguilar-González et al. 2018).

Visiting the site of the now operating Palo Viejo Hidroelectric Power Plant with an Ixil group in late 2019, by the group's count a total of 18 *hidroelectricas* had arrived to the Ixil Region, a number substantiated by Batres-Marroquín (2021) (see Figure 49 for the locations of these hydroelectric power plants). Generally, as Aguilar-González *et al.* (2018: 243) documents, the main groups affected by environmental distribution conflicts are Indigenous and peasant communities living in rural areas. Based on data from the Government of Guatemala's Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (http://portal.saa.gob.gt/), Alonso-Fradejas's (2015: 503) map of the geographical locations of the 1214 agrarian and environmental conflicts registered by the Government of Guatemala in 2012 (as can be seen from Figure 50) shows a concentration of such conflicts in the Ixil Region, the central western side of the department of Quiché.

Not a unique episode or period in Guatemala, these violations constitute an enduring and recognizable pattern in the country from its criminal oligarchy[cdxlviii] (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023) that does not protect Indigenous rights, facilitates their erosion, and, further still, goes on the
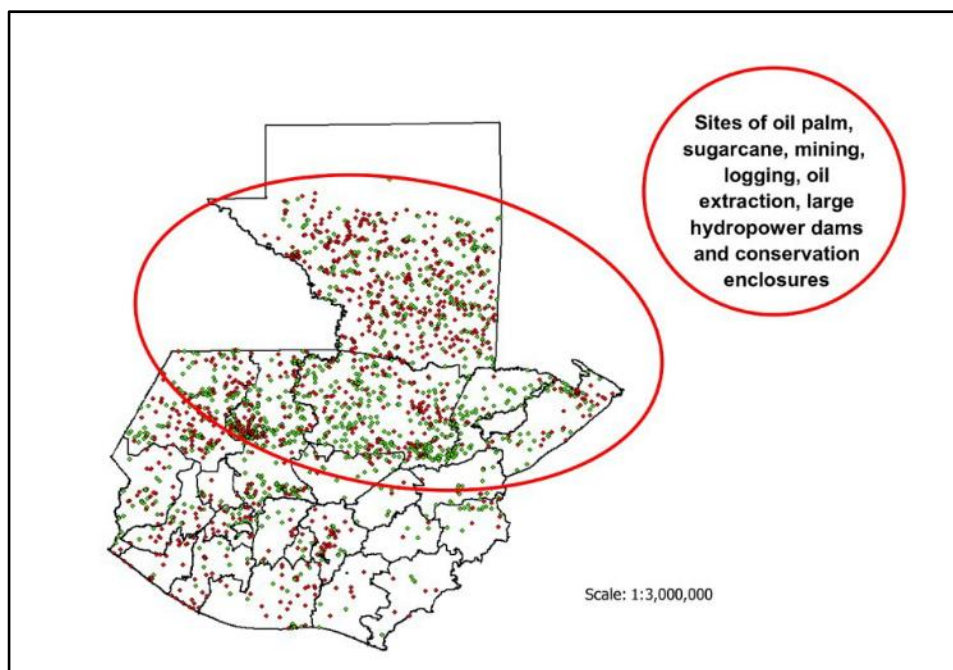

Figure 49 (left): Map from Alonso-Fradejas (2015: 503) showing the locations of oil palm, sugarcane, mining, logging, oil extraction, large hydropower dams and conservation enclosures from 2012 data, registered by the Government of Guatemala. The Ixil Region, in the central western side of the department of Quiché, can be clearly seen as the most highly concentrated part of the map.
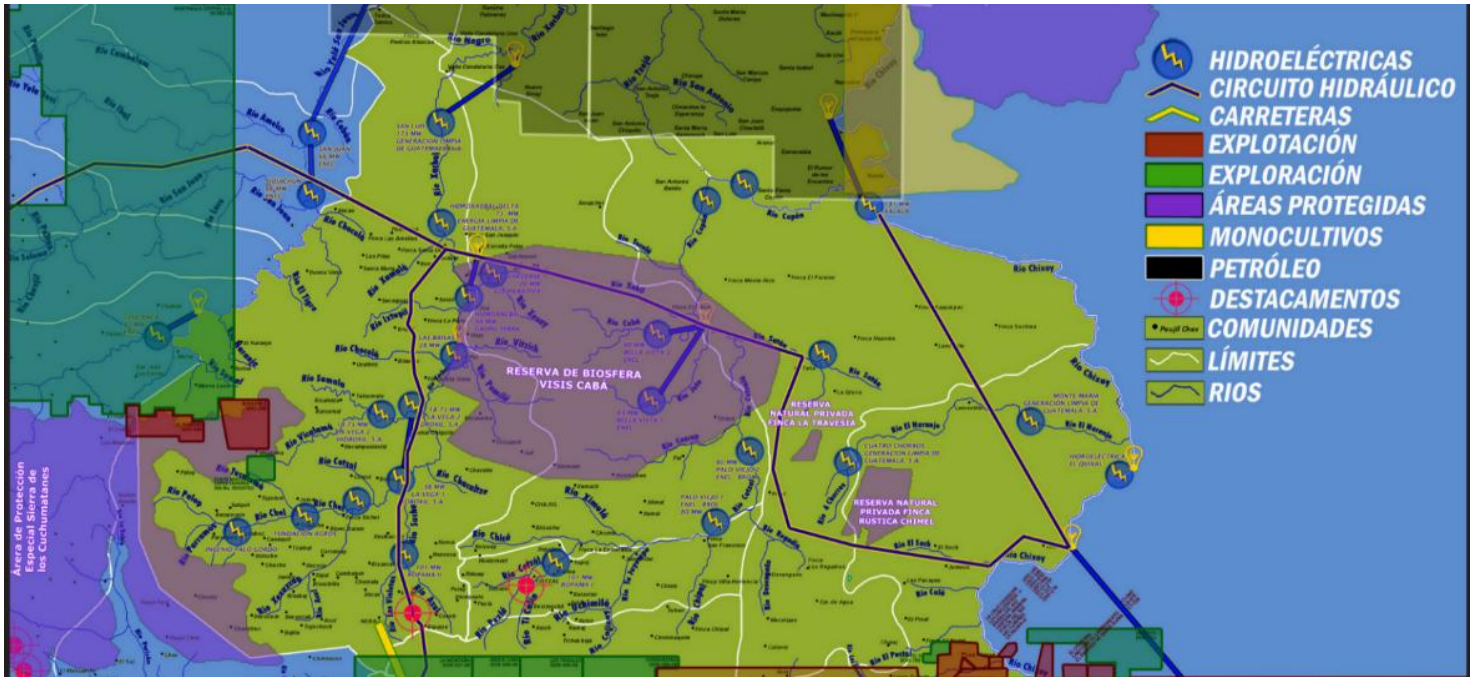
Figure 50 (above): The 18 locations of hydroelectric power plants (hidroelectricas) within the Ixil Territory (Source: Batres-Marroquín 2021)

offensive to ensure that their interests are protected through the completion of such projects[cdxlix]

(ibid.: 24). For decades, the Guatemalan military has been sent to megaproject conflict zones in

the country to protect investments of private industries (Aguilar-González, Navas, and Brun

2015; Aguilar-González et al. 2018; Ybarra 2018; López de la Vega 2019; Sveinsdóttir et al.

2021; Gonda et al. 2022). Citing Aguilar-Støen and Bull (2016: 35), Gonda *et al.* (2022: 7) write

that economic and military elites take to the exercise of direct violence against what are referred

to as "promoter[s] of social conflict" because such populations are positioned as opposite the

extractive agenda of the national development model. Repressive, police-military gang

suppression-repression strategies known colloquially as *mano dura* (tough hand, heavy hand) are

contiguous with the same protection of private interests (Boerman, Aguilar Umaña, and Jones

2023: 3).

The exhibition included this history of State repression that also came as a response to public protests in Cotzal against Palo Viejo in 2011 and after. In a meeting with community members from the directly impacted village of San Felipe Chenlá, an Ixil elder explained in October 2019 that Chenlá was subject to one of such exercises of direct State violence during the 2011 Cotzal protests. He recounted the arrival of many police[cdl] and helicopters, descending upon the community during one of their last resort direct actions to protest Enel's practices, then in the plant's construction phase. Sources confirm that tear gas and 3 helicopters were used to disperse protestors, protestors there to contest the project's failure to consult them (Martinez-Alier et al. 2011, 2016; Escalón 2012a; Sede Ya Basta! Marche 2012; Batres Marroquín 2021: 30; EJ Atlas 2022).

From this particular conflict, the Ixil traditional structure of *Alcaldia Indigena* itself emerged, to guide the community toward *tiichajil tenam* (Banach and Brito Herrero (2021: 49-50) and, as Don Ajmag and the exposition explained, to 'defend Ixil territory'. Becoming the foundation for many of the revitalization efforts to tether the Ixil to their ancestral lands, the threats posed by extractive industry have, also been a base to re-build Indigenous institutions around the defense of territory. In the words of Xi'ben:

> "From the beginning, the Universidad Ixil was created to support and defend itself and to be the guide for our community. When the state recognizes you, it imposes on you, it takes away your rights, identity, and you only do errands and are puppets of the corrupt. The territory, [this] is what we have kept for defense."

II.   Indigenous, land-based, social justice movements and the decolonization of 'territory'

Identifying the collective complaints against environmental injustices as 'ecological distribution conflicts' (Martinez-Alier 2002), Scheidel *et al.* (2018: 586) comment upon the role of environmental justice movements[cdli] as one means to leverage inequalities created by extractivism by enabling multiple dispossessed groups[cdlii] to come together in contestation of 'unsustainabilities' and form new communities[cdliii] sharing ecological distribution conflicts that push public debates on the 'environment'[cdliv] rooted to colonial injustices[cdlv]. Aguilar-González *et al.* (2018: 244) and Muradian Walter, and Martinez-Alier (2012: 564) assert that appeals to territorial rights in socio-environmental conflicts and protests against decision-making procedures that exclude or minimize resident claims and concerns are common from these movements. Nested into networks and coalitions interconnected, interstitial, and spanning several scales (Aistara 2018), Rosset *et al.* (2019), Price, Nonini, and Fox Tree (2008), and Perfecto, Vandermeer, and Wright (2019: 248) suggest that these new rural, grounded, social movements which link practice and theory in relationships of reciprocity with the land "hold the key to real biodiversity conservation"[cdlvi] as these people protect biological diversity with their food systems, the basis for their more-than-human notion of territory.

Advocating for the restoration of what was appropriated by Europeans during their global colonization and equalizing historical inequalities between human groups by 'decolonizing' from the unequal systems they established, the work of *La Via Campesina* (LVC) (Rosset et al. 2019), *Movimiento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST) (Perfecto, Vandermeer, Wright 2019: 141-147), and others have brought the concerns of peasants and farmers into the fold of an

equality-based environmental justice movement[cdlvii] with their notions of food and seed

sovereignty that link, inextricably, the livelihoods of people with the lands and seeds that sustain

them. Where agroecology began as a reference to the utilization of available nutrients in the soil

with the additions of manures and vegetable composts to help retain water of the soil while

cycling nutrients (Gliessman, Engles, and Krieger 1998), with the concept of food sovereignty

the "agroecology revolution"[cdlviii] denotes both a method and a philosophy. Miguel A. Altieri and

Victor Manuel Toledo (2011), eminent scholars in the field of sustainable food systems,

agroecology, and their global social movements, cite the specific innovations and technologies of

coordination and collaboration in the 'agroecology revolution' from peasants in the north of

Central America in the late 1980s, and from Guatemala the 1970s[cdlix] (Holt-Giménez 2001;

2006), as an infrastructure powering these movements toward justice[139]. Receiving some support

from OXFAM and World Neighbors, the social movement likely grew from an exchange of

Kaqchikel Maya farmers[cdlx] given funding to enact methods of labor-sharing that could draw

upon the horizontal "action-reflection-action" pedagogy and praxis of Paulo Freire (see Freire

and Ramos 1970), Latin American popular education methods, and the wider Catholic-inspired

Liberation Theology mobilizing Indigenous cultural movements at the time (Mier and Terán

Giménez Cacho et al. 2018: 640).

Started in the highlands of Guatemala (Altieri and Toledo 2011) alongside one of the most

important innovations and technologies commonly used among peasants in these spaces,

campesinx-a-campesinx knowledge transfer (see also Holt-Giménez 2001; 2006), for those at its

epicenter the movement represented a lifeway already carried across traditions for generations

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[139] The specifics of Guatemala's food justice and environmental justice movement in recent years are discussed in Annex [II: vi].

that could be enhanced through relational materialist (Anderson and Harrison 2010, cited in Brice 2014: 947) networking. Sharing materials and trial-and-error agriculture among farmers in Guatemala, networking farmers were able to exponentially drive positive change through reciprocal knowledge, skill, and tool exchange across distances. Referring to "the myriad of traditional systems still existing in Latin America" and able to adapt across generations, Altieri and Toledo (2011: 597) point to the significance of pre-Columbian cultures and knowledge systems in fueling the rise of the agroecological revolution globally from farmers such as these, in this geography[cdlxi].

Demonstrating the concept as built upon the degree of organization, or *"organicidad"* ('organicity') among and between connections, the social fabric of community members is key for knitting together and scaling up localized agroecological struggles (Mier and Terán Giménez Cacho et al. 2018). Mier and Terán Giménez Cacho *et al.* (2018: 645) emphasize the importance of social organization for agroecological movements, referring to it as "the culture medium [soil] upon which agroecology grows". Specifically, in their identification of five cases of localized struggles of agroecology that work collectively to create a larger and what could be considered 'alternative' globalization of capital and energy flow, the scholars argue that peasant organizations deploy the use of critical pedagogies that depend upon notions of 'territory' that tie its networks to physical space. As a "pedagogical mediator in bringing agroecology to scale"[cdlxii] (ibid.: 645), for many peasant organizations that count Indigenous Peoples among their ranks in Latin America, bodies and territories are not conceptualized as separate (Bonelli and de la Cadena 2023: 307; Cabnal 2010; 2017; 2019). The social fabric of interconnected life forms,

what Cabnal (2020, cited in Patiño Niño 2023) and many others have referred to as a 'network of life' is composed of the same networks assembled working toward food sovereignty.

Situated by some as part of a decolonization effort that can be traced to Spanish invasions half a millennia before (Batz 2022), the growing momentum of these *campesinx* and agroecological movements in Latin America, otherwise referred to by *Via Campesina* and others as food sovereignty movements, find *campesinxs* and rural or Indigenous communities fundamentally contesting notions of 'wealth' detached from reciprocities with the land that are central in many of these conflicts with extractivist projects. Putting forth their own definitions of wealth intertwined with health in the process of rematriating their communities to the land through forms of investment in their ancestral and Indigenous knowledge systems, the land-based, more-than-human food sovereignty movements mobilize the necessary transitions[cdlxiii] to address and reduce the human social inequalities from colonial structures (Val et al. 2019) by materializing Indigenous definitions for territory that also defend Indigenous more-than-human place and actors.

Though strategies vary, a common convergence among these localized struggles also beyond Guatemala is marked by "an identity discourse and the struggle for non-extractivist livelihoods based on their own understanding of "good living" (*sahil ch'ool*)." Describing the philosophy implicit in the food sovereignty movement, living the 'good life' or *buen vivir* (Gudynas 2009; 2011; 2013; 2014; 2021) for many Indigenous Peoples means rupturing the hegemony of colonization's structures of control and domination – capitalism and its extractivist core— by

asserting the lifeways of food sovereignty that permit the expression of decolonized Indigenous knowledge systems.

While "the lengthy history of people reacting to colonization is … a long-term movement in itself" (Campaña Continental 1991: 140), decolonization movements have been rearticulating worldviews that define the world according to more-than-human understandings that also redefine humans in that relation. Decolonial literature makes visible and identifies the counter-subjectivation processes that allow actors to emerge in these struggles as they articulate themselves according to identities according to their Indigenous ontological perspectives. In the words of Gonda *et al.* (2022: 5) citing Maldonado-Torres (2007) and De Sousa Santos (2006), these "struggles are made visible in their own terms and according to their own conditions and experiences," in a "re-invent[ing of] social emancipation," that, for any observing the process, involves "carefully observing the actions of the condemned, in the process of becoming a political agent". As the result of a relatively recent process of articulating political and identity claims in Guatemala (Cano Contreras, Page Pliego, and Estrada Lugo 2018: 17) (see Annex II: iv and v), Yashar's (2005) dissection of the modern Indigenous movement draws upon the connection to ethnicity and an identity rooted in pre-Columbian origins[cdlxiv] as a useful political instrument with a range of levels of effectiveness in the different countries of Latin America where it is used for asserting the political nature of territory from Indigenous perspectives. Indigenous identities have been building strength in this assembling; consolidating as a strategic tool to contest the ongoing inequalities of settler colonial occupation within their territories[cdlxv] (Ybarra 2011[cdlxvi]; Alonso-Fradejas 2015; Copeland 2018; Konforti 2022) as they assert their different definitions of them.

Don Ajmag, an ancestral authority of the Ixil Territory, or the *Alcaldia Indigena*[140], spoke to me about advancements made possible by the Peace Accords[cdlxvii] for the Pueblo Maya to rearticulate Indigenous forms of societal organization. Articulating themselves as distinctly 'Maya' Indigenous Peoples, the signing of the accords was a step toward materializing indigenous identities tied to the land that provide support to their territorial defense movements to defend more-than-human identities:

"Though we say that this country costs us a lot, we have made progress. The issue of the [indigenous] authorities has been advanced, for example. The authorities appear in [*indumentaria*] at important events, now I will appear with my [indigenous] clothing, with the hat, with the *barre,* without any shame [or fear]. Not before. My fellow women can be in restaurants [in *indumentaria* now] because the clothing is typical - it is synonymous with being 'Indio' [1.20.21]. It cost a lot [the war] but perhaps one of the products, really, of the peace agreements is an agreement called the identity agreement of Indigenous Peoples. There is a specific agreement for that where, let's say, the languages in Guatemala were recognized. …. They are languages with their grammar, which still needs to be improved, but let's say we achieved full recognition to simply say 'yes, we exist' – that we are not [just] indigenous, but a *Pueblo* Maya/Maya People."

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[140] Translated in English to roughly the 'Indigenous mayor's office' is a group of Maya Ixil traditional representatives that have asserted themselves as equivalent to the municipal mayor for lack of any formal mechanism to instate them today

Constitutive of a different kind of globalization and development, Fox Tree (2011) cites the

Maya identities as a model for an alternative understanding of globalization where indigeneity

and the assemblage of Indigenous identities are emerging as a response to Euro-American large-

scale dispossessions of pre-European peoples in the Americas. Identifying the Maya more

specifically in this global movement, Fox Tree writes (2011: 88) that "Mayas naturally

understand their movement as 'global' because they see it as the latest phase of five centuries of

enduring hemispheric resistance against colonialism."

From the Digital Archive of Latin American and Caribbean

Ephemera collection, ephemera from the movement show

how Maya and Indigenous assertions of indigeneity, an

Indigenous identity, became a place to also rebuild society

for Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala in the immediate post-

war years as Indigenous groups claimed links with ancestral

more-than-human histories of their territories as a part of

their Indigenous identities (see Annex II: iv and v). One

pamphlet clearly states: "In the thoughts of our grandparents

'LAND, NATURE, WORK, MEN, WOMEN, THESE

CANNOT BE SEPARATED, THEY FORM A WHOLE'"

(Campaña Continental 1991: 3, emphasis in original)

Figure 51 (above): Depicts the Indigenous "faces of America" asserting their connectedness with both one another and with 'nature' and land. Campaña Continental. 1991. 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular. Series: Leyendo Nuestra Historia, Folleto Popular No. 2.

(Figure 51). From the Maya identity movement, colonial notions of territory are explicitly

contested and Indigenous definitions of territory are explained. Blending modern notions of

rights with the emerging Indigenous identities and demands for justice in the restoration of both,

the pamphlets conclude (i.g. ibid.: 22) that 500 years of dispossession, exploitation, and violence against Indigenous *Pueblos*, is little barrier for "the force of the organized *pueblo*". The fight that they fight is "[t]hat war [that] won't be lost, here in this land, because this land will be reborn again" (Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel) (ibid.: 22), referencing the sense of agency attributed to the more-than-human world of Maya ontological perspectives and the notion of territory that conceptualizes land inseparably with peoples living upon and defending it[cdlxviii].

Xib'en, a middle-aged man from the Ixil community of Ilom, Chajul shared the distinction for the Ixil between simple definitions of land in geographic or simple terms with Ixil conceptions of territory that have less to do with maps and more to do with the conditions of life itself. He told me:

> "There is the dictionary [definition] of territory where it is a geographical determination with boundary stump markers. That's what it says. It is geography, that which is territory by what the dictionary says. On the other hand, here, the grandparents say the territory is not that it starts over there and ends here. [Instead, it is that area where] they had their water, they had mountains, they had culture, they had their language."

Echoing Xib'en, López de La Vega (2019: 162, quoting Guatemala's Memoria Histórica 2013: 378, translation mine), cites the connection of the Maya of Guatemala with the geography through the ties of practice which are exercised upon the landscape in a definition of territory which is defined as "the physical, social, cultural and spiritual space in which [the communities] organized themselves to produce and reproduce, the geographic, social and historical framework,

that with practice, knowledge and experience they went appropriating." For the Maya lowlander Indigenous peoples in Peten, Ybarra (2018: 15) explains that the Maya Q'eqchi understand land as part of the *tzuultaq'a*, or "the spirit that grants them permission to work the land and live from its bounty. In so doing, the *tzuultaq'a* affirms their indigenous identity." As my Ixil interlocutors explained, 'land', *tx'ava* in Ixil, is likewise more than an item, much more than a noun in speech, much more than an object to be managed, or property to be owned[cdlxix].

For the Maya, land is the body-territory (Cabnal 2010; 2013; 2017) as much of their food system, the *milpa*, reproduces from seeds inherited from grandparents and ancestors who store their lifeforce year after year primarily in the land[141]. Land, like the human body, is thus seen as carrying the conditions necessary for survival to the Ixil and their biocultural forms of expression, which happen in their ancestral 'territories'.

In Guatemala, those engaged in the agrarian and environmental justice movements for food sovereignty across the country overwhelmingly connect with the 'defense of territory' masterframe (Yagenova and García 2009, Alonso-Fradejas 2015; Tramel 2019: 7; Batz 2017; 2022; Copeland 2019; 2023; McMichael 2023) that draws upon decolonial and more-than-human definitions of territory like these. Utilizing a power of lived connection, relaying messages about threats and mobilizing bodies in defense of the collective, Indigenous and local communities like the Maya Ixil are found engaging with *'defensa del territorio'* movements[cdlxx] as a direct response to eroding biodiversity health and the rise in human social inequality from further colonial intrusions to extract energy and life from communities who cannot afford to

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[141] See Chapter V and VI for the discussion of the *milpa* and Ixil practices that steward these seeds *in situ*.

relocate the destruction or themselves. As Castro and Picq (2017: 797) comment on these territorial defense struggles, some communities in this struggle find themselves demanding the respect of international rights to free, prior, and informed consultation for development projects within their communities, while, for others, the battle is a legal one over recovering communal land titles that have been privatized[cdlxxi].

Price, Nonini and Fox Tree (2008: 133) suggest from the context of Guatemala that the processes of becoming into Indigenous and local community identities is where the action to transform global structures occurs[142], suggesting that, in the envisioning of the "ideal places" with social movements in defense of Earth and Indigenous worldviews, that their occurrence from Indigenous or local communities become themselves 'grounded utopian movements' (GUMs). They locate new social grounds scaffolded on what become redefined values, transforming social relationships from these movements that are harbingers of transformed identities and decolonial worldviews that carry with them new ideas for transformation (ibid.: 142). Fitting for the context of Guatemala, this framing of social movements facilitates, supports, and empowers the emergence of Maya identities as they gather around a defense of territory (Paz-Salinas 2017; López de La Vega 2019; Martínez-Velarde et al. 2020) to demand through food and seed sovereignty, a respect of a more-than-human identity with their Indigenous notion of territory. López de La Vega (2019: 162, translation mine) summarizes: "[i]n all of these experiences, they are looking to recuperate the political subjectivity of the community as an actor capable of determining the transformations of their territory and deciding about their pathway."

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[142] They ask: "[w]hat of the movements that do not aspire to gain political power within the modern state or to challenge capitalism-but whose internal identity-work transforms the lives of their members, and even the social setting around them, as they seek to bring about a more satisfying world?" (Price, Nonini and Fox Tree 2008: 133).

As a response to both the violence introduced by extraction projects (Navas et al. 2018; Scheidel et al. 2018), a response to human rights abuses at large on Indigenous peoples, and the influence of decades of social movements from *campesinxs* of Latin America (Holt- Giménez 2006), from their decolonized positionalities as Indigenous Peoples on long stewarded ancestral lands that draw no separation between human body and land body (Cabnal 2010; 2013; 2019), movements defining territory, thus, are also social justice movements that defend themselves from their identities beyond the human.

Scholars of the modern Maya movement note a adoption of the pan-Maya identity and Maya Movement in Mesoamerica as emblematic of new social movements not only focused on what they are not, but as definitive of new "autonomy, identity, and reflection on the socially-constructed nature of reality" (Campaña Continental 1991: 133). Through what they refer to as its 'messy' methods, or the performed and embodied practices of activism, the various portrayals of the Maya movement, definitive of more-than-human Maya identities through a struggle over rights and reference to indigeneity and ancestral claims, are also a "revitalization movement" (Price, Nonini and Fox Tree 2008: 138) where the term 'indigenous' often references new political associations able to bridge communities across multi-cultural states (Yashar 2005). The decolonization of Indigenous identity, as Calderon (2014: 28) notes[cdlxxii], is a social movement of a collective global energy, rooted in the land (#landback), that facilitates the achievement of sustainability goals and "rejects anthropocentric and Eurocentric understandings of land and citizenship"[cdlxxiii] as it revitalizes Indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

III. "A thief is a thief, a theft is a theft": recognizing 'rights' and education alongside Ixil traditional governance structures as tools to defend territory

What the October 2019 exhibition in Cotzal also documented was this revitalization movement committed to decolonizing Ixil knowledge systems in defense of the Ixil territory, educating and mobilizing the population to claim and enforce their Indigenous rights. While casting aside peacekeeping instruments like the ILO Convention 169 may have been effective for corporations like Enel initially, deferring conflicts over rights to prioritize neoliberal development, social movements in the region have gained experience fighting these corporations and are honing popular defense tactics, reassembling Indigenous governance structures and sharing lessons learned in the process. Despite the eventual outcome of the hydroelectric project, the main focus of the exhibition was on the (re-)formation of Indigenous structures of government, the *Alcaldia Indigena*[cdlxxiv], a positive result in response to the violation of Ixil rights to consultation and unequal structures of governance that permitted its entry.

The figure of the Ixil *Ancestral Authority* emerged around this specific role, to defend the territory, one that, as Don Ajmag defines according to food sovereignty, also specifies "the space where one cultivates":

> "On the other hand, we [ancestral authorities], yes, we can confront the state in defense and go through the mandates that are there. It is what the grandparents have given us. The day that we no longer do that then we fall into error. … this territory is one of communal lands. … So that is why we are tasked with defending them. One of the roles that we have

is the defense of the territory. The defense of the 'land', here there is a difference. The

land is the space where one cultivates, but the territory is everything that is torn off from

that definition[, the land does not stand alone] in the Ixil understanding. That is the

mandate that our grandparents gave us. In other words, when they give us *la barra*[143]*,*

that we cannot be above or override the constitution, they tell us in words, 'you are going

to defend peace, maintain harmony, and be an example before the people. You are going

to defend our lands'. When one receives this mandate, well, at least I review myself and

various others what it means. It would be to stand on the limits we set and defend

ourselves. Little by little one goes understanding that is the role that they have given. So

in a few words, the great work that the *Alcaldia Indigena* office does is an inter-

revolution with the state [on the definition of territory]. That is, we have to coordinate,

not subordinate to the orders of the state. The public ministry, the supreme court of

justice, the ministry of education, some ministries that the state has, that we have to

dialogue as equals."

From expositions like this one and others in the community that educate the Ixil about their

Indigenous *Pueblo* rights, many Ixil know of international and national instruments designed to

protect their rights as Indigenous Peoples. Regarding specifically the right to consultation, as

outlined in ILO Convention 169 and the UNDRIP agreement, Don Ajmag mentioned the

obligation of projects to consult the community, the failure to do so as a violation of Indigenous

community rights. As his words indicate, grassroots movements that restore these authorities in

Indigenous territories also share its networks to educate it about their rights:

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[143] Indigenous authorities such as the Maya Ixil in Guatemala are entrusted with a *barre* during their tenure that
serves as a symbolic representation of their authority.

"On the subject of consultation, for example, if the Ixil People are not consulted when a megaproject enters, we tell them our rights were violated. Ask, consult, [but we] return with their same law. Right now, we have forced three hydroelectric projects not to be completed in the Ixil Territory because we make use of this. We compel the state that there are applications. It is a bit of the strength that we have, let's say, that there is recognition in the courts for that. In the Ixil case, jurisprudence has gained on the subject of consultations when there are already three *amparos*[144], similar or dis-similar, they become law, so lawyers say. I learned those terms. It collects jurisprudence and can be applied to any indigenous town in Guatemala. We distribute copies to friends. When a company arrives in your territory, this forces them to make a consultation."

Having lost some of the pieces of former Maya Ixil governance systems, Don Ajmag references a responsibility of the Maya Ixil systems to try to relearn what consultation meant according to their own '*Ixil* philosophy', to find out how to be accountable to multiple generations according to Ixil knowledge traditions:

"How do we see the topic of consultation from our Ixil philosophy? We have to adapt it to that of our [traditions]—how did our grandparents consult? Because here they consult daily but what type of consultation do they do? It is not a consultation of raising your hand, this is not a consultation. It is not something [simply] registered in your notebook.

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[144] An *amparo* is defined by Kurtenback, Reder, and Riplinger (2024: 5) as "a specific legal procedure of constitutional rank that permits reaction to the excesses of power. It emerged as a protective mechanism in Latin America and facilitates every citizen being able [to] resort to this instrument when complaining about threatened and actual violations of his or her rights, also by state agents."

It is our consultation as Indigenous Peoples, [but] how do you do that? It is this that we are also investigating ourselves. As they clearly say, I'm not that old to know many things. What they have learned is along the way, it is with our grandparents. When I say grandparents, I don't mean it only genetically. The Ixil grandfathers and grandmothers, how the ancients have taught them things. So, I don't know this issue of the resolution of conflict, we resolve [in ways of our tradition and grandparents/ancestors]."

As the Ixil traditional governance structures are 'parallel' but in practice must defer to municipal government, the authorities and the mobilizations that they support must continue to garner strength in other ways to topple hegemonic unequal and oppressive power structures of the colonial State. Funneling into a small room in the village of Xeputul I's modest auxiliary community space in late 2019, a group of Universidad Ixil students convened with elders and those who lived through centuries of violence next to *Finca* San Francisco (Batz 2022) to learn about the community's resilience in the face of the power plants and to bolster such efforts with their support. After opening the session in traditional ceremony, community elders began recounting some of the trauma and violence inflicted upon the community— from the establishment of the initial *Finca* in the coffee plantation boom of the 19th century (Gibbings 2020; Konforti 2022: 745-746), to its predecessor, Enel's hydroelectric power plant, today. Stories are truncated by explanations of the clear, consistent community efforts to navigate structures of systematized exclusion, from the complex legal code in Spanish to corporations that gain licenses for massive financial profits from their lands without their consent.

Maintaining themselves here and staying physically *on the land,* the presence of the community on its soils continues to anchor a resistance and resilience, one of the most significant successes the Ixil can claim here[cdlxxv] as they continue to self-organize. For the Ixil, "all of the mountains have their [people]", as one woman, Dona Tx'I', expressed. Living in reciprocity from the Ixil more-than-human identity, living on their ancestral lands the Ixil also keep relationship with their mountains, "the most sacred of all, of all that we have".

After soliciting support and assistance for help from an international community[cdlxxvi] (Figure 52) without success, the Xeputul I elders' parting message to the student group drew upon the same self-organizing that produced some small success from protests in 2011: "We share this information with you because

Figure 52 (above): Efforts to contact the international community brought the Ambassador to the United States to Cotzal in February 2011 to try to convince negotiation efforts along in the then ongoing conflict between Enel and the community.

maybe you all can do something about this, so we share the information to you, students."

Education, particularly around themes of human rights, is another slow but effective measure that elders and concerned residents of Xeputul I are hoping for when they contact groups of friends and allies like this one in Ixil sister municipality, Nebaj. The small village continues to self-organize, pairing with the local university's interest to reinvigorate Ixil ancestral traditions in the aftermath of the devastating genocide and to defend with it all aspects of life in their territory, their ancestral ways of knowing, doing, and being still shared across the Ixil Region and materializing its dimensions.

Walking around Xeputul I with the Ixil students after the event, the other foreigner, Joselito[145], a long-time resident in the Ixil Region, polled the group of students about what other efforts could be made to support Xeputul I. Some of the students were themselves residents of neighboring villages. Joselito reiterated to the group that the strategy of violence had been tried, with less than successful results[cdlxxvii]. Suggesting other ideas, Joselito pointed out the reason the students were are all gathered together, "what do you all do here in the University?". A thoughtful pause rested between group members next to the sound of our footsteps plodding along the dirt road. "The *Finca* is a thief!" Joselito burst into the silence opened up. "It doesn't have land, the *Finca*— it robbed it! Make a study, you have to come do a study to tell us findings about climate change in this region because it is them who is endangering us, isn't it? Who is going to come [help] from all of this?", he continued. Further discussion about the kind of work the students will do to write their theses in the university identified a route to document the changes the *finquero* and Enel have inflicted upon the region, now for generations. Joselito continued:

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[145] Josito was assassinated shortly a few months after these words, likely for his activism doing this kind of work with Indigenous Guatemalan communities.

"so a thief is a thief—the robbery can happen 100 years ago, 10 years ago or 5 minutes ago but you learn from this. In Guatemala it is difficult because up to the president are thieves, the mayor, you can only vote for thieves. But this is where you have to start, from zero. If you yourselves doubt that the land is of Cotzal then you won't achieve your goal. First, we have to be all in agreement that this, this is the communal land of Cotzal. You have to start reporting who is the thief. Then you have to continue. Maybe your child will get justice, but to get back [your territory] maybe it takes ten years. With a backpack you can run away and hide it—the [*finqueros*/landowners] did not put something in a backpack. They stole land! So it is easier. He's just right here. The thief cannot just pass all of his days right next to you!"

Joselito summarized:

"Why do we fall? Because we don't have a plan. So then here we come and say that we don't want anything [of the project] here and they give you a little more [money]. But what you all want is not money. It is the river. This doesn't have a price."

As the bus engine sputtered to a start, the conversation was cut short as the group prepared to leave. Standing next to the power plant's containment pond at the top of the now desecrated mountain in the final stop of our tour, Joselito posted one final question to the group before boarding the bus to leave. A simple question without an easy answer:

"you have spoken a lot about the problem and all of the issues with Enel, but what do you want? What is the solution? What is the petition you are making? I speak about us organizing ourselves to confront them, but confront for what? What is the solution to all these problems?".

While the student's answers varied from 'leave some of the energy here for us' to 'reforestation', "it would have been beneficial for us if they gave us a house, if they gave us energy, if they gave us a chance to study Spanish, but nothing. [There has been] no benefit at all [for us]". The general theme of benefitting from changes within the community was clear. One message that resonated within the group and seemed to stitch these struggles at the village level together across the Ixil community came from the reply: "we are forming ourselves to defend el Pueblo [Ixil]".

IV. Direct action and self-organizing, the defense of territory as a defense of life

In the same month[cdlxxviii] as the exhibition, I was invited by my friend Cornelio to attend an *assemblea* he helped facilitate in the Ixil Region's municipality of Chajul, giving yet another dimension to that collaborative effort defending the *Pueblo* Ixil (Figure 53). The event was organized by communities and was premised to address the topic of defending the territory, its title '*defensa del territorio*'.

On the way into the meeting, I met a man named Lu who spoke to me about his understanding of the mandate of this, the sixth and last reunion of this particular group: "to study protected areas".

A study that arose in response to a stimulus from the outside, Lu spoke, like many of the others, of a 'They' "taking our communal lands" and "not letting us [access] them"[cdlxxix]. Demonstrating to me the effectiveness of the previous six sessions, Lu iterated the point of the *assemblea*: "for this reason we are standing up to study where is the decree, the article which states these things. [Because] there is no article. You cannot sell our [communal] lands."

Having brought myself to this group of Ixil farmers and their varied supporters after Cornelio's invitation, I posed a few questions to Lu to understand the nature of the issue which I had been given only brief context for when I was invited. "Who is providing you with the institutional articulation to meet together, CONAP[cdlxxx]?". Lu gave an indignant reply

> "No. It's that we are in opposition to CONAP. What's going on is that the problem with
> them is that they have sold the land, the protected area, to the *empresa* [Enel] as well. For
> this, we have taken issue with their sale of our lands without our consultation. This is
> why we are rising up together. Various people and local affiliates with the [Catholic]
> Church have helped us to make these six meetings that we have had, with an agenda in
> each, and now we have our demands against [them]."

Resolute about his words, Lu excused himself to take a seat inside.

Figure 53: The Defensa del Territorio Assemblea on October 25, 2019.

Finding Cornelio in the event, I relayed information to him from Lu, wanting to understand more about the content and motivations of the group's previous six sessions. My questions prompted a longer response about the history of the conflict. From their perspective and as internal witnesses to the struggle, Cornelio cited a lack of regard for the 18 existing communities in the area who, like those in Cotzal impacted by Palo Viejo, were not consulted before the declaration of Chajul's protected area which has subsequently been "given … over to a company"[cdlxxxi].

Attesting to the power of grassroots efforts to mobilize in defense of shared values, culture, and ways of life, the simplification of 'territory' into quantifiable and proprietary natural resources that took away food and homes for many of those in attendance brought the community together in this defense of communal Ixil territory. Equipped with knowledge on topics such as "climate change" and "proper land management", Cornelio shared with me that upon his arrival to the region before the internal armed conflict he originally brought these terms forward for emphasis to local people in the region but received little traction or interest from locals on them. Poncho emphasized their role as facilitators, learning their roles to support the underlying processes of self-organization that have identified community leaders as those who rise to the occasion of the task, articulating that task according to community demands: "Like many projects, [funders] come and say 'we're going to do this' but sometimes people [in the community] don't feel it, don't care about that. So when the people [of the communities] come, what matters is that process [of how they self-organize to meet the goal]." In the conflict and resistance that arose from the declaration of Visis Cabá as a biosphere reserve, the community had demonstrated the processes of community consultation, showing how communal mechanisms, already in place, held the community together as such, without hierarchies. Cornelio elaborated:

> "When I talk about leaders, we are talking about social leaders, leaders also chosen by the community. They are there. I have only made community. This, to me, gave us our window to enter the community network. Not only plans but strategies; strategies is what we do. When we go to enact that, that strategy, when I get to work with something that they are interested in, they themselves bring themselves together. They approached us

with these initiatives because they bring themselves together. They have summoned themselves here."

The Ixil simply needed help to articulate themselves, in Cornelio's words:

> "This year the structure was already made to apply to their communities. Each leader informs their community because we had worked with the leaders, communicating with the people what needs to be communicated from the leaders of the community."

Adapting an approach receptive to community interests, Cornelio told us that the community approached him in 2018 about their interest in having him help them to create what he referred to as "communitary regulations". Designing their own rules and regulations amongst themselves as they arose through their own traditional and inclusive process of consultation, Cornelio and Poncho provided assistance with institutional support and other simple logistical issues like navigating Spanish language barriers[cdlxxxii]. Cornelio signaled that it was here where he and others affiliated with the Catholic church began to offer counsel on rights, human rights in particular, from "*defensa del territorio*" discussions.

Defense of communal territory against the Reserve brought the different impacted villages together through these resistance efforts that evolved in a snowball effect, picking up supporters and momentum through processes of self-organization ongoing since the initial declaration of the Reserve in 1997. Forming into six events to educate the community about their rights as Indigenous Peoples, network amongst one another, and explore legal instruments available like

the eventual filing of an amparo in 2022, attendance at the October 2019 *assemblea* event was sizable, diverse, and representative of a corner of the Ixil region where communities were being threatened with eviction from their homes and *milpas* by the recently designated protected area, the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve[146]. Identities were named in the read-aloud role call and public greeting period of the event[cdlxxxiii]. The meeting itself was also an important assembly point for networking these issues for the community as people were brought together toward common goals to protect it. A testament to the self-assembling processes Poncho and Cornelio described, when given support to articulate and self-organize in a space around themes important to the Ixil community, the defense of Ixil territory as the physical space to practice *tiichajil* lifeways[147] central to Ixil identities was a central and obvious first concern.

Organized without formal funding, simply help from Cornelio and Poncho to secure a venue, the event showcased the structures of community organization in action that, more often than not, only interact with the State when they must defend themselves from it[cdlxxxiv].

Beyond navigating vast and exclusive structures of the State[cdlxxxv], grassroots defense movements like this one must be able to articulate their notions of territory through their struggles according to rules and norms of the colonial State, one which does not recognize processes implicit to communal land tenure schemes and their 'owners' who live on the lands that are governed by the same collective. A speaker from a local organization in the meeting summarized the injustices the Ixil face for simply the maintenance of their ancestral territory:

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[146] This case is the one documented in Chapter IV, which also points to further dispossession for the purposes of extractivist industries, hydroelectric power plants included.
[147] This is discussed in detail in Chapter VI but is synonymous with Ixil definitions of food and seed sovereignty.

"We are seeing here that the number one problem in our territory remains the authorization of communal lands as a protected area, but [we] gave the name. Our grandparents and ancestors called it Visis Cabá. This is a society-level problem. They [our ancestors] managed to defend our territory and into today we have been fighting. They are taking our territory and no one says anything, no one defends us, no one defends the forests. Think about it, there are 2 companies that are generating these problems and there are others that are exploring rivers for [more] profits in this town…"

As the work of Lyons (2023: 72) comments from the context of Colombia, territory itself can be identified as a victim, indigenous definitions of it "grounded in diverse modes of knowing and being [that] unsettle liberal humanist conceptions of victimhood, crimes, and harm". As the scale of inequalities in these territories and their manifestation in the patchy anthropocene[cdlxxxvi] (Tsing, Matthews, and Bubandt 2019: S186) is shared by many, movements like those in Cotzal and Chajul to protect communal lands that produce food and seed sovereignties in Indigenous territories are also finding one another in what are shared struggles. Looking at the *campesinx-a-campesinx* self organizing dynamics of the 'defensa del territorio' movement as Indigenous Peoples find collaborators regionally through shared struggles to articulate their more-than-human 'indigenous' identities, in the following section I document one march across the west of Guatemala into the city at its national palace to show how these movements gather further support through the building of a shared territorial body. Drawing upon Maya notions of territory as a collective platform where issues of exploitation and extractivism emerge as a shared trauma

since colonial periods, shared Maya more-than-human identities mobilize the politics of *feminismo comunitario* to demand justice.

V. Scaling and the defense of territory as mobilizing performances from *campesinx-a-campesinx* networks

While the Maya movement and its social mobilizations may have lost momentum in the 1990s after the signing of the peace agreement (Yagenova 2006), continued local cohesion and advocacy from resilient Maya community structures (Way 2016) have given a foundation for the Indigenous and peasant environmental justice movements (Copeland 2023) that now fight extractivist exploitation in the same territories. The energy and strength of a collective effort previously from pan-Maya identities and an Indigenous movement in Guatemala have given ample ideological and ontological foundation to locate a defense of other-than-human lives by citing localized Indigenous territorial defense struggles that tether Peoples such as the Ixil to their lands for survival. Also learning through the successes of movements that came before[cdlxxxvii], mobilizations of the mid-2010's against the 2014 Monsanto Law and 2015 protests that brought the resignation of Guatemalan President Otto Fernando Pérez Molina among these (Annex II: vii), Indigenous and other land and water defense movements at the local level have honed strategies through successes gained both locally and regionally through direct actions[cdlxxxviii]. Reciprocating energy and resources between the different scales, local movements have allied with regional partners over shared grievances that, through the amplification of local struggles, reinforce and empower multiple levels of the fight for territory against extractivist alliances in Guatemala.

I participated[cdlxxxix] in one national march, *Marcha de la Dignidad por la Vida y Justicia,* in defense of life and territory recognizing these synergies that began on May 7, 2019. Though not unique, marches like these have happened with some frequency in Guatemala (see also Alonso-Fradejas 2015) since the 2000s (Copeland 2023). The march began in Guatemala's second largest city, Xela, and marched roughly 200 kilometers until the country's capital, Guatemala City. A several-hundred-strong stream of *campesinxs* and '*defensores'* of "*the land, water, territory*", we walked the distance together, blocking lanes of highway traffic along the way. As also seen in the protests against the Monsanto Law (see Annex II: vi) and 2023 protests in favor of respecting the vote for *Semilla Movimiento*, both led by the same actors (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023), this method of resistance has been practiced and proven very effective in recent years to force attention to the demands of an otherwise marginalized and ignored cohort in the Guatemalan population. This march, a demonstration against nationwide corruption and impunity in Indigenous territories walked with signs and chants from thousands of rural and mostly Indigenous Guatemalans to demand dignity for life and justice against those threatening it.

Walking some 8 or more hours on the Pan-American highway per day, cars and trucks were forced to ebb slowly past in a single remaining lane of travel as the Indigenous patchwork of Maya *indumentaria* of *campesinxs* from Guatemala's highlands blocked major transportation arteries across the country (Figures 54-58) and made their discontent and sentiments heard publicly. From May 1 to May 8, an otherwise neglected populace used the same methods of direct action as those from the Maya Ixil in Chajul[148] and Cotzal at the regional level to force the

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[148] The protests against the Biosphere Reserve are documented in detail in Chapter IV.

attention of oppressors at the top of the State's unequal power structures to pay attention to the very basic demands of the '*defensa del territorio*' embodied movements. Similarly, many of the same actors participated in them. Causing urban residents and others in automobiles to slow, each taking their turn to read the signs of marches to understand the cause of the heavy urban traffic, demands from the rural populace are spread, here also, *campesinx-a-campesinx*. Playing music and leading chants to express clearly discontent to listeners, protest speakerphones repeated phrases on banners and signs of the march, initiating call-and-response with the crowd to communicate messages across the body politic while causing friction between social classes that cannot be ignored[cdxc].

Figure 54 (above): Sign of an organizing truck of the march reads: "March of Dignity for Life and Justice: Men and women of the rural areas and the city against this model of corruption and impunity"

Figure 55 (right): The march into Guatemala City

Marching by day and sleeping on the side of the road by night, as our group of Ixil from Nebaj, Chajul, and Cotzal merged with the march, speakerphones could be heard blasting the question to marchers on this, the fourth day: "Are we tired *compañeros*[149]?". A strong chorus response retorted, "no!", in traditional call-and-response style. In a feedback of energy from the march, their strong reply was a welcome start to the day for our group arriving from a middle-of-the-night and several-hour bus ride through mountain passes to arrive at the junction before sunrise. Marchers were asked "and from where do we come from? And from where are we going? And

Figure 56 (left): march stopped at the side of the highway to rest

Figure 57 (right): Marchers on Day 7 as the March enters Guatemala City, a road sign alerting cars of a "Campesino Bloqueo", Campesino Blockage, some indication of the size of the march as road signs signal to automobiles a reason for delays.

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[149] The best English translation for this might be somewhere between partners, peers, companions, friends and colleagues.

why are we marching?". The questions received various replies, "for life and justice", "we are marching for life!", "we are marching for water, we are marching for the land, we are marching for the territory!".

Not even the only Maya Ixil at the march, a previous group of Maya Ixil joined the March at the Pan-American highway juncture to Santa Cruz de Quiché. Their '*El Pueblo* Ixil' sign declared the Ixil People present in the march (Figure 58), as many others had similarly fashioned[cdxci], helping

Figure 58 (above): Sign held by the Ixil reads: "The Ixil Pueblo: Present in the march".

to establish amongst marchers and onlookers the more specific Indigenous identities articulating themselves clearly.

Speaking with the media (ALBATV 2019), Amalia Mejia of the Guatemalan organization FUNDEBASE stated the intentions of the march as not only to defend Indigenous territories, but to demonstrate publicly in front of corruption and violence from the Guatemalan state, a further demonstration and claim to the rights of Indigenous people and their cosmological perspectives in the country:

> "For our brothers and sisters political prisoners who defend the territories that defended
> life, who defend the land, but also vindicating the rights of social organizations,
> vindicating the struggles of the organizations' struggles and that is why we are here in the

streets. We have left Xela, shouting our [voices] against corruption, against impunity, against violence by this state that exists here in Guatemala."

Spreading awareness and decrying corruption, impunity, and injustice, the signs of the march are different but through them emerge definitive shared themes of a politics of regrowth and life articulated by *feminismo comunitario*. Exemplary of those, Ixil signs in the march demand justice and dignity for Indigenous People whose basic rights and lifeways are continuously under threat; denounce corruption from public officials and big business in the Ixil Región making illicit deals to disadvantage the local Indigenous community; and make pleas to allow the now disbanded CICIG, an independent investigatory body created during the Peace Accords following the internal armed conflict, to continue with its mandate investigating and trying corruption cases in the country[cdxcii].

Protesting abuses of power, Ixil signs in the march echo similar discontent as expressed by protests in front of their local municipalities.

Though identified by the name of a resistance movement that dates back to the internal armed conflict, members of the 12 communities under the threat of dispossession by the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve are another group of many Ixil at the march. Called the

Figure 59 (above): Maize depicted symbolically on the banner of the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPR).

Comunidades de Población en Resistencia- Sierra (CPR- Sierra) (see Figure 59 for CPR banner in the march), since the formation of these communities in early 1980 (IACHR 1994: n.p.) they have defended Ixil Territory with their performances demanding justice. Living through the worst of the violence in the internal armed conflict as they received army attacks also by helicopter (IACHR 1993), the CPR groups maintain a very distinct political positionality on food sovereignty in the Ixil Region as their defense of their lands has not wavered.

Q'esla, a member of one of the local community cooperatives and resident of the CPR-Sierra had been with the March since its second day. Managing with the Spanish between us, Q'esla was one of the first people I met in Nebaj in the first six months I volunteered at the community cooperative. On the Junta Directiva of the cooperative, Q'esla made the dedicated 3-hour journey several times a month to reach the collective from his village, happy to make the trip more often when the facility needed to be looked after. When I made the trek to visit his family and *milpa* in his village he referred simply to the CPR-Sierra as "la Resistencia". From his reference to the defense of territory that he continues to live everyday in his territorial lands

Figure 60 (above): Standing behind Q'esla in the march. Image depicts symbols in the crowd of the march representing Maya cosmology and the Maya calendar.

farming the *milpa*, and his mobilization in national protests to extend that defense across Guatemala, 'the Resistance' for Q'esla is not only a reference to the CPR-Sierra that established his village and that he remains a part of. For Q'esla, the defense of territory is not an obtuse or

theoretical construct but an embodied resistance of the more-than-human that Indigenous

campesinxs like him care for and perform the protections of in every moment of every day.

Having survived the violent assault upon Ixil lands in the genocide, Ixil like him who join these

movements to defend their territory have lived through years of violence and multiple waves

enduring the colonial hegemon in a single lifetime. Now an 70-80-year-old grandfather, Q'esla

does not just defend his territory at home. As he marches in the crowd 200 kilometers for justice

it is clear his politics of *feminismo comunitario* fight to protect sovereignties of the *tiichajil*

lifeway across space and time.

As the mass of land, water, and life defenders pour into the national plaza in Guatemala City,

some 118km later from the point we joined, speeches begin to articulate in front of the national

palace a new collective indigenous identity, both Guatemalan and Maya using a combined term

GuateMaya. The 'GuateMaya Pueblo', specifically, pre-Columbian roots are identified as a

common origin for the defenders of a more-than-human lifeway. Speakers weave together the

past, present, and future with this identity inscribed in writings of ancestors from the Maya

sacred book the *Popul Vuh*[cdxciii].

Blended into the crowd beyond the colorful patchwork of traditional *indumentaria*, many

symbols from Maya cosmology and the Mayan calendar materialize the discursive gesturing on

banners (Figure 60), maize, mountains, and the other-than-humans depicted in Maya

iconography and current symbolic depictions held also by the Maya Ixil (Figure 59).

These cosmological perspectives appeared in speeches of the march as other-than-human agencies were invoked by other Maya groups from the march, specifically that of the Territorio Mam and wider Quiché region. A speaker from one of these groups cited in his speech several specific nonhuman ancestors by their names in Maya Mam or Maya K'iche' as he encouraged the crowd to recognize the endurance of multi-generational[cdxciv], multi-species efforts against an '*oligarchia criolla*', or colonial era-linked oligarchy. Arriving to the march not by "personal energies," these multispecies communities of Maya ancestors gave counsel, permissions, and vital energy, guiding previous Maya generations that passed down the knowledges of today:

> "we were able to talk to the mountains in each prayer. In every day we walk we manage to talk to the stones to ask for permission in our path, we manage to talk to the rivers to say that you supply us vital liquid to enable us to arrive. We speak of our ancestors asking for energy because some have left us an example of [how to carry forward this legacy]."

From the main plaza of Guatemala's capitol city, the march concluded with a reading from its manifesto, entitled 'the Manifesto of the March for Life and Justice'. Making clear the identities and origins of the mass, the speeches culminated many days of walking to speak directly to and assert their voices in front of this '*oligarchia criolla*' at the seat of political power in Guatemala's Palacio Nacional de la Cultura (National Palace of Culture). Their words declare that they will "make themselves visible", "defend [their] territory", and "reclaim their rights":

"This march begins at Xela Hu No (a maya name) where our grandfathers and grandmothers started the Resistance with them, we pay homage to our ancestors who confronted the invader with the *encomendero* or those who happened to be in our territory. We are ancestral authorities, communities in resistance, indigenous and peasant organizations, student movements, youth, women, artists of diversity, feminists, social organizations of various kinds, community and alternative media, and people who dream and fight for a change. We ask from different places in Ximuleo and in our walk we have met, we have shared our thoughts and decided to unite our steps to make ourselves visible because this system does not take us into account. It makes us invisible and we only count when they persecute us for defending our territory, when they accuse us of being criminals and troublemakers, for mobilizing and demanding our rights, or we are a number of votes for corrupt politicians who violate rights or criminals to loot the state."

Identifying themselves as both an individual and collective mass, they decry the injustice of a government allied with megaprojects and business "invading their territories", deciding to march against "the persecution sustained against men and women who are *defending life*":

"We carry out this march through individual and collective effort...we have decided to walk, the persecution that continues against men and women who defend life, justice and human rights and react to misery, the permanent violation of rights, the absence of health, education, services and basic needs, the majority of the population and that cannot be an answer as long as it remains in the palm of manipulation and dispossession that invades our territories with mining, hydroelectric and large constructions, which benefit a few

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families. As long as impunity and corruption of politicians, officials, and businessmen continue, which is typical of the resources that come from our taxes, these serious needs cannot be resolved."

"We have united our steps", they announce, "rejecting the criminal alliance that actually has control of the three powers of the state" and brings further violence and harm to "[their] Pueblos" with their undemocratic methods; "the point is to create greater conditions for the dispossession of towns, communities, and individuals"[cdxcv]. Marching in order to "transform from the root", they identify this other political power by "the power of the *Pueblo*" as that which sustains the marchers and that which protests the abuses of its alternative:

> "…and to which it is necessary to transform from the root so that the postulate that the power that comes from the people is a reality. For us, democracy came out more from elections and change of government. You cannot see true democracy in a country where collective and individual rights are constantly violated; where an extractivist and agribusiness model is imposed by force; where young people are looked at with suspicion for the simple fact of being young; where there is a permanent exclusion of women and indigenous peoples; where the basic needs of the population are not satisfied because resources are diverted for the enrichment of politicians, officials, and corrupt businessmen."

The manifesto cites the shared grievances of an Indigenous population fighting injustice, corruption, and murder at the hands of the Guatemalan state, the same state with a mandate to

protect its population. Small progress made in many small, hard walked steps, the speeches

conclude with messages of hope and achievement over the ability to unite together across

differences of gender, age, and space in the country, cooperation and coordination across

Indigenous perspectives to "walk together" as its *own* power of the collective: "But above all, we

walk together, men and women, of different ages and territories…"

Like the Palo Viejo protests of Cotzal, the Monsanto protests nationally from 2014, and many

other mass mobilizations that counted the Ixil among their participants in Guatemala, the

performed methods from the Marcha de la Dignidad por la Vida y Justicia draw attention to the

network of Indigenous people and *campesinxs* in Guatemala decolonizing their 'territories' with

notions of food sovereignty that protect all of the network of life implied by Indigenous defenses

of 'territory'. Beyond the physical territories of each Indigenous group in the march, the actors in

it and represented by it share connections to more-than-human kin (Haraway 2016), historical

networks of care, cosmological perspectives in their view of the world, and a vision of a future

that is fundamentally rooted in these more-than-human alternative pathways of development that

oppose historically unequal and extractivist hierarchical structures that drain energy and

abundance from community reciprocities built into the living networks of their long stewarded

ancestral and territorial lands. The methods of the march demonstrate the more-than-human

sociality of these social movements, contagious across many asynchronous mediums as well, as

local movements nest into regional movements like this one, and feed hope and resources from a

strong larger collective into local defense of life and territory efforts that individual groups in

their situated territories must battle[cdxcvi].

From the march, a closing speech congratulated the diverse crowd of Guatemalan marchers for the "different expressions and organizations of the social movement present" as could be seen physically in what he cited as a "multitude of organizations in social movement". With identities proudly displayed on banners of marchers, the speaker drew reference to the diversity of the movement, echoing the march's most common refrain, common in Latin America and heard throughout the many days of marching, that here all become a "*el pueblo unido, jamás será vencido*"[150]. Bringing those words into action by "[d]oing the practice that the united people will never be defeated," he reminds the crowd that the participation of all generations of people in this fight is important in the formation of the group as "*a pueblo en resistencia*"[151]. He closes, addressing *compañeros*, partners, to say that the heat of these actions pulls a drop, but it is with 'the mentality', effectively a becoming or being of the rematriation process, where many drops are brought to make a torrent of substantial change.

While it may be easy to mistake or overlook the challenges and battles of Indigenous Peoples, land defenders and caretakers as marginalized in political discourses of Guatemala, the energies of these movements flare up in marches and moments of particular direct action but their energies are everpresent in lived performances of the more-than-human as territory throughout it. Upon my return to Nebaj two days later I found banners hanging in Nebaj's main plaza that (Figure 61) read "Territorial Ixil Meeting: the defense of territory is the defense of life", "Recovery of Lands and Territories Dispossessed of the Ixil People". A small crowd was gathered to hear speeches. For those who battle inequality in its many forms everyday, across many generations, the more-than-human Indigenous territorial body, in its various assemblages,

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[150] English translation: "a united community [that] will never be defeated".
[151] English translation: "a people/community in resistance".

is a place literally and metaphorically sustaining and nourishing their energies toward change. These are the movements that do the work to make the energy available for the materialization of a 'new spring' from the seeds sown by a politics of *feminismo comunitario*.

Figure 61a, b, c, and d (above): Event in Nebaj's main plaza on May 10, 2019, two days after the national Marcha de la Dignidad por la Vida y Justicia ends. Banners read "Encuentro Territorial Ixil: la defense del territorio, es la defensa de la vida" "Recuperacion de las Tierras y Territorios Despojadas al Pueblo Ixil".

VI. Conclusion

Walking back to the bus after the meeting with residents of Xeputul I in Cotzal, I also spoke to the students that day in October 2019 about the message they received from the elders and what they had in mind to do about it. To Meq', a young man who had shared memories and stories from his grandparents on the atrocities of the massacre at the river we passed earlier in the day, I asked if memories of the histories with the *Finca* and the war were still shared in his community.

"Yes" he told me, "between us [the community], we take it until our deaths". Responding to my next question about what can be done, if anything, in response to what we heard from the elders, he turned to me and the others in the group who overheard my question to make the point: "Yes. Yes, we can do something. It is my hope to *recuperate* this land to our people. If I don't achieve this, my children will one day. I have this hope." Using the word '*recuperar*' in Spanish, Meq's reply spoke not only of a return of the land to its original caretakers, but also of the process of restoration and healing that deploys the politics of *feminismo comunitario* to benefit both in the justice of rematriation. Knowing Meq' for his work in the region dedicated to doing just this (Figure 62), I know he does not say these words lightly. Like many in his community, the 'seeds' of change germinating in the new spring of the *Movimiento Semilla*, are connected to these aspirations for equality from localized defense of territory movements like those documented in this chapter from the Ixil Territory. From Aguilar-González *et al.*'s (2018: 248) notion of nested conflictivity, the appropriation of environmental space is suggested as "overlapping with the lack of recognition of indigenous land rights and land concentration", notions of territory implicit in those definitions.

Figure 62: President elect Bernardo Arévalo in a visit to the Ixil Region, wearing Ixil indumentaria. Photo credit: Meq'

National political movements such as *Movimiento Semilla* provide evidence of how wide-reaching the defense of land and territory from Indigenous and land defenders has become, decades after the defense of territory emerged as a framing for food sovereignty struggles in

Guatemala. Able to do the revisiting of history to address injustice and move forward, as the public memorials in Nebaj remind residents daily[152] *Movimiento Semilla* is a symbolic, if not also substantive, step to materialize justice from the *campesinx-a-campesinx* processes of organizing central to these movements. Though the success of *Movimiento Semilla* may still be limited by the criminal oligarchic structures of power that remain still unaddressed[cdxcvii], "Guatemala's political winds once again point to the increasing political weight of the Indigenous authorities" (Masek 2023: 344). What remains to be seen is how or if Arévalo and his governing coalition will provide Indigenous peoples with "a long-overdue seat at the table" (ibid.).

Figure 63 (above): Movimiento Semilla's modest headquarters in the Ixil Region in 2019 shortly after the political party officially became one.

Drawing the dissertation to a close, this chapter has aimed to forefront the connections and importance of decades of Indigenous organizing in political processes in Guatemala to decolonize from patriarchal colonial modern structures. As Indigenous *campesinxs* participate in lifeways of rematriation to their Indigenous territories, the politics of *feminismo comunitario* to defend Indigenous definitions of 'territory' also contest attempts to colonize new space with extractive industries that stand to benefit the new settler elite. Connecting to these more-than-

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[152] See Introduction for images and reference on this.

human social movements in defense of Indigenous territories, current President Bernardo

Arévalo's personal history connected to Guatemala's hopeful Ten Years of Spring (Annex II:

viii) that ushered in a period of labor and land reform, one of the biggest if not the biggest issues

for Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala[cdxcviii], could be considered a partnership built from the pre-

figurative, grounded organizing of justice from Indigenous movements[cdxcix].

Using what instruments they have, however, land defense movements are not completely without

their own tools to achieve justice. In the *Ixil Region in* 2021, the communities in Visis Cabá

under threat of dispossession filed an *amparo*[153] against the current municipal mayor. Like his

predecessors, the mayor has been allocating communal lands to private interests, taking a piece

of the profits under the table. Tools such as the writ of *amparo*, continue to provide some small

erosion of the hegemon's power. Timelodged by 10 claimants under coordinated civic action,

another *amparo* at the national level for *Semilla* was a critical tool that paved the way for the

landmark 14 December 2023 decision from Guatemala's Constitutional Court that the January

inauguration of president-elect Arévalo would be guaranteed (Expediente 6175-2023) and a

democracy of the vote enforced (Kurtenback, Reder, and Riplinger 2024: 5). While these tools

are essential legal instruments, the articulation of these struggles as a 'defense of territory' by the

Indigenous and *campesinx* land defenders is a critical foundation of these politics emanating

from Indigenous territories across Guatemala. Repressed by the same structures of colonialism

present in the territory and documented throughout the dissertation, to not recognize their

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[153] The construct of *amparo*, or the suit, action, recourse, or writ of amparo is a legal term similar to the 'injunction' in the United States legal system, that is a specific judicial remedy for the protection of constitutional rights adopted in various forms throughout Latin America. The *amparo* proceeding provides protection for a wide array of rights, including human rights, that can be claimed as a mechanism of jurisdictional constitutionality against harms, threats, or violations where the State or its authorities are the sole culprit (Brewer-Carías 2008). The whole judicial proceeding generally concludes with a judicial order or writ of protection (*amparo, protección or tutela*) which gives it the *amparo* title used here.

influence reflected in *Semilla* or successes of their protests that were the fertile soil *Semilla*

emerged from, would be a further injustice.

A recognition of the foundation of grassroots defense of territory movements that *Movimiento Semilla* has built atop, should not be overlooked as the same actors from local struggles have also led those at the regional level. Appearing prominently on the front lines of the national strike, and not without risk (Figure 64), popular and ancestral Indigenous authorities led the "*paro nacional indefinido*" that began on October 2, 2023, to uphold the democratic decisions of voters in the country, themselves reinstituted through the same "grassroots community mobilization against extractive activities" as the basis for the re-articulation of Indigenous societal and governance structures (Masek 2023: 344). Ixil

Figure 64 (above): Anonymized post on Facebook on September 16, 2023, detailing threats to protesting Indigenous Authorities of Iximulew.

ancestral authorities (*Alcalde Indigena*) are pictured in media on the frontlines of these protests (Figure 65 and 66), the ability to report abuses critical in their success.

Figure 65 (above): Alcalde Indigena maintaining protests in the weeks and months following the September 2023 election result. Photo credit: Anonymous.

As Yagenova and García (2009: 166) conclude, Indigenous Peoples' defenses of their territory and shared ways of life against extractivism have

Figure 66 (above): Photo from Masek (2023: 340) depicting the Maya Ixil ancestral authorities in the protests to defend popular sovereignty and respect the democractic process in Guatemala City on October 9, 2023.

"constructed popular blocs among the local population with sectors of the church, intellectuals, and diverse social classes to build a solid base of popular unity. Leveraging legitimate claims against the state and its legislation by using various forms of law – ad hoc municipal law, community practices (usos y costumbres), and international agreements (ILO Convention 169) – pits growing popular power against that of the central state, which excludes direct democracy. In this way, the correlation of forces between the government and the governed begins to change. The democratization of the state depends on the unity of those who defend their territory and their way of life, and hence on their level of consciousness and political power."

As explained by various more-than-human social movements from Indigenous peoples across the so-called Americas that recognize life as reciprocal, never uni-directional relationships linking species in cooperative interconnected networks, the *defensa del territorio* movements that have arisen and which I encountered in Guatemala, participate in a larger decolonial movement also beyond Guatemalan politics, one that the concept of food sovereignty advocates for: bringing

possibilities to live 'the good life' where Indigenous lifeways do not have to separate a human

from the nonhuman. In Guatemala, the 2014 mobilization against the Monsanto Law, marches

like the Marcha de la Dignidad por la Vida y Justicia, and local solidarity movements like those

from the Ixil Region's Cotzal and Chajul that support these larger movements, and the most

recent mobilization of these movements into mainstream politics as *Movimiento Semilla* in the

2023 Guatemala political election, go beyond individual Indigenous identities to defend the

existence and strength of not only Indigenous rights and concepts of territory. With ontological

perspectives that refuse extractivist projects to convert all forms of life into the structure of

anthropocentric inequalities that impoverish all for the benefit of few, Indigenous understandings

of life as a shared project, inherited and passed down over generations, is a radical politics of

equality.

As heard from the council of Maya Ixil elders in Xeputul I and from conversations between Ixil

about how to come together to fight the same aggressors, Maya Ixil and many others remain

committed to the fight to keep life's projects together with the frame of territory, the site of their

Indigenous food sovereignties that fights an ontological fight against morphing colonial-era

systemic inequalities. Defending the space for Indigenous more-than-human potentialities while

educating and decolonizing from knowledge systems of the oppressor, Indigenous mobilizations

to protect Indigenous lifeways on ancestral lands, with ancestral interspecies networks working

toward shared goals in survival, are seeking to 'rematriate' in a decolonial movement from the

oppressive inequalities that steal life for private profits. These movements, educating beyond just

the situated sites of the definition of these identities, ask for the justice of recognition and

support as their practices are also the same ones that protect a living future through the

relationships of territory that they care for and protect as a part of their more-than-human identities.

The Pan-Maya identity, a regional Indigenous identity, has become a foundation for strengthening a lifeway toward a more-than-human future for many in the country, including for those of the rural *campesinxs* of Guatemala's western highlands where Maya ancestry also references a perspective on reality oppressed by colonialism's legacy for some 500 years. For the Maya Ixil, understandings of 'natural resources' as they are envisioned within global neoliberalism's capitalism of today, have always kept a value of life itself first, respect for *Madre Tierra*. Other-than-human lives for the Maya not only hold a value of food sovereignty against economic hardship and starvation, but these other-than-human lives maintain ecological communities through their presence and provide foundation for the revitalization of Indigenous identities in a larger decolonial movement across the Americas. Bringing together different actors and mobilize international mechanisms to enforce rights for the collective (Elías 2015: 80), the decolonization process also defines and reinforces Indigenous identities as they can grow strength in articulating how is the change for a livable future. Indigenous identities identify territory as they articulate, bringing rise in the decolonization movement to various nested scales of a defense of territory that allows the performed expression of identity from their Indigenous ontological perspectives. Refusing the imported values system of capitalism and neoliberalism that continues to mutate its structures of control to choke profit out of life in various forms throughout Indigenous territories, these threats have also further consolidated a movement of Indigenous identity that mobilizes ontological perspectives that protect their communities, defending water, land, and life itself as part of the body that we share.

From the Zapatista movement of the now autonomous territories of the Zapatistas in Chiapas and southern Mexico who take much of their inspiration and mentoring from indigenous influences in the region (Stahler-Sholk 2010), the Zapatista proverb "They buried us, they forgot that we were seeds…" and other similar metaphors for rebirth and reseeding reappear in these movements, alluding to the power of decolonial movements to restore from more-than-human energies (see Figures 67-69). In Latin America today, none of these Indigenous revitalization movements, defending their territories, stand out more prominently than those attached to the election of *Movimiento Semilla*.
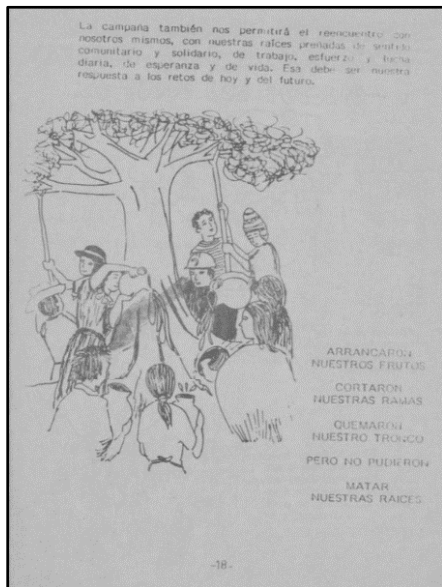

Figure 67: Popular motif of damaging the various parts of the movement, but it will always be reborn from the roots, like a tree. Secretaría Operativa. 1990. Queremos que nos escuchen, que se oiga la voz de nuestros pueblos. Campaña continental: 500 años de resistencia indígena y popular. Series: Folleto Popular, No. 1. 24 pages.
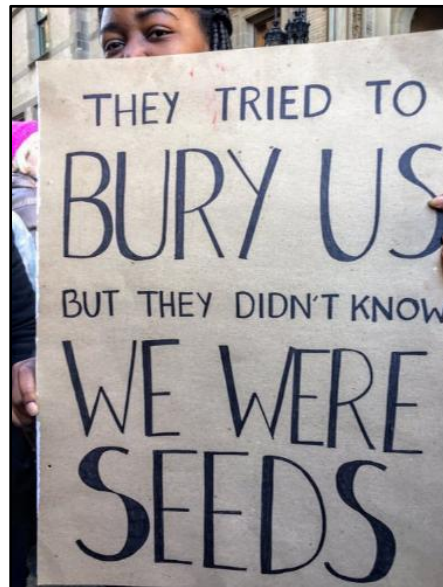

Figure 69: shared metaphors that cross species boundaries, linking plants and humans also appearing in #MeToo January 2018 Global Women's Marches. Sign held by a woman pictured from the New York protest reads "They tried to bury us but they didn't know we were seeds". Photo credit: Barbara Malmet. Twitter. @B52Malmet Jan 20, 2018 10: 08p hashtags: #NYC attitude. ; #WomensMarch2018

Figure 68: Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC) banner at the march reads: "Comieron nuestros frutas, cortaron nuestras ramas, quemaron nuestro tronco, pero no pudieron matar nuestras raíces"

VIII. Conclusion

Biological diversity conservation begins from a place of valuing diversity. Historical and enduring inequalities between human Peoples designed by doctrines of human control and domination that gave rise to protected area conservation models from nation-states, intergovernmental agencies, and international NGOs globally today, do not serve the interests of all in their injustice of inequality and exclusion of more-than-human lifeway designs/worldviews. As I document in Chapter IV with the case of Visis Cabá, adding support to many other examples of people-exclusionary conservation globally, to meet biodiversity objectives, the reparations (Corbera et al. 2021) and healing to address, mend, and restore from the trauma of colonialism and its material inequalities (Collins et al. 2021) is not separate or tangential to the task of biodiversity conservation. Conservation's protected areas are often referred to by Indigenous Peoples as diverse food and life systems that sustain us through their involvement in them. Their labors contribute not only to their own health but to the health of all that is more-than-human, to biodiverse regeneration, and, eventually, to a wealth of abundance for the whole of the living world. From the Ixil's very substantiated, place-based take, this research makes a contribution to the field of 'conservation' that argues from perspective of decolonial multispecies feminist perspective that *Indigenous food systems*, bringing their own biocultural ways of knowing, being, doing, and materializing restoration of the land, are forms of conservation. Recognizing the knowledges, forms of management, care, and scientific contributions of Indigenous Peoples creating biodiversities in their food systems, the best form of biodiversity conservation comes bottom-up from those who have lived for generations stewarding reciprocal relationships across species as traditions of multispecies cycles of

reciprocity.

As the terms decolonial feminist and multispecies intersect in addressing the inequalities of the cultural hegemony designed by the patriarchal-colonial modern global structures, the theoretical framework used in the analysis of the Maya Ixil and their *milpa* food system through the lens of rematriation in this research demonstrates the value of alternative rationalities than that of the nature/culture divide that seeks to own, possess, and linearly harvest energy from, privatizing reciprocities of the public commons for private, controlled domain available for the capitalist system's highest bidder. Focusing on this central point of distinction for biodiversity, the experience of patriarchal-colonial modernity that divides reality according to colonial era European Enlightenment categorizations of a nature|culture divide is an ontological perspective that drives an industrial agricultural model to continue producing anthropocentric lifestyles with uncertain outcomes for biocultural diversity(/'biodiversity').

At the very least, we must diverge from the 'current social metabolism of capital' (Svampa et al. 2022), the 'historical project of capital' (Segato and McGlazer 2018: 208) to create projects that reconstitute community (Wildcat and Voth 2023) by reconstructing more-than-human communities under attack and restoring those dismembered by the colonial and state interventions prescribed by modernization (Segato and McGlazer 2018: 206), addressing the inequalities of marginalized more-than-human communities like the Ixil, not just individual human groups. As "reconstituting the thread of memory and reconnecting the fragments of communal technologies of sociability" (Segato and McGlazer 2018: 210) for Indigenous Peoples includes memory and socialities of a more-than-human world, conservation by the designs of the

bottom-up biocultural diversity conservation model not only is a radical step of justice, but it is also a template for humanity in a more-than-human way of thinking, being, doing, and knowing; to grow back a livable future with humans equally participating in that process. Biodiversity is not separate or apart from humanity, indeed we have not— and Indigenous and western knowledges agree that we could not— exist in an only human world.

In the words of Dakota scholar Kim Tallbear (2016: n.p.) "[t]he decimation of humans and nonhumans in these continents has gone hand in hand. … Our genocide in the Americas included and continues to include our other-than-human relatives". Indeed, near the top of the food pyramid (Bonhommeau et al. 2013) by precarity, the survivance[154] (Vizenor 1999) of humans relies upon the survival of other species as well. Focusing on the politics of inequality furthered by many models of conservation that provide the opposite results, I demonstrate in the dissertation that definitions for conservation matter for creating a future we want. The top-down patriarchal colonial modern conservation models, steeped in colonial structures of inequality, operate with a logic that both jeopardizes our ability to envision a future by devaluing caretakers and knowledges passed across millennia, and furthers threatens more-than-human lives that exist by expanding inequalities that extract the structures of integrity supporting life for the private benefit of a minority of the patriarchal colonial elites of a Global North. Scapegoating accountability for the causes of historical inequality and using the same structures to further its continued disastrous effects, narratives of the climate crisis and mass biodiversity loss that obfuscate the phenomenon's origins do injustice to the millions of smallholder farmers who

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[154] Defined in simple terms by Vizenor (1999: vii): "Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry".

continue to provide the only viable 'restoration' available in the face of always political re-valuations of land. In, thus, an unsustainable loop that consumes an ever-increasing portion of world's geography for a smaller and smaller few benefitting humans, the impoverishment of the more-than-human world to privilege an anthropocentric one, cannot be mediated with an uncritical and inaccurately 'neutral' treatment of a highly political concept like 'conservation' or its opposite in how we produce food.

Stealing not just 'land', as the colonial logic would articulate, for Indigenous Peoples like the Ixil, neocolonial and neoliberal grabs over their ancestral territories also steal food out of their families' mouths and health from all of the more-than-human ecosystem. For this reason, the dissertation contributes to literature around the political movement of food sovereignty to focus on how the Maya Ixil contest the logic of anthropocentric approaches by enacting their alternative, non-anthropocentric, biodiversity conservation models as a practice of tiichajil's relationships of reciprocity and care between humans and other species. Adopting the politics of feminismo comunitario, I demonstrate through the biocultural conservation of the Maya Ixil milpa food system that the defense of more-than-human identity through a defense of food sovereignty in their Indigenous ancestral territory is also a political defense of Indigenous territories and worldviews that address issues of inequality in Guatemala at landscape-scale.

In the chapters focused on this rematriation process in the Ixil Territory, from the *Mercado Campesinos* and the rhizomatic affiliations contained at them, I learned about Maya Ixil food systems, biocultural diversity conservation, and the biocultural restoration ongoing in this one example of connections to land anchoring more-than-human restoration, and healing after

intergenerational colonial trauma (Duran 2019) in the Maya Ixil community. Across political divides, these shared spaces of more-than-human Ixil culture derived from connections to the *milpa* cultivate a re-establishment of traditional forms of knowledge production from the land and the more than human. Highlighting the forms of more-than-human biocultural diversity conservation implicit in the enactment of food sovereignty projects of Indigenous Peoples like the Ixil in Chapter V, I show how existing lifeways of the human conserve and protect biodiversity from place-based Indigenous knowledge systems that have evolved from reciprocities of care in a more-than-human existence.

Broadening and decolonizing from anthropocentric 'sociality' that is jeopardizing life's structures of integrity, the 'more-than-human' knowledges of Indigenous Peoples provide a place to understand how to rematriate also the anthropocent to the specific places and living communities around the Earth. An appreciation for the form of biodiversity conservation performed by Indigenous Peoples living according to their Indigenous knowledge systems provides a place to instrumentalize the process of balancing inequalities by addressing colonial constructs. Doing this work of rematriation through a focus on shared ground, where all of life's forms eat and through better food systems can restore onehealth to the planet globally, in Chapter VI I went into detail about the specific structures of biocultural conservation, spread from land-based decolonial pedagogies, that the Maya Ixil use to engineer their food landscapes for their food sovereignty in the *milpa*. In this chapter, I demonstrated how the Milpa Maya Ixil's guardians, the Maya Ixil, have fought for food sovereignty through its materialization from their ontological and cosmological institutions that also produce more-than-human abundance, biocultural diversity, according to ancestral knowledge systems.

In the final empirical chapter of the dissertation, Chapter VII, I documented the food sovereignty movement in Guatemala as a defense of a place-based identity that is implicit in Indigenous Maya notions of territory. I followed several Maya Ixil in a multispecies ethnography in their territory to draw connection to how the literal and figurative fight to defend territory, as a multispecies and living being that includes the human, is the grassroots foundation across Guatemala that a faction of the political mainstream has recently found common ground and shared historical common goals with. Suffering successive military dictatorships after the U.S.-backed coup de état and then suffering directly decades of violence and a genocide at the hands of the Guatemalan military, for the Ixil[d], the other three targeted Indigenous groups of the genocide[di] (Sanford 2003: 152), and many other Indigenous Peoples of Iximulew who suffered acutely in these years, the motivation to return where the Ten Years of Spring era left off (Annex II: viii) has not faded but ebbs as a constant flow of energy powering the more-than-human and finding windows to fight for justice for those defending it. As the sites of ecological conflict but also most often those hotspots for biodiversity, these energies start from defenses of life and territories of Indigenous Peoples like the Maya Ixil who advocate for all species when they advocate for themselves.

Restructuring global food systems, particularly at the scale noted (DeClerck et al. 2023), requires, quintessentially, this 'cultural' change. The needed changes to global agricultural systems cannot be regarded as simple technological fixes. In a similar parallel, solutions to 'fix' global food systems by addressing issues of industrial agriculture without also fixing the structures of inequality that created them, as suggested by calls for regenerative agricultural

practices and regenerative agroecological systems (ibid.), reproduce harms to 'nature' by reinforcing the same human structures of inequality that endangered them in the first place.

For the Indigenous peoples of the world forced into struggles to defend their immediate human lives and spaces for the multiplicity of others human and other-than-human that compose their territorial communities, these movements are performed in a variety of ways. Where it may be described through stories, the very physical fight to survive the fast-paced change is also a part of the complex reality that Indigenous peoples like the Maya Ixil face in an everyday experience. Imperiled for generations by a human-centered global colonization, the scale of change to jeopardize the complex fabric of life on the planet is registered also in the confluence of these stressors with more palpable struggles that have been transferred culturally across generations, cultures which, while indeed weighted by intergenerational traumas, endure with a commitment to their values systems, still coherent enough to provide energy to revitalization projects that decolonize Indigenous identities and directions for the future. These efforts by communities to defend against the loss of life on the planet in the particular regions where they have lived for generations, I have argued in this dissertation are where solutions to rapid destabilizing change forecasted by continued dependence upon fossil fuels lie. Addressing human social inequality created during a colonial era, is addressing the root of global environmental change. Still identifying as a member of the multispecies communities of place across the planet, immediately and directly through the knowledges and wisdoms of ancestors passed down through generations, the reciprocal lifeways and societal designs of Indigenous Peoples who design food and habitat for a more-than-human is a food sovereignty integral to our survival as a species on Earth. Through these invaluable lived connections to place, biocultural diversity conservation

means the re-learning of how to support life's human caretakers, Indigenous Peoples, who keep the integrity of life's complexity on Earth from their knowledge systems that have accumulated a wealth of knowledge over millennia about how to implement place-d restorations of onehealth. Care, not competition, will allow humans a future on Earth. This is the change, a change in our behavior and perspective on life, one deeply needed in order to preserve relative stability on Earth, that can allow biodiversity on Earth to thrive. Should such messages not be heeded, it is not just the loss of Indigenous wisdom and culture that will be lost but so too do we jeopardize the loss of Earth's living community, in all of its biodiverse richness.

We are all food for someone.

Reciprocities lie at the foundation of food sovereignty as community is built in place, from soil, on land that Indigenous Peoples teach us cannot be owned, only shared and cared for. This reorientation of the human to become a more-than-human can bring both equity, justice, and a healing through realizations that are themselves, through this rematriation, a form of global restoration beyond the human.

We – the more-than-human world—caretake the Earth, and, in reciprocity, She cares for us, feeding us and giving us material from the collective energies of shared abundance as a wealth to survive, to live, fundamentally under the condition of diversity. Diverse and equal. As its scholars articulate and practice, in the restoration of that space is restoration, reparation, recovery, and health for all beings, communally. Thus, through care, this politics is a politics of humans equal to other species in managing Earth's provisional landscapes and food forests, all

living beings providing labor but also sharing wealth from an economy of more-than-human abundance cycling reciprocities through equal distribution from care. Restoring food systems to be places of care is regrowing these embodied relationships across species, providing, therein, an alternative food system to the industrial agricultural model from its new ecologies of power. As the more-than-human is the subject of such systems, the rematriation process regains landscapes of equality from the same diverse food systems that feed humans as these provide the necessary conditions for life also beyond them. The issues with our global agricultural system are not credited to a lack of sufficient food globally, but are made inefficient and problematic from the inequalities they generate of distribution rooted in an anthropocentric design. To have food in the future, a future where environmental conditions will yield even less stable growing conditions, it less important in the project of feeding life what humans can 'take' from their labors. To survive beyond 7 generations, we must understand how ways of knowing that add our energies as 'care' toward the shared project of the survival and abundance of life on Earth can be operationalized.

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X. Annexes

I. Annex I: Methods related to Maya Ixil definitions

i. Defining categories in the research: 'Semilla/land'

Arriving to Nebaj, Guatemala equipped with my research questions about native 'seeds' and the various human and more-than-human connections with them, it became apparent in the first few days of my stay that the Spanish word for seed, '*semilla*', so central to my research, commonly connotated a much more expansive definition than even my initial inquiries had credited. My journey to understand the simple use of the term in the Maya Ixil community opened to me a view of their reality and existence that held relationships among and between living beings as a shared currency, across species, and as a means of organization, belonging, and membership based on a reciprocation of place and shared rootedness to land. Crediting these insights also to the maize seed, a seed that guided my focus to attune my thinking to the more expansive definitions for 'seed' used by its Maya Ixil caretakers, from an attention to the seed and responses to questions about it from the Ixil, I operationalized, from the very beginning of my fieldwork in the Ixil Territory, an attentiveness to multiple layers of meaning and value that is built upon knowledge systems created from and with synergies/energies of a 'more-than-human' community on the land.

A first encounter with the cosmological perspectives of the Maya Ixil that dictate the category of 'seed' came most poignantly from the field when I asked about the 'where' and 'who' of seed exchange. What seemed to me like simple and fundamental questions, questions like 'Where do

you get your seed from?' or 'Who do you get your seed from?', left me reflecting on my use of

Spanish grammar instead of collating responses. 'Am I asking this question properly?' I

wondered as I collected different responses each time I asked, responses that seemed

misinterpretations of my question. In one instance "where did the maize seed come from?",

asked in reference to a specific instance of an identified exchange, gave the response "there, the

people". Confused, I asked a clarification question to know "the people here gave you the

seed?". The final response kept me wondering "it was brought, they say from here, but also from

there [*motions with a wave of the hand*] when they arrive…" before trailing off[155].

Examining my Spanish grammar to check my own communication, I consulted some native

Spanish-speaking friends about my phrasing. No, I was not asking the question wrong. My

grammar use was correct. As I became more familiar with the local Spanish vocabulary for

specific common words, I also ruled out misinterpretations that could be around the words

themselves. Finding myself stuck puzzling through riddles about the relationships between my

questions and my Maya Ixil friends' understandings of them based on replies that only

collectively seemed to agree on a rough reply around '*la tierra',* 'the land', one key interaction

helped me make sense of my misunderstanding in simple terms that reoriented also the

categories I was using to ask the questions.

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[155] From the nearby geography of Guatemala's western highlands of Sacatepequez with the Maya Cakchiquel, Burleigh, Dardano, and Cruz (1990: 422) provide another example of the same phenomenon when inquiring about childhood diarrheal disease, finding that consistently inconsistent answers raised the researchers' awareness of a need to understand the cognitive structure for conceptualizing what is diarrhea and what causes it and treats it.

This simple but important realization came months into my fieldwork when I was invited to stay

for a week or so with a friend, Kami, a 'youth'[156] and child-less woman of my age who stayed in

a small 'village'[157] in the Nebaj municipality with her parents and many younger siblings.

Following her in her day-to-day rhythms about her village community, harvesting food for

meals, visiting family homes to check in about ongoing projects of the local cooperative, and

attending local events, staying with her gave me an opportunity to see the Ixil lifeway by

participating in it from the perspective of Kami's family's day-to-day activities. After at least

four months together of me asking questions to explore and learn through our exchanges about

Ixil food systems, animal and plant care, women's culinary arts, health, and— most saliently—

seeds and seed exchange, I was sure that my friend Kami would notify me of any moment to see

seed exchange happening in real-time in front of us. I assumed this to be especially the case

should such an event or moment happen when we were together.

On one of these evenings, however, such an opportunity came to witness 'seed exchange' that

could have been easily missed. As we walked back to her home from a visit with neighbors about

their new composting toilet installment, we came upon the brightly lit face of a Maya Ixil elder,

someone we encountered on the dirt path clearly interested to engage with us. As a specific

instance of how my white foreign nonthreatening-ness in an unusual place served as an invitation

for engagement in the Ixil Territory, Kami stopped for a moment to exchange greetings with the

familiar face. Looking to Kami, back to me, and then back to Kami, the man's relaxed gaze was

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[156] From my general observation of the term 'youth', in the Ixil context this term was mostly reserved for those people under the age of 30, and/or without children.

[157] I use parentheses around the word 'village' to denote that the particular agglomeration of houses along the road is not necessarily dense enough to be considered a village and that its establishment was also likely done during the war when the Ixil were forced to leave their homes next to their *milpas* to be surveilled by the Guatemalan armed forces.

underlit with amusement as Kami served him an explanation in Ixil about why this white, tall, obviously foreign, lone lady was appearing here, a place far enough away from the main municipal town of Nebaj to rule out mere coincidence.

As I stood listening for a legible word in Ixil from the little vocabulary I had been able to pick up in the language at that point, I noticed the conversation changed its hum to a different tone. The topic had clearly changed to one occluded by my level of Ixil comprehension. Slow nods were exchanged. The occasional sound of agreement was murmured by the elder as they spoke. Having grown accustomed to the innocent, unguarded curiosities that accompanied most of my first encounters with the Ixil by that point, at our parting with the elder and after some silence I innocently ventured my own question about the conversation.

"What did you and the elder talk about?", I asked Kami.

Without skipping a beat, very matter-of-factly Kami replied that they had discussed blue maize seed and had arranged a plan later in the day to exchange it. This elder, one of the only ones in the village or Nebaj town with blue maize, she told me, had enough saved from his harvest to share. On behalf of Kami's organization in Nebaj that had expressed an interest in planting blue maize in their demonstration garden, Kami explained to me that their discussion had closed with a small negotiation and that a small bundle of

Figure 70 (above): The blue maize seed Kami picked up that day.

seed would await her at their home later in the day when she would visit the family and pick it up. Holding back a feeling of incredulous frustration, I wondered about the vastness of the cultural divide between us and made a mental note to return to the circumstance once I had more information.

Seemingly hidden in plain sight, from the casual place-based reciprocities of small villages that happen so commonly they're scarcely noticed as anything interesting, I was granted a moment of insight into how the Maya Ixil experience their situated, place-based reality. I came to find that most often the Ixil did not have the experience of purchasing seed in a single moment in a farming shop or was sought out. Shepherded through human hands and homes, cared for between land and human homes until it returned to the land the following year, most seeds were quite literally found 'in the land'.

Aistara (2018: 113) brings politics to such conceptions that do not distinguish between seed, land, or human, decontextualizing genealogical approaches to biodiversity conservation and placing attention toward the situatedness of diversity as political based on several networks that shape interactions within them such as organic practices, livelihood strategies, and alliances with nonhumans. This conception of the seed is developed through the concept of networked diversities, or

> "products of the relationships organic farmers build across time and space, with other
> living species and other farmers at the landscape level … [that] emerge as nature-culture
> hybrids out of the interaction of human and nonhuman actors who cohabit and comanage

lived landscapes. Together they form intricate entanglements that are part of a continuous

adaptation to new circumstances, constituting the making and remaking of place. These

examples demonstrate that we must reconceptualize diversity as intermeshed and

relational processes of becoming (Haraway 2008), rather than a growing list of species in

the process of extinction—or un-becoming—to conserve both biological and cultural

diversity in the long term." (ibid.: 111).

From the perspective of biodiversity conservation, it is particularly important not to separate

more-than-human beings from ways of knowing that have 'become' from more-than-human

networks with their own systems for knowing. From the cosmovision of the Maya, there is no

separation between social, natural and sacred spheres of life (Viaene 2010).

In a similar created fashion, biodiversity as a concept has arisen quite recently in its own right,

defined significantly by the 1992 creation of the CBD (Aistara 2018: 111, citing Escobar). Seeds,

however, are a place of creation in both material and idea, that continue to be defined by

knowledge systems beyond the human. Aistara (2011: 493-494) refers to seeds as a material

conceptualization of networked [bio]diversities that mediate a form of social relations that extend

more-than-human kin networks. Citing specific examples with the 'Creolized seedscapes and

exchange networks' created on small farms in various global locations which are a "key

component of making their farms into places" (ibid.), in Aistara's conceptualization, seeds are

extensions of land and kin without speciated boundaries, and as conceived by land caretakers

who participate in labors of abundance-making as networked biodiversities. To this, I fit the

concept of restorative justice that emphasizes the acts of reciprocity in networked biodiversities

as performances of care that cross-species, generations, and cycle continuously as a food system, which is beyond the anthropocent.

Thinking of Aistara's understanding of the network of farms creating 'place', the practices of farmers to supplementing stores of seed, in the placed reciprocities of the Ixil Territory, are not thought of by these interlocutors and actors in more-than-human networks as 'seed exchange'. The human is responsible to continue the social contracts in more-than-human relationships, passing along storied affiliations [knowledge] together with the material parts ('memory banks' concept, see Nazarea 2005). Toledo (2013: 269) refers to this recognition as "a new bio–cultural axiom", urgently needed, for "the world's biodiversity will be effectively preserved only by preserving diversity of cultures and vice versa."

Many studies stress the importance of the informal or local seed systems (see: Cromwell 1990; Almekinders *et al*., 1994; Wierema *et al.,* 1994; Sperling *et al.,* 1995; Friis-Hansen 1999; Thiele 1999; Almekinders and Louwaars 2000; Seboka and Deressa 2000; Tripp 2001; Badstue *et al.* 2006; Coomes et al. 2015) that support biodiversity and which operate outside of interest in profits. Badstue *et al.* (2006: 268) write that *"the mobilization of social relations is a crucial part of seed transactions"* and that, for this informal market, "Local seed supply in these communities is not based primarily on commercial motives. It is mainly part of a moral system based on trust and social responsibility" (Badstue et al. 2007: 1588). Badstue *et al.* (ibid.: 1587) note, in fact, that "relatively few" farmers are interested only in the acquisition of financial return from their maize seed, suggesting that "the primary motive for farmer-to-farmer seed distribution rarely is to generate a profit. These findings suggest that there is a strong cultural value in the study area

associated with being helpful to others, as long as one is able to do so while covering one's own needs." For the western highlands of Guatemala specifically, Hellin, Cox and López-Ridaura (2017: 196) write that the rationale for most farmers to conserve local maize varieties is "for cultural and social purposes".

Figure 71a, b, and c (left and above): This image of the packaging plant roots from the market

While a significant motivating factor for the exchange of seed could be related to another's genuine need for it (Badstue *et al.* 2007: 1587), Maya Ixil performances and practices of interspecies care of the *milpa* and its seeds also relate to their more-than-human responsibilities and obligations to more-than-human ancestors and future kin. My experiences with Maya Ixil farmers in the Ixil Region reinforced conclusions from the literature about maize seed and its

exchange, allowing me also to picture more broadly how these networks of trust and reciprocity are more-than-human and work together in real time to connect physical materials with cosmological ones, coming together in a concept of land that *includes* the living beings that maintain life in it and atop it in reciprocity. In the Ixil Territory, trust and reciprocity is performed and earned on-site, in workshops and events that bring people together over shared interests vested in multispecies survival.

As was a common refrain in my conversations with the Maya Ixil, to tell me that the war had broken or injured the *'tejido social'*, social fabric, the culturally Ixil practices and relationships that were prescribed in these *txaa* community norms and understandings of *tiichajil* were founded in and upon systems of trust, community. That community reinforced social education and transmission culturally as well. Systems once so severely ruptured may also too be hard to recultivate, given the passage of too much time and knowledge lost through the loss of generations.

Francisco, like all of the Maya Ixil of his generation, survived the most recent campaign to exterminate indigenous populations in Guatemala which had a particularly violent focus on the Maya Ixil. An elder of his own accord, he shared stories with me about surviving the war as a part of his community's *Resistencia*, 'Resistance', as he referred to it, and *Communidades de Pobulaciones en Resistencia* (CPR) as it is known more formally from Guatemala's 40-year civil war period. An Ixil farmer, his home is far from the municipal center of Nebaj in the village of *La Libertad,* 'The Freedom', aptly named for the community there 'in Resistencia' which formed during the war as civilians in the community were forced to flee to the mountains and take refuge

from attacks and air strikes by the Guatemalan-state military (REHMI 1998; CEH 1999). After the 2-bus ride and 3-hour journey to Francisco's village to visit his *parcelas*, passing lone pine stands interspersed with the managed arrangements of maize and other crops in the *milpa*, I was told as we walked through the rocky rolling hills that not only was *his* seed handed down from his parents when he inherited a piece of land but that this is the practice for seed *generally* in the Ixil Territory. Planted among rocky slopes prone to crumbling, he told me that the challenging landscape where he and his father first lived in refuge shortly after the war was handed down to him by his father, inherited with maize [seed] growing atop it. Land, itself an incomplete standalone concept for the Ixil, was not passed through generations as an object. Alive and in reciprocity, land is passed down as a living ecosystem that one must care for into new generations, along with the seeds they hold.

Speaking to another farmer relocated to Nebaj's Salval village after the war, another perspective on the violence of the war in the region showed how *milpa* seeds exchanged between human trust networks were also restoring Maya Ixil living connections to land. Badstue *et al.* (2007) remark that diversified food systems are strong systems for secure seed supply, seed sovereignty as critical for connections with the land to perpetuate generation after generation. While farmers I spoke to disagreed on whether or not maize varieties were fully lost in the war and the literature seems to disagree about the extent of these losses and their causes (Steinberg and Taylor 2002; van Etten 2006; Isakson 2014: 372), thereafter also coupled with chemical, market-led development that has threatened native food and seed systems since the war (Copeland 2018), I found communities of the Ixil Region drawing upon the richness and resilience of their multispecies community to regenerate from seeds and heal together after the disaster. Just as

these more-than-human ecologies are more resilient to climate change (Sperling *et al.* 2008)—

they are also important for the regeneration of caretakers after a disturbance.

Curious about how my friend and elder of the community Francisco came to know Kata, another

friend and manager of an Ixil-led organization located in another village, I posed the question

one day to Francisco in a conversation over coffee. Francisco explained to me that he and Kata

met after the war in 1991 or 1992, after the worst of the war's atrocities but before Peace

Accords had been signed in 1996. In this meeting, Kata had given him some much-needed *milpa*

seeds also sharing with him her idea to start an organization to do this and restore Maya Ixil

cultural traditions in the wake of the violence. By Francisco's shared interest in the idea, they

remained in contact through to the idea's inception. Naming Francisco as one of the first

members of the entirely Ixil-led organization, an organization in the municipal town dedicated to

being a resource to other Ixiles, Francisco informed me that today he today receives amaranth

through the organization and has grown a small amount of it in his *parcela.* Restitching the *tejido*

social after the war by drawing upon inherited reciprocities with the maize, first maize and now

amaranth are connecting people and lands in the region by reseeding the community from the

same traditions of the Maya long ago.

Co-evolving in reciprocity, Dyer and Taylor (2008: 473) link the genetic stability of maize in

these regions of Mesoamerica with these social dynamics where "several subpopulations can be

maintained when seed exchange is mostly among kin or within ethnic groups". Farmer networks

remain a good means to understand maize diversity and distribution in these regions as farmer

networks appear to also mirror maize diversity and distribution at local levels (Pressoir and

Berthaud 2004). So important are the human social factors of maize exchange that Orozco-Ramirez *et al.* (2014) conclude from research in Oaxaca, Mexico that social factors, as determined by the presence of seed networks (see also Atran et al. 1999) and ethno-linguistic membership, may be more significant determinants of maize landrace distribution in a region than local environmental adaptation.

From the Central valleys of Oaxaca, Badstue *et al.* (2007: 1584) explain the mechanisms of exchange that provide further background to the link between Maya peoples of today in Mesoamerica and maize seed:

> "Seed is often inherited, passed on from parents to children when the latter start farming independently. Often, the seed has been in the family for many years during which it has provided the sustenance of the family, whereby it has acquired an inherent affection or symbolic value. Thus, for many farmers in the Central Valleys, the maize seed lot is something they have in-trust, which links them with previous generations, and which they, in turn, must pass on to their descendants."

Seeds, little animals, and fruiting bodies under or above the ground, the exchange of the seeding bodies drew my attention to what I noticed was an informal customary practice of exchange in biomaterials that would happen at the close of events hosted in homes throughout the community, an extension of their human social networks but indistinguishable in their minds from them. A family in the Nebaj municipality's Xecoxo village, headed by a strong Maya Ixil woman who did both the traditional female roles and traditional male roles in the absence of her

U.S.-living husband, echoed this about seed. According to her knowledge, she told me that seed comes from family or from neighbors, always paid back as an implied part of the relationship. A different visit to the even higher elevated village of Xecotz demonstrated this reciprocity between close connections where human-mediated social networks can facilitate lifestreams to other beings apart from just the plant seeds. After meandering around the *parcela* of our Ixil farmer host, my Maya Ixil friend Vicente and I were treated to coffee inside of the home where several chicks roamed the compacted clay ground beneath us. Scooping them up playfully, Vicente and I departed the village with the chicks stuffed inside of his shirt, tucked neatly into an overhang of shirt cloth that rested above a traditional Ixil belt, comfortably nestled for the bumpy truck ride back.

As many of the events I attended were related in some way to food, farming, medicine, or health, discussions often had a demonstrative component that seemed to culminate at the close of these events with a kind of pollinating of biodiversities of place. Often taking place in the clean-up, stops for bathroom before boarding transport, or general departure goodbyes, I began to see why my friend Kami didn't register a moment of seed exchange happen right in front of us in her village. As many of these moments after events were fleeting and informal enough to sometimes equate to mere collection of a berry or piece of shrub, many Ixil engage in these exchanges without even recognizing how it contributes to biodiversity generation. The lived networks of reciprocity between species seemed also to be 'seeding' through the permeable relationships growing in the human community.

Trading energies and investing labor into the collective food system that reaps benefits for all, trading reciprocities between neighbors, between species, in the service of food for everyone, in a living economy shares abundance as health for all (see also O'Keefe et al. 2023), for the Ixil, seed was not necessarily something one 'pays' for as much as it is a material carrying lifeforce that brings a community together and helps it maintain integrity and resilience in the face of change. Although seed can be interpreted as a noun, it is always also regarded as a praxis that implies a 'doing'; it is always also a process (Aistara 2018: 114; Hertz, Mancilla Garcia, and Schlüter 2020; O'Keefe et al. 2023), a verb.

Staying in the village with Kami and her family, in embodied presence, being *there,* on the land, as they had since time immemorial, I was able to become materially immersed in the multispecies lives and rhythms of Ixil intertwined and interconnected networks of reciprocity that serve different definitions with their lifeways and knowledge systems. My questions about seed exchange assumed a separation of the seed from the Ixil and a 'thing-ness' that, simply, their cosmological perspectives and the creation stories that helped to compose them, did not create. For the Ixil, humans, land – La Madre Tierra—, maize, and the other beings were not separate (Millner 2023) and had never been. Neither was the human the only one among them with agency. Separations of 'seed', 'human', 'land'— where they existed— were *assimilated* pieces of Western culture. These were not, however, how the Ixil conceptualized their reality in their own territory, living their Ixil lifeways.

From the western canon, Ingold (2000: 226) suggests that 'people see as they move', the process of 'moving in a landscape' creating knowledge and dynamically transforming it in the process,

both in the embodiment of knowledge and knowledge of environment that one experiences

through relation in this process. Preoccupied with simple Spanish communication, trying to catch

the translations of each individual word in a language native to neither me nor my conversant

friends, I realized that with my questions about 'seed' I was moving but not seeing and, in the

process, nearly missing the entire meaning of Ixil replies to my questions. Before any further

questions about seed could be posed, I first had to understand 'seed' using Ixil categories. I had

to have a better understanding of what composed the dimensions of a *Maya Ixil* reality; a reality

framed through and by the many acts of reciprocation between species, making kin of each other

in the region for generations. I had to think from the more-than-human.

The definition of seed and its use says much about the active relationships with a more-than-

human world. In this world, seeds are not passive, singular units passed along as a planned

practice or event in human time. Capable of a richness of food and life, they material

multispecies actors in the Ixil Indigenous knowledge system that regards itself fit into Earth's

cycles and wider ecological rhythms. Human hands are not credited for all of the labor in

achieving a harvest but participate with their agencies in a larger process beyond the human. To

my Maya Ixil hosts, any and all of the actors upon the land care for one another to survive and

everything and everyone "*comes from*" *the land*. For the same reason, none 'own' seed or its

potential. They know that to survive and prosper, the maize and all of the other seeds of the

milpa have to survive and prosper too.

II. Annex II: Historical background and context for interpreting Iximulew's Maya, more-than-human identity movements

i. Creating 'race': the early colonial period in Guatemala (1518–1821) and exclusive nationalism (1821–1945)

In the experiences of many Indigenous[158] Peoples, relationality and the project identities that can be used to understand them, is empirical as much as it is theoretical. With reference to the lived experiences of generations, a concept of indigeneity itself or a people as 'Indigenous', began as an assertion of ancestry from cultures, knowledges, and cosmologies that pre-date ones introduced during the arrival of Europeans to the 'Americas' in 1492. For many peoples who had been living in the so-called 'New World' at the time of Europe's first encounter with them, contact with 'Europeans' began a complicated re-negotiating process, not only for physical space and access, but for the identification of what 'is'; reality itself.

As European accounts took to privileging their explanations over those of the Indigenous peoples they encountered (Cajete 2000) in the 'New World', new campaigns of description that traveled previously impossible distances across the globe began to shape the confines of a uniquely singular 'world'. Referred to as the first "great collective appropriation of one country by another" (Said 1978: 84), later reflection on this phase of history from Edward Said's *Orientalism* has brought much-needed critique and attention to what Said identified as a

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[158] "Indigenous" is used in this thesis as a descriptive term as the term may not be applicable in all contexts of first peoples of the Americas where other terms are preferred (see Hillerdal et al. 2017), but references, specifically, pre-Columbian Peoples who continue to negotiate their sovereignty and self-determination as a People within the context of colonial, settler, postcolonial, and neocolonial relations (Bruchac 2020; see also Weeber 2020). Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz referred to it as "a commonality of historical experience: of genocide, of devastation, the destruction of civilizations, and a memory of who the people are before imperialism, before Columbus, before European overseas colonization"; "the red thread that runs through the Americas" (Barsamanian 2018).

curtailment of non-European knowledge expression, giving rise also to 'postcolonial' literary criticisms and later 'decolonial' knowledge production efforts centered around geography and representation that free the 'Other'ed. As the Spanish Empire was bifurcating newly encountered indigenous populations across the Americas, colonization efforts globally were calibrated from a locus within western Europe. Beck (2019: 115) comments on the 'orientalization' of Spain itself as Europeans sought to order and rank humanity generally into a singular ontological frame fit to colonization's goals based around capital accumulation:

> "The architecture of knowledge accessed by the West about Spain became colonized when the most authoritative voices in the discipline of Hispanic studies and for knowledge about Spanish culture originated from outside of the Spanish-speaking world– for example, Southey and Herder, and from influential organizations with extensive publishing programmes, including the American Hispanic Society."

Structural changes in Indigenous society were forcibly imposed by European cultural norms, brought by the Spanish into the Americas and categorically instructed by the philosophies from Europe's Enlightenment that orchestrated a new relationship to land, fit to emerging economic regimes.

Introduced concepts from the Spanish such as *'la raza'*, are documented from *casta* paintings of the early modern period (1492-1800) (Earle 2012; Beck 2019), capturing the Spanish attempts to illustrate to European audiences back home what they were encountering in the Americas. A distinctive "Spanish American art form" (ibid. 2012: 194), the paintings themselves were

customarily done in a series of sixteen where three sub-cycles would depict the sexual outcomes of Spaniard and Amerindian, Spaniard, and African, and Amerindian and African pairings, accompanied by labels to indicate the caste status of each individual in the painting. Giving rise to terms like '*criollo*' for "a man born in the Americas of two pure-blood Spaniards born in Spain" (Vinson 2018: 57), and '*mestizo*' or '*castizo*' in reference to admixtures of Spanish and indigenous parents, geography increasingly provided a way to order 'whiteness' (Beck 2019: 109) as the Spanish flipped exogenously defined categories from Old World into the categorical subjugations that divided non-European peoples in the Americas from Europeans back home. Citing the work of Martínez (2008), historian Rebecca Earle (2012: 212) cites *'la raza'* as originating from Spanish understandings of the Old World hierarchies of people from notions of 'blood purity' and religion, mapping these understandings gradually onto skin tone:

> "Martínez has indeed argued that the concept of blood purity provided the framework for the elaboration of the colonial caste system, with Amerindians occupying the position of the old world's Jews and conversos, and Africans that of Muslims and moriscos. Old-world categories of impurity, she suggests, were transformed in the new world into categories of colour."

While Earle ultimately concludes from historical archives that *la raza* "provides little evidence for the existence of racial thinking" (ibid.: 214), citing the Spanish belief that cultural practices played a strong role in the creation of the early modern body as physical characteristics "were not in general considered immutable", she concludes that the early modern Hispanic world did experience race as a "meaningful social category" (ibid.). Beck (2019: 101) argues that the

increased interest and solidification of this science of describing people "impose[d] race while also structuring non-white people within the Enlightenment concepts of civilization and culture." *Casta* paintings set into context, did do the work to set about formalizing categories of people in the New World that would have important implications for the identification of a labor force in newly emerging Spanish export economies growing profits from the sale of New World crops like indigo. Trying to keep bodies separate while integrating the same 'Indio' subjects (MacNeill 2014; 2020: 118) into European cultural and religious norms *in-situ*, Earle (2012: 184) highlights the "inherently contradictory" aims at the heart of the Spanish colonial endeavor that left indelible imprints on the landscape and its people. For the purposes of the thesis, the definition of colonialism will be used as defined by Collins *et al.* (2021: 3) to mean "a set of practices, hinges on the forced control of space and the domination of land, bodies and nature by a foreign 'other' who becomes localized." The term refers then to "the period beginning in the 15th century during which Western Europeans began to set up colonies around the globe, dominating people and extracting their land and resources for their own benefit" (Collins et al. 2021: 3).

Racial categorizations symbolically tied to the accumulation of wealth in this new regime of rationality at the birth of the Guatemalan *finca*-state, heavily reliant upon the production of an 'Indigenous other' and his/er labor. The Spanish application of '*la raza*' in Guatemala served the newcomers with a template to sever existing relationships of indigenous knowledge that previously relied heavily on an ancestry to and kinship with the land. Mazariegos (2020: 15) writes that the Guatemalan *finca*-state grew

"by inscribing, in the form of proper names, lineages and inheritance of colonial and post-colonial origin that came to signify wealth, whiteness, and surplus of enjoyment or *jouissance* in the form of White-European patronymics, by virtue of which, indigenous proper names were forced to occupy the position of loss and castration."

Naming and subjugating, peoples of Guatemala were physically, symbolically and economically reoriented within their own lands by colonial systems of capital accumulation that formed new relationships with the land as it was repurposed to empower new benefactors at the top of their designed hierarchies. In Guatemala the forms of governance from colonial administrations officially followed on premise a 'two republics model' where as indigenous peoples were allowed to keep their own forms of governance alongside an imposed Spanish system. This system, however, was yet another way to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands and governance systems through less overt means (Wittman and Geisler 2005, cited in MacNeill 2020: 118).

From the colonial Spanish model from the middle of the 16th century to the 19th century in the Polochic Valley we can also see how the political-economic model of 'pueblo de indios' (Indian villages) for Indigenous populations of Guatemala such as the Maya-Q'eqchi' forced Indigenous peoples into villages and coerced them into working on *fincas*, or large agricultural export farms, and paying taxes to the Catholic Church, overall reinforcing a cycle of gathering land and paying taxes on it for its use. Reorienting relationships to land completely, subjugated Indigenous peoples were redirected to the locations of best fit for Spanish economic projects while many others fled their lands, fearing enslavement or a violent removal from them. With the 1523

arrival of Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado, the first to arrive in Guatemala, Palacios

Aragón (2005) links the destruction of Indigenous peoples under Alvarado's forces back to the

first of what would later become many "scorched earth" style campaigns against Guatemala's

indigenous communities. Under Alvarado, the Spanish razed entire indigenous villages using this

"scorched earth"-style warfare (Colop 1991; Ybarra 2010) that set communities on fire with their

food as a means to starve the local population into submission with Spanish demands.

Gould (2006) traces the history of the installation of the ideology of 'la raza' back to Spanish

colonial era agrarian policies, instrumental in the creation of an initial dual agrarian structure that

repurposed large tracts of land for the Spanish profit from agricultural crops while

simultaneously drawing Indigenous peoples into these systems as laborers or tribute payers

within them. Elliott (2021) documents the systems of forced labor in these initial encounters of

the Spanish with Indigenous Maya populations where incumbent populations were forced to both

produce work in these lands while also paying tributary fees to the Spanish crown and the

Catholic church. Archival sources of the period document opposition from Maya Ixil leaders

who voice their expression of opposition to such measures through formal decrees, though to

little avail (ibid.). Providing a historical snapshot of the categorizations of race and the

reorganization of society under the Spanish, in *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and

the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700*, Earle (2012) notes that the very

determination of an 'Indian' for the Spanish in the colonial era was based upon payment of a

head tax for the Indian Tribute and proof of entitlement to communal land.

Othering that paralleled the empowerment of capital, the expansion and conversion of landscapes into agricultural crops for a commodity frontier with crops like indigo and later coffee, transformed communal and traditional land tenure systems to privilege the new Spanish and foreign elite in the rise of Guatemala as a new settler state (Ybarra 2018). Characterizing these transformations of land with the rising economic *criollo* elite, Gould (2006: 397) refers to this period as a "second conquest", marking the rise of the *finca*-state (Mazariegos 2020), as liberals at the helm of the Guatemalan government's efforts began converting communal lands into private property after the 19th-century mid-mark when coffee plantations became particularly profitable. By the last half of the 19th century, Maya communities had lost half of the lands they owned during the colonial period to exploitation of Spanish economic expansion (Palma Murga 1997; Palacios Aragón 2005; Wittman and Saldivar-Tanaka 2006). Long outlasting the Spanish, however, these systems to progressively displace Indigenous peoples and *campesinx* farming populations from the highest quality lands of Guatemala were in effect until 50 years after Guatemala's 1821 gaining of independence (Gould 2006: 397).

Following and despite Guatemala's independence from Spain on September 15, 1821, American imperialism continued an imposed transformation of Guatemala's land and peoples as the production of agricultural exports grew during the 1800s. The 19th century saw the projects of Spanish economic expansion grow to the export of cochineal and then coffee (Carey 2009), attracting the attention of European settlers farther north.

Through agrarian and labor policies until the mid-twentieth century's 'Ten Years of Spring', racial hierarchies provided the infrastructure to further widen existing race-based inequalities in

Guatemala. Narratives of 'manifest destiny' that encouraged settler expansion mirrored

Guatemala's liberal reforms of 1871 that facilitated the redistribution of lands by the Guatemalan

State to German oligarchic families in the Polochic Valley who grew for export coffee, bananas,

cotton, and meat (Mingorría 2021). Gould (2018: 148) offers one example of race-based

inequality institutionalized in the "notorious" preferential treatment and issuing of land titles to

wealthier migrants of the Petén region by the Empresa Nacional de Fomento y Desarrollo

Económico del Petén (FYDEP). By 1871 to 1944, Indigenous workers were enslaved in systems

of debt (Palencia Frener 2021), losing more land as many could not outpace the taxes imposed.

By 1900, the foreign-run multinational corporation United Fruit Company (UFCO) had been

established in Guatemala, using these liberal reforms to profit from the export of fruit, bananas in

particular, from Guatemalan lands (Carey 2009). Guatemalan President Manuel Estrada Cabrera,

eager to lure North American business interests, granted the company concessions like exclusive

access to Guatemala's central railway line. With corporations like UFCO repurposing

Guatemalan lands for the export of agricultural commodities including sugar, cotton, cattle and

non-traditional fruits and vegetables (Carey 2009), Indigenous populations were increasingly

relegated to the peripheries within their own lands. At the onset of the 1930s global economic

depression, many Indigenous Maya in Guatemala were left without pay for two years of work

(Elliott 2021). As one of the major areas sourcing contract laborers during the 19th-century land

changes, the three Ixil Region municipalities of Nebaj, Cotzal, and Chajul (Palencia Frener 2021)

were strongly impacted by these changes. By 1950, the Guatemalan census depicted a mere 2%

of the Guatemalan population in control of 72% of the region's total farmland (Elliott 2021: 115).

ii.   Historical land access during the colonial period and immediate aftermath

Enjoying a period of plentiful land access during the colonial period (1524-1821) as the Ixil managed to escape the worst of the initial Spanish colonization in comparison to other more centrally-located groups in Guatemala, largely due to the region's challenging location, initial interaction with the Spanish came through their lack of immunity to successive waves of epidemics brought by the foreigners (Elliott 2021: 117). The larger series of smallpox epidemics which ravaged much of the North American continent between 1775 and 1782 (Fenn 2001), also devastated eastern Comanchería in the 1780s (Hämäläinen 2008), and percolated gradually from 1780-1810 into the indigenous populations of Mesoamerica's Guatemala (Lovell 2021). Through the combination of war from the first 'scorched earth' exercises of the Spanish and the spread of their Old World diseases, by the end of 1600 historians estimate that Guatemala's population of indigenous Maya peoples since 1520 had experienced a total 50 to 80 percent reduction (Lovell 1988; MacLeod 2007). While the Spanish arrival set off unintentional 'feral encounters' (Tsing et al. 2021) between diseases from the Old World such as smallpox and measles and an immunity-lacking indigenous population, imported disease from Europeans was the primary cause (Fenn 2001; Hämäläinen 2008; Koch et al. 2019) of some 56 million indigenous deaths from 1492 to 1600, as estimated by one study that combined multiple methods to estimate continent-wide pre-Columbian population numbers (Koch et al. 2019). In the first 150 years after Spanish arrival, 90% of the Ixil community had perished from disease (Lovell 1988: 117, cited in Elliott 2021).

Ushering in the age of *finqueros*, by the late 1800s, changes in Guatemalan national government laws that allowed claims on what was termed "vacant land" began to see the percolation of large

landowners to the region, favored by these laws that would benefit the national economy through their export crops such as coffee (Elliott 2021: 111). As Elliott (2021) documents, the period of 1835 to 1836 immediately following the 1821 liberation from Spain saw Guatemalan elites begin to consolidate and designate the "vacant lands" left in the wake of the disaster as 'property', private property titles granted through state land redistribution campaigns. During this time, as all land was now mandated by the state to hold a land title, land was automatically turned over to the state unless titles could be shown. Eager to acquire wealth in the same manner as Spanish colonial systems were funneling wealth to the overseas Spanish crown, elites in Guatemala optimized the opportunity with the law to acquire land from other parts in the country.

Under 1877's Decreto 170, the Ixil Region and other Indigenous parts of Guatemala were subject to a modernization and replacement of previously communal and culturally-relevant land tenure systems. Under this decree, Nebaj and Cotzal applied for land titles over their ancestral territories in 1878 (Elliott 2021: 118). Nebaj received *ejido*[159] land title to 38 ¾ *caballerías* on February 28, 1881 (ibid.: 119). Batz (2017: 60 citing Segundo Registro de la Propiedad [SRP], #4403, Fol. 164, Lib. 250) and Elliott (2021: 118) document the *ejido* of Cotzal, created on January 22, 1885 from this decree, the municipality received *ejido* title on February 9, 1885 (ibid.: 121). The new claim to ownership over the lands in total amounted to 379 *caballerías*, 29 *manzanas*, and 6,558 *varas cuadradas*[160]*, registered and titled to the "municipality" of Cotzal by the dictator Justo

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[159] *Ejido* is a form of communal land or land-sharing common to Mesoamerica where land title is shared among a community of members. Elliott (2021: 114) references also p*arcialidades*, which are defined as "family groups holding property in common" that were an important asset for community structure that were maintained despite early Spanish land reforms.

[160] For reference, a *caballeria* is a Spanish imperial unit of area which contains 64 manzanas (or roughly 44.72 hectares); a *manzana* is a Spanish imperial unit of area where the Guatemalan standard is equivalent to 0.6988 hectares (Konforti 2022: xxi); and a *vara* is a Spanish imperial unit of distance where the Guatemalan standard is equivalent to 0.6988 metres; 10,000 square varas are equivalent to one manzana (Konforti 2022: xxi).

Rufino Barrios (1873-1885). Giving formal written title to the Ixil lands of Cotzal, lands which also held previous community-held title, the new *ejido* gave further legitimacy to previous claims, but through the conversion to a new system also gave land in Guatemala more broadly a new, foreign value as an exchangeable unit where communal ownership was not the default and property titles have often lead to further dispossession and displacement in the country (Grandia 2012). Despite small but incremental change in the communal tenures, such as the extension by 9 caballerías, 14 manzanas, and 3,693 varas *cuadradas* to include the boundary village of Pulay by 1914 for the Cotzal *ejido* (Batz 2017: 60), community land tenure systems gaining legal titles was significantly slower in acquiring land than private actors as communal land tenure is shared by many owners who must agree together on how to manage their communal lands. Owned by many in a collective under cadastral logic, communal land still has to make unified decisions regarding the shared lands, a process that not only may take much longer but which created uncertain futures for many upon those lands. For reference, a *caballeria* is a Spanish imperial unit of area which contains 64 manzanas (or roughly 44.72 hectares); a *manzana* is a Spanish imperial unit of area where the Guatemalan standard is equivalent to 0.6988 hectares (Konforti 2022: xxi); and a *vara* is a Spanish imperial unit of distance where the Guatemalan standard is equivalent to 0.6988 metres; 10,000 square varas are equivalent to one manzana (Konforti 2022: xxi).

A part of the "massive assault on indian lands" that characterized the epoch of capitalism's particular arrival to the region with the expansion of coffee production (Forster 2001: 12-15; Elliott 2021: 131, citing McCreery 1976: 457), the 1877 law that opened land previously owned by the municipality up for sale thereafter began what was to become a dramatic rush on land that

Elliott (2021: 115) writes, evolved into the "powerful plantation oligarchy" that endures into today from mixed European origins. Two large *fincas* for the production of coffee and sugar in the east of Cotzal during the 19ᵗʰ century were established by the Herrera family, a family among the top wealthiest in Guatemala at the time (ibid.: 121). Cotzal and northern Chajul saw the establishment of these large *fincas, Finca* San Francisco and *Finca* La Perla, respectively, established from land acquisitions in the same period by foreign owners. *Finca* San Francisco grew from 16 *caballerías*[161] acquired in 1904 by Italian labor contractor Pedro Brol and *Finca* La Perla arose from land purchased in 1900 by Lisandro Gordillo Galán, thereafter expanded through smaller purchases and thefts of 100 *caballerías* in 1903 from communally owned land of the Chajul municipality (ibid.: 123). Researching these transactions of land parcels, Elliott (ibid.: 122) writes of the image of Brol, the "New Tiger of the Ixcán", that appears from land registry records of the time: "…the image emerges of a man constantly on the alert for opportunities to buy more. His name reoccurs as a lender or an adjacent owner in all three [Ixil] municipalities." An opportune historical moment for the purchase of land, Brol arrived in a period of extensive titling for nationally registered land in Guatemala, a period that lasted until around 1920 (ibid.: 118). Growing through this collection of lands, Finca San Francisco became a nationally registered and titled plot and eventually also a stock-based company, San Francisco Cotzal, S.A., on May 14, 1921, with 500 shares of Q1000.00, distributed among the four Brol heirs (ibid.: 128). The Brol family continued to buy up adjacent and neighboring parcels of nationally titled and municipal land from Maya local tenure schemes throughout the 1920s and 1930s across the Ixil Region. Elliott (ibid.: 122) notes that another 100 *caballerías* outside of the Finca San

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[161] Elliott (2021: 114) reiterates from Handy (1984:43) that a caballería, as the principal measurement in land from Spanish classification was recorded in titling documents and for this reason the measurement is used here. Its equivalent is 1 caballería to 109.8 acres.

Francisco in Cotzal are owned by the Brols today. Characteristically, confusion over the registration of these lands, makes the record of them inconclusive from what records are available.

Many disputed lands in this era in the Ixil Region were ultimately turned over to *ladinx* and K'iche' *milicianos* [militiamen] from Momostenango and Chiantla municipalities, soldiers of the Guatemalan military (Palencia Frener 2021: 207). The prioritization of soldiers' requests for 'vacant lands' continued throughout the period of national titling, requests seemingly prioritized, at times, even at the expense of previously titled lands, as in the case of the Chajul municipality (Elliott 2021: 121) and one military soldier, Captain Isaías Palacios, received 15 *caballerías* in the valley of Acul, Nebaj, despite the valley's already 8000 other inhabitants residing on the same land (ibid.: 119).

Communal titles from the period were granted, though were less favored by the approval mechanism through the State. The Chajul municipality requested title for 300 *caballerías* of land evenly divided around Chajul, Ilom and Chel, a figure later raised to 600 (ibid.: 119), joining the municipalities of the region between 1878 and 1903 which were generally trying to ascertain formal titles for community land (Palencia Frener 2021). Depicting the different reception of applications for communal tenure and racist undertones, Elliott (2021: 120) documents that subsistence farming was not seen favorably in the eyes of a growing and capital-amassing Guatemalan state, which issued the following reply to the Chajul municipality's request:

"An insatiable thirst devours some towns, particularly Indian ones, to claim vast

extensions of land, in whose hands they are completely unproductive; in this way the

country is deprived of important agricultural projects, the main source of Guatemala's

wealth. Communal property seriously delays the progress of industrial agriculture,

conflicting with good economic principles."

Legitimated in different periods with different methods, one purchase of the Brols, the *Finca

Zequiquel*, from former military man Captain Francisco Morales in 1933 (ibid.: 118), gives one

example of how local Maya common tenure systems were slowly partitioned off to foreigners

looking for a profit from the land (ibid.: 128). Before the purchase at Zequiquel, Maya residents

had lived on the land caring for *milpa* plots for at least 50-100 years. Extended titles on *papel

sellado* (legal paper) had been given by the municipality of Chajul to residents to legitimate such

arrangements. Documents provided by the municipality, and the only ones available at the time

for residents, discrepancies in the titling first arose to the community's attention in 1971 when

the Instituto National de Transformación Agraria (INTA) moved to collect taxes on idle lands.

Contrary to their records, INTA officials identified the Brols as holders of the land's national

title. Discovered in the preparation of surveying the area, this case is likely outstanding as the

Chajul municipality was able to realize the inconsistency and seek appropriate redress. Formal

processes were able to eventually recognize and honor the municipality-issued titles in December

1976. Other similar cases arose in the region and in Guatemala[162] where many Indigenous

communal territories have been made aware of the lack of control over their lands as

transnational mining and hydro companies have arrived to exploit resources, many with less

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[162] From Guatemala's Peten department, Ybarra (2018) documents many of these instances in her book *Green Wars: Conservation and Decolonization in the Maya Forest.*

optimal ultimate outcomes.

The case of Zequiquel is more of an exception than the rule for the Ixil Region as conflicts over land for communities unable to produce formal title documents have been a consistent source of tension between Ixil residents and more recent immigrants.

Many of the stagnated efforts to redistribute wealth and address previous inequalities among Indigenous populations and a wealthy foreign elite have created an additional confusion surrounding conflicts of land tenure, particularly in the Ixil Region (Elliott 2021). In the case of Cotzal's Finca San Francisco, co-owner and also Minister of Agriculture under then President Arbenz, Nicolás Brol, owned enough land to warrant the expropriation of uncultivated portions to local smallholders under the law introduced as Decree 900[163]. No exceptions. Despite producing coffee, sugar cane, maguey, cypress, forest, beef, and heramiles, processing the crops on-site with the help of a coffee processing plant, a wheat milling plant, a brick factory, a sack-making factory, and silos for storing grain (ibid.: 126-127), the Unión Campesina of Cotzal led by Rosendo Girón Toledo brought a claim to initiate the land reallocation process against Finca San Francisco under the new decree on February 25, 1953. Three additional claims followed in the days thereafter (ibid.). Determining some 86 *caballerías* of Brol's land 'unused', these claims successfully expropriated Brol land to many Maya Ixil as a result of Decree 900. Only three years later, however, the dismantling of Arbenz's government and the institution of a new government overturned the decree on July 5, 1956 (ibid.), stripping residents of the right to land

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[163] Palencia Frener (2021: 211, footnote 7) notes that according to the Guatemalan Land Reform Archives, three large fincas in Cotzal would have fallen under Decree 900 in 1952. These were: 1. San Francisco Cotzal, owned by the Brol Brothers and Company; 2. Finca Asich y Varias, property of Mortual Juan Sajicullasco, and 3. Finca San Felipe Chenlá, owned by Sociedad Herrera.

once again and turning the lands by default back to the Brol estate where they have remained since.

Forced to accept a return to previous inequalities over access to land after 1956, the period from 1960 to 1974 in Guatemala kept 3% of the population in control of 63% of the nation's farmland (ibid.: 116), the owners of Finca San Francisco among this 3%. Beginning in Spanish colonization, continuing in national and international capitalist projects, and expanding after sponsored programs of terror that rained heavily down on the Ixil Region in the 1980s, Elliott's (2021) work on the specific land tenure challenges in the Ixil Region show a history of foreign wealth accumulation in the reduction of Indigenous control over land, shifting power over it to a foreign, now naturalized, elite. Formalized into the formal tenure rights in Guatemala which have been historically determined by top-down governance structures (Mauro and Melet 2003, cited in Kuper 2014), the State's historic omission of community land use and management rights have only further weakened the Ixil in various foreigner invasions, legitimating transfers of land and its control to elites and the State despite and contrary to traditional management practices exercised by communities throughout that time (Kuper 2014). Giovanni Batz (2022) summarizes the result of *finca* creation and registration of land titles in the Ixil Region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as cause for the displacement of indigenous peoples in Guatemala and a precursor to great land inequality by what Elliott (2021: 111) cites as "trapping people into debt, creating fraudulent contracts, bribing government officials, among others". With such uncertainty surrounding the formalization of communal lands and no system in existance to replicate them comparable to the cadastre system, *finqueros* and private interest have exploited loopholes in the system, a system built for them and mainly benefitting them since their arrival. In a country

where, as of 2014, approximately 20% of the country's rural population was involved in a registered land dispute (Kuper 2014: 44), the muddled titling claims created in various periods of neoliberal land creation have left a constant instability for the Maya Ixil as land titles, often evaluated on a case-by-case basis, overwhelm the system and continue to privilege the interests of foreigners from within the region.

At a current size of 315 *caballerías*, 45 *metros* 360 *vara*[164]*,* consolidated from 40 registered pieces into one on April 19, 1960 (Elliott 2021: 122), Finca San Francisco is one pertinent example. Unimpacted by drought, unlike other parts of Guatemala like the dry corridor (Einbinder et al. 2022), the Finca occupies a total of 0.13% of Guatemala today in an area between the municipalities of the Ixil San Juan Cotzal and Uspantán. Situated predominantly in the mountainous highlands, this large portion of land is not just valuable for its productive capacity. Adapting with the times, the latest Brol inheritors have sought new forms of income from the security of their land titles. Suffering losses in recent years as result of changing climate and its effects to make coffee prices less advantageous for large-scale harvest, the *finca*'s highland location makes the site amenable for new profits from the international market's commodification of another essential resource for the Ixil, one also now contained in the land's title.

Before the exporting industries selling coffee, sugarcane, and hydroelectric energy arrived, the elders of Xeputul I who lived through many of these violences next to Finca San Francisco

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[164] or roughly 141 square kilometers. This is a Spanish imperial unit of distance where the Guatemalan standard is equivalent to 0.6988 metres; 10,000 square varas are equivalent to one manzana (Konforti 2022: xxi); one manzana equals 1.73 acres (Horst 1989: 28).

gathered in Xeputul I's modest auxiliary community space to tell our group of Ixil students about

the history of the land before the *finca* or the *hidroelectrica*. "The land was common land, but

now you cannot enter" shared an elder. We are told that the same place used to be designated for

the harvesting of firewood and meeting together in what was once a market. Opportunistic

moments for industry to usurp additional lands seem to have put the community in a constant

state of forced vigilance for when more of their community could be repurposed again by private

interests. "During the war they invaded many of the lands in the area, expanding the *finca* from

what it formally had until there," the speaker gestures toward one side of the room. An elder in

traditional *indumentaria*, Ixil hat and red and black overcoat, continues about these invasions

that ate land from the community and began an acrimonious relationship with the arrival of a

new foreign adversary, a relationship borne from their strategic deception:

> "When we encountered Enel they had us sign blank papers. Since our Indigenous
>
> authorities before were illiterate in Spanish they signed the papers without knowing what
>
> they said. We are fighting because of this, because we didn't know about the
>
> hidroelectrica. They didn't have our consent. We didn't know how they would make
>
> energy. It was very powerful the sound in the night when they brought the materials here,
>
> which was dangerous because of the bad roads."

Leader and Indigenous mayor of Cotzal Concepción Santay lamented to media sources: "for us it

is shameful, a mockery they are making of us. We make [energy] but we don't have it" (Escalón

2012b).

In a region where only 27 of the 45 villages of Cotzal have access to electricity, the irony of the arrival of a private energy company is not lost on the Indigenous locales. In an area they are told inaccessible by the national electrification scheme, a private corporation has come to build towers that will take energy out of the region, converting it along the way into an energy that comes back for the Ixil in the form of both local and global environmental climate change. For the 27 of the 45 villages where electrified energy *is* available, prices for it make it similarly inaccessible as most maintain land-based livelihoods that eat what they put their labors toward. Partly due to the challenges to get infrastructure to more remote regions, Guatemalan electricity company Deocsa bills as much as ten times per kWh to the North of Quiché compared to the price per kWh in urban Guatemala City (Escalón 2012b).

iii.   Neoliberal transformation during La Violencia

In tandem with the rise of U.S. corporate interests and their political allies, the 1950s and 1960s saw a strengthening of agricultural modernization in Guatemala, largely a result of intra-American politics of the time (Carey 2009). Chemical fertilizers in many parts of the country became common practice as farmers saw direct benefits from large harvests. The Association of Agricultural Technologies was created by the Catholic Church and governmental leaders of the country as a means to protect against the anxieties of communism. The group was strongly associated with both U.S. political and corporate interests during the time. Synthetic fertilizers also became associated with insurgents as it is claimed by some Maya Kaqchikel that agronomists from the U.S. and Europe were in Guatemala during the civil war espousing Marxist ideology and disseminating Green Revolution technologies from multiple angles (Carey 2009;

Copeland 2018). Association with these groups, however, was persecuted by the Guatemalan

military as it mounted several violent campaigns to eliminate insurgents and a political left.

In 1970, Guatemala's military government continued cooperation with hegemon U.S. as the U.S.

Agency for International Development (USAID) brought its more open interventionist-style

development together with its agricultural interests in the country by launching the Public

Agrarian Sector. From the sector, two five-year National Development Plans were outlined for

charting Guatemala's future national growth, laying foundation to prime Guatemala's agriculture

toward neoliberal goals. Markets reversed from the Árbenz period were transformed into 'free'

ones, newly reinvented into a neoliberal, market-based economy that stole from rural peasants a

second time as large landowners collected most of the benefit from its distributed lands (Gauster

and Isakson 2007).

A structural trend in Guatemala, Holt-Giménez (2008) comments on how neoliberal policies in

Guatemala are undergirded by a capitalist and extractivist governmentality. Scholars such as

Ybarra (2018) draw links to the enforcement of these policies through the various mechanisms of

the state and its political priorities. Contrary to what it promises, neoliberal restructuring which

began in earnest in the 1980s in Guatemala, is noted by other scholars to have significantly

constrained the economic autonomy of the Guatemalan rural population and peasantry by

narrowly bounding these populations to economically and environmentally vulnerable food

systems that are subject to market prices (Gauster and Isakson 2007; Isakson 2014).

Financing the boon of Green Revolution agricultural projects, small scale irrigation projects

increased the irrigated area in the country by 48 percent from 1980 to 1995, substantially

disincentivizing maize production for the production instead of non-traditional crops in the

process (Isakson 2014). Isakson (2014: 356) documents the scale of this transition where, between 1950 and 1985, 98 percent of the maize consumed in the country was harvested domestically. The years between 1961 and 1990 showed a mere 4 percent of the maize supply in the country as imported, figures that document historically and in the recent past, that Guatemala was quite 'food secure'; food sovereignty secured *campesinos* access to produce what they consumed (ibid. 2014). Reversing this trend as non-traditional crop expansion in Guatemala surged by a whopping 280 percent between 1985 and 2010 (ibid.), the neoliberal Green Revolution catered to the interests of foreign populations and the elite, the Guatemalan government as a most obvious benefactor.

A global neoliberal restructuring that preyed upon Guatemala's widening agricultural sector from the 1980s, was also targeted at the time by international markets and financiers through structural adjustment loans. Faced during the 1980s with a massive debt, Guatemala accepted structural adjustment loans from the World Bank and the IMF that were predicated upon an exchange of the opening of the Guatemalan maize market to low-priced and heavily subsidized products from foreign suppliers. Dictating the policy that would privilege the flood and eventual profit off of their own products as they flooded the country's markets, USAID promoted the introduction of non-traditional crops to replace maize food systems (the milpa) with snow peas, broccoli, French beans, and melons, changing the agricultural structure and composition in the country (ibid.; Carey 2009) as Indigenous peasants were made irrelevant unless lands were sold or pressured to serve new markets. While some rural landowners were able to obtain legal land title for their lands through state agencies in the 1960s to 1990 period, salvaging the optimism of the Guatemalan democratic revolution, many rural landowners were left empty-handed or without

initiative to begin the arduous process required to obtain legal title after Guatemala's democratic spring was cut abruptly short (Gould 2006). As Carey (2009: 290) points out from the year 1979, 88 percent of the farms in the country covered only 16 percent of the arable land and only a small 2.5 percent of the farms farmed the remaining 65 percent of arable land.

Like previous national-scale development plan projects, encouragement from the Guatemalan government in the form of an "Irrigation Development Framework 2013-2023", implemented a strategy at the national level since 2012 to help further encourage modernization in irrigation systems via public investment. Taking public funds from the country's agriculture authority Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Alimentación (MAGA) away from the traditional small-scale irrigation schemes referred to as "mini-riego" that were popular since the 1980s, (FAO 2014), the restructuring of the Guatemalan agricultural sector "generated a dependency upon imported grains and agrochemicals", that Isakson (2014: 349) concludes, "probably contributed to the erosion of crop genetic diversity, thereby undermining a cornerstone of long-term global food security".

Further implementation of the neoliberal GEDDS trajectory (Castree 2010) spearheaded by hegemon corporate U.S. appetites, brought also the deregulation of extractive industries in the mid-2000s that wrought industrial-sized havoc on Guatemala's environmental resources from yet another angle (Copeland 2018: 6). Debts and an inability to compete on the treadmill of inequality that expands into a Global North subverting potentials of a Global South based on colonial hierarchies, saw the Quetzal mandated by IMF to be devalued, opening up further

incentive for foreign interests to invest in agricultural products and land resources of Guatemala that became available inexpensively on the international market (Isakson 2014).

iv.   Decolonization by identification: Mesoamerica's modern Maya and early beginnings (1970s-1980s)

As farmers were finding one another in Guatemala to network knowledge, techniques, and resources in their *milpas* and mounting the agroecology revolution, the defense of Indigenous identity, territory, and lives brought further unification of a 'Maya' identity grown as the political statement against injustice in the shadow of the stolen revolution budded in Guatemala's Ten Years of Spring.

In the 1960s to 70s Maya activism began to gather force and definition as it developed in two separate and distinct branches: that of the *clasistas,* who worked with ladino groups on issues related to class, and that the *culturalistas* who were focused on issues related to Maya identity (Way 2016: 3). Sharing ancestral peoples, in Guatemala's neighboring country Mexico the post-1970s period saw the emergence and fortification of a modern 'Maya Movement' as Maya identities were reinvigorated with Indigenous regionally-originating worldviews, cultures, and languages to serve as a means and site of resistance (Price, Nonini, and Fox Tree 2008; Caso 2010). Citing Maya origins and ancestrally-inherited social systems as was ongoing in Guatemala, the parallel populist movements in Mexico were also fueled by *campesinxs* (Nash 2001) and the revitalization of Maya cosmology in popular culture and knowledge systems by *campesinxs* in the Mexican border department of Chiapas (Hernández-Castillo and Nigh 1998).

Cano Contreras, Page Pliego, and Estrada Lugo (2018) argue that the Maya movement began amid the internal armed conflict of the 1970s, as Maya peoples became politicized in Guatemalan politics. A theme not new to many Maya groups who have always cited their ancestral Maya origins, the modern Maya movement is cited by others to have emerged in the 1980s (Stern 2005: 50; Yashar 2005) when Guatemala's Indigenous populations suffered atrocities at the hand of the Guatemalan state and its military apparatus who targeted them by the performances of their indigeneity and culture. As peasant rebellions forced Indigenous peoples across Guatemala to seek refuge, cultural communities of the marginalized groups emerged as natural result of being targeted and repressed violently by the Guatemalan military. From these sharing space under attack, these same populations also began to assert claim to their Indigenous identities.

Specifically, the Declaration of *Iximche'*, notably bearing the prefix '*ixim*' as the word for 'maize' in many Maya dialects across Mesoamerica (Bassie-Sweet 2002: 3, citing Kaufman and Norman 1984: 121; Staller et al. 2006) arose in one definitive moment of the beginning of the modern Maya movement as it helped to consolidate a Guatemalan Indigenous identity under persecution. The Declaration was provoked by the January 31, 1980, violent entrapment and murder of 37 Maya *campesinxs*, Ladinx activists, and university students who had gathered in the Spanish Embassy of Guatemala City to denounce the violence and repression of the Guatemalan state military and seek support from an international community through the embassy. Burning *campesinxs* and rural Indigenous leaders alive after they were trapped inside of the Spanish embassy set alight, Indigenous leaders from communities in the northwest of Guatemala's Quiché department were murdered in a violent, very visible attack that led to the

establishment of self-defined parameters for Maya people in Guatemala and further escalated

tensions and for the most brutal next few years that followed of the 40 years of civil war (Cano

Contreras, Page Pliego, and Estrada Lugo 2018).

Defending themselves and their Indigenous territories and ways of life, the last two decades of

the civil war gave rise to what became a "vibrant pan-Mayan Movement" (Way 2016) that

gradually trended the *clasistas* and *culturalistas* together into the 1990s as the identity movement

developed into political activism. In this period, Maya participation in municipal politics

"soared" despite the formal and official decline of the Mayan movement itself (ibid.: 3). Within

the CEH (1999: Chapter 2, Volume 5: Conclusiones y Recomendaciones, page 41, translation

mine) report, the Maya movement is cited as the consolidation of subjectivities that form

fundamental political subjects transforming a history of profound suffering as a result of the

historical oppression of Indigenous identity into a rich, tolerant diversity:

> "In the opinion of the CEH, the Maya movement asserted itself during the last years of
>
> the armed confrontation as a fundamental political subject. In their fight against the
>
> exclusion they have suffered since the founding of the State, they have made important
>
> contributions in the field of multiculturalism and peace. These provide inescapable
>
> foundations for society as a whole to review its history and commit to the construction of
>
> a new nation project that reflects its multicultural nature and that is inclusive, tolerant and
>
> proud of the richness that its cultural differences represent."

From the context of Latin America more broadly during Guatemala's 40-year conflict, military regimes that violated human rights were increasingly finding resistance from strong countercultural movements that used many strategies (i.e., symbolic protests and legal processes to document and publicize abuses, international cooperation, and other methods) to combat human rights abuses at the hands of oppressive state and regional regimes (Bickford 1999: 1101). In several cases, these movements achieved significant results. Bickford (ibid.: 1101) notes the correlation between these movements and the fall of the military regimes in Chile, Argentina, and, to a lesser extent, Uruguay, commenting on their "influential" role to catalyze and shape dynamics of democratic transitions in these countries. Nevertheless, Bickford (1999) argues that the lingering past human rights abuses in Latin American countries is responsible for the creation of a 'culture of *"la impunidad*"[165], particularly within state agencies.

Erich Fox Tree (2011: 81) links the formation of Maya identities with the concept of indigeneity throughout the region, Maya identities providing a scaffolding for what he argues forms the basis of a new 'indigenized model of indigeneity' reshaping Guatemalan politics. Asserting a link between the country's three dozen Maya dialects and a single ancient Proto-Mayan language spoken some 4,000 years ago, Fox Tree (2011) draws support from Western academic disciplines to substantiate a connection common from the oral traditions of the region. The concept has easily been easily adopted in modern Maya populations and reborn in various educational contexts, permutating variously as Maya ancestral connections are being revitalized still into

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[165] Defining *impunidad* in a footnote on page 1102, Bickford (1999) writes that 'impunity' is the closest English translation for the word but that "this does not capture the richness of meaning that the word "impunidad" confers in Spanish. In Spanish, this term encompasses more than simply exemption from punishment for evil deeds. It also implies systemic corruption, the fundamental absence of the rule of law (especially, as it applies to those in positions of power), distorted norms of justice and fairness, and the constant sabotaging of democracy through the erosion of democratic institutions."

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today. From this politicization and processes of unification for various repressed actors sharing commonalities in their repression by the Guatemalan state, the emergence of the Maya movement has become a space for the redefinition of identities and new types of indigenous actors since the mid-1980s to the early 1990s as it has become a priority for many to salvage and rescue imperiled Maya traditions and culture after the civil conflict killed many and forced new structures in the oppression of state-military persecutions of Indigenous and peasant communities during the 1980s.

Playing a critical role in the spread of the movement's popularity, education is cited by Price, Nonini, and Fox Tree (2008: 138) as one of the initial tools useful for the politicization of Maya identities as it has brought about 'activist-intellectuals' that have gained an understanding of concepts such as decolonization to frame the long struggle since 1492 to maintain these pre-Columbian cultural identities and lifeways. As one example, one of the first formal institutions of the emerging Maya movement in Guatemala was the educational institution started in 1984 as the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* (Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala). Helping to codify Maya identities and pre-colonial cultural origins, the ALMG helped to standardize Maya languages using a Latin-based unified alphabet, among other educationally-based reforms (Fox Tree 2011: 93).

v.   The modern Maya movement, post-Peace Accords

Figure 73 (above): Imagery of the Americas united in Indigenous voices. Secretaría Operativa, Campaña Continental. 1990. Queremos que nos escuchen, que se oiga la voz de nuestros pueblos. Campaña continental: 500 años de resistencia indígena y popular. Series: Folleto Popular No. 1. 24 pages.
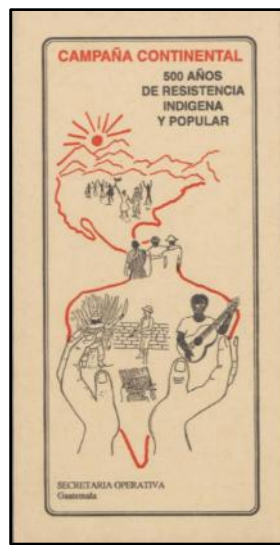

Figure 72 (above): Imagery of a united hemisphere of Indigenous peoples. Secretaría Operativa, Campaña Continental 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular. 1992. Campaña Continental 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular. 6 pages. Pamphlet.
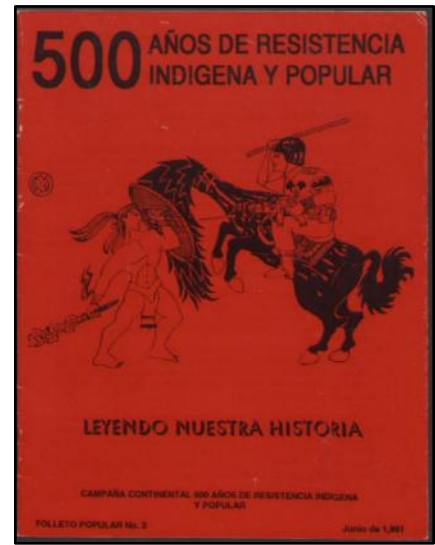
Figure 75 (above): "500 years of Indigenous and Popular Resistance, Reading Our History". Campaña Continental. 1991. 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular. Series: Leyendo Nuestra Historia, Folleto Popular No. 2. 24 pages.
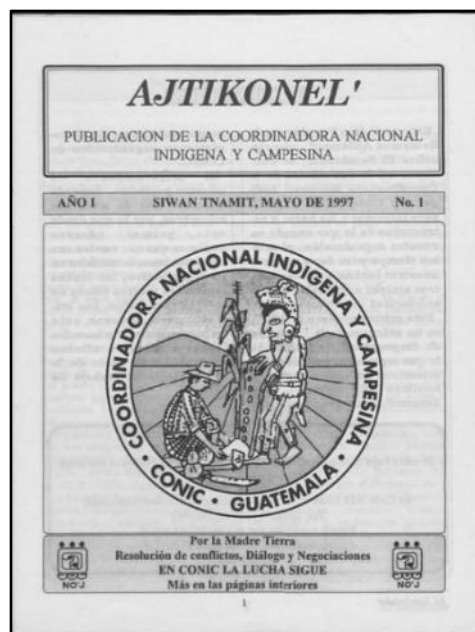

Figure 74 (left): Farmer and Maya figure depicted planting maize together on the front of the Indigenous publication. Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina (CONIC) publication 1997. 24 pages.

Many ephemera of the Digital Archive reiterate narrations of history in the 1990s that speak to

the long history of Maya people in Guatemala and Indigenous populations across the Americas

today, a 500-year[166] legacy of Indigenous and popular resistance (Campaña

Continental/Continental Campaign 1990; 1991; 1992) (Figure 68-74). Depicting an Indigenous

presence as supporting a popular movement of resistance which has endured for the last 500

years, the pamphlets cite the violence against pre-Columbian worlds at the encounter with

Europeans, "an encounter of two worlds" that "for the *pueblos indios* of America, … marked the

beginning of the genocide and ethnocide that lasted now more than 500 years" (Campaña

Continental 1992: 3). The pamphlets educate readers from Indigenous perspectives of the history

of the American continent, one with three parts: before the "invaders", the 500 years, and a third

phase that signals space for the growth of Indigenous society as it instructs "we have to construct

today for ourselves" (ibid: 3). Breaking away from the previous 5 centuries where "they have

spoken for us", the pamphlets emphasize a new era of Indigenous Peopes wanting to assert for

themselves their identities by "start[ing] to speak with our own voice" (Campaña Continental

1990: 15), telling their history that unites pre-Columbian peoples under the frame of indigeneity

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[166] The Campana Continental identifies its beginnings in Bogota, Colombia on October 1989 at the *I Encuentro Latino Americano de Organizaciones Campesinas e Indigenas* (First Encounter of the Latin American Organization of Campesinas and Indigenas) where 72 delegations from 21 countries launched the *Campaña Continental 500 Anos de Resistencia Indigena y Popular* (Continental Campaign 500 Years of Indigenous and Popular Resistance) as "an Latin American popular and alternative response to the 5th Centenary Celebration" (Campaña Continental 1992: 2).

Figure 76 (above): Depicts the Indigenous "faces of America" asserting their connectedness with both one another and with 'nature' and land. Campaña Continental. 1991. 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular. Series: Leyendo Nuestra Historia, Folleto Popular No. 2.
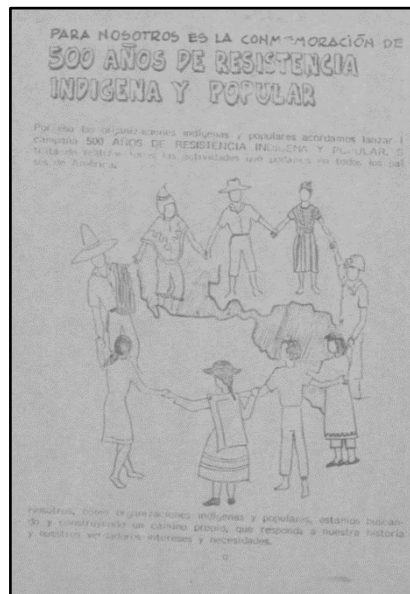
Figure 78 (above): Imagery depicting Indigenous peoples from around the Americas uniting around shared land. Secretaría Operativa, Campaña Continental. 1990. Queremos que nos escuchen, que se oiga la voz de nuestros pueblos. Campaña continental: 500 años de resistencia indígena y popular. Series: Folleto Popular, No. 1. 24 pages.
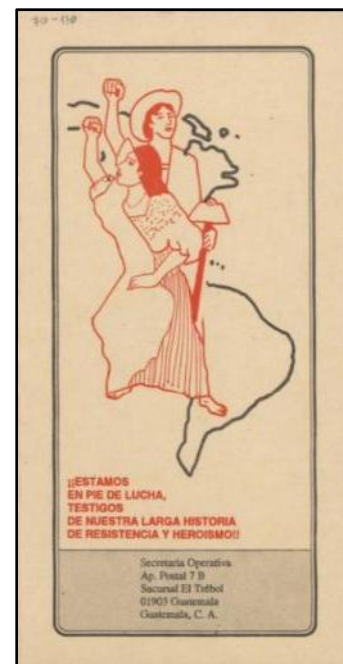
Figure 77 (above): Imagery of shared struggles across the American hemisphere from the pamphlet: Secretaría Operativa, Campaña Continental. 1992. 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular. Campaña Continental 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular. 6 pages. Pamphlet.

(Campaña Continental 1992: 3). Recovering the voice of Indigenous Pueblos, the campaign is positioned to help Indigenous groups "know one another and unite our ideas and experiences from each one of our *Pueblos* of *America*, so that we have voice in front of this historical fact" (ibid.: 2). Simple imagery and messages illustrate the interest of the movement to establish and connect these "different FACES OF AMERICA" (Figure 76) and to encourage them to speak with their own voice by educating "our[/Indigenous] communities" about an Indigenous shared history which exists in "a space of communication, encounter, coordination" which can be amplified for the "popular sectors of America" (Campaña Continental 1990: 15; 1992: 5).

Educating readers about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, a history that the pamphlets note has historically been presented from the perspective of the '*colonialista'* (ibid. 1990: 12), is presented with the help of contrasting voices and simple drawings that narrate the divergent experiences of colonization in the Americas (Figure 79) with experiences from different Indigenous groups of the Americas that draw connection between groups and strengthen this shared identity of indigeneity. Pages of Campaña Continental's (1991) pamphlet detail the different kinds of colonization across the Americas, citing several Native American groups and enslaved '*traidos'*[167] that share a similar history of forced

LOS NUEVOS CONQUISTADORES
EL ROSTRO DEL IMPERIALISMO

Ahora existen nuevas formas de dominación y de colonialismo, grandes empresas transnacionales explotan nuestro trabajo y los recursos naturales de nuestros pueblos.

El invasor ahora es distinto, pero igual en sus intenciones.

Ahora nuestros países están amarrados por la Deuda Externa, los organismos creados por el Imperialismo, como el Fondo Monetario Internacional, son los que determinan las políticas económicas, que mantienen sumido en la miseria a nuestro pueblo.

Las grandes empresas, controlan el mercado mundial; por ello cuando deciden bajar los precios de un producto, millones de campesinos, sufren hambre.
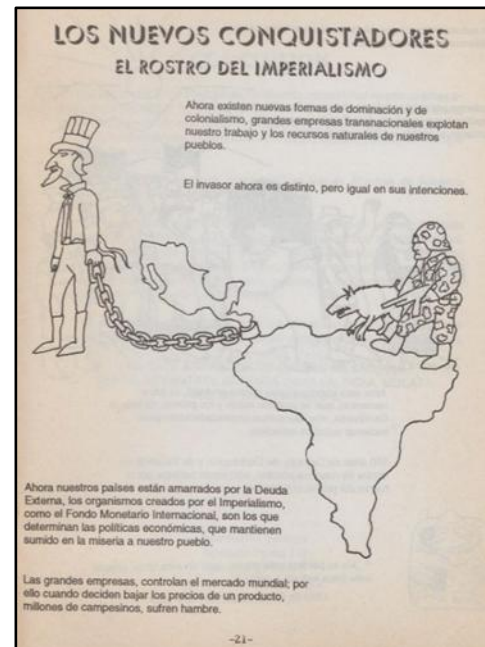
-21-

Figure 79 (above): New forms of colonization, imperialism from transnational corporations and debt. Campaña Continental. 1991. 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular. Series: Leyendo Nuestra Historia, Folleto Popular No. 2.

colonization (ibid.: 14-15) and "new forms of domination and colonization, large transnational corporations exploiting our work and natural resources of our *pueblos*" (ibid.: 21). Identifying the Cultura Maya specifically as one cultural identity that existed before the arrival of Europeans (ibid.: 3), the story of their colonial encounter is presented from this Indigenous perspective. Highlighting the new definitions of territory brought by the colonizer after the removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands and the introduction of private property which "did not exist before", the imposed "another way of life" that "exploited our ancestors to the death in mines and *haciendas*"[168] (ibid.: 11) is connected to foreign conceptions of territory and rejected.

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[167] Translated from Spanish as 'brought people', in reference to slaves.
[168] Hacienda could mean any number of buildings from a personal house, to a plantation or ranch house, to a farm, or tax authority.

In these popular movements, themes of justice and restoration are cited, to "*recuperar* our cultural identity and establish conditions of dignity and justice" and look for "a more dignified life for our *pueblos*" (Campaña Continental 1992: 2). Against the situation of oppression and exploitation, the campaign looks "to construct a path where we
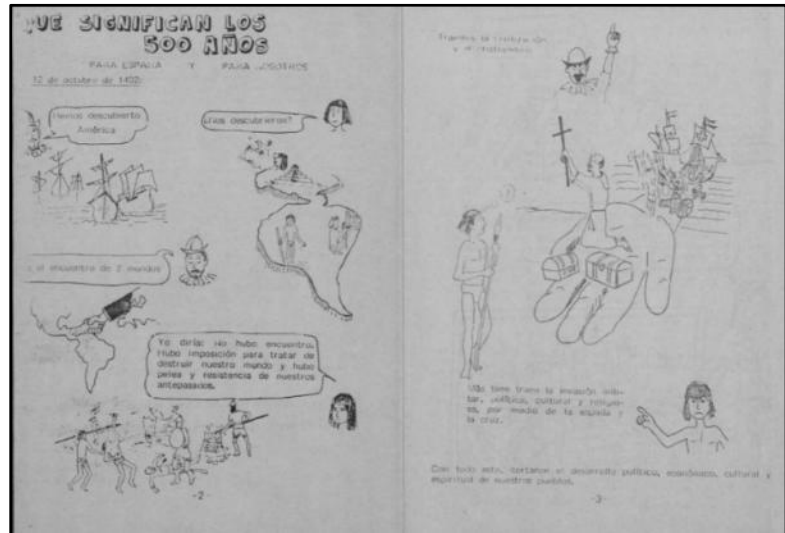

Figure 80 (above): Simple images tell of the divergent histories between Indigenous peoples and colonists in the Americas over the last 500 years. Secretaría Operativa, Campaña Continental. 1990. Queremos que nos escuchen, que se oiga la voz de nuestros pueblos. Campaña continental: 500 años de resistencia indígena y popular. Series: Folleto Popular, No. 1. 24 pages.

[/Indigenous peoples] can participate based on our ways of organizing that our ancestors passed down to us" (Campaña Continental 1990: 13); "convert ourselves into actors of our own destiny together with the other oppressed, exploited and discriminated against peoples of America and the world" (Campaña Continental 1992: 5); "recuperate our historical memory to affirm our [Indigenous] identity" (Campaña Continental 1990: 12-13; 1992: 4) and "rescue the memory of our heroes and martyrs of these last 500 years of indigenous and popular resistance" (ibid. 1990: 16).

Evidence of the growing momentum in Latin America around the emergence of Indigenous identities in popular movements anchoring decolonization efforts, the pamphlets solidify connections to pre-Columbian histories that centralize reverence for the abundance of the Earth

and the continued responsibility by Indigenous Peoples to use their voices and resistance to care

for Her. From the first publication of Ajtikonel' in 1997, a publication from the newly created

National Indigena and Campesina Coordinator (CONIC), the iconography of the publication's

front page prominently depicts a farmer, *campesinx*, and a Maya figure together with the words

'in CONIC the fight continues for La Madre Tierra' (Figure 75). Articulating Indigenous notions

of territory that connect people, land, and the more-than-human, from these ephemeral pamphlets

documenting a history of the Maya identity movement colonial notions of territory are explicitly

contested and Indigenous definitions of territory explained. One pamphlet clearly states: "In the

thoughts of our grandparents 'LAND, NATURE, WORK, MEN, WOMEN, THESE CANNOT

BE SEPARATED, THEY FORM A WHOLE'" (ibid. 1991: 3, emphasis in original) (Figure 76).

Another pamphlet stands against the hate between brothers, division, isolation, and conflict between *Pueblos,* sown by colonizers to replace a history of Indigenous communities and cultures, "whose values of *vida comunitaria* and solidarity, of life in harmony with Mother Earth and la *naturaleza*, that we can support in a new society" (ibid. 1990: 15). Defending this whole, new society that communities in this resistance can play a part in creating, the pamphlets express a path of "knowing and recuperating our past and the identity of our *pueblos* to look for solutions to the large problems that face us today" (ibid.: 13); a path that will "raise all of us and defend the rights that pertain to us because
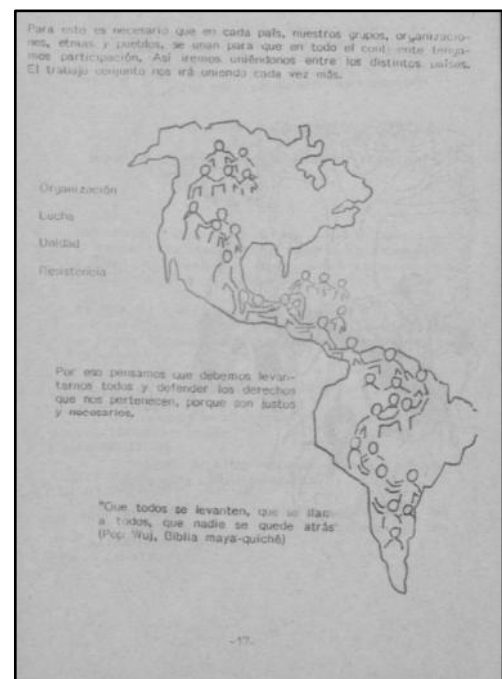

Figure 81 (above): Popul Vuh cited in the representation of unifying Indigenous peoples across the American hemisphere Secretaría Operativa, Campaña Continental. 1990. Queremos que nos escuchen, que se oiga la voz de nuestros pueblos. Campaña continental: 500 años de resistencia indígena y popular. Series: Folleto Popular, No. 1. 24 pages.

these are just and necessary" (ibid.: 17). Citing a passage of the Popul Vuh, the "bible" of the

Maya-Quiché, the pamphlet urges that "Everyone stand up, that we call everyone together, that

no one is left behind" (ibid.: 17) (Figure 81) in a territorial defense movement of Indigenous

Pueblos throughout the Americas as indigenous identity is defined according to those

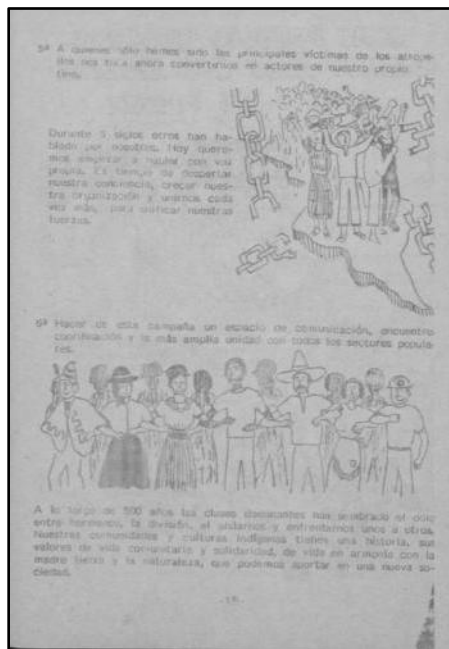marginalized by previous historical accounts.

Figure 82 (above): Imagery breaking free from chains, united in Indigenous tradition. Secretaría Operativa, Campaña Continental. 1990. Queremos que nos escuchen, que se oiga la voz de nuestros pueblos. Campaña continental: 500 años de resistencia indígena y popular. Series: Folleto Popular, No. 1. 24 pages.

Figure 83 (above): Maya Ixil men and women in a national protest holding a sign which reads: "In the fight for the land the woman is present". (CONIC 1996: 27).

As a motivating concept behind and justifying of these efforts, human rights is commonly cited

by the pamphlets (Campaña Continental 1991: 22) and in the ephemera of the collection as a first

step in the direction toward this Indigenous resurgence and revitalization. From the

Comunidades de Población en Resistencia (CPR) Sierra-Ixcán (Campaña Continental 1992),

communities of people who fled to the highland forests during the war and communities where the Ixil also found themselves in self-defense against warring groups, a declaration cites the awareness efforts by public figures such as Rigoberta Menchu and Amilcar Mendez on themes of human rights as essential in reclaiming and defending of rights, rights recognized through these figures by the national public and an international community. Campaña Continental (1991: 23) iterates: "we raise ourselves in an organized way to reclaim our rights", the right to territory and Indigenous forms of expression as pivotal in these.

vi.   Guatemala's seed, food, and life sovereignty movement

> "The native and hybrid seeds are important links to the heritage from our grandparents; they passed down the seeds [to us], which we conserve and produce in our plots ... Maya women [harvest] and conserve the seeds but with the [Monsanto] law, their efforts will [be interrupted and] disappear, including the ancestral [sources] of knowledge" (quoted in Lea 2017: 2650)

Guatemala's seed, food, and life sovereignty movement has demanded the performance of these Maya more-than-human identities to defend the territorial body, a powerful mass mobilizations in Guatemala hailed as a full 'revolution' by those who study the concept (Foran 2005; Selbin 2009; Copeland 2018).

Yagenova (2015: 329–331) identifies the year 2003 as marking the onset of a period of heightened protest in Guatemala where 5,178 protests were recorded between 2003 and 2013 as

campesino, indigenous, student, and other groups took to the streets to voice discontentment, much of which related to changes toward industrialized agriculture in the country[169].

One of the largest and most successful protests for indigenous and other groups in favor of anti-neoliberal integration and consolidation in the country was the introduction of and mass uprising against Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties' Decree 19-2014. Approved by the Guatemalan Congress on 10 June 2014, the decree was to take effect on 26 September 2014, and intended to bring Guatemala into compliance with requirements on intellectual property rights and biosafety protocols mandated by the country's ratification of the free trade agreement, CAFTA-DR. Importantly to more-than-human identities of the Indigenous Pueblos of Guatemala, the law was also the first to suggest maize as a commodity. Thus seeking to redefine the sanctified substrate and necessity for the nourishment of biodiverse communities across Guatemala, the Law brought maize into a contentious zone of 'ontological conflict' (Blaser 2009; 2010; 2013; 2016) for the Maya who consider maize as constitutive of life itself. Assembling to defend and protecting the intangible value of the *milpa* and its lifeway based in reciprocal relationships of care with the Maya, the defense that eventually defeated the law brought a people in defense of the *relationships* to Maya more-than-human territories.

Grandia's work (2017) explores the political ecologies of the conflict and the vehement opposition to it from Indigenous groups and others around the country who opposed the

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[169] A major protest to the national legislature of roughly 30,000 Mayan and ladinx *campesinxs* took place in the streets of Guatemala City in 2008 to protest the unequal agricultural structure in the country and to demand government support for the cultivation of non-transgenic basic grains (Klepek 2012). In the same year, on June 26 in Sololá, the *alcaldía indígena* (indigenous mayor's office) organized a public demonstration of over one thousand people against the increases in oil and fertilizer costs (Carey 2009) as inputs for cash crop farming became insurmountable for many small farmers.

colloquially dubbed 'Monsanto Law'[170]. Making clear interest of Guatemalan elites in the

domination of foreign interests over seed resources, disadvantaging almost all local actors within

Guatemala[171], awareness of the decree spread, swaying public opinion heavily against the law in

its wake (Grandia 2017: 67). For the maize's close relationships with people Indigenous, Ladino,

or other, many across Guatemala opposed the bill, seen as an attack[172], and joined mass

mobilizations in both urban and rural parts of the country to express their discontents and assert

their a right to the freedom of seeds and local seed exchange systems[173] (Klepek 2012; Griest

2015; Grandia 2017; Lea 2017).

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[170] The law was colloquially called the Monsanto Law for its obvious prioritization of agribusiness interests over Indigenous rights and regional food sovereignties and for Monsanto's heavy involvement in its passing.

[171] Grandia (2017) specifically highlights the clause of the law awarding breeder patent rights as an imminent threat to Maya and *campesinxs* who would be forced to allow a flood of genetically-modified seed into the country by the new regulations within the law (ibid.: 66). Breeder patent rights were excessive at twenty-five years for trees and vines and twenty for other species if compared to other countries of the region. Criminalizing farmers for replanting, transporting, or selling PVP-protected seeds without breeder permission by the clause, privatized seed, as an 'intellectual property' by the law, threatened critical food sovereignties for farmers who often share seed across generations and among one another. Without the resources economically to buy new seed each year instead of saving their own, and likely instigating undercuts for the price of maize for small farmers, steep fines that came with the law threatened patent violators with heavy one-to-four-year prison sentences or monetary fines of up to 1,300 USD under the law's Article 51. An exorbitant amount of money for most of rural Guatemala's standards, these penalties were cited by farmers and others as completely untenable. Grandia (ibid.: 59) points out that the majority of small farmers and farmworkers who compose at least half of the country's labor force would be forced to work seven months at the $9.66 per day minimum wage to pay off as much as a $1300 fine.

[172] The national seed network, the National Network in Defense of Food Sovereignty (REDSAG), described the law as "a direct attack on the traditional knowledge, biodiversity, life, culture, rural economy and worldview of [indigenous] peoples, and food sovereignty" (REDSAG 2014: 1).

[173] . The Indigenous Observatory, the Maya Ukux Be Association, the Social Collective for the Right to Food, the Latin American Agroecological Movement, the National Network in Defense of Food Sovereignty, Rural Studies Collective (Cer-lxim), and the National Alliance for Biodiversity Protection all issued public statements against the Monsanto Law and warned against its detrimental effects on farmers, the agricultural economy, indigenous communities, and national food security. Edgar René Cojtín Acetún, a leader of the movement and member of the indigenous municipality of Sololá, stated in defense of sacred maize that would be impacted heavily by the Decree "We cannot live without our corn. It makes up all of our lives. We consume it for our food, we sell it, it is us" (Griest 2015). After an announcement from the director of Guatemala's science and technology research institute (ICTA) on 22 August 2014 indicating that even the 148 'improved' seeds (11 hybrid and 35 genetically-altered corn/maize varieties) developed within the country and had yet to be patented would also be patentable by foreign interests under the new law, even the support of agronomic engineers generally in support of the 'improved' seeds of Green Revolution technologies was lost (Grandia 2017). Social media reflected a similar, nearly unanimous, opposition to the law as less than 1% of comments posted in relation to it favored its passage and 99% opposed it (Grandia 2017: 71).

While the diversity of actors involved and opposed to the law was broad and sizable[174], the most

influential and significant bases leading the movement were those of the Indigenous groups of

Guatemala[175] (Grandia 2017: 69-70). A different form of globalization throughout the

Americas[176], self-organizing both physically and virtually into public spaces to protest the

change and protect lifeforms intrinsic to Maya conceptions of territory, the opposition brought

out against the decree and lead by Guatemala's Indigenous Peoples was successful in blocking

the bill and defending ancestral claim to maize stories, material, and economic exchange, at least

temporarily[177]. Hearing objections from the streets and considering the massive unrest caused by

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[174] In the climax of efforts to defend the seed, Grandia (2017: 70) cites roughly 120,000 people from 82 communities standing in the Pan American Highway road from 10am to 6pm to obstruct traffic and shipping routes; Q'eqchi' peasant groups blocking another major highway in the northern lowlands; Anonymous Guatemalan 'hacktivists' impeding the regular function of major government websites such as the Superintendent of Taxation Administration, the Constitutional Court, National Police, and the Ministry of Finance; and associated 'Anonymous' Facebook and Twitter feeds signaling commands from social media to 'Keep firing!' (Sigan disparando) as those methods utilized by the self-organized mobilizations that took place on 2 September 2014. Grandia (2017: 60) notes that despite the different ideological perspectives in the conflict, the 'high-stakes' context brought "diverse social movements [to] take coordinated action". Peasant federations, health workers, biologists, Maya spiritual leaders, environmentalists, Pentecostals (who regard Monsanto as an anti-Christ), opportunistic politicians, college students, and Guatemala City foodies (ibid.: 59) were all brought together by the movement to collectively to defend maize and non-monetary connections to it.

[175] In the 96 percent Maya western highland department of Sololá, seventy community members mobilized their populations to defend against the law. In what Grandia (ibid.) describes as a "torrent of press conferences and demonstrations", Maya leaders drew parallels with the country's recently ended 36 years of civil war and the Monsanto Law, claiming the law a 'food genocide'. Edgar René Cojtín Acetún, leader and resident of Sololá municipality, stated in defense of their sacred maize "We cannot live without our corn. It makes up all of our lives. We consume it for our food, we sell it, it is us" (Griest 2015). Indigenous Maya, Guatemalteca, woman, environmental rights defender, and spokeswoman of the Maya Peoples Council, Lolita Chávez, echoed a feeling of 'attack' on the Maya people by attacking their territories through sacred connections to maize seeds threatened by the law (Chiquin 2014, cited in Grandia 2017: 69-70). Outside of the Constitutional Court, as lawyers for an indigenous union (Movimiento Sindical, Indígena y Campesino Guatemalteco, MSICG) presented an appeal some days previous to the mobilizations on Tuesday, 26 August 2014, signs with these messages appeared. Some read: 'I am man of maize of Guatemala, not Monsanto'; 'We are the sons and daughters of maize, not of Monsanto'; 'Our Maize, Our Country' (nuestro maíz, nuestro país); 'I am Maya: my blood, my bones, my muscles, my hair are made of maize. No to Law 19-2014!' (Grandia 2017: 67).

[176] This is discussed in Chapter V.

[177] Though Monsanto law was quickly repealed as a result of the uprising, a PVP law that would have barred farmers from reproducing privatized varieties of seed, the Industrial Property Law that was passed in 2000, is still in effect. It outlines similar 'property' rights that the Monsanto Law would have strengthened. Concerns in the country remain that other laws may be enacted in response to CAFTA or another bill introduced to address it that could be detrimental to peasant seed-saving and regenerating systems.

the law, only three weeks before it was set to be enacted on 26 September 2014, the law was repealed by the Guatemalan Congress on 4 September 2014 (ibid.: 57).

The positive momentum and success of this movement to protect more-than-human forms of identity shared among indigenous pueblos of Guatemala is now nearly a decade in the past. Its success, however, has not been forgotten by the Maya nor political strategists in the country whose political parties were born amid this organizing (see Annex II: vii). Building upon and strengthening a resurgence of Indigenous identities in the same lands, property rights transformations and the privatization/neoliberalization of the parts of life are changes that threaten life itself for many Maya and other Indigenous groups of Guatemala are increasingly political and locations for contestation by land defenders and their land-based social movements (Halvorsen 2019; Trauger 2014; Middeldorp and Le Billion 2019). Having leveraged inequalities created by extractivism to bring multiple dispossessed groups together within the environmental justice and food sovereignty movement in Guatemala, the narratives of indigenous and land defenders that reassert collective forms of territory as a part of Indigenous identity and form new communities of practice addressing ecological distribution conflicts are critical in the contestation of inequality in the country. The structures that they form in communities (Scheidel et al. 2018: 586) across Guatemala are the foundation of change and organizing for the structures that politicians such as Arévalo build their political campaigns after.

Placing the hope of a 'new spring' from indigenous and popular support of the *Semilla Movimiento* into context (Annex II: vii, viii), while Arévalo does not formally address Indigenous issues, the campaign's origins from this Indigenous defense of territory by way of

their more-than-human relationships traces a foundation to them and their successful mobilizations in the hopeful movements of the 2010s. Using metaphors from the food sovereignty movement in Guatemala without mentioning specifics of their struggles, the *Semilla Movimiento* has left out the important Indigenous aspects of the political discourse intricately intertwined with the defense of territory movements that build notions of the territory beyond the state (Trauger 2014; Copeland 2019; Halvorsen 2019; Batz 2022). Maize and the sovereignty to keep, sow, and grow maize is integral to the survival of rural Maya populations in Guatemala and much of Central America where the previous Maya civilizations once flourished, and cannot be done *ex situ*.

vii.   The ascent of *Movimiento Semilla*

In Guatemala, grassroots community mobilization such as marches, roadblocks, land occupations, and protests against extractivism or its political organization for it, remain the most successful methods of political engagement to address the ontological collisions in the country that continue to threaten Indigenous lifeways. Such organizing, as Masek (2023: 344) comments, acts too as "the basis for a rearticulation of popular and ancestral Indigenous authorities who are on the front lines of the national strike." In the subsequent democratic mobilization of the 2010s (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023) and using the same techniques, significant pressure was exerted by these movements to initiate the resignation of then-president Pérez Molina in 2015 (Granovsky-Larsen 2017). In 2022, Molina and his vice president Baldetti were sentenced to 16 years in jail for their involvement in a high-profile customs- and tax-fraud scheme.

Although other means have been consistently tried toward better rights to include and recognize Indigenous Peoples through the many international treaties and agreements that Guatemala is a party to, any progress in the country on these fronts has consistently been made through the struggle of the social movements that bring political actors together and mobilize international mechanisms and spaces to enforce rights (Elías 2015: 80). Increasingly, identity, and Indigenous claims to territory that bring people together with more-than-human worldviews are becoming a foundation for greater food sovereignty for peasants and dispossessed groups of the neoliberal regime.

Connected to the legacy of progress from the 2010s in advocating for equality-based reform and extending more-than-human ontological perspectives into political imaginaries, the germination of *Movimiento Semilla* and the election of Bernardo Arévalo happened in a fertile soil that these democratic mobilizations and those of the pre-civil war years created. The political party itself began in 2014, the same year as the Monsanto Law protests, as an informal forum to discuss social, political, and economic challenges (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 31). Its activists were featured in the 2015 anticorruption protests (ibid.), and CICIG-MP investigations conjured images of the Guatemalan state "held hostage" by what they referred to as the "Pact of the Corrupt", terminology that propelled collective action (ibid.: 30). The *Semilla* party registered in July 2017, became officially recognized in November 2018, and presented its first presidential candidate Thelma Aldana, a former attorney-general who spearheaded the Pérez Molina investigation (ibid.) in 2019. Disqualified in May of 2019, *Semilla* still went on to achieve moderate success gaining 7 seats in Congress with 5 percent of the vote (Font 2024). The only Indigenous woman in the running for the presidency in 2019, Maya Mam human rights defender

and founding member of the Campesino Development Committee (CODECA), Thelma Cabrera's placement 4th in that election with 10 percent of the vote came as a surprise to political elites that was subsequently addressed in 2023. Cabrera and Rodas, her running mate for the Movement for the Liberation of the Peoples, were identified early as "a threat to Guatemalan elites: a strong Indigenous and campesino movement" (Batz 2023: 110) and were subsequently disqualified, a decision that since February of 2023 brought thousands of Guatemalans to the streets, mounting blockades against the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE)'s decision to disqualify and remove them from running (Batz 2023). Meléndez (2023: 3) describes the decisions of The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the attorney-general's office (Ministerio Público – MP), along with the courts, as establishing "arbitrary sanctions to candidates that did not align with the interests of the traditional elites".

Arévalo's social democrat campaign was a dark horse that quietly filled the gap. Avoiding exclusion as he polled at 2.9% in voting intention in the last polls before the first-round election (Meléndez and Perelló 2023; Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 21), near the bottom, relatively unknown, and never amongst the favorites (Font 2024: 54), the country's corrupt elite did not perceive him "as a real threat" (Kurtenbach, Reder, and Riplinger 2024: 3) and "simply failed to take him seriously" (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 29). In a poll from June 23, 2023, before the first-round, he was not mentioned at all (Harrison 2023).

Winning 11.8% of the vote in the first-round elections in June 2023, 4 points above the candidate in 3rd place, Arévalo advanced to the run-off where he faced Sandra Torres (Harrison and Zissis 2023). Drawing the scrutiny of the international community that sent more observers for the

2023 run-off than any other in Guatemala history (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 31), special prosecutor Curruchiche with the support of Attorney General Porras[178] and Judge Fredy Orellana sought to suspend *Semilla* claiming without evidence[179] that irregularities appeared in the voting process (Masek 2023: 341). U.S. officials and governments across the Americas denounced attempts to invalidate the results of the election, issuing sanctions against key officials impeding it (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 33), and fracturing support of public sector agencies and private elites who grew concerned about associations with overt impunity and the economic costs of sanctions and international isolation (ibid.: 34). The involvement of the international community was an important factor in changing the environment that the corrupt oligarchy operates in and effective at the point of threatening their business interests in the country should election results be tampered with (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023). The high presence of international observers was also critical to counter narratives from the criminal oligarchy that contested its results (ibid.: 31).

In the second-round runoff election on August 20, 2023, Guatemalans came out in overwhelming support for Arévalo who won by a broad margin of 60.9 % of the valid vote (Harrison and Zissis 2023; Meléndez 2023: 3) and gaining 23 of the unicameral legislature's 160 seats (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 21-2). Broad discontentment of the population[180] translated into "unprecedented" numbers of voters at the polls (Kurtenbach, Reder, and Riplinger 2024) as he earned more votes than any presidential candidate in Guatemalan history (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 22), making

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[178] Porras has long been identified as someone who has "knowingly engaged in actions that undermine democratic processes or institutions, significant corruption, or obstruction of investigations into such acts of corruption" (US State Department 2023, cited in Kurtenback, Reder, and Riplinger 2024: 3).

[179] Splintering the coalition of the criminal oligarchy that bands together against reform, Schwartz and Isaacs (2023: 29) document the affirmation of the results of the first round by the Constitutional Court, after an audit ordered by the institution "found only negligible errors in the vote tally".

[180] A poll ahead of the first round election on June 23 2023 indicated that 82.8% of Guatemalans polled felt that the general situation in the country had 'gotten worse' in the last 3 years ahead of the election (Harrison 2023).

for one of the biggest electoral surges that Latin America has seen in the last decade (Schwartz

and Isaacs 2023: 21). Claims of fraud endured, however, after Arévalo's second-round victory,

spurring a 5th raid on the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) by the Public Prosecutor's Office

(MP) on September 29, as police officers stormed offices and removed ballot boxes, a move that

sparked immediate outrage from the population who responded with a national strike (Masek

2023: 341).

Thus, spurring a pro-democracy, an anti-corruption mobilization was born in the communities,

reminiscent in size and urgency to the 2015 anti-corruption protests of former president and

general Otto Pérez Molina (ibid.: 342). Unlike the primarily urban protests from the middle class

of 2015, however, the nationwide protests of 2023 were Indigenous-led. Initiated by the 48

Cantones of Totonicapán who announced the strike from the Western Highlands on October 2,

2023, The Indigenous Municipality of Sololá, the Parliament of the Xinka People, and six other

ancestral organizations representing the Indigenous peoples of Chichicastenango, Nebaj, and the

Q'eqchi' territories joined in support of the indefinite strike (ibid.: 341). Not alone, however, the

'paro nacional indefinido' blocked traffic and staged sit-ins in over 140 points across the country

with the support of university students and faculty, healthcare workers, public school teachers,

market vendors, and urban and rural civil society groups (ibid.) demanding that those impeding

the will of the people step down from office. In front of the Public Prosecutor's Office dozens of

Maya and Xinka leaders initiated a sit-in (ibid.: 340).

Hailed as "epic" "nothing short of remarkable … Against the odds… [and] stirring hopes that it

may indeed be possible to transform how politics is done [in Guatemala]" (Schwartz and Isaacs

2023: 32) the protests confronted the state instrumentalizing the justice system to retain its power (Masek 2023: 343) and the Indigenous leaders leading the protests brought home the message that nation-building projects cannot exclude indigenous peoples (ibid.: 344). Beyond the last vestiges of the rule of law that could protect the will of the voters, mass demonstrations are cited by scholars as a "key factor" in assuring the election's results (Kurtenbach, Reder, and Riplinger 2024), the decentralized movement as a possible "last barricade against authoritarianism" (Masek 2023: 344) and autorcratisation (Kurtenbach, Reder, and Riplinger 2024).

Barragán (2023) writes that despite the prominence of the Mayan social movement that emerged in the mid-to-late 1980s after indigenous activism from the Committee of Campesino Unity (CUC) in the 1970s, even after the social movements involving the Mayas declined in prominence at the signing of the Peace Accords, indigenous groups have never formed a viable indigenous-based national political party. Speculating about the reason for this, Barragán (2023: 82), citing Pallister (2013), suggests that a preference for the more dispersed pattern of political mobilization at the local level could feasibly be explained, at least in part, by a legacy of repression that lingered into the post-civil war years[181]. Indigenous groups negotiating for peace and reparations had "serious obstacles to the translation of indigenous mobilization in social movement organizations into political power through the party system … Indigenous have known that anything interpreted as a threat to the state might elicit a violent response [from it]." In the decade before the peace accords, Masek (2023: 343) cites Kay B. Warren in noting the

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[181] Aguilar-González *et al.* (2018) find from interviews with key academic/activist informants of the mining sectors in Guatemala that "the informants never consider the role of the law or the institutions of the State, which they see as irrelevant due to their ineffectiveness".

'reemergence in public view' of the Maya movement as many organized for school, court, and cultural reform but a lack of resources to press politicians left these efforts without results.

While the 1996 peace agreement envisioned fundamental changes that included recognition of the rights of the indigenous population and sweeping reform in the state's security sector to establish a new civilian police and reform of the judiciary, a failed referendum on these as constitutional changes in 1999 effectively "shelved redistributive measures, secured a wide (albeit not quite total) amnesty for wartime rights abuses, and erected high barriers to political-party formation" (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 25). Leaving the issues at the close of the war unaddressed and the "criminal-oligarchic project" conserved (ibid.), significant doubts arose that such change would ever come to pass (Kurtenbach, Reder, and Riplinger 2024: 2). Barragán (2023: 89) emphasizes that from the usual exclusion of indigenous peoples in Guatemalan politics after centuries of systematic structural exclusion since Guatemala's independence from Spain in 1821, key issues of the indigenous collective such as land ownership, reform, or the defense of their legal system, remain largely unaddressed. From 2020, Aguilar-Støen (2020: 68) estimates that 80 % of the arable land in Guatemala is controlled by less than 5% of the population. "Democratic" institutions born into an environment of impunity, corruption, and a history of violence towards indigenous peoples as engineered by the criminal oligarchy set the tone for little success during peacetime (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023: 26). No strong indigenous party exists in Guatemala to date, despite the emergence of political parties that addressed indigenous concerns directly like WINAQ in 2011 and the creation of the People's Liberation Movement in 2018 (Barragán 2023).

For a country with the second highest indigenous population in Latin America where indigenous people represent between 41% and 60% of the total population (Barragán 2023: 89; Kurtenback, Reder, and Riplinger 2024: 10), a percentage that is especially high in the highlands (Barragán 2023: 75), these figures demonstrate the stranglehold of the '*criollo* elite' on the political system (Flores 2017). Nearly every president until 1985 in Guatemala was a general (Lehoucq 2023), and into today, perhaps more than any other political system in the Americas, the army remains essential in the operation of politics, an "institutional spinal cord of a repressive and minimalist state" (Lehoucq, 2012: 146-47, cited in Lehoucq 2023: 88). When Guatemala's literacy rate in the over-15 age group hovers at a mere 71.4% in rural areas, 64.7% among the indigenous population, and 57.6% among indigenous women (Barragán 2023: 76), access to simple political participation such as voting remain significant structural barriers to civic participation[182].

As half of Guatemala's indigenous population continues to be employed by low wage-agriculture, working at a rate of 80.3% in the informal sector (compared to just 57.7% for non-indigenous people) (Barragán 2023: 76), the use of metaphorical connections to seed from *Movimiento Semilla* may not have explicitly addressed indigenous identities directly but it did speak a language from politics common to Guatemala's indigenous populations. Linking into the horizontal energy of indigenous movements such as those around the Monsanto Law in 2014, *Movimiento Semilla*'s Plan of Governance (2023: 55, 58) suggests the campaign's plan to address historical inequities with the metaphor of the seed. The document anticipates creating a different relationship of government to the Guatemalan population, "the planting of seeds of a new social

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[182] Barragán (2023: 83) takes the example of the position of an identity card which is required for voting as prohibitively expensive for a large part of the population, travel to urban or more populated areas, and the loss of working days as further barriers to obtain the critical voting document. The concentration of polling stations in urbanized areas creates similar issues.

contract", and building "the great national agreements that prepare the *tierra*[183] that allows us to reap a new social contract". Ten seeds for the recovery of the future are presented to accomplish this (ibid.: 25) and though the common food sovereignty theme of *buen vivir* is identified instead as '*bienestar*', common themes from the food sovereignty movement are gathered together unmistakably in the document with lines such as:

> "Thus, we recognize that each action of public power is a seed that is planted and cared for to reap greater social well-being and economic progress over time; therefore, a responsible government must work to sow the seeds that allow society to satisfy the needs and protect current generations without forgetting the challenge of future generations finding a better place to live." (Plan de Gobierno Movimiento Semilla 2023: 22).

Addressing the issues of a problematic state, the Plan (2023: 13) suggests a new state with Arévalo at the forefront will be focused on people; a "[p]roctor of comprehensive human well-being and development" and the promotion of increased employment and better living conditions for workers and their families "as it organizes its economy in a sustainable way, with full respect for nature and the rights of present and future generations". Guided by a government administration, that state will abide by the five principles of "Democracy, Equity, Plurality, Human Economy and Respect for nature" (PGMS 2023: 17).

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[183] While this could be translated as 'ground', the most common translation for tierra is land. The use of imagery that brings to mind the Earth and land with metaphors of seeds and planting could be reasonably interpreted from this document to be intentionally targeting an audience with Guatemala's high rural *campesinx* population.

Linked historically to origins from democratic movements of the 2010s and connection through its presidential candidate Arévalo to historical mobilizations that brought substantive land reform and workers' rights during Guatemala's Ten Years of Spring (movements easily recalled by many indigenous in Guatemala's rural lands), Semilla's metaphorical use of the seed could very feasibly be seen as an overt connection to a history of substantiating change in the country. Where the revitalization of Indigenous languages, practices, ideologies and ontologies has often been linked to the "homegrown universal metaphor of Mesoamerica: maize cultivation" (Fox Tree 2011: 100), Semilla's use of the seed presented a potential opportunity for Guatemala's indigenous population whose issues with corruption interpellate with the repressed expression of indigenous more-than-human forms of identity that hold much value in the seed.

Kurtenback, Reder, and Riplinger (2024: 10) argue that "[a]dditional focus should be on the endeavours of indigenous people, who have been at the heart of pro-democracy protest movements; [as] political actors have, in recent decades, largely ignored them…".
To understand the articulation of indigenous issues in the 2023 election of Bernardo Arévalo, an academic, diplomat, anti-corruption activist, and son of Guatemala's first democratically elected president Juan José Arévalo, before understanding the grassroots energies that came together in the election it is necessary to devote the following section to a brief review of the history of Juan José Arévalo, his predecessor, the 'reversed revolution' or 'counter revolution' of Guatemala in 1944-5 (Foran 2005). A period in Guatemala's history notable for many indigenous peoples who experienced profound change because of political will to reorient public policy away from the interests of large landowners (Lehoucq 2023), the opportunity to revisit where these democratic mobilizations left off inevitably played a role in the widespread support for Arévalo, son of a

president who famously began the period of sweeping reform. Commemorations from the Ixil Region made clear the salience of such themes for the Ixil (Figure 84).

Figure 84 (above): Visceral reminders of the significance of the 1944-1954 Ten Years of Spring in Nebaj's Central Plaza. Photo taken October 20, 2019.

Addressing indigenous issues, deeply and suddenly, the memory of the period as one threatening enough to crescendo tensions in the country into 40 years of civil war that it is still reeling from (Brett 2016a; 2016b), was clear from social media and live celebrations on August 20, 2023 where parallels to the Guatemalan Ten Years of Spring invited calls for a 'new spring', germinated by the seed of Semilla. Dormant in the soil until conditions are right to germinate, a history of indigenous organizing against the colonial repressive state has prepared the different elements together for possible transformation. As Kurtenback, Reder, and Riplinger (2024: 10) note the increasingly narrowed range of options for Indigenous communities in the country's highlands, who rank among the poorest but most severely impacted by the climate crisis, corruption and impunity of the State and country's political system, these regions are also

engineers of "highly creative traditions of environmental protection and political organization" that draw upon their own history of organizing.

Guatemala's *criollo* oligarchy, or the corrupt oligarchy, while distinct from authoritarian formulations of Venezuela or nearby El Salvador, has been known to assemble to defend the spaces of privileges they have inherited and continue to protect from the general population (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023). After the Peace Accords of 1996 were signed, an era of neoliberal development and accumulation has deteriorated rural social capital and autonomy and protected impunity (Einbinder and Morales 2020: 141). Some scholars argue that the effect of the changes brought by the formal end of the civil armed conflict were "more devastating for rural livelihoods than the violence of the war" (Aguilar-Støen 2020: 60; see also Aguilar-González et al. 2018: 248). Thwarting efforts to continue into further precarity for the country, the election of *Semilla* with the help of an international community and grassroots organizing, Guatemala, largely thanks to the efforts of its dominant Indigenous population, is a case to observe as other important wins such as the IAC ruling in favor of Agua Caliente and against the Guatemalan State, provide underemphasized or devalued examples on how bottom-up organization can address and transform structural inequalities.

viii.   Ten Years of Spring (1945–1954)

From the new oligarchic Guatemalan state that excluded indigenous peoples created at Spanish independence in 1821[184] to the 1871 liberal reform that began a period of violent dispossession for indigenous peoples on their indigenous lands, since its beginning indigenous peoples have fought for inclusion in the modern Guatemalan nation-state.

In 1944, after 13 years of the intensification of a police state and impoverishment of worker rights (Forster 2001), authoritarian leader Jorge Ubico was forced to resign by an urban movement of university students and Guatemalan citizens from a middle-class background (Streeter 2000: 12-13) who protested Ubico's suspension of the constitution (Forester 2001: 84). Replaced by the country's first democratically elected leader[185] Juan José Arévalo became the president of Guatemala from 1945 to 1951, proposing a change for the country that veered away from the exploitative policies of his predecessors as he promised "a period of profit for men who work in the fields"[186] (Dion 1958: 116). Constitutional and agrarian reforms were initiated in the interest of Guatemala's indigenous peoples for the first time in history (MacNeill 2020: 120).

The optimism of Arévalo's presidency paved the way for the widely popular labor and structural land reforms proposed by his successor, democratically elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán (1950-1954). Drawing upon studies and statistics from his predecessor (Handy 1994: 127), Árbenz's social democratic government sought to extend agrarian reforms and redistribute land from large farmers into the hands of landless peasants who might be able to

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[184] It should be noted that the exploitation of silver, gold, and lead by Spanish colonizers before independence did not benefit the indigenous population either (Aguilar-González 2018: 244).

[185] It should be noted from this first democratic election however that only literate men were given the right to vote (Gleijeses 1991: 36).

[186] Translated from the Spanish "un periodo de provecho para los hombres que trabajan en el campo" phrasing.

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focus on creating farms of their own (Immerman 1982: 64-67; Handy 1994: 4). Gleijeses (1991: 43) writes that although Arévalo sought recommendations and supported research on agrarian reform, "nothing happened". Under Árbenz and with the help of the Guatemalan Congress, however, the passage of Decree 900, the Agrarian Reform Law on June 17, 1952 (Gleijeses 1989; 1991) outlined the oversight of a national land reallocation scheme of agrarian reform that intended to equalize what had become some of the worst wealth disparities in Latin America (Handy 1994). With the law, reform was intended to redistribute to a Guatemalan public some of the consolidated private, generally foreign wealth, expropriating all uncultivated land from landholdings larger than 272 hectares (673 acres) and uncultivated land from landholdings between 272 hectares (672 acres) and 91 hectares (224 acres) if less than two-thirds was in use (Gleijeses 1991: 149–164). Declaring the reappropriation of unused plots greater than 90 hectares (224 acres) in total area to be allocated to smallholders who could cultivate it actively, government bonds were to be issued to large landowners in exchange for the reallocation of their unused lands (ibid.). Under Decree 900, by 1954 land from some 1,700 estates, some 570,000 hectares (1.4 million acres) was expropriated and redistributed to about 500,000 individuals, or one-sixth of the population, greatly improving the general quality of life standards for many rural *campesino*, primarily indigenous families who received direct and immediate benefit from the scheme (Gleijeses 1991: 149–164). Árbenz's land reform provided benefits to rural livelihoods and boosted national agricultural production in a period known in Guatemala affectionately by rural and Indigenous peoples as the 'Ten Years of Spring', or the 'October Revolution', sentiments that recently resurfaced in the *Semilla Movimiento* campaign and protests (see Figures from Chapter VI), thus demonstrating the continued opening for justice and land reform that the

period infused into politics of Guatemala since[187]. This period marked perhaps the beginning of a recognition by Guatemala's indigenous peoples "that social change was possible" (Adams 2004: 158, cited in MacNeill 2020: 121).

Considered by many as the pinnacle of Guatemala's short and abruptly curtailed October Revolution, the progress of Decree 900 at the same time threatened corporate interests in the country. Facing a major loss to its enterprise by losing the lands producing its products, American corporate giant United Fruit Company, the powerful 'state within a state' (Blum 2003: 75) protested the land reform change from the beginning, lobbying its own government in the U.S. for its reversal. Strongly opposed to the land redistribution plans and in a time of Cold War ideological tensions, UFCO was a private U.S. company that opposed land redistribution as it would inevitably lose land and a pacified workforce built up in the Ubico years. Since declassified documents from the U.S. government (Immerman 1982; Schlesinger and Kinzer 1982), proved the lobbying of UFCO effective. Linking the corporate elite of the U.S. with their Guatemalan interests in-country, the U.S. Government intervened in the democratic operation of Guatemala with a variety of covert undemocratic campaigns, abruptly halting the 10-year period of reform since 1944. Covert U.S. forces intervened directly and clandestinely in the democratic affairs of Guatemala, igniting also popular concern over communist fears into the Cold War era.

The covert U.S. C.I.A operation, PBSUCCESS, outlined these measures and its 1954 coup d'état struck structural reforms and rushed to protect U.S. vested interests with the export of goods by the United Fruit Company (Jonas 2000). The 1954 US-backed coup, code-named Operation

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[187] Semilla and the election of Arévalo junior.

PBSUCCESS, sought to pick up where previous U.S. President Harry Truman's government failed at trying to disrupt budding socialist energies in the country with Operation PBFORTUNE. Picking up where that campaign left off, PBSUCCESS successfully overthrew Árbenz (Blum 2003). Árbenz himself was turned into a political villain, a primary tactic used by the campaign to remove him from his position and reverse sweeping changes. He was overthrown despite his political stance outwardly advocating for capitalism and the protection of private property. Branding Arbenz's government as 'communist' (Schlesinger and Kinzer 1999); inspiring and producing a U.S. Navy blockade (called Operation Hardrock Baker); instigating the bombardment of CIA planes; and encouraging the initiation of a whole campaign of strategic psychological warfare (Cullather 2006) to dismantle the reforms, PBSUCCESS was eventually effective at corrupting the momentum of the burgeoning Guatemalan revolution, further draining its potential by reversing the popular national land reform (Gleijeses 1991).

After Árbenz's removal, the U.S. engineered a corporatist dictatorship under Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas at its head (Carey 2009), leader to what would become successive military dictatorships since. Prioritizing agendas of those enacting the coup de état, agrarian reforms from Decree 900 were rolled back from Árbenz's time (Immerman 1982; Gleijeses 1991: 382) and intervention from the U.S. took new forms as development and aid agency support stifled civil unrest that ballooned from a population outraged by the theft of their democracy. Decapitating a fledgling democratic movement during peacetime (Doyle and Kornbluh 1997) and generating further confidence for the imperial force to implement similar covert interferences in the democracies of other Latin American countries and globally thereafter (Gasiorowski 1987), Guatemalan elites swiftly leveraged political affiliations with American government and private

interests in Guatemala to dismantle socialist efforts to equalize inequalities and reverse structural changes, turning to the counterinsurgency to maintain "the renewed plantation capitalist order" (Masek 2023: 343). Establishing an unfortunate precedent, the success in removing Árbenz, Doyle (1997) writes, made PBSUCCESS "a model for subsequent CIA activities in the hemisphere," many of which included massive loss of life on the part of resident populations.

These findings were substantiated formally by declassified U.S. government documents from May 23, 1997, where 1,400 pages of the 100,000 secret archives were released by the U.S. CIA on its involvement in the 1954 Guatemala coup d'état through Operation PBSUCCESS. The documents detail arrangements in the Operation for what became a successful overthrow of Árbenz (Doyle and Kornbluh 1997), showing U.S. government strategy and intervention during a time when Cold War fears of communism politically motivated U.S. involvement from multiple geographies. Guatemala was one of its first successful heists. In the declassified documents, Árbenz and his socialist-oriented reforms are cast as 'Communist' and targeted by U.S. covert operations able to channel private interests fruit exporter UFCO.

Not the last coup d'état or political intervention toward a more equitable society in Guatemala by the U.S., in 1963 Arévalo senior ran for a second term as president that was cut short by the United States (Friedman 2024). Friedman (2024: 69, citing Friedman and García Ferreira 2022) highlights a lesser-known coup d'état in 1963 cited in declassified documents engineered by U.S. President John F. Kennedy who green-lighted this second coup to prevent Arévalo from winning the election after predicting he would do so in a landslide. In a CIA, Central Intelligence Bulletin from November 9, 1959, Arévalo was referred to by the CIA as a "rabidly anti-US

former president of Guatemala" who regrettably enjoyed "wide popularity" (cited in Friedman 2024: 88). Stoking further anxieties over communism, the daily brief comments "if Juan Jose Arévalo again assumes the Presidency of Guatemala, it will likely open the way to a Communist regime" (ibid.). Friedman (2024: 90) documents the actions of the US embassy in Guatemala City, which understood its mission as "preventing Arévalo's succession to power," conniving with Defense Minister Enrique Peralta Azurdia to stage a coup, overthrow outgoing president Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, and cancel elections, so that "the most popular candidate [would be prevented] from taking office" and barred from running in future elections".

III.   Annex III: Statement of objection

Student's name: Gina D'Alesandro

Program: Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy

Dissertation title: Multispecies foodscapes and polyculture politics, rematriation from Iximulew's Pueblo Maya Ixil

Dissertation supervisor(s): Dr. Guntra Aistara; Dr. Hyaesin Yoon; Dr. Jose Pablo Prado Cordova

I wish to name individual/s whose presence in the Dissertation Committee I object to: (circle the appropriate answer) NO YES

If you marked YES, please name the individual/s: n/a

Justification: (Please, note that the reasons should be well-grounded.)

Date: Nov 30, 2024

Signature of the student:_____

IV.   Annex IV: Endnotes

Chapter I
Endnotes

[i] After Gellman and Bellino (citing Torres-Rivas 2006: 12) and other scholars, I prefer to use the term internal armed conflict instead of 'civil war' as state actors committed the vast majority of crimes during the conflict against innocent civilians, primarily Indigenous Peoples, thus the casting of the period as a civil war is inaccurate as it was more accurately a state-sanctioned 'war against civilians'.

[ii] In the case of European contact with Indigenous Peoples in the Americas, once 'discovered', a critical strategy of controlling the unequal hierarchies imposed by Europeans involved the declaration of what was referred to as '*terra nullius*' (Wolfe 2006). Lands characterized by the term denoted an "uncultivated" state, which, according to Lockean definitions of land ownership, were effectively 'available' if no human hands claimed them through the processes of his labor.

[iii] Even today, land as empty or unproductive continues to drive and justify agribusiness investments (Makki and Geisler 2011: 11).

[iv] Indicative of the cultural popularity of the terminology in settler politics of the region at the time, in his Third Annual Message to Congress on December 5, 1843, U.S. President John Tyler encouraged citizens of the now United States of America to become pioneers of "wilderness reclamation" (Purdy 2012: 182). President James Buchanan in his December 6, 1858, Second Annual Message to Congress extended a call for the same, urging citizens to "reclaim wilderness" from the wider 'waste'lands (Purdy 2012: 178). Wasteland was a term to juxtapose its opposite of 'improved and cultivated' land, that entered mainstream Western Anglophone discourses from Adam Smith's well-known *Wealth of Nations* writings (Smith and Cannan 1904). Rhetoric that soon became law, as both men were U.S. presidents during the rise of the nation's first formally designated conservation areas, the progressive management and romantic understandings that identified 'wilderness' and then distributed it into digestible categories for these abstract purposes commonly appeared together in political discussions of the late 19th century (Purdy 2012). From the late 19th century in the Americas, wilderness thus became the exception to a continent-wide program creating private property out of vast landscapes destined for development, the latter a mentality that American environmental law scholar Jedediah Purdy (2012: 178) argues "dominated United States resource law" during these years.

[v] Standing Rock Sioux historian Vine Deloria Jr. (1985) notes that the 1800s saw some 500 treaties signed between the U.S. government and Native American Nations, using treaties to formalize and codify land ownership schemes, access to food, and policies to regulate basic needs for indigenous populations. Of these 500 treaties signed, the U.S. has broken every one (Deloria 1985).

[vi] Rightful claiming that had its price, the assimilation of inculcating 'culture' into the peoples of the formerly 'wild' nature was, at the same time, 'the white man's burden'. See Rudyard Kipling and Thomas James Wise's (1899) well-known writing by this name where the two Anglophone white men argue that it is the White Man's Burden to carry the "uncivilized" and darker complexioned peoples into a modern era in the name of 'progress'.

[vii] Famous for a lecture in 1893 on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", late 19th-century historian Frederick Jackson Turner popularized the phrase 'manifest destiny' to refer to the frontier thesis of assimilation as one supported by God. Noting the origins of the concept of manifest destiny, Pratt documents its first formal appearance in the publication entitled "Annexation" of the magazine the United States Magazine and Democratic Review in July/August of 1845 where, in a defense against other nations, the concept is deployed as a means to reference the rightful claim to expand throughout the newly encountered lands, oblivious to the paradoxical context of Europeans dispossessing Native peoples of such lands. The Democratic Review mention complains and proclaims: "between us and the proper parties to the case, in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (quoted in Pratt 1927: 797-798).

[viii] Playing a heavy hand in the perceived entitlement to the lands new to Europeans with the creation of a so-called 'doctrine of discovery' set by legal and religious precepts, Minton (2023) describes the Papal Bull Inter *caetera* (1493), issued by Pope Alexander VI, that explicitly names non-Europeans as pagans whose souls would be damned should they fail to allow European Christians from intervening. The Catholic Church's Papal Bull "*Inter Caetera*" (1493) establishing 'the doctrine of discovery' outlines explicitly the 'full and free power, authority, and jurisdiction of every kind' to colonizing Europeans for the dispossession, enslavement, and mass murder of Indigenous peoples globally. In this Doctrine of Discovery, any land not inhabited by Christians was available to be "discovered", claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers, declaring the "Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself."

[ix] Inherent in that structure is violence, which Taiaiake Alfred (2005: 52) says a responsibility for "begins and ends with the state, not with the people who are challenging the inherent injustices perpetrated by the state and who are seeking to alleviate their own present suffering under the state's existing institutions and practices. … Change necessitates conflict, but a violent form of conflict is a strategic choice of the state supported by colonial elites and by public opinion as well."

[x] In this history of reorganization by settler colonial arrivals, as the U.S. West was forcibly 'opened up' by U.S. President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1930 and the construction of railroads that led settler masses into what were previously borderlands, a legal infrastructure was created to allow settlers to 'legally' claim ever larger tracts of land in allowances granted by the 1862 Homestead Act which was followed by the equally disastrous Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Signed into law by Abraham Lincoln, the Homestead Act declared 160 acres of land could be claimed by any settler who could prove at least five years of residence in one site, making improvements to the site during such time, as per Lockean conceptions. From the first homesteader, Daniel Freeman in 1863, to the last homesteader, Ken Deardorff in 1979, the Homestead Act turned over a total of some 270 million acres, 10 percent of the current-day United States, to settler arrivals (Gambino and Frail 2012). The Dawes Act reallocated an estimated 90 million Indigenous lands to settler colonial interests (McDonnell 1991). The total aggregate land reduction from the Indigenous peoples of North America since European colonial arrivals is estimated to arrive at a figure of roughly 94%; from 7,011,450 km2 before Europeans to 426,598 km2 today (Farrell et al. 2021).

[xi] The mythologies associated with manifest destiny-oriented expansion also remade settler identities within popular culture with the help of the widely read dime novels of the 1880s where depictions of cowboys as hardy, individualistic, and pragmatic (Lopez 1977) reached a broad popular audience at home and, eventually, internationally as well. David Lopez (1977) documents the early years of 'Texas cowboys' expanding the ranching and trail-driving lifestyle of the settler economy, followed by 'eastern cowboys' from the regions now Kansas and Nebraska in the early 1880s. Demonstrating them as myths according to the realities of cowboy life, however, Lopez (1977: 328) asserts that cowboys were not glamourous positions, instead were "perhaps the first occupational group to suffer directly from mass media romanticization". Desperate for the failure of family farms (which would later turn into the agricultural disaster of the Dust Bowl and economic Great Depression), settler men turned to cowboy positions on the frontier with few other options as most positions were badly paid and highly dependent. Patel and Goodman (2020: 435) document the low wages and seasonal nature of these jobs, intermittently spent in unemployment or busied with other forms of additional work as few men could secure the stability of year-round 'top hand' positions supplied by established ranches. In this largely fictionalized romanticization of the 'Wild West', 'the frontier' also served the practical purpose of reinforcing developing colonial institutions, ideologies, and making of new 'American' identities through settler colonial narration of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For more on this see Turner (1893: 199-227); Slotkin (1992: 29 – 62); Grossman (1994: 7 – 65). Such narration, built atop existing exclusions that glorified the violence of settler colonialism furthered discriminatory policy and practice toward subverted peoples.

[xii] In a 1920 publication, Turner (1920: 3) writes of the frontier as "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" and "the line of most rapid and effective Americanization".

[xiii] In much of North America, after removing Indigenous children from their communities children were prohibited from speaking their native language in coerced attendance at residential schools where teachers subjected children to many forms of abuse that would not only seek to remove any imprint of Indigenous identity but would enculturate children to White, Christian traditions. Famously, the co-founder of the first residential schools declared the intention of the institutions and those affiliated as needing to "Kill the Indian, save the man!" (Churchill 2004; Minton 2023). Numerous other forms of abuse have been documented to have occurred at these schools, to the point that in many instances Indigenous children did not survive within them (TRCC 2015). Minton (2023) notes that the

evolution of the 'kill the Indian, save the man' dictum that led these 'educational' initiatives was positioned as philanthropic at the time as it followed a previous policy of killing in favor of one that 'saved' through educative assimilation.

xiv de la Cadena (2019: 482) identifies the concept of race as enabling and facilitating the onto-epistemic practices of ranking humanity, thus participating in the "one-worldmaking division. It partnered with "culture"—a conceptual tool without which "race" never was—to translate excesses as beliefs and rank them as distance or proximity from nature or humanity. The resolve of the translation was to cancel those excesses: as beliefs they were false, and as false they were pernicious. Race-culture was in genealogical continuity and political coincidence with the church and God."

xv Following these logics, numerous other tribes of the western hemisphere have been dispossessed of their ancestral lands to make way for the specific forms of development and 'undevelop'ment specified by settlers (Fletcher and Büscher 2016). A comprehensive study on the land dispossession and forced migration of Indigenous tribes and tribal nations in the contiguous U.S. gives the figure of 7,011,450 km2 of land where historical tribes had a documented presence (Farrell et al. 2021: 3). Reduced by 93.9% (P< 0.001), these same tribes were formally recognized as present in a mere 426,598 km2 of the contiguous United States by 2021. Today in Turtle Island, the North American landmass, "[w]ithout exception, every present-day tribe has a smaller land base than they did in the historical period" (Farrell et al. 2021: 4). Of the Indigenous tribes or groups from the historical period that remain in the same area today, 42.1% do so with *no* federally or state-recognized tribal land (Farrell et al. 2021: 3). Unequivocally, the re-categorizations by settlers according to European conceptions of a nature/culture divide have had a dramatic cumulative effect.

xvi Not insignificantly, standards and rules are perhaps the most important encryption of power relations (Busch 2011: 28) as they "appear to be neutral, benign, merely technical, obscure, and removed from daily life, [but …] they are largely an unrecognized but extremely important and growing source of social, political, and economic relations of power" (Busch 2011: 28). From these limitations, we also conceive of the categories and options that structure our experience of the world (ibid.).

xvii While these first instances of protecting land from development materialized the idea of conservation in the western hemisphere, the initial concept of it, began much earlier in Europe. Though it was not referred to as 'Europe' at the time, for the sake of easier reading I refer to the region as Europe here. The concept of conservation is cited by Fletcher and Toncheva (2021: 3) and Perfecto, Vandermeer, and Wright (2019: 63) as having origins in Europe's conflict-ridden English movement toward enclosure that began in the 12th century. Propelling with particular momentum during the mid-15th to mid-17th century, spaces previously designated for crop production and agriculture became entwined with the privatization of capitalist expansion during the primitive industrialization of the period and happening with particular fervor in the region. The rise of the textile industry in England and the widespread conversion of rural peasant lands, from wheat and other crops to wool, brought with 'the Enclosures' a set of legal changes that forced peasants from rural lands to make way for wool production that could be used in manufacturing (ibid.: 63). Those dispossessed of their lands during the transition were forced into urbanizing spaces to find alternative means to sustain themselves, giving rise to socio-political theory situating the urban worker, or 'proletariat'. This process the authors cite as 'self-reinforcing' and describe the textile manufacturing industry and its catalytic effect on the conversion of landscapes, subsequently re-organizing people accordingly: "Textile manufacture required workers and at this stage of primitive industrialization, it required a lot of workers to produce any quantity of cloth. Increasing numbers of people worked in manufacture, trade, and transportation of goods, while at the same time cropland, forests, and marshland were converted to sheep pasture. Consequently, demand grew to produce more food on less land and with less labour. Those who could grow more food were rewarded with increased income. Furthermore, as trade grew, there was more demand on forests for wood to make boxes, barrels, wagons, and ships. As cities grew, more wood was also needed for houses and other buildings, and great quarries and mines were cut into the earth to provide a vast range of materials."

xviii In Frederic E. Clements's article on 'Nature and Structure of the Climax' (1936) it is clear to see a depiction of these theories naturalized into the field of ecology, as Clements and others assumed that the specific prairie plants that they considered 'pristine' or 'true prairies' were composed of assemblages of prairie plants destined to exist in certain arrangements on these prairies. Ignoring the recent violent removal of their buffalo grazers with their assumption that such patterns had been evolving in place for millions of years, much of the romanticization of landscapes in the Americas deemed pristine from an ecological perspective have been dismissed in more recent years by ecologists who note that plant communities change over time, though not according to any standardizable

laws of succession (Botkin 1990; Worster 1994, cited in Morrissey 2019: 60) but acknowledging the erasure of Indigenous efforts is still a more recent and slow to materialize counter to these imaginations (Morrissey 2019).

xix In this transition, 'Nature' transitioned or was paired with a new category of 'wilderness' (Cronon 1995; 1998; Gomez-Pompa and Kaus 1998; Callicott and Nelson 1998) that went from needing to be subdued to being a space of and with "positive virtues" (Nash 1967: 61, 115). Divine, awe-inspiring, and productive of epiphanies, these spaces needed to be 'protected', as signaled by its main promoters which included Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Frederick Jackson Turner, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, and others. A commonality of white European settler colonial heritage among these predominantly male representatives should be noted as hardly coincidental. Nature spaces such as "mountain peaks, endless vistas, and sheer rock faces" were depicted as awe-inspiring, full of wonder, and productive of epiphanies and states of ecstasy and connection with the divine, as well as provisional of the fraternity with all living nonhuman creatures (Purdy 2012: 200). In place of Indigenous peoples, God was credited as the reason for the landscapes. As indigenous people of the lands were relegated almost completely to a background marginalized status, conservation became the exception to making a direct profit from lands for settlers with its obtuse potential (Purdy 2012: 182). New virtues assigned to Nature promised settlers spiritual transcendence, space for self-recognition, and the preservation of 'purity' held in this new 'wilderness', a space morally outstanding and timeless, but ultimately *apolitical* (Cronon 1995, emphasis mine; Callicott and Nelson 1998).

xx From the histories of the first two national parks in the United States where conservation first shaped the protected area model, racialized hierarchies actively created and reinforced the romanticized notion of wilderness, acutely widening inequalities in this period as Indigenous lands were stolen and repurposed for conservation. Broadly referenced as "white wilderness fantasies", which "at once instantiate whiteness and masculinity" (Ybarra 2018: 17), both of the first designated and formally 'protected' areas in settler USA, the 2 million-acre Yellowstone National Park and the Yosemite Valley, were heavily reliant upon the dispossession of Indigenous peoples (Cronon 2001) to design their contained wildernesses. Namely, these displaced peoples were the Sheepeatern Shoshone in the western United States (Nabokov and Loendorf 2004) and the Miwok tribe of the Yosemite Valley, both forcibly removed from their lands for the parks and for new economic ventures such as gold mining in the case of the Yosemite Valley (Spence 1999). Historian Mark Spence (1999: 8) writes of this history of national parks in the U.S. as "serv[ing] as a microcosm for the history of conflict and misunderstanding that has long characterized the unequal relations between the United States and native peoples".

xxi The first formal designation of land for 'protection' from culture's development became the U.S.'s Yellowstone National Park, designated in 1872, and the granting of Yosemite Valley to California State in 1864 "for public use, resort, and recreation" (Purdy 2012: 187). Careful not to impinge upon other more direct extraction values, these lands were assessed as worthy of conservation status at a time when most U.S. federal land was "restricted to economic productivity" (ibid.). The reservation of these exceptional lands was thus regarded as an anomaly "whose preservation would subtract nothing from the priority of development" (ibid.).

xxii Systems of settler design, industrial agriculture continue the effects of this global landgrab, or large-scale global acquisition of land and exploitation of it into private possession (Borras et al 2011; Scheidel and Sorman 2012), visible in the spike in transnational farmland acquisitions since 2008 (Li 2014: 589). According to Borras *et al.* (2012: 851) a land grab is "grabbing the power to control land and other associated resources such as water in order to derive benefit from such control of resources [...] control grabbing is inherently relational and political; it involves political power relations".

xxiii Forming the environmental organization the Sierra Club in 1892 while simultaneously describing the native peoples of the Americas and Black people brought to them as "dirty", "lazy", "garrulous as jays", "squirrelish", "wife stealing", and generally uncivilized (Fleck 1978: 21), New England transcendentalist and naturalist John Muir, well known for popularizing romantic valuations of nature that praised 'wild' places for their aesthetic qualities and God-like transcendence (Purdy 2012), demonstrated how conservation and the narratives of transcendentalism relied upon racist depictions of Indigenous peoples that appropriated their structures for new purposes. Not the only settler with these views, these perspectives were common among settlers around the western hemisphere of the time. American writer Richard Davis wrote of Indigenous Peoples, the land's "original owner", after he visited Honduras in 1896 as "fail[ing] to understand [land's] value. The Central Americans are like a gang of semi-barbarians in a beautifully furnished house, of which they can understand neither its possibilities of comfort nor its use" (cited in Agrawal 1997: 465). Other racist tropes of the Indigenous figure in the settler colonial historical narrative included mythologizations of them as being 'at one' with nature (Wenzel 1991; Coté 2010) and romanticized depictions of 'the noble savage' (Ellingson 2001; Minton 2023). Some of these continue to be recycled in recent years, as Wenzel

(1991: 50) writes of the seal protests by Inuit in the Arctic whose lifeways were flattened to become merely a part of Canadian mythology "like polar bears and caribou, all living symbols of the country's northern heritage" (Wenzel 1991: 50). No matter the racist negative depiction, these frameworks explained a reason to the settler for the need to molding indigenous populations into 'civilization' with Christian means. Civilization was to be a space repopulated with original peoples turned religious converts; a process of 'civilizing' and assimilating them into the new unequal systems of capital. Commenting on the relationship of race and capital with religion, Argentine decolonial scholar Walter Mignolo (2008: 1738, emphasis mine) writes of the necessity to categorize and subjugate racial groups as integral to the rise of capitalism but unproblematic for Christianity: "[c]apitalism, an emerging civilizational ideal in tension but not in conflict with Christianity, *needs* racism: first to assert its identity and to justify its will to power, second to justify its expropriation of land and exploitation of labor."

xxiv Reifying the separations into a legal framework, a legal definition of wilderness as an area "untrammeled by man", "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" (U.S. Public Law 88-577 (16 U.S. C. 1131-1136)) was defined in section 2(c) of United States Public Law 88-577, the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Act further defined wilderness as "…an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value" (ibid.). Through the law, Indigenous peoples became legally separated from their ancestral territories in the U.S. as land management practices prescribed human activities acceptable for land uses under conservation status.

xxv "Being 'cornered' goes beyond just having PAs cut your boundaries, cut you out of boundaries, or prevent your movements. You are cornered not only when the creation and establishment of PAs hem your remaining lands and territories in so you cannot access the resources needed for your refuge and sustenance. You are cornered when the State pits you against commercial interests with concessions without protecting your rights of access and use. You are cornered if PA authorities remake your customary governance systems and resource management rules and systems with an external plan (Yin 2017). You are cornered if PAs deny you access causing loss of livelihoods and identity. You are cornered if PAs allow the loss of your security against killings and evictions in the name of conservation" (ibid.).

xxvi Corbera *et al.* (2021: 901) write: "the often-championed idea that the world's biodiversity can be maintained if it remains in specific geographical locations while impoverished in others is misleading; even the most geographically distant and human-altered Nature suffers today from human inference through, for example, global climate change or ubiquitous pollution."

xxvii Looking specifically at the inequalities produced by protected areas, Kashwan (2017) finds in a cross-national analysis of 137 countries that interactions between inequality, democracy, and the legal designation of protected areas are correlated. The researchers' findings report these associations where "the effects of inequality vary depending on the strength of democracy: in relatively democratic countries inequality is associated with less land in protected areas, whereas in relatively undemocratic countries the reverse is true" (ibid.: 1). The largest national parks of the study showed a tendency of being located in countries with the highest levels of economic inequality and presence of questionable democratic practices. Some of the world's most economically impoverished countries— the Republic of Congo, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zambia— showed a large 30% of their territories set aside land for nonhuman wildlife and biodiversity conservation. Dispossessing Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLC), some 15 countries of the study counted 250,000 people evicted from the boundaries of newly designated protected areas between 1990 and 2004 and as many as 1 billion people impacted by conflicts within forest reserves. Linking inequality with nature conservation, Kashwan (2017: 1) concludes that "[t]he highly significant effects of inequality undermine the democratic dividend in the arena of nature conservation".

xxviii Some 184 cases of Indigenous peoples evicted from ancestral lands for the establishment of protected areas, largely in North America, Africa, and Asia are documented by 2006 from Brockington and Igoe (2006).

xxix Building upon Foucault's theories, environmental anthropologist and sociologist Robert Fletcher (2010: 171) combines the control and enclosure implicit in the concept of governmentality with neoliberalism to explain the how "neoliberalisation within natural resource policy", 'neoliberal environmentality', provides a frame to interpret colonial power structures with their means of control over remade, uni-directional relationships with a more-than-human world. At the intersection of environmental policy, environmental governance, conservation, and economic

development, environmental governance suits core principles of neoliberal economic transitions (Brockington et al. 2008; Büscher et al. 2014). Fletcher (2010: 175) writes of neoliberal environmentalities that "1) interventions are commonly justified in terms of their role in nurturing and sustaining life, both human and that of other organisms (even the whole of life) as well … and 2) interventions' object is commonly 'populations' (both human and non-) as a whole, seeking to maximize the total area of protected forest and amount of land under forest cover minimize, the quantity of extinct species, etc.". The logic of 'neoliberal environmentality' (McAfee 1999; Heynen et al. 2007; Igoe and Brockington 2007) applies the same power of enclosure and control articulated by Foucault, extended to static 'resources' in an 'economy' premised upon the management of the environment in preparation for various stages and forms of consumption (Oxa 2004: 239). Hiding behind the facade of conservation and a development of green economies that discursively align with neoliberal conservation definitions of nature (Igoe et al. 2010; Grandia 2012), the use of power by state apparatuses and their orchestrators to 'protect biodiversity' is steeped in what Alonso-Fradejas (2012: 525, citing Foucault 1979: 20), in the context of Guatemala, refers to as a government-led 'extractivist governmentality', or "[a]n ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has population as its target, political economy as its principal form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical means".

xxx Le Billion (2021: 880) writes of these practices as legitimizing exclusionary practices: "seeking to 'harness nature' through spaces of double exception, a common politics of enmity directed at local communities yet again legitimizes exclusionary practices rather than solving capitalism's contradictions."

xxxi Providing an explanation also for how declines in 'charismatic' species of African sub-Saharan landscapes add increased value to the 'well-stocked' privately conserved lands that provide tourism and other services for profit (Büscher 2021), the intermarriage of profit- and incentive-driven market logics with conservation has detrimental results for conservation objectives and IPLC (Büscher et al. 2012; 2014; Collins et al. 2021; Shapiro-Garza 2021).

xxxii In the Cerrado, a high savannah of extensive plateaus cut by valleys in the second largest biome of Brazil after Amazonia, one measures to extend conservation inspired agri-business to claim land titles and usurp traditional authority over communal land entirely (Le Billion 2021).

xxxiii Orchestrating and managing this distinct sphere and its operants, Foucault's theory of 'governmentality' (1991) has been instrumental for those seeking to understand how neoliberalism imparts a complete 'new art of governance' (2008: 176) upon those subject to its reach. Governmentality, Foucault theorized, is more than simply a way of governing. More pervasively, Foucault (ibid.: 218) asserts that governmental structures *become* mechanisms to infuse and force populations to internalize a 'whole way of thinking and being', a 'general style of thought, analysis and imagination'. Guided by a logic that seeks to continue accumulating 'capital', life and its forms become yet another domain for accumulation, appropriating previously communal "commons" or the "public domain" into commodified "properties" for the profit of a small few (Kloppenburg 2010: 369). The industrialized scale of exploitation of the commons by neoliberal capitalism is argued by scholars to have saturated global dimensions (Hardt and Negri 2000; Harvey 2003), its insatiable appetite churning out devastating results for our living planet. In what Gupta and Ferguson (2002: 982) name as a 'transnational governmentality', the organization of the nation-state becomes a container, 'spatialized', through processes of "vertical encompassment" to naturalize its own legitimacy and authority by asserting itself as "superior to, and encompassing of, other institutions and centers of power", namely those of local, grassroots origins. Orchestrating an 'examinatory' interpretation of justice, replacing a previously 'inquisitorial' one (Foucault 1977: 305), Foucault (1977: 308) theorizes on the mechanisms of this oppressing power, normalized by its all-encompassing reach to eclipse all other possibilities, and operationalized in the systems of power that ensure adherence to inequality's hierarchies. The State's 'court' or legal systems among these, Foucault (ibid.) asserts, is tasked with overseeing the exercise of enclosure and control *beyond* the prison and linked to a 'series of carceral mechanisms'—"...it is the court that is external and subordinate to the prison. That in the central position that it occupies, it is not alone, but linked to a whole series of 'carceral' mechanisms which seem distinct enough -- since they are intended to alleviate pain, to cure, to comfort -- but which all tend, like the prison, to exercise a power of normalization" (ibid.).Thus, fashioning a 'justice' devoid of fairness or equality, hollow for its service to those inheriting access to its protections, the exercise of power of the nation-state, for the experience of its citizens, is a normalization of violence, internalized and manifested within society ultimately at the expense of all within it. The power of the nation-state, however, is not a power built without also the initial power to dominate and control the nonhuman. Following Foucault, Li (2014: 591) asserts that 'regimes of exclusion' are created from the simplification of land by a logic operating by what Foucault referred to as 'the right manner of disposing things'

(1991: 95) as land, water, or other necessities for survival are reduced to objects for exchange, consumption, and ultimately disposal (Mbembe 2003; 2019; Nixon 2011; 2013).

xxxiv Igoe and Brockington (2007; 2010) refer to this as neoliberal conservation, as the management of 'natural resources' according to accepted capitalist expansions makes conservation complicit in capitalism's expansion as it welcomes a development of 'green economies' that discursively align with neoliberal conservation's definition of nature as, functionally, inert material (Igoe et al. 2010).

xxxv From turning conservation sites directly into extraction sites (Le Billion 2021) to acquiescing landowners with financial incentives using market or "market-like" transactions to manage ecosystems by valuing the "services" from natures that promise greenhouse gas sequestration, biodiversity conservation, cleaner or greater quantities of water, global benefits are discursively positioned as justifying such schemes (Shapiro-Garza et al. 2020; 2021). Le Billion (2021) lists some of the overt routes to turn conservation into extraction sites as: locating extraction directly within protected areas ('degazetted PAs'); turning protected areas into an encircling and protective envelope to extractive industries themselves ('integrated or adjoining PAs'); turning former extractive areas into conservation areas in what is deemed 'reclaimed or cover-up PAs'; to the designation of 'offsets' for protected areas, thus permitting of the continued extraction of industry ('biodiversity offsetting PAs') within such boundaries. Serving as a front to protect polluting industries, at times wastes produced by extractive industries have designed polluted areas into 'protected areas' (ibid.), deeming them 'conservation perimeters' by delimiting the spaces around an extractive industrial pursuit to occlude such activities from public view while legitimizing such activities and often further jeopardizing local livelihoods (Le Billion 2021: 866). Of the 'market-like' transactions and production of 'neoliberal natures' (Enns et al. 2019; Fletcher and Toncheva 2021; Le Billion 2021), perhaps one of conservation's clearest forms of the commodification of life from complex forms into simple units, 'biodiversity offsets' utilize payments to reimburse for ecological services while allowing regular extractive practices to continue. Seen by some as tools of dispossession in their own right (Hackett 2015; 2016), biodiversity offsets use market-based instruments such as commodity extraction, carbon credit payments, species and wetlands banking, and ecotourism (Fletcher and Toncheva 2021; Le Billion 2021) to turn intangibles into commodified material. These neoliberal approaches acquiesce landowners with financial incentives using market or "market-like" transactions to manage ecosystems by valuing the "services" from natures that promise greenhouse gas sequestration, biodiversity conservation, cleaner or greater quantities of water, as externalized global benefits justifying such schemes (Shapiro-Garza et al. 2020; 2021). Relying upon the enforcement and transparency of governments for such schemes to work, biodiversity offsets provide problematic terrain for the preservation of biodiversity in practice as governments may double the benefit of these areas by marking them on a map as conserved while simultaneously promoting them for the use of extractive industries. Additionally harmful effects of biodiversity offsets, often these new conservation schemes can result in the criminalization of local livelihoods that were once based upon the management and productive potential of biodiversity but become illegitimate through the administration of biodiversity offset regimes (Le Billion 2021). Le Billion (2021) criticizes these offset schemes as more accurately described as 'extraction offsets' than biodiversity ones.

xxxvi From the context specifically of Guatemala, Alonso-Fradejas (2015) identifies and names three broad strategies that are often used by extractivist benefactors to force local communities into compliance with extractivist projects: corrupting communities members with the 'trojan horse' strategy; working with sustainability gatekeepers from the 'pretty up' strategy; and the last strategy, often deployed as a last resort, the 'rule by fiat' strategy that draws upon laws that allow the deployment of the military to forcefully remove people. The trojan horse strategy usually involves the pay-out of traditionally young indigenous rural men to incentivize the population from within to become amenable to extractivist projects. Individuals are paid to lubricate community will toward the projects. A complement to the 'trojan horse' strategy, the 'pretty up' strategy involves biofuels and renewable energy private interests doing a public branding of their products as appearing socially responsible and ecologically sustainable. "Sustainability gatekeepers" play a role in re-signifying the hazard in the community to be something that is a 'best option' for employment, environmental preservation and climate change, food security, and issues of corruption in government (Alonso-Fradejas 2015). Sustainability gatekeepers and local coyotes are used to help promote local coherence of their projects from within the community. They are aligned with the political hegemonic representatives who dictate the placement of such actors to narrate the emergence of new dominant traditions via political, legislative, and economic oppressive controls. In the case of oil palm and sugarcane in Q´eqchi´ lands of Guatemala the sustainability gatekeepers are often from major development firms, conservation national and international NGOs, but can also be from universities and consultancy firms, which participate in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that include, in the case of the Q'eqchi', the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

(RSPO), Better Sugarcane Initiative (BONSUCRO), or the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB) (ibid.). In the case of the Q'eqchi' land conflicts in Guatemala's Peten department, the agribusinesses of the Guatemalan Sugar Producers Association (ASAZGUA) and the Oil Palm Growers Guild (GREPALMA) have representation in the "powerful" 'Guatemalan Agricultural Chamber' which sits within the "almighty" Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations (CACIF) (ibid.). Fit to the interests of the powerful economy able to strongly influence Guatmealan politics through its economic interests, CACIF, such extractivist projects bring income to certain individuals within Guatemalan society through CACIF, thereafter leaving only these adherents to such financial organizing as beneficiaries while large portions of the population remain with the truth of the agrarian extractivist projects and their unequal societal effects. In the rule by fiat strategy, the government uses the 1965 counterinsurgent 'Decree 7 on Preventive States of Emergency' as a justification for the deployment of the Guatemalan military to villages where such extractivist landgrabs are being contested by the local community. Through the enforcement of this legislative application, national attorneys are then called upon to enforce the Anti-terrorist Bill that identifies local communities in villages protesting forced removal as in offense of penal law through the 'aggravated usurpation of property'. This structure is identified as the rationale for the removal and imprisonment of many peasant and community organizers. This violence and forced dispossession of land for extractive industries, Alonso-Fradejas (2015) notes, however, is not the end of the repression as private and parastatal violence, acting beyond the formal scrutiny of a state-held office, are often a final word on land dispossession. Barricading lands and closing them to public entry, enclosing communities in plantations, threatening ultimatums that undermine household cooperations between spouses, and, most violently, assassinating and disappearing those who refuse to sell their lands, are measures used by such actors beyond the formal connections with the state. Many of such assaults are conducted by "groups of generally poor, landless Q´eqchi´ men are hired to assault and/or evict their fellow resisters" (ibid.: 26). Again, due to the hegemonic interests of beneficiaries of the extractivist projects that allow private industry to vie for control of the state apparatus, the assassinations and disappearances of many land defenders in Guatemala are of little relevance, though the full numbers of these are unclear as the sites of such crimes are often beyond the location of the project itself.In conversations and experiences with the Maya Ixil from their territory, the ongoing, perhaps uninterrupted threads of violent submersion of IPLC since defining encounters with Spanish conquistadors centuries prior were featured prominently in many dimensions of Maya Ixil life.

xxxvii Used in some 500 existing schemes around the world, holding roughly US$30–50 billion in annual transactional value invested in such modes of management (Salzman et al. 2018), these schemes are trading these credentials at a large scale. Many Indigenous communities express concern over the sale of "services" from their lands that could lead to relinquishing their rights over them, as Shapiro-Garza (2021: 243) documents the concerns of one community in Oaxaca, Mexico: "community members openly worried that selling something that was continuously produced and tied to their land (e.g., carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, etc.) would give the buyers of these 'services' rights to their territory". Neoliberal logics to administer "new imaginaries of place", reterritorializing landscapes in "regimes of exception" are already referred to by Le Billion (2021: 3) as "dangerous tools of land reallocation, creating spaces of exception and annihilating 'traditional' socio-environmental forms of life."

xxxviii The phrase 'decarbonization, decentralization and decolonization' is repeated throughout Jen Gobby's *More Powerful Together: Conversations with Climate Activists and Indigenous Land Defenders* (2020), grouping the forms of exploitation together in the book's central thesis that colonial extractive capitalism is destroying both nature and Indigenous societies, repeated by the author and the book's interviewees.

xxxix Burchardt and Dietz (2014: 481): define neo-extractivism after Uruguayan social scientist Eduardo Gudynas (2009) introduced the concept, as "associated with a specific mode of development where the receipts from exports of primary goods are invested in social development and are used to widen social participation", elaborating that it is patterned by a set of growth-oriented development paths. These include "(1) extracting raw materials and natural elements such as minerals, energy carriers, and forest and agricultural goods; (2) exporting raw materials; and (3) using revenue to improve living conditions" (Burchardt and Dietz 2014: 468). Furthermore, in alignment with Gudynas (2013: 8) who connects the Latin American manifestation with strengthened connection with the State, Latin American (neo-)extractivism is characterized by a renaissance of the developmental state which "(1) steers and regulates the economies of extraction, appropriates extra revenue and mediates between diverging interests; (2) acts as an agent of development and addresses the social question via supporting development projects in the region; and (3) creates political legitimacy for itself through democratic elections and a development narrative" (Burchardt and Dietz 2014: 470-1).

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[xl] Jack Kloppenburg (2010: 369) explains very simply the general concept of neoliberalism as "the appropriation of that which is shared in the 'commons' or the 'public domain' and its transformation into an exclusive, commodified form". Completing the final phase of divulging the commons to settlers (Ford 2010) Sociologist Michel Callon (2006: 15) cites the hegemonic strength of neoliberal economics as predicated upon "a constructed, logical discourse based on a number of irrefutable hypotheses". Eliminating the possibilities for the possibility of other 'economics' systems or organizational frameworks of exchange at the global level, such as those based on cycling reciprocities, Nature and Culture separations are one of these central irrefutable conditions allowing capitalist forms of exchange their strength. Society is assembled in the neoliberal 'economy' as "a distinct sphere of human activity, marked off from the social, the political, and the ecological as a domain of individualized, monetized, rational-maximizing calculation" (Gibson-Graham and Miller 2015: 2) in much the same way that forms of science claim objectivity. Making the final conversion to reorient the relationship of the human with a more-than-human world, neoliberalisms make the human into a *user and manager of* the world, no longer a *beneficiary* of its *mutualisms* (Ingold 1992) but a *consumer of them,* in true Cartesian relationship (Descartes 1968: 78). Through the concept's application, neoliberalism can be considered a philosophy, a program, or an ethos guiding development agendas, and a practice emerging from policies that shape behavior in the material world. Some of neoliberalism's central identifiers are commodification, marketization, and privatization (Mansfield 2009; Büscher et al. 2014; Fletcher and Toncheva 2021). Neoliberalism and its processes are conceptualized by geographer Noel Castree (2010: 15) as fit to a cannon of principles that stress growth, efficiency, development, democracy, and sustainability. Castree (ibid.) suggests some common trends in the application of neoliberal paradigms that include the privatization and marketization of commodities; deregulation and re-regulation of goods toward 'market-friendly' policies; institutional harmonization via government and civil society; and, finally, an infusion of the concept of democracy with 'freedom' of and for the benefactors of neoliberalism's splendors. It should be noted that indigenous democratic models do exist (Graeber 2004: 88), yet non-western models of democracy are infrequently cited by political theorists (Price, Nonini, and Fox Tree 2008) as these are commonly tied to these same western concepts. Criticism of the Western concepts from the perspective of Guatemala is posed by Greg Grandin (cited in University of Chicago Press 2004: n.p.), who concludes that democracy itself could be conceived of, by its use in Latin America, as a product of terror: "The idea— widely held at the end of World War II—that freedom and equality are mutually fulfilling was replaced by a more anemic definition, one that stressed personal liberties and free markets. To make the point as crudely as possible, the conception of democracy now being prescribed as the most effective weapon in the war on terrorism is itself largely, in Latin America at least, a product of terror".

[xli] By protected area model I refer to the IUCN definitions (Dudley 2008: 3; Stolton, Shadie and Dudley 2013) of protected area, established since the 20th century and formally declared in 1994, which are "shorthand for a sometimes bewildering array of land and water designations, of which some of the best known are national park, nature reserve, wilderness area, wildlife management area and landscape protected area but can also include such approaches as community conserved areas. More importantly, the term embraces a wide range of different management approaches, from highly protected sites where few if any people are allowed to enter, through parks where the emphasis is on conservation but visitors are welcome, to much less restrictive approaches where conservation is integrated into the traditional (and sometimes not so traditional) human lifestyles or even takes place alongside limited sustainable resource extraction." The formal and "agreed" definition is "A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values" (Dudley 2008: 8). As the IUCN explains (Dudley 2008: 3, emphasis mine), for Indigenous or ancestral Peoples denied further connection with their ancestral landscapes through such designations, these "sometimes come with a ***price tag*** for those living in or near the areas being protected, in terms of lost rights, land or access to resources. There is increasing and very justifiable pressure to take proper account of human needs when setting up protected areas and these sometimes have to be "traded off" against conservation needs", with priorities of nonhumans taking precedence "sometimes". According to the six categories introduced for protected areas by the ICUN's global geoscaping scheme, a further undertone of control and bio-'management' according to what is best for the human based upon rationalities of the nature|culture divide that serves capitalist value system, are clear. The IUCN (Dudley 2008: 4) notes that these categories of protected area designations are not based upon the 'most effective [for biodiversity]' but are applicable globally and that the "intervention" of humans is "implied" as the logic that underlies all interactions in and beyond these spaces: "assignment to a category is not a commentary on management effectiveness; the categories system is international; national names for protected areas may vary; all categories are important; and a gradation of human intervention is implied." Furthermore, the patriarchal-colonial modern guidelines of these protected area designations are "the

result of an intensive process of consultation and revision coordinated by a specially appointed task force of WCPA, working closely with WCPA members and also with the other five IUCN commissions" (Dudley 2008: 5), or, in other words, chosen experts according to what can only be assumed are western [Euroamerican-centric] ways of knowing. While the IUCN (Dudley 2008: 6) indicates the categories should not be used "as an excuse for expelling people from their traditional lands", there seems to be little way to distinguish how to identify when this is the case.

[xlii] Although it should also be noted, albeit less frequently, that conservation can provide a means to protect Indigenous lands and territory (Buchadas et al. 2022; Schleicher et al. 2017)

[xliii] Using a spatially explicit global reconstruction of historical human populations and land use to understand these trends in human interaction with the landscape, Ellis *et al.*'s (2021) findings note that biodiversity loss in the recent era has accelerated as a result of global colonization, a process that has brought larger-scale agriculture and industrial economies (ibid.: 2-3).

[xliv] Looking at eight landscapes across five continents, Jackson *et al.* (2012) found the loss of biodiversity was found to be associated across the eight landscapes with high-input agricultural intensification.

[xlv] Despite some issues of resolution (Khoury et al. 2014: 4002-4003), a study by Khoury *et al.* (2014) measured trends in richness, abundance, and composition of crop species in the food supplies of 152 countries, comprising 98% of the world's population to get a global outlook on the situation. Examining this diversity from the years 1961 to 2009 the researchers found that while overall total quantities increased (on metrics such as total quantities of food calories, protein, fat, and weight, and proportions of energy-dense foods), national food supplies worldwide had become more similar in composition (homogenous) on all metrics measured. Furthermore, non-majority cereal— oil and starchy root crops— had decreased during this period. The study reported fifty measured crop commodities found to contribute to the top 90% of calories, protein, fat, and weight globally. By their estimation, a slimmed total of 94 crop species from 70 genera in 37 plant families exist currently in the global crop commodities. Most troubling from the study, the authors' find that "[t]he rate of movement toward homogeneity in food supply compositions globally continues with no indication of slowing" (ibid 4003).

[xlvi] The most seminal study and largest yet on this comes from Davis, Epp and Riordan (2004) who evaluated possible changes in USDA nutrient content data for 43 garden crops between 1950 and 1999. They find "statistically reliable declines (R < 1) for 6 nutrients (protein, Ca, P, Fe, riboflavin and ascorbic acid)", though no statistically reliable changes were identified for 7 other nutrients (ibid.: 669). From those in decline from the study, for protein the median decline was 6%; for riboflavin, 38%. From the 43 raw fruits and vegetables assessed by the study, these declined in protein, calcium, and phosphorus, iron, and levels of Vitamin C. Specifically, calcium fell significantly in broccoli, kale, and mustard greens, the iron content fell in chard, cucumbers, and turnip greens, and a high amount of vitamin C was lost from Asparagus, collards, mustard greens, and turnip greens. A study from Australia during the period of 1989 to 2019 (Eberl et al. 2021) draws attention to a shifting of iron content in foods from different places. Of the decreased iron, decreases of 30–50% were found for sweet corn, red-skinned potatoes, cauliflower, and green beans. Increases of 150–300% were seen for Hass avocadoes, mushrooms, and silverbeet. While the effect of genetic engineering of these often-commercialized crops was not mentioned by the authors, this may be related to the declines in nutritional content of these crops. From grains, an assessment of wheat from 16 different countries around the world (Mariem et al. 2021) documented an increase in carbohydrate content and an impoverishment of protein content in wheat by 23% from 1955 to 2016. Reductions in manganese, iron, zinc, and magnesium in wheat were also found by the study during the same period.

[xlvii] In *What Your Food Ate*, David R. Montgomery, a professor of geomorphology at the University of Washington in Seattle and co-author Anne Biklé present how food is becoming less nutritious, decreasing its capacity to be preventative medicine.

[xlviii] One study by Medek, Schwartz and Myers (2017) modeled atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations projected out to the year 2050 finding that rice, wheat, barley, and potato protein contents decreased by 7.6%, 7.8%, 14.1%, and 6.4%, respectively and that some 18 countries may lose > 5% of their dietary protein, including India (5.3%) by 2050. By the diets of today and the income inequality globally, an additional 1.6% or 148.4 million of the world's population is suggested by the study's researchers to be at risk of developing protein deficiencies because of the elevated CO2 in the atmosphere today. In India, specifically, the researchers note that an additional 53 million people may fall into a category of risk.

[xlix] Paradoxically, uniformity is a problem for the 'productivity' of industrial agriculture as well. The International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES FOOD 2016: 15) cites 'numerous historical examples' of vulnerable situations that have arisen and resulted in 'significant economic losses' and 'large-scale suffering' as a result of trends toward uniformity of crops and livestock.

[l] By 2020, 9% (690 million) of the world's population was hungry— a statistic that rose in 1 year by 10 million people and in 5 years by nearly 60 million people (FAO I, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO 2020).

[li] The agribusiness landscape continues to buy out or outcompete small agriculture firms, arriving in 2018 to an almost inconceivably consolidated and powerful 'Big 4' (Bonny 2017; Chee 2018; Reuters Staff 2018). Four agrochemical companies control nearly 70% of the global pesticide and seed markets (Wittman 2023: 474). Economic researcher Sylvie Bonny (2017: 1648) highlighted an approximate increase in the top four companies from 8% of the total commercial market in 1985 to 51% of the market by 2016. In this landscape, the outlook for small farmers and alternative seed ownership regimes who hold out an alternative food system continues to look increasingly desperate.

[lii] Levis *et al.* (2018) argue for a conceptual model of forest domestication that exists from their research in Amazonia, a region first curated by historical peoples, but handed down through generations to today's Indigenous peoples of the region today. Highlighting eight specific human management practices from these regions, researchers from this study collected data regarding the management practices and composition of forest patches dominated by "useful plants" surrounding 30 contemporary villages near to archeological sites (ibid: 3). Speaking to 33 informants from two villages along the lower Tapajós River where known archaeological sites are found and relating that information to interviews with locals about the distributions and abundances of 85 woody species domesticated for use as food, shelter, or other uses by pre-Columbian peoples, the researchers correlated the eight categories of management practices found in the literature as commonly known by traditional people in the two villages of the study along the lower Tapajós River (ibid.: 10). From the basin-wide analysis of pre-Columbian impacts on these Amazonian forests, the landscape itself spoke of the multi-generational imprint of these pre-Columbian peoples. Domesticated species (by these Peoples) were found to be five times more likely in mature upland forests than non-domesticated species, and a relative abundance and richness of domesticated species increased in forests on and around archaeological sites (Levis et al. 2017: 925), a mark of their presence in the direct creation of these biodiversity hotspots. Of the multispecies assemblages composing the diverse food systems of Amazonian peoples, they remark "that useful perennial plants occur in multi-species patches around archaeological sites. ... The management practices we identified have transformed plant species abundance and floristic composition through the creation of diverse forest patches rich in edible perennial plants that enhanced food production and food security in Amazonia" (Levis et al. 2018: 1-2). While the central and eastern Amazon Basin was occupied and modified by humans in the pre-Columbian period and have clear relationships to the peoples of these lands still present in some way on them today, the extent to which similar use patterns of the land extend west into the Basin's interfluvial zones is still debated (McMichael et al. 2012). Particularly is this the case for the Amazonian dark earth soils of an often-studied basin near the confluence of the Solimoes and Negro rivers in northwest Brazil (Silva et al. 2021). Part of a debate about the particular fertility of the minerals in the dark earth research site, Silva et al. (2021) used radiocarbon dating of the fertile soil to identify an origin of the nutrients. Finding that though soil and records of past monsoon intensity seem to suggest a climate-driven shift in river dynamics to flooding after a dry period about 8,000 years ago, leading to possible accumulation of carbon and nutrients as a result of reduced fire disturbance, increased regional tree coverage, and the induced flooding of these areas. Nevertheless, the practices of Indigenous peoples in the management and identification of these areas today has played a critical role in the preservation of such these soils since such processes occurred. As the large sedentary populations managing such soils thousands of years prior to formal agriculture, or, according to the more likely extrapolation that indigenous peoples have maintained the knowledges and ability to identify such sites as areas of exceptionally high fertility, it is clear that those Indigenous peoples of central Amazonia are closely linked with these soils into the present day.

[liii] From the ICCA Consortium's (2021) Territories of Life Report, Indigenous and local communities are leaders in biodiversity conservation and territorial protection, these areas are referred to and conceptualized recently as Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCAs), or territories of life. The report finds that Indigenous peoples are important custodians and guardians of state- and privately-governed protected areas in the over ¼ of the world's protected and conserved areas globally that share territory with Indigenous peoples and local communities.

[liv] Garnett *et al. (*2018) cite "over a quarter of the world's land surface" at roughly 38 million Km2 in 87 countries as managed by Indigenous Peoples or local communities.

[lv] The positive outcomes between land tenure and Indigenous Peoples communal ownership schemes can be measured in positive biodiversity outcomes. Strong forest tenures in Africa appear to produce greater incentives from communities to protect forests from overharvesting (Barrow et al. 2016). Examples of linked social equity and

biodiversity positive outcomes are also available from other African contexts (Hulme and Murphree 2001) to support these conclusions.

lvi This study of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), performed by Garnett et al. (2018), uses publicly available geospatial resources to show that Indigenous peoples manage at least ~38 million km2 in 87 countries or politically distinct areas. Widely cited by non-Indigenous and Indigenous experts, the study characterizes the connection between Indigenous peoples and biodiversity with quantitative data, citing a "strong correlation" between Indigenous peoples and the remaining high biodiversity in protected areas.

lvii A comprehensive analysis of the world's terrestrial mammal composition across Indigenous lands done through the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) found that 60% of 4460 assessed mammals had greater than 10% of their ranges on Indigenous Peoples' lands, and 23% of the mammals assessed (1009 species) showed more than 50% of their ranges on Indigenous peoples' lands (O'Bryan et al. 2021). Specifically for threatened species, the study cited 473 (47%) of these species occurring on Indigenous lands, where also 26% of these had >50% of their habitat on such lands. For mammal species, specifically, 935 mammal species (131 categorized as threatened) had ≥ 10% of their range on Indigenous Peoples' lands, lands also categorized as having low human pressure (ibid.: 1002).

lviii From their study of Indigenous-managed lands in Brazil, Canada, and Australia, Schuster *et al.* (2019: 1) note the presence of vertebrate species as more numerous in Indigenous territories lands than in existing protected areas. In biodiversity-dense Brazil, the same study found that Indigenous territories contained more species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians than all the protected areas in the country beyond these territories, combined. Bray argues from Chapter 7 of *Mexico's Community Forest Enterprises: Success on the Commons and the Seeds of a Good Anthropocene* (2020) that community forest projects in Mexico do a more effective job of conserving biodiversity than the formalized protected areas model. Pointing to effective forest maintenance, Bray articulates these results as largely accredited to decreased deforestation levels in the community forest project areas compared to formal conservation areas, thus better preserving the integrity of habitat for biodiverse species to live in from the community forest project areas.

lix By the numbers, Indigenous peoples live in forests around the world with almost 300 billion metric tons of carbon within them (Rights and Resources Initiative 2015).

lx Where communities are tasked with protecting their own forest reserves, some 320 to 380 million hectares of forests are governed fully or in part by Indigenous and tribal peoples (FAO and FILAC 2021).

lxi Those managed by Indigenous Peoples were documented by this study to have shrunk at a rate of only 4.9%, whereas forests assessed by the study outside of Indigenous territories shrank at a rate of 11.2%.

lxii Ecologists cite low-intensity subsistence agriculture as provisional of the most effective form of conserving biodiversity (Perfecto, Vandermeer and Wright 2019). Perfecto, Vandermeer and Wright (2019: 233) propose the biodiversity matrix in place of the approach to biodiversity that "rejects a focus exclusively on habitat fragments, and proposes that the general dilemma can be better addressed with an increased focus on the matrix and, following current ecological understanding, the interactions it has with remaining fragments of 'natural' habitats." Included in the matrix are also landscape level management practices that the ancestors of many Indigenous groups carried out. Using fire and other relationships with key species, Indigenous Peoples caretake the landscape into abundance, as can be seen from examples such as the Illinois Confederacy (Illinois-speaking including the Peorias and Kaskaskias, and Miami and other smaller Indigenous peoples of these lands) of the Illinois Valley, an area that covers large portions of the modern-day states of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Kansas and Missouri today (Morrisey 2019: 43). Burning the prairies to allow the new green fresh grass shoots to grow and attract grazers such as bison and elk, Morrisey (2019: 56) writes that the Illinois "managed prairie as a game reserve to maximize productivity", playing a special role in the selection of prairies over woodlands.

lxiii From the field of conservation, this transition has been advocated as a move to a 'post-conservation' (Igoe 2004) era, in the interest of both environment and social justice (Igoe 2004: xi), where the development of a "people-centered, rights-centered" approach can bring legislative and institutional reform (Ganguly 2016), and a "historically informed, decolonial conservation (Collins et al. 2021; Kashwan et al. 2021; Krauss 2021; Mabele et al. 2022) that occurs *in-situ* (Bellon 1996), supplemented by various cosmological foundations of place-based agrarian expertise (Graddy-Lovelace 2014).

lxiv From the perspective of more directed crop origins, recognizable crops of today found to be the earliest domesticated in Latin American New World Tropics by Piperno (2011: S459) include *Calathea allouia* (leren) and *Maranta arundinacea* (arrowroot), both grown for their tubers; *Cucurbita moschata*, *Cucurbita ecuadorensis*, and

possibly *Cucurbita argyrosperma* squash; bottle gourd; maize; manioc; peanuts; avocado; and *Inga feullei* (pacay), another tree crop. While chile peppers, cotton, chayote and other *Phaseolus* species (the tepary bean) were domesticated in different and sometimes ecologically dissimilar parts of Mexico and Mesoamerica (Piperno 2011; Piperno 2012), despite their disparate origins, the crops were commonly grown together after the spread of agricultural practices (ibid.: S455).

[lxv] In identifying a new geological epoch due to human disconnections with a more-than-human world and excessive consumption of that world that now produce 'waste', scholars have taken similar issue with the term 'Anthropocene' for the universalization of the problem (e.g. Malm 2013; Haraway 2015; Moore 2015).

[lxvi] Studies using historical-ecological perspectives in a relatively recent field of paleoecology, the study of ancient environments, have begun to amass a strong base of evidence documenting the various sustainable management practices of pre-Colombian peoples in the Americas for centuries or millennia. Human influence in shaping and maintaining biodiversity through the management of local societies in the Amazon's *terra preta* soils by 2,000 BP has been documented for years (Arroyo-Kalin 2010; Denevan 1966; Heckenberger 2003; Lombardo et al. 2011). Additionally, the preservation of forest cover by contemporary Indigenous societies in low-density living of the Amazon, such as the Sierra Maiguailida, has long been associated with enhanced biodiversity (Zent and Zent 2002). Ellis *et al.* (2021: 2) note that nearly three-quarters of terrestrial nature has been shaped for the last 12,000 years by diverse histories of human habitation and use by Indigenous and traditional peoples, lands that include more than 95% of temperate and 90% of tropical woodlands.

[lxvii] A recent salient example of resiliency and Indigenous food systems from the recent COVID-19 pandemic, was found in many of the 1000-year-old floating garden islands once used by the Aztecs in Mexico City called *chinampas* that were revived to feed the local population at the height of the pandemic's disruption of global supply chains (Gokee 2020).

[lxviii] These include the 6000-year-old clam gardens in the Pacific Northwest's Coastal Salish communities; buffalo prairies in the heart of the landmass and kelp forests and herring eggs on hemlock boughs from the homelands of the Haíɫzaqv in present-day British Columbia, Canada; the management of native eel populations through the traditional construction of rock walls, fish canals, and holding ponds for eels by the Gunditjmara people in Australia who have been harvesting them in this way for at least 6000 years (Rose et al. 2016); the Bauré People's management of landscape-scale aquaculture systems of earthen causeways and canals in Bolivia's Bauré Floodplain in Amazonia, used to catch water and funnel fish, growing fruit trees on the top of berms to also attract snails that are eaten by the Bauré People, along with other larger animals that the snails attract (Erickson and Balée 2006); the historical maintenance of canebrake (native bamboo) ecosystems by Southeast Indigenous groups and bison reframed as a form of landscape-scale soil management, the interplay between Indigenous fire, soil fertility, canebrake regrowth, and grazing animals important, such as the southern bison, highlighted in particular for the intentioned care of these Indigenous populations; and the Zuni Pueblo community of New Mexico, USA (but pertaining also to the Hopi and others of the region's mountains) using run-off agriculture to plant corn fields continuously watered by monsoon water flowing off of the mountains as a dryland agricultural food system managed with traditional knowledge systems for millennia at the scale of an entire watershed (Homburg, Sandor, and Norton 2005). Johnston's work and that of many other Indigenous scholars and ecologists attentive to omissions in the historical narrative of the Americas/Turtle Island/Abya Yala, provide ample evidence of the active and intentioned cultivation of landscapes later inaccurately coined by European peoples as 'wild' and 'pristine'.

[lxix] Looking at the functional diversity characteristics of four archaeological village complexes (12 forest gardens between 100 square meters or roughly 1,100 square feet to a square kilometer) in the Pacific Northwest of North America, Armstrong *et al.* (2021) point out that the species richness from ancestrally-managed Indigenous food landscapes provides an abundance of food for humans. Examining the material legacies of the Indigenous societies of their study locations from maintained living structures, fish traps, forest gardens, root gardens, cooking pits, and other elements of these communities dedicated to defense, transport, and food production, their findings conclude that the forest gardens of historical Indigenous peoples provide more functional trait diversity than surrounding forests and that plant communities in forest gardens of Indigenous peoples contain higher functional diversity, or species richness, than peripheral conifer forests more than 150 years after people left their villages in the wake of colonial-settler invasions (Armstrong et al. 2021: 9). These managed perennial fruit and nut communities were associated exclusively with archaeological village sites and were richer in diverse resources and habitat for animals and pollinators than forested ecosystems without the history of dedicated human management (Armstrong et al. 2021: 6). Representing some 80% of the forest garden indicator species in the study were hazelnut, Pacific crabapple, highbush cranberry (*Viburnum edule*), red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*), Solomon's plume

(*Maianthemum racemosum*), nooka rose (*Rosa nutkana*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), and black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii)* (Armstrong et al. 2021: 9) with species such as wild ginger [*Asarum caudatum*] and wild sarsaparilla [*Aralia nudicaulis*]) found in the lower layer's sheltered closed canopies of the forest gardens (Armstrong et al. 2021: 11). Of the ten plant species found in this study to be significant indicators of forest gardens in the region, those found generally grouped together in these food systems were all ethnobotanically important food sources for humans (Armstrong et al. 2021: 9). Diversities of diet designed into the landscape, food for humans means food for a more-than-human community; the forest gardens were also cited by this study to have been the best habitat and food for mammals like moose, bear, and deer, findings corroborated by Armstrong *et al*. (2021)'s consultation with Ts'msyen Elders of the study sites who confirm that these "old villages" remain the best places to hunt into today. Among other distinctive characteristics found from these forest gardens were larger seeds, more animal-dispersed species, more shade-tolerant plant species, shrubs, and more insect-pollinated species, compared to the periphery conifer forests assessed in the study (Armstrong et al. 2021: 9).

lxx Using Google's Ngram Viewer, Grey and Patel (2015: 432) trace the term back to this first use of the term from Latin America in 1979.

lxxi The Nyéléni Declaration marked a critical moment in the creation of a new world order that made a statement of alternatives to neoliberal globalization—*"Now is the time for food sovereignty!" (Nyéléni Village, Sélingué, Mali 2007: 3).*

lxxii The full Nyéléni Village, Sélingué, Mali (2007: 1) definition reads: "Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations".

lxxiii In full, Figueroa-Helland (2018: 182-183) defines of food sovereignty that: "While it produces "food," it fosters (agro)/biodiversity, polycultures, closed metabolic cycles and ecosystem restoration, coupled with labor and decision-making based on communality, reciprocity, consensus, equity, and intersectional social justice. It addresses biodiversity loss by relying on complex polycultures that nurture complementary interactions between myriad species and ecosystems. It tackles the climate crisis by (re)vitalizing agro/biodiverse ecosystems that stop the climate-related damages of monocrop/industrial agriculture, and constitute carbon sinks. It confronts the inequality crisis by enabling dispossessed peoples (peasants, indigenous peoples, women, fisher-folk, landless rural populations) to recover livelihoods, and ensure viable futures for their communities, starting with land sovereignty. It restores dignified work by fostering communities that control what they produce. It addresses the energy, water and resource crises by delinking food systems from fossil-fueled industrial mechanization. It delinks food production from industrial mining by employing natural fertilizers integral to closed nutrient cycles; not relying on mineral extraction (e.g., oil, gas, rock phosphate) on which agro-industry depends for its mechanized processes, pesticides and fertilizers. It confronts the displacement/migration crisis: if indigenous revitalization can succeed people will secure livelihoods, thereby facing less pressures to leave, which counteracts the rural-to-urban and Southern exodus. It addresses the health crisis faced by oppressed populations resulting from deprivation of sustainable, healthy and self-sufficient livelihoods. In sum, food sovereignty enables alternative socioecological relations thereby tackling the convergence of crises (Altieri et al. 2015)."

lxxiv In full, Gutiérrez Escobar (2019: 187) writes that "[f]ood sovereignty and autonomy imply the defence of the knowledge, practices, and territories of food producing peoples — including peasants, fishermen, pastoralists, and urban farmers — as spaces for the reproduction and thriving of life and multispecies communities. This contrasts with the rationalized management of plant and animal life and death for profit and economic growth under the corporate food system. The transformative actuality and potential of food sovereignty and autonomy resides in the defence of three of such life-affirming principles: commons, diversity, and solidarity."

lxxv Food and seed sovereignty are often closely associated. Kloppenburg (2010: 153) notes that 'seed sovereignty' must guarantee "the right of farmers to decide which kinds of seeds to grow and how they are shared", the protection of indigenous seeds as coupled with sovereignties over food. Protecting the space to make these decisions, Kloppenburg (ibid.: 385) notes that "[s]eed sovereignty therefore entails creation of a legally defined space in which sharing is unimpeded but is protected from appropriation by monopolists" (ibid.: 385). For the purposes of this dissertation, and according to its theoretical frame, the two are used interchangeably. For specific explanation as to how this is operationalized in my methods, please consult Annex I.

lxxvi At its best, Montenegro de Wit (2017: 205) writes of the politics of agroecology that it "aims for a reflexive, participatory practice that is grounded in a subversive politics: a commitment to disrupt the homogenizing forces of the globalization project with biological and cultural diversity. It offers renewal of such diversity, in situ, instead of its capture in a commodity form." See also Molina *et al.* (2019) on the role of political agroecology in furthering advances of sustainable food systems.

lxxvii CaC methods from Mexican peasant organizations *Centro de Desarrollo Integral Campesino de la Mixteca* (CEDICAM) of Oaxaca and *Grupo Vicente Guerrero* of Tlaxcala were able to take Guatemalan methods and develop them further as displaced Guatemalan populations provided agroecological expertise in a complementary movement of exchange between a burgeoning interest in the practices in the social context of communities further north and the displaced seeking refuge from conflict after the 1980s (Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho et al. 2018).

lxxviii van Etten (2006: 696) cites the commentary of visiting archbishop Cortés y Larraz on the scene in Nebaj: "Nebaj has a very abundant harvest with no way out, because even if they would leave it in vain, nobody would accept it, only because of the work of collecting it."

lxxix These include the Achi', Akateco, Awakateco, Chalchiteco, Ch'orti', Chuj, Itza', Ixil, Jacalteco, Kaqchikel, K'iche', Mam, Mopan, Poqomam, Poqomchi', Q'anjob'al, Q'eqchi', Sakapulteco, Sipakapense, Tektiteko, Tz'utujil, and Uspanteko Peoples.

lxxx This may well have to do with the maintenance of large, coherent tracts of land under this form of tenure that have served as more-than-human ecosystems but are maintained as food systems by Indigenous Peoples. While other chapters of the dissertation elaborate on this point, there are many theories that support this argument with examples from ecology to support them. Regarding the well-studied effects of isolation, referred to as 'fragmentation' in the Amazon rainforest, Corlett and Primack (2011: 266-267) write that "Numerous observational and experimental studies have been carried out … to determine the effects of rain forest fragmentation. These studies have shown that when a habitat is fragmented, movement between fragments is reduced. Many bird, mammal, and insect species of the forest interior will not cross even narrow open areas. … When animal movements are reduced by habitat fragmentation, plants with fleshy fruits that depend on these animals for dispersal are also affected. As species go extinct within individual fragments through natural succession or random chance, new species will be unable to arrive due to barriers to colonization, and the number of species present in the habitat fragment will decline. … The overall effect of all these fragment processes is that all forest fragments tend to lose species, with both the rate of loss and the precise species that are lost depending on fragment size, fragment isolation from other forest areas, and the nature of the matrix." The generation of 'edge effects' by the anthropocentric transformation of forests relates to the commonly cited ecological theory of island biogeography which guides understandings for how biodiversity survives better on larger islands, or pieces of land, than biodiversity across several smaller islands or patches of healthy but separated forests. Better biodiversity outcomes over time arise from the cycling of resources in larger spaces, explaining why and how biodiversities are better able to sustain themselves in larger tracts of land devoted to their habitat and food. Though Aldo Leopold is credited with first popularizing the terms edge and edge effects from his well-known 1933 book *Game Management,* the term is more widely associated with Wilson and MacArthur's 1957 theory on island biogeography. In the case of Guatemala, Designated national conservation agency CONAP (2020: 158) notes that most communal lands in Guatemala "are located in indigenous and local community regions ... [and that these] coincide with areas of forest cover, with hydrographic basins, inside and outside protected areas."

lxxxi Forests from the departments in the western highlands contain a variety of conifer trees (i.e. *Pinus, Abies, Cupressus*), broad-leaf trees (i.e. *Quercus, Alnus, Arbutus*), and mixed forests (Elías 2012: 152) and are also home to endemic species such as the Guatemalan Fir (*Abies guatemalensis*). The Guatemalan fir is considered 'endangered' today after stands across Guatemala were exploited by the late 1950s for the tree's value as a timber product, source of charcoal, and use as a Christmas decoration for urban populations (Gardner 2013; Andersen et al. 2006).

lxxxii Del Águila (2021) identifies this number at 120, perhaps using different criteria, and Bullock *et al.* (2019: 142) at 350 protected areas.

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lxxxiii Del Águila (2021: 89) cites these same figures at a total area of 3,192,997 hectares, or 29.3% of Guatemala's national territory.

lxxxiv Specifically problematic is the legal recognition of tenure rights/ancestral land rights that many communities and municipalities lack, "a weakness above all to assert their rights before third parties and before the State"; a lack of recognition of local institutions of territorial development and values; forms of local government and system of rules and sanctions not recognized in government from the framework of customary law; and the consistent threat of the fragmentation and sale of communal lands as individuals sell possessions and titles to those beyond the community are all ways that make a coherent form of management for communal lands structurally and systemically weak (Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales. 2009: 86).

lxxxv Within CONAP's system of protected areas and Decree Law 4-89 regulating them, Private Natural Reserves, are formally registered "areas of property of individuals or legal entities whose owners voluntarily designate land for an estimated period of time for the conservation and protection of habitats of flora and fauna as well as biotic communities or environmental features". Furthermore, these Private Natural Reserves "count on the support and full recognition of the State for the protection of the integrity of the land and its resources." According to Article 8, however, these landowners are not bound to a timeframe to 'protect' these areas as the declaration of the reserve is *voluntary*. They are also not forced to develop any management plan for such areas. By IUCN protected area definitions (Dudley 2008: 9), "protected areas should be managed in perpetuity and not as a short-term or temporary management strategy". Thus, the inclusion of these private natural reserves in Guatemala's protected area categorizations raises further question about the 'protection' of what and for whom if private reserves are not only recognized and supported by the Guatemalan State but allowed private management when these short-term protected areas are not recognized by the criteria of protected areas by the IUCN.

lxxxvi As these are made for each and thus structured variously at the local level.

lxxxvii This is a reference to the encomiendas or 'repartimiento' of Spanish colonizers, given land ownership and ownership of labor and tributes of Indigenous Peoples on those lands for agricultural or stock-raising enterprises by Spanish aristocrats across Latin America in the early colonial period (see Lockhart 1969).

lxxxviii Gonzalez-Bernat and Clifton (2017) note that it is often foreign development or NGOs that provide any formal support to the structures of biodiversity conservation or valuation of biodiversity materialized within areas designated for it. Creating troubling alliances, NGOs have been cited as providing funding for protected areas management due to the chronic shortfall of funding allocated for them by the State (Gonzalez-Bernat and Clifton 2017). From the parallel case of the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Petén, Sundberg (1998: 407) summarizes that "[t]hrough CONAP, the state has increased its bureaucratic presence, reasserted its authority over the region's natural resources, and reorganized and rationalized resource extraction and production, all with the assistance of international NGOs."

lxxxix Through the decision of Guatemalan courts the period was ruled a genocide, it's military perpetrators also convicted in the same decision. The later decision was later revoked, however, due to the threat that it caused those elite in power who, if some were brought to justice, would have lead to a landslide of other leaders in positions of economic privilege that would also face the same fate for their involvement in the crimes of genocide.

xc Sanford (2003: 155) points to the overt racism contained by the metaphor used ("quitar al agua del pes"), where the water is the Maya and the fish are the guerrilla, explaining that "[e]ven here, it is clear that the general made a distinction between the guerrilla (fish) and the Maya (water). If he truly meant to "scorch communists" and "eliminate subversion," the fish, rather than the water, would have been his military target. If he was unable to distinguish between the Maya and the guerrillas, the metaphor would have had no meaning. Rios Montt, like Lucas Garcia before him, wanted to eliminate the Maya. The massacres were a genocidal campaign, begun under Lucas Garcia and continued under Rios Montt, which intended to destroy the Maya because they were Maya."

xci See Pamela Yates's (1983) documentary *When the Mountains Tremble* where a soldier in the Guatemalan military fighting in the Ixil Region is interviewed from the battlefield and reports himself Guatemalan but unaware of who or what he is fighting against.

xcii The first massacre from the Nebaj municipality's village of Palob, depicts the relentless pursuit of a civilian population by military forces: "*Ya cuando el Ejército sacó a toda la gente de Palob, lo cual sería en la primera masacre. Entonces se tuvo que retirar toda la gente, se retiraron mas de 300 familiares de ese lugar para defender la vida. Pero el Ejército los persiguió y los encontró arriba de donde estaba la aldea, allí los encontró, los bombardeo y masacró a la mayor parte de la gente.* Caso 7727, Palob, Nebaj, Quiché, 1982." (REMHI 1998: 263)

xciii Figures reported from the Exposicion fotografica: Por la defense del territorio de San Juan Cotzal exhibit visited multiple times in October 2019.

xciv These were in the villages of Acul, T'zalbal, Juil, Rio Azul-Pulay, Ojo de Agua, Salquil Grande, Bichibala, and Santa Avelina, though Manz (1988:109) does not include in this list Juil and Santa Avelina but instead indicates 7 villages as identified by the military as 'complete', San Felipe Chenla included instead.

xcv The six development poles were: the Ixil Region (El Quiche), Playa Grande (El Quiche), Chacaj (Huehuetenango), Chisec (Alta Verapaz), Senahu (Alta Verapaz), and Yanahi (El Peten). Steinberg and Taylor (2003: 451) also refer to rural areas in the lxil country as designated "Red Zones" by government security forces. After Schirmer (1998: 42), they define Red Zones from the height of conflict in the early 1980s as enemy territories, where "no distinction was made between *guerilleros* and their peasant supporters. Both were to be attacked and obliterated" (ibid.). The worst period of violence, La Violencia, was between 1982 and 1983 when counter-insurgent forces designed and implemented campaigns to systematically wipe out Maya groups in what was formally declared as a genocide in 2013. Rooted in the systematic racism of the Spanish and the founders of the country in 1821, these plots to destroy some 440 indigenous communities in the country were justified by the State which claimed such communities were a part of a communist plot against the government (Gulden 2002).

xcvi Referred to in Guatemalan military documents as the 'Ixil Triangle' by the triangular shape of the 3 Ixil municipalities together.

xcvii Elsewhere it is reported that at least 29,000 people from 54 communities were displaced in the Ixil Region (PBI 2012: 4). According to David Stoll's *Between Two Fires* (page 95, cited in Alfredo Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 34), Cerro Sumal, Xeputul, and Amajchel were the villages that refuged many Ixil who fled to the mountains.

xcviii These authors and writings include: Ducan Talome's *Ixiles la pérdida de Ilóm*, David Stoll's *Entre dos Fuegos*, Yvon Le Bot's *en la Guerra en Tierras Mayas*, and Roddy Brett's *Una Guerra Sin Batalla*. Information in these books provide supporting evidence and corroborate what violence is documented against these civilian groups hidden in the mountains from the CEH (1999).

xcix These Maya families fled from the municipalities of Chicamán, Uspantán, Cunén, Sacapulas, Nebaj, Cotzal, Chajul, Playa Grande, Aguacatán, and Chiantla, specifically (Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 34).

c Amnesty International (2016: 21) writes of the encouragement of the State for *campesinos* to settle in areas during the armed conflict without title to the land they lived and worked in for many years. Thereafter, "The same areas were subsequently designated natural reserves by the authorities and as a consequence these *campesino* families were viewed as squatters. Paradoxically, claims have been made that these reserves have since become the site of the exploitation of natural resources." The cycle of Indigenous dispossession by the Guatemalan state is, thus, not isolated to the Ixil Region.

ci This how one Ixil educator speaking to a group of Colombian students in the Ixil Region learning about the post-war period phrased it: "The peace agreements served more to calm the war. The violations of human rights on the part of the State continue. So for us, it only served as a little bit for the people who were in the armed struggle [they] then calmed them down a bit the persecution and the violation of human rights, though these still continue, which tells us there is no 'peace'. When we organize ourselves, when they take our human rights, when they call us terrorists, when they call us *guerrillas*, they put everything on us. So it tells us that there is no peace, there is no freedom. So the peace agreements there are nothing more than [written words]. Those who demand, those who enforce these agreements are nothing more than the people. And the state does nothing."

cii Lerner's (2007: 1) analysis of the legal proceedings undertaken in the aftermath of the 36-year conflict to bring its executors to accountability concludes that the transition from conflict to reconciliation is marred by a trouble with 'truth', where perpetrators of the genocide have been able to contort its narrative in ways that excuse or remove the violence of the period.

ciii In reference to the 1877 law that opened up for sale land previously owned by the municipality and the dramatic rush on land that ensued, Elliott (2021: 115) refers to the same as the "powerful plantation oligarchy" to refer to their ownership of much of the land in Guatemala. Many of these are proud to maintain and make reference to their mixed European origins, the explanation for the use of the term '*criollo*'.

civ During the peace accord negotiation process, CACIF sought to negotiate economic transitions into the accords separate from issues of land, inequality, and poverty in favor of and stressing a 'growth'-bathed, discursively constructed horizon for the country (Granovsky-Larsen 2017; Seay-Fleming 2019). The omission of the negotiation of these critical issues, thus, meant that the government was not mandated to adjust economic conditions for peasants in the country (Granovsky-Larsen 2017).

cv The Spanish acronym represents the Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales, y Financieras.

[cvi] Krznaric (1999, cited in Tramel 2019: 184) refers to CACIF as "the key "uncivil" actor of Guatemalan civil society because of its historical propensity to support non-democratic politics and, more broadly, through its attempts to limit citizenship rights in order to preserve economic privileges".

[cvii] Ratified by the Guatemalan Congress in 2006 between the U.S. and Guatemala, the DR-CAFTA is pertinent to Central American countries, the United States and the Dominican Republic as a free-trade agreement (FTA) and one of many international agreements that have also served to accelerate what Castree (2008; 2010) deems the 'neoliberalization of natures', among other commodified real-world phenomena. With the exception of white maize, DR-CAFTA stipulates that all products between member states should be allowed to move freely between 10 to 15 years after the introduction of the agreement, exporting the privilege of corporations, as granted in the U.S., to Latin American countries. This, of course, would allow more foreign-produced maize into the country with the provision that these imports would face no tariffs for given quota-ed products. This major agreement of Latin American countries with the U.S. is significant as it is also the first agreement of its kind to stipulate that all signatories must comply with the European-created International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), giving rather unrestrained power to seed developers and breeders and tying together the legal institutionalized framework for seed in the U.S. with strict systems of regulatory control over seeds, compulsory in Europe. In alignment with the favoring of corporations present in the neoliberal system of the U.S., Article 15.10.1b of the DR-CAFTA agreement gives protection to companies by allowing them to keep "undisclosed data" on the safety (or lack thereof) of products out of public reach if the product has been 'previously approved in another territory' (Suppan 2004: 2).

[cviii] One study including most of the farm households in the western highlands of Guatemala, cites an average of only 6.9 months of the year as supplied by the family's own land resources; the remaining months supplemented by maize purchased from the market to meet these most basic consumption needs (Hellin et al. 2017: 188).

[cix] Writing of the effect after community bonds are broken, Segato and McGlazer's (2018: 209) note the inertias unleashed in the dissolution of community bonds that has the effect of driving people toward the "world of things" in a Global North as the desire for *things* produces *individuals* in order to replace desires for rootedness previously satisfied by the production of community and community identity.

[cx] From Asia, Peng (2014) correlates the absence of land security as generative of fewer incentives to maintain soil and regenerate the health of the land. The lack of formal land ownership is cited as the reason for less sustainable, local agricultural practices such as slash and burn or swidden agriculture (Peng 2014) as farmers race to maximize extraction potentials from the land. From the wider study of community forest conservation projects in 8 countries around the world, in the community of Uaxactún, in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve, Wilkie and Painter's (2021) interview with 2 conservation practitioners discusses a 25-year community forest concession granted to the community by the Guatemalan government that has had similar effect. As a concession that will not be automatically renewed and has no clear criteria for what might constitute 'successful' conservation, Wilkie and Painter (2021: 7) comment that the uncertainty over the loss of the concession for Uaxactún has created a 'perverse incentive' for some community members who feel that "investing resources to manage the concession well legitimizes the power of the government to take away their livelihoods."

[cxi] Disrupting Ixil common tenure regimes that link the Ixil in reciprocal relationship with their body-earth territory by way of a state allied with capitalist intentions, Elliott (2021: 130) elaborates on how the manifestation of land as property, an ontological baggage from Europe, has become a standard under Guatemalan national law: "Maya views of land used for self-sufficiency conflict with the modern capitalist view of land as a commodity exploited for maximum profit… Under Maya common law, cultivating virgin land or inheriting what ancestors had cultivated determined ones' right to land. Under national law, written decrees of the state and transactions within those decrees determined land rights" (Elliott 2021: 130).

[cxii] Muradian *et al.* (2021: 564) define socio-environmental conflicts as "mobilizations by social movements against particular economic activities, in which concerns about current or future negative environmental impacts are an important part of the grievances. We refer to conflicts in which contestation by social groups are visible, either through legal cases, campaigning, demonstrations or direct (even violent) confrontations."

[cxiii] In the Polochic Valley today, specific families of German descent, such as Maeglis and the Widdmans who control 1/3 of the land in the Polochic Valley, are responsible for the expansion of detrimental oil palm and sugarcane industry and the conflict it produces. The subsequent *colonato* system they imposed placed the same dispossessed indigenous population of Maya-Q'eqchi' as *mozos-colonos* of forced workers in the *fincas* for the right to occupy land and income that could only be used within *finca*-owned stores, falling into debt for the discrepancies between payments and subsistence needs (Mingorría 2021:7). With the coffee crisis of the beginning 2000s, the

mozo-colono system deteriorated to leave many Maya-Q'eqchi' families unpaid and without land (Mingorría 2021: 8). In one notable example, in May 2011, 14 Maya-Q'eqchi' communities of roughly 800 families were violently evicted by the Widdman family and the Guatemlan State from their homes while 1800 hectares of grain were razed, all to clear the area for further expansion of plantations (Mingorría 2021: 10).The same terrors since the war show a continued aggression toward indigenous peoples of the area, where oil palm and sugarcane industry become pipelines of violence. One Maya-Q'eqchi' community member quoted in Mingorría (2021: 9) described this evolution: "[t]he palm and sugarcane come with weapons, they say the peace accords were signed, but there is still armed surveillance. Every night shots are heard from the companies' private security. Women do not travel alone on the road, because they [the private security guards] are on the roads and can rape them like in the [counter-insurgency] war."

[cxiv] Extra-urbano (2017b, translation mine) writes of the story of Pedro del Barrio of Ilom village, Chajul Guatemala: "But when the armed conflict came, [Indigenous institutions] ended, they killed the spiritual guide, they killed the catechists, they killed the committees. Destroying them [inhumanely]. Well, it is not only human life that ended, it also ended visits to know their lands... So, today we are seeing that here in Ilom we have 880 children who are in school, but every year there are more people, but there is no place for them anymore."

[cxv] Since 2012, public funds from the country's agriculture authority Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Alimentación (MAGA) have been diverted away from the traditional small-scale irrigation schemes referred to as "mini-riego" and toward largescale irrigation (Copeland 2018).

[cxvi] The critical association of vast numbers of humans identified by Europeans as slaves, serfs, indigenous people, people of color, and women with categories embedded in the 'Enlightenment's notion of a mutable and subvert-able 'nature' formatted a hierarchy of labor that invisibilized and devalued both non-human and human forms of it, all submerged according to vertical classifications of European values, ideas, and society in general (Moore 2016: 91, cited in Arons 2023: 36-37) that stem from the initial nature/culture divide. As Moore comments, the resulting 'capital-ism' became into the divide it created, "the web of life … reduced to a series of external objects — mapped, explored, surveyed, calculated for what Nature could do for the accumulation of capital" (Moore 2016: 87, cited in Arons 2023: 37). Moore goes on that "the genius of capitalism has been to find ways, through culture, science, and the state, to appropriate streams of work/energy for free or low cost" (2016: 90, cited in Arons 2023: 37), the constant and continuous erosion or theft from that created entity of nature which is taken for granted as an inexhaustible resource. Devaluing everything but himself, capitalism from the nature/culture divide allows a disambiguated man to consumes his own foundation through the objectification of 'nature'. As Arons echoes, such splits gave rise to the philosophical and ideological separation of capital-H "Humans", or culture, and "Nature."

[cxvii] The politics of land ownership and race creation share a close historical relationship. Indigenous people were not considered by Locke and other white Anglophone men of the time to be capable of appropriating the products of their labor. Accordingly, thus categorized as inferior to the rational, self-owning [white European] man, the Indigenous peoples of the so-called Americas and their lands were, therefore, all regarded as a 'Nature' that could be 'discovered' and claimed. Women and Indigenous, African, or otherwise colonized or European-controlled peoples, were not subject to the same property-over-body concept (Kolia 2021) as their labors had already been invisiblized in and with the subversion of Nature to Man's control, as authorized by the Catholic Church's Papal Bull "*Inter Caetera*" (1493) establishing 'the doctrine of discovery'.

[cxviii] From inequalities an "irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism" is identified by new materialism as creating a 'metabolic rift' (Foster 2000) after Marx's discussions on capital (1981: 949), asserting that accumulated inequalities appear in material asymmetries generated by historical cycles of accumulation that "have separated humans from agrarian landscapes, plants from livestock, and communities from working knowledge of their own agriculture" (Montenegro de Wit 2021: 126). The acknowledgment of these inequalities of access to and use of energy from life's ecosystems is not only an acknowledgement of inequalities of wealth distribution from the perspective of a globalized market economy, but it also politically reframes human relationships to nonhuman others as extractive relationships have come to replace more-than-human reciprocities based on circular forms of 'energy' use. Expanding upon Johan Galtung's (1969) description of inequality, Fischer-Kowalski (2003: 22) comments that the inequality from these asymmetrical exchanges borne also out of the difference in subsistence modalities forms a kind of "structural violence", distinct from "direct violence", as extended metabolisms generate 'large scale pollution problems'. Within this characterization and delving into analyses of 'overexploitation' by providing some quantification of this structural violence between the two societal forms, Fischer-Kowalski's (2003: 30) gives some definition of a Global North as becoming an actor at a global scale where the harvest and transformation of minerals and fossil fuels can be quantified. Performing an analysis according to such framing,

Fischer-Kowalski's (2003: 30) concluded that the extended metabolisms of industrial societies consume about 3.5 times more than the basic metabolic profiles for agrarian or subsistence societies as based on the average per capita material consumption, the consumption of minerals and fossil fuels, non-necessity materials, accounting for the primary difference between the two societal characterizations and a source of this structural violence. Impacting all other metabolic communities, these 'colonizing interventions', as Fischer-Kowalski (2003: 30) characterizes them, "take place on all levels of biological organization, from ecosystems (terrestrial, aquatic, marine) to organisms (domestication, breeding, etc.), organs, tissues (e.g. tissue culture) down to the molecular level of the genome (genetic engineering)".

[cxix] In *We Have Never Been Modern* the late Bruno Latour (1993) discusses origins of a lines of thinking that commonly characterizes human society today by a nature/culture and mind/body divide, identifying it as a modern constitution to diagnose a single natural order which emerges as a universal to identify the ontological separation of things and humans "forever dissociated from the representation of citizens through the intermediary of the social contract" (Latour 1993: 27). A social contract created to keep things and humans and thereafter bodies and minds separate, these ideas also trace a history back to a convergence or co-production of political theory that emerged from a dispute between Hobbes and Boyle. Latour (Latour 1993: 28) describes these two men as "like a pair of Founding Fathers, acting in concert to promote one and the same innovation in political theory: [where] the representation of nonhumans belongs to science, but science is not allowed to appeal to politics; [and] the representation of citizens belongs to politics, but politics is not allowed to have any relation to the nonhumans produced and mobilized by science and technology". What Latour argues emerged from the dispute between Locke and Paine was what he refers to as the 'modern' constitution, a declaration of sorts that science and nature were distinct and separate from the political human realm, a realm unique to humans. Critical scholar widely referenced on the concept, Mignolo (2010: 12) writes that "[M]odernity" is a European narrative, but the historical events that sustain[it] are not only constituted by the internal history of Europe but of Europe and its colonialworld since 1500". Collins *et al.* (2021) cite the development of 'Modernity' as a cultural idea transmitted through regimes of rationality and secular science that globalized from Europe's cultural period of Enlightenment.

Chapter II
Endnotes

[cxx] The emergence of 'nature' from writings of Europeans in the 17th and 18th centuries was an initial step toward the commodification of land and its accumulation and exchange that supported and facilitated capitalism as an alternative way of living on the land. According to emerging Cartesian relationships to the commodified space that replaced more-than-human and co-dependent relationships, man become "masters and possessors of nature" (Descartes 1968: 78) and wealth itself grew around new characterizations of the "fruits of earth and all the commodities that can be found in it" (ibid. 2006: 51) that were "no longer [dependent] on the limits of "land productivity" and, rather, on the exploitation of "labor productivity"". Li (2014) traces these definitions as such back to debates from the Anglophone-speaking European world between Thomas Paine and John Locke where Lockean definitions claimed ownership over land through labor. More specifically, coloniality and the role of "work" are suggested by Kolia (2021) as grounded in Lockean notions of private property and self-as-property where the "work" of the European, rational self-owning man is recognized above and to the exclusion of the co-produced work of his 'other'-ed, lesser, contemporaries. John Locke (2005/[1689]: 81) fought for a conception of land that located in any "improvements" to it as granting full ownership of it to the laborer, turning the land into fully 'private property' once worked or 'improved' by the human man. Given, thus, its value by what the rational man can make of it, Locke (1690/1980: 23–24) asserted "[H]e who appropriates land to himself by his labour, does not lessen, but increases the common stock of mankind". The ethos of "providential republicanism" that emerged from Locke's ideas is summarized by Purdy (2012: 173) as situating "the natural world [a]s made for productive use: nature ha[d] a telos, to be fruitful and support human life, and this purpose [wa]s realized only through human labor". His contemporary, Thomas Paine, argued for an alternative concept of ownership in his 1797 pamphlet *Agrarian Justice* where "the earth, in its natural uncultivated state" should remain "common property of the human race" (Paine 1797: np, cited in Li 2014: 591). Advocating for the collection of profit only from labors with the land that left the land itself as commonly owned, Paine's understanding of land ownership left communal land tenure schemes

possibility to continue without disruption. The religion of power prescribed by Locke's theory of epistemology, Kolia (2021: 5) summarizes, is a "secularizing relation of self-responsibility and individuated self-consciousness disarticulated from customary and religious authority". Emphasizing the eventual meanings of Locke's work built from the nature-culture divide legitimated by religious authority but extended beyond it, Kolia (2021: 3) writes: "a racialized, secular, and externalized conception of the environment was punctuated by 'progressive' settler colonial processes of appropriation and capitalist processes of commodification." Strongly influenced by the Protestant Christian ethics of self as property, Lockean proprietary Nature converged with Cartesian human exceptionalism as the European man became 'Enlightened' and 'modern' (Latour 1993) in his disambiguation from God that paralleled the development of science and was complemented with thus an expansion of the property of the 'self'.

cxxi Arons (2023: 36-37) describes Jason Moore's (2017: 13) use of the term, highlighting the practical violence central to organizations and conceptualizations of nature separate and opposite culture, systematized globally between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries by Europeans. Identifying the divide and focusing on the ideological and philosophical roots to the systems of inequality created within it, Moore's Capitalocene "connects the world-economy to the world-ecology and seeks to understand human relations of power, production, and environment-making in, and in relation to, the web of life" (Arons 2023: 36), putting today's contexts of inequality against the background of the rise of capital and its "complex and interrelated processes of the global-scale, world-historical, and politico-economic organization of modern capitalism stretched over centuries of enclosures, colonialisms, industrializations, and globalizations" (Demos 2017: 17, cited in Arons 2023: 36- 37). The foregrounded unpaid work done by nonhumans and lowercase 'h'-humans *is* the societal structure made in the collective structure formed by capitalism and its 'age', the Capitalocene (Moore 2016: 93, cited in Arons 2023: 38). Providing this framework to orient inequality and its global proliferation as organized [hegemonic] systems "the "Capitalocene" provides an ideological framework for dramatizing social, racial, and gendered eco-inequalities" (Arons 2023: 38, citing Moore 2016; 2018) as fit to the scale of global destruction and pollution.

cxxii With *longue durée* approaches that understand the historical expansion of Europe within a global and hegemonic system of objectification and consumption, decolonial and feminist historians emphasize how Indigenous Peoples and women were those first human categories categorically subverted and contained with the concept of Nature, neither quite human (Ortner 1972; 1974; Plumwood 1993; McClintock 1995). Conflated together, the feminization of nature as female was very much a narrative present during the colonial era, as depicted in the writings of men from historical records of the Enlightenment (McClintock 1995). Anthropologist Sherry Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" (1972; 1974) argued that women's biological processes were positioned all around the world as physiologically 'closer to nature' than the depictions of men's bodies 'closer to culture'. Such distinctions were mapped onto the hierarchy of culture as dominant over nature. Peter Hulme (cited in McClintock 1995: 26) notes the feminization of land within discourses of the period as it is situated in such writings "as a passive counterpart to the massive thrust of male technology". Feminist historian Anne McClintock (1995: 23) writes of the use of knowledge paired with science as a tool of domination that subverted both women and nature as categories of the unknown that could be forcibly and spectacularly revealed.

cxxiii Women and nature both were "conquered, dominated, and disciplined, placed in a subordinate, obedient position" (Segato and McGlazer 2018: 200) in the arrangement. Segato and McGlazer (2018: 200) cite the appropriation of women's bodies as the first spaces of "patriarchal-colonial modernity", their proximity in the same appropriation to 'nature' subverting these simultaneously. Subverting women as a precondition to subverting a nonhuman world, this order was the "hard rock-crystal structure that has stabilized the *patriarchal prehistory of humanity"* according to European classifications.

cxxiv Citing the social origins of the creation, MacCormack and Strathern (1980) dispel the myth of nature, citing it as one of "a system of arbitrary signs which relies on a social consensus for meaning".

cxxv These categories were mapped with the spread of colonialism into the structuring of a global East and West (Said 1979: 6). Writing from the 'Orient', Palestinian-American Edward Said (1978: 207) stipulates that the West establishes its 'other' through penetration, silencing, and possessing of an 'East'. The analysis of colonial-era discourses from historical documents finds the association of African and Indigenous peoples with landscapes feminized and sexualized also through the lens of race (Pratt 1992; McClintock 1995). McClintock (1995: 30) writes of the myth of 'empty land' or 'virgin land', a certain kind of nature, as "involving both a gender and a racial dispossession" through its ascription as such. Mapping European "forbidden sexual desires and fears" onto the lands and peoples of Africa and the Americas, McClintock (1995: 22) argues that European imaginations of such places draw geographies of what she refers to as 'porno-tropics' in their voyages into an expanse of these spaces of the 'unknown' for European colonizers.

cxxvi Segato and McGlazer (2018: 204) cite some of the anomalies and purges modernity produces: "it stabilizes norms, quantifies punishments, catalogs pain, privatizes culture, archives experience, monumentalizes memory, essentializes identities, commodifies life, mercantilizes the earth, and levels temporalities."

cxxvii Converted from a dual matrix organized by mutual reciprocity into 'the binary modern matrix' that collapses all alterity into a function of the One, Segato and McGlazer (2018: 201) write that the position of "every Other has to be assimilated into a framework of universal reference" whereupon every individual Other becomes defined by the creation of '*the* other': "every "other" will be an "other" with respect to the universal "one" of colonial modernity: black and Indian will be the "other of white"; woman will be "the other of man"; sexual practices considered non-normative will be "the other of heteronormativity"; and non-human species will come to be defined precisely by their "lack of humanity.""

cxxviii Beth Rose Middleton (2015: 562) identifies four key tenets of what she refers to as an Indigenous political ecology. These articulated in reference to climate change are: "(1) attention to 'coloniality' or ongoing practices of colonialism (e.g. displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands; no recognition of indigenous self-determination); (2) culturally specific approaches reframing analyses in keeping with indigenous knowledge systems; (3) recognition and prioritization of indigenous self-determination, as expressed through indigenous governance; and (4) attention to decolonizing processes that explicitly dismantle systems of internalized and externalized colonial praxis."

cxxix Political ecology is defined by Barca and Bridge (2015) as a frame that analyzes how mechanization and industrialization processes linked historically by coordinated relations collectively benefit from the appropriation of biophysical systems maximized to various spatial scales. The feminist/decolonial frame further seeks to deconstruct the appropriation of those biophysical systems to understand how they were distributed according to uneven and unequal hierarchies of privilege, notably the white, English-speaking, man.

cxxx In these narratives, Enlightenment ideas allow the white European man to envision himself as superior to and in a place of domination over Nature as the tool of his creation, Science, is used to 'penetrate her depths' and 'pierce veils' (McClintock 1995: 23). Enlightenment metaphysics provided knowledge as a means of power, gendering space to penetrate it through the journey and "technology of Conversion: the male penetration and exposure of a veiled, female interior; and the aggressive Conversion of its 'secrets' into a visible, male science of the surface" (ibid.). Iconographic depictions also repeat these Enlightenment ideas of knowledge as penetration in the images of the time. McClintock writes (1995: 24): "Female figures were planted like fetishes at the ambiguous points of contact, at the borders and orifices of the contest zone. Sailors bound wooden female figures to their ships' prows and baptized their ships—as exemplary threshold objects—with female names. Cartographers filled the blank seas of their maps with mermaids and sirens. Explorers called unknown lands "virgin" territory. Philosophers veiled "Truth" as female, then fantasized about drawing back the veil". McClintock (1995: 23) cites after Farrington (1964: 62) these as "gendered erotics of knowledge" where a hierarchy of man over nature is drawn clearly into Enlightenment writers of the time, such as the words of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and other known writers of the period who claim to be on a side of the "very truth" in their Science writings. Lines like "leading to you Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave" from Bacon (ibid.) show the "male power-fantasy" Edward Said (1978: 207) refers to present in these tropes.

cxxxi "[T]he matrix of coloniality crystallized and permanently reproduced by the state." (Segato and Monque 2021: 781). Beyond simply the term coloniality, Segato and Monque (2021: 786) refer to the 'establishment of the pattern of coloniality' (Segato and Monque 2021: 786), which has a history within the frame of historical pluralism: "These histories respond to the expansion of the tentacles of the modernizing state within the space of the nation, entering with its institutions in one hand, and the market in the other, tearing the communal fabric, bringing chaos, and introducing profound disarray into the structures that existed there and into the cosmos itself."

cxxxii Arturo Escobar (2018: 86) writes that "Perhaps the most central feature of the One-World project has been a twofold ontological divide: a particular way of separating humans from non-humans, or nature; and the distinction and boundary policing between those who function within the OWW from those who insist on other ways of worlding (the many versions of the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy, including civilized and primitive, modern and traditional, developed and underdeveloped)."

cxxxiii Mies (1986: 77) theorized capitalism as a way to organize and delimit nature through forms of control that took unpaid work/energy and production the turned them instead into 'women, nature, and colonies', all part of "a *poetics* of ambivalence and a *politics* of violence" (McClintock 1995: 28, emphasis in original). Accessed through constructs of gender and sexual control, Stoler (1989: 635) writes of the feedback between and guidance of such categorizations in the fashioning of race: "gender specific sexual sanctions demarcated positions of power by

refashioning middle-class conventions of respectability, which, in turn, prescribed the personal and public boundaries of race."

cxxxiv At the same time, however, Indigenous Peoples continue to demonstrate a heritage of sites of refusal (Simpson 2017) and resistance against the commodification, objectification, and pacification of 'land'.

cxxxv "[Slow death] prospers not in traumatic events, as discrete time-frame phenomena like military encounters and genocides can appear to do, but in temporal environments whose qualities and whose contours in time and space are often identified with the presentness of ordinariness" (ibid.).

cxxxvi Li (2014: 591) articulates these as 'regimes of exclusion' that are created by the simplification of intangibles lay the groundwork for a process Foucault (1991: 95) critically referred to as 'the right manner of disposing things'.

cxxxvii Colonial systems of expansion created the items that they also consumed in a global world market that Moore (2017: 19) identifies as based upon 'cheap natures' that reduce "not only the value of circulating capital but the whole of commodity in general" (Moore 2017: 19).

cxxxviii Intangibles for survival simplified conceptually into an assemblage of static items, "what we call a resource or a 'natural resource' is a provisional assemblage of heterogeneous elements including material substances, technologies, discourses and practices" (Li 2014: 589) without control over their own labor as that too is owned by the Capitalocene's elite.

cxxxix In this vein, referring to the emergence of Andean indigeneity, de la Cadena (2010: 360) writes that a new politics of indigeneity could "force the ontological pluralization of politics and the reconfiguration of the political", transforming the systems "from one that conceives politics as power disputes within a singular world, to another one that includes the possibility of adversarial relations among worlds: a pluriversal politic."

cxl Segato and Monque (2021: 785) argue that individual rights and citizenship is an important part of the social fabric of coloniality and advocate instead in favor of understanding different identifications of citizenship where indigenous groups can remain "*pueblos*". They write (ibid.): "we can do away with such constraints on the notion of identity and reformulate it in connection to the idea of a people as a historical vector: a people is a collective that sees itself as stemming from a common past and advancing toward a common future.

cxli See also Harris and Wasilewski (2004) who identify indigeneity as an alternative worldview that includes the 'four R's' which are relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, redistribution.

cxlii Hertz, Mancilla Garcia, and Schlüter (2020: 329) write that the most common ontologies in science today are "substance ontologies", which originate from Descartes and Plato's ideas and leave other options rarely considered (Kaaronen 2018; Nicholson and Dupré 2018). It is important to differentiate relational ontologies from social-ecological systems (SES) and resilience approaches, as the latter approaches continue to rely heavily on 'substance ontologies', limiting the ability of SES and resilience conceptual frames for understanding complex adaptive systems (Hertz, Mancilla Garcia, and Schlüter 2020: 329) for their focus largely on the individual (O'Keefe et al. 2023).

cxliii Braidotti (2018: 32) argues that this shift that frames relationality from a slightly different angle, while maintaining the location of feminist situated knowledges, places the human into these networks of ecological relation without removing our specific location from within the human body. She writes that "Anthropomorphism is our specific embodied and embedded location, and acknowledging its situated nature is the first step toward antianthropocentrism" (Braidotti 2018: 32).

cxliv "Embodied in Nuu-chah-nulth philosophies of *hishuk'ish tsawalk*, (everything is one), *uu-a-thluk* (taking care of), and *iisaak*, (respect) is the understanding that we must honor the wisdom and values of ancestral knowledge in maintaining responsible and respectful relationships with the natural world." (Coté 2016: 11).

cxlv "As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you. So your methodology has to ask different questions: rather than asking about validity or reliability, you are asking how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship? The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge, I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the research relationship. This becomes my methodology, an Indigenous methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to *all my relations*." (Wilson (2001: 177).

cxlvi For the Anishinaabe peoples of Turtle Island cultural transmission happens significantly in and through their language, *Anishinabemowin,* regarded as a sacred gift from the Creator (Young 2003; Kimmerer 2018). Anishinaabe Métis scholar, educator, and artist Vicky Kelly shares from the Anishinaabe creation story that the human was told by the Creator "to go out and learn their names", "how they call themselves," for the living beings of their shared

world (Reconciling Ways of Knowing 2020a), gaining knowledge by learning about them and their stories of how they are called in *Anishinabemowin*. She writes: "In the Anishinaabe Creation Stories, as part of our becoming human, we are invited to wander the world with profound *reciprocal recognition* and *ethical relationality*, such that through reverence and wonder we are gifted the name, essential essence, or quality and the wisdom teachings of each and every being in Creation" (Kelly 2021: 190, emphasis mine).

cxlvii Citing Donald's (2009: 6) use of the term 'ethical relationality', Todd (2016: 18) situates ethical relationality as a means to "more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other", bridging difference by an ethical centering of "the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a particular person understands and experiences living in the world".

cxlviii Joan Tronto (1993: 103) defined here caring "as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web."

cxlix Exceptions do exist, such as from the work of the late Dian Fossey (1972; 1983) who used an intelligent and respectful curiosity as a method of engagement with gorillas of her Karisoke Research Centre in Rwanda in 1967 to her assassination in 1985, finding curiosity as a recognized and nonthreatening behavior from her, the human, that allowed a certain trust to develop in space between the species through mirrored curiosity recognized across species.

cl A contemporary of Darwin from the world's 'East' at the time, Russian ecologist and naturalist Peter Kropotkin reflects upon the shared struggle for survival among life's organisms as far more representative of a *cooperation* between species in his book *Mutual Aid* (1902). Ideas that explained the same phenomenon, though differently, than Darwin, whose suggestion of a world of species in competition also fit neatly into the emerging global dynamics of material inequality that Marx gave description of as capitalism, Kropotkin's ideas were not picked up in mainstream scientific thought. Their alignment with political theories of cooperation from the East was, perhaps, an unlikely coincidence. Kropotkin's ideas nonetheless remain a useful mental model for the function of ecological systems that show cooperation, not competition, as having a long history of theorization on the evolution of complex ecological systems and the interworkings between them by their behavior and function. This model also depicts all species as active in the performance and participation of sociality and what we could consider as social or society itself.

cli Multispecies feminist scholars such as Puig de la Bellacasa (2015: 692) are rethinking soil to show how through the lens of care it becomes its own "living, interdependent community". The emergence of concepts such as onehealth also link the living interdependent communities in the soil with the human gut. A microbiopolitical (see Heather Paxson 2014: 115–21) domain of inter and multispecies interaction that gives important example of the fuzzy species boundaries already mentioned, connections between the soil and human gut are also a trending area of research in both medical sciences and feminist STS.

clii With the Maya of El Salvador, Millner (2023: 27, citing Millner 2017) details soil repair practices that are "often imagined … as a kind of decolonial healing process" as having multiple dimensions that repair soil but demonstrate new horizons for care across species: "The idea here is that repairing the damage incurred on the fabric of subsistence agricultural systems (soil) can take place through the rehabilitation of marginalized traditional and indigenous knowledge systems on the one hand, and the rebuilding of economic autonomies on the other. In the process, new innovations are celebrated. Soil repair, here, is not a question of restoring traditional practices per se, but developing a form of lay experimental science that rejects the notion of the field as a flat space without histories, or stage for modern geopolitics. … based on ethos and doings that sets new horizons for care for species life" (Millner 2023: 27).

cliii Reconnecting with ways of being on the land that embodies living interaction between heart, mind, and movement, Simpson (2017: 215) pre-emptively asserts that the involvement of care with the feminist ethic does not remove the endeavor from being a highly intellectual practice.

cliv Kuokkanen (2007: 32- 33) conceptualizes gift-giving and care-taking where "the gift is a reflection of a particular worldview, one characterized by the perception that the natural environment is a living entity which gives its gifts and abundance to people provided that they observe certain responsibilities and provided that those people treat it with respect and gratitude [care]. Central to this perception is that the world as a whole comprises an infinite web of relationships, which extend and are incorporated into the entire social condition of the individual. Social ties apply to everyone and everything, including the land, which is considered a living, conscious entity. People are related to their physical and natural surroundings through their genealogies, their oral traditions, and their personal and collective experiences with certain locations. … In indigenous worldviews that foreground multilayered and multidimensional relationships with the land, the gift is the means through which the socio-cosmic order is renewed and secured. The gift is the manifestation of reciprocity with the natural environment; it reflects the bond of

dependency and respect toward the natural world. From this bond, certain responsibilities emerge. In this system, one does not give primarily in order to receive but rather in order to ensure the balance of the world on which the well-being of the entire social order is contingent. Thanks are given in the form of gifts to the land's guardians, who sustain human beings; but the gifts are also given for continued goodwill. According to this worldview, human beings are only one aspect of the creation; that is why their view of the world is marked by a clear sense of responsibility toward other aspects with which the socio-cosmic order is shared and inhabited. As Deloria notes, this "view of life was grounded in the knowledge of these responsibilities ... The human ceremonial life confirmed the existence of this equality and gave it sustenance"" as I argue that we can see materialized in and with Indigenous food systems.

clv Quoting Jeannette Armstrong on traditional Okanagan teachings and prophesies, Kuokkanen (2007: 38) cautions "that we are cutting ourselves off from the ability to live well by distancing ourselves from the natural world. This is what my generation has been told by our elders. We are cutting off the abilities that we previously had that gave us the best chance to be in a healthy relationship with ourselves as people and with the rest of the world."

clvi In full, Kuokkanen (2007: 39) writes of circular reciprocity and sharing: "In reciprocity as practised in terms of indigenous worldviews, gifts are not given primarily to ensure a countergift later on, but to actively acknowledge kinship and coexistence with the world; without this sort of reciprocity, survival – not just of human beings but of other living beings – would be impossible. Thus the main purpose of circular or ceremonial reciprocity is to affirm myriad relationships in the world; from these relationships arise an acknowledged collective and individual requirement "to act responsibly toward other forms of life."

clvii While significantly less common, Western ethics have scholars who have made efforts historically to resituate agency as a characteristic of all living beings in the community of life, such as the work of Aldo Leopold (1966) who writes: "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." (Leopold 1966: xviii-xix).

clviii 'Reciprocal recognition' is the act of making a practice of seeing another's light and reflecting it back to them or 'mirroring' it (Simpson 2017: 181, 187), Building the social structure from positive affirmation, mirroring or reciprocal self-recognition, Simpson (2017: 184) comments on the importance of generating strong Indigenous communities through Indigenous demonstrations of care that "Forms the basis of positive identity, self-worth, and dignity in the other being. This in turn creates strong individuals and strong families, the building block of Nishnaabeg political systems" (Simpson 2017: 184).

clix Explaining the connection of shame and the experience of settler colonialism for Indigenous Peoples, Simpson (2017: 186) writes that "[s]hame is a powerful tool of settler colonialism because it implants the message in our bodies that we are wrong". "We are made to feel ashamed for being Indigenous. This shame leads to disconnection from the practices that give us meaning. It elicits pain" (Simpson 2017: 187). Alfred (2005) and Duran (2019) note a similar effect through an articulation of the effects of 'guilt' in Indigenous society which functions similarly.

clx "Part of being in a meaningful relationship with another being is recognizing who they are, it is reflecting back to them their essence and worth as a being, it is a mirroring. Positive mirroring creates positive identities; it creates strong, grounded individuals and families and nations within Indigenous political systems". (Simpson 2017: 181).

clxi Kuokkanen (2007: 33) quotes the words of Mohawk writer Beth Brant "We do not worship nature. We are part of it"" and from the Okanagan tradition Jeannette Armstrong who articulates the same point "I know the mountains, and by birth, the river is my responsibility: They are part of me. I cannot be separated from my place or my land. When I introduce myself to my own people in my own language, I describe these things because it tells them what my responsibilities are and what my goal is." For the Okanagan, "the self and the world are not separate entities" (ibid.: 40).

clxii Lorimer (2016: 64) refers to these forms of re-entanglement as involving "awkward forms of care", studying specifically (ibid.: 59) "how immunity with gut buddies [helminths] is enacted in contrasting multispecies assemblages that illustrate communal and immunitarian characteristics of contemporary biomedicine", demonstrating also from within the discipline how the human is already 'more-than-human' and how, through our gut (where we consume food), we are connected to the soil. They write that "It appears that helminths are capable of reorganizing our bodily ecologies in ways that not only affect our "gut feelings" of immunity and metabolism but also might shape the more refined processes of mood and cognition" (ibid. 68). Related to previous discussion of circular reciprocity and notion of the 'gift' within them from Kuokkanen (2007), Lorimer (2016: 72) writes of helminths as a companion species with whom we "quite literally … eat and upon whose agencies digestion depends, necessitating a more expansive and intimate understanding of multispecies gift economies."

clxiii Describing Sami worldview and knowledge, Kuokkanen (2007: 34) describes "every geographical place [as] considered [by the Sami as] an entity in which the physical dimension was in balance with the spiritual one ... both aspects needed to be taken into consideration when making a living." Gifts played an important role in maintaining this balance" that before the erosion of several centuries of Christianity also included for the Sami sharing with and giving gifts to the land, or "*sieidi* gifting". Where these practices are often considered by ethnographic work as 'sacrifices' but instead, Kuokkanen (ibid.: 35) argues that they should be considered as "an expression of gratitude for the spirits' goodwill and a means of ensuring future abundance". As the practices are "a voluntary expression of a particular worldview" Kuokkanen (ibid.: 36) links them with a reflection of "a respectful and also intimate relationship with the land".

clxiv Graddy-Lovelace (2017: 674) also comments upon the "latent alignments" between and among the 2017 and 2018 global Women's March and other transnational women-led agrarian movements, naming specifically the international peasant organization *La Via Campesina* as one of such movements. The World March of Women, a global campaign that has mobilized about 5500 women's groups in over 159 countries and territories against poverty and violence against women, is a transnational feminist network that, since 2006, has also addressed women's struggles through a focus on food sovereignty which brings together land, food, and body.

clxv The enduring popular movements in support of women's rights (MeToo Movement) saw global solidarity and action on January 21, 2017, as 673 women's marches around the world were registered with an estimated 4,956,422 protesters (Women's March 2017b). Citing connections to land and its importance as more than a place to stand on, words from the U.S. Women's March's Guiding Vision and Definition of Principles from 2017 align with the environmental justice movement and echo sentiments from food sovereignty movements: "We believe that every person, every community and Indigenous peoples in our nation have the right to clean water, clean air, and access to and enjoyment of public lands. We believe that our environment and our climate must be protected, and that our land and natural resources cannot be exploited for corporate gain or greed—especially at the risk of public safety and health" (Women's March on Washington 2017a).

clxvi While the Zapatista movement had political and environmentally motivated origins, Canada's Idle No More Movement began in a direct response to Canada's passing of Bill C-45, a veritable vote of disregard to Indigenous communities and the value of the environment as many of the state's environmental laws were eliminated and Indigenous lands became opened to development (Coté 2016: 6). The greatest mass mobilization of Indigenous people at the time, the Idle No More Movement (Simpson 2017: 218) was followed in 2016 by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Nation's (SRST) defense of their ancestral homelands at Standing Rock from the Dakota Access Pipeline, a movement also led by women on the movement's front lines (Gottardi 2020; Kring and Means 2021) that brought together even larger numbers of Indigenous People and allies opposed to the destruction of Sioux lands and water.

clxvii Masson and colleagues (2017: 55) write, specifically, that "The current commodification of nature through the patenting of seeds and plants is seen as threatening women's resources, as well as their traditional agricultural and medical knowledge and role in their communities."

clxviii Indigenous Quiché Maya, Guatemalteca teacher, environmental rights defender and spokeswoman of the Maya Peoples Council, Aura Lolita Chávez Ixcaquic, spoke out against one such attack in Guatemalan in 2014 with the 'Monsanto law', regarded as "a frontal attack on our people, because it is a frontal attack on seeds, and if they attack seeds like maize, beans, and others, they are attacking our lives and territories… [This is because] maize taught the Maya people to coexist (*convivir*) in community and diversity, because when maize is planted, when one goes to the field, s/he realizes that maize exchanges with other varieties, amidst herbs and medicinal plants. Hence, we see in this co-existence, maize isn't selfish, but rather teaches us how to resist and relate to the world."

clxix Gorenflo *et al.* (2014: x) find a strong correlation between language density and biodiversity density as 70% of the world's languages were found by their study to lie within 25% of the planet's land area considered as either "biodiversity hotspots" or a "high-biodiversity wilderness areas". Maffi's research (2002; 2005; 2007) reports consistently on the high biodiversity associated with Indigenous groups by the presence of cultural/linguistic diversity indicators, demonstrating the overlap between regions with high other-than-human biodiversity and the presence of Indigenous groups and languages. Supporting these conclusions from the world's tropical belt, Stepp *et al.* (2004) cite a strong association between Indigenous language diversity and plant diversity. As one of the first to draw connections between threats to biodiversity and human language diversity, Krauss (1992: 4) also links their interconnected 'endangerment', that "[l]anguage endangerment is significantly comparable to—and related to—endangerment of biological species in the natural world". More recent research from Gavin *et al.* (2013) notes the

steep decline in linguistic diversity, leading to the probable extinction of some 25 percent of the world's 7,000 oral languages, is happening at the same fast pace as the loss of biodiversity.

[clxx] As multispecies feminist Donna Haraway (2018: 105) reminds, justice has always already been a multispecies question as it necessitates "becoming responsible at all sorts of scales and configurations". Similarly, Papadopoulos, Puig de la Bellacasa, and Tecchetti (2023: 2) write that "[s]tanding for justice that does not separate human from non-humans, Indigenous thought and struggles are defending alliances of people and ecologies, and the inseparability of Earth/place belongings with cultural belongings."

[clxxi] The frame of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989), based on feminist critical race theory and first proposed in the seminal work, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,* of Black Feminist scholar Kimberle Crenshaw, is useful to understand the depth and extent of the systemic violence of colonialism and its matrices of capture as they have impacted Indigenous Peoples such as the Maya Ixil of this research. Grappling with the forms of marginalization and inequality in how they intersect by social stratifications of class, race/ethnicity/religion, and gender, age, disability, geographical location, language, migration status, sexual orientation(s), and size, as the most common, intersectionality notes how the violences that privilege the perspectives of male, white, Global North, heterosexual, able-bodied humans above all other categorizations (Braidotti 2017a: 23, citing Crenshaw 1995) are compounded through multiple layers or interacting fields of oppression. Experienced both uniquely and cumulatively at intersections, forms of social marginalization cannot be considered by one social marginalization like race alone. Focusing critically on the power imbalances that create these intersecting marginalizations, intersectionality is a tool of analysis that allows us to engage with the hierarchies of inequality, gathering strength to oppose them by bringing community to resistance movements positioned within inequality's hierarchies to be at odds with each other (Carbado et al. 2013: 305). "Demarginalizing" (Crenshaw 1989) and "Mapping" (Crenshaw 1991), a particularized intersectional analysis or formation is always "a work-in-progress" (Carbado et al. 2013). As Carbado *et al*. (2013: 306) explain, "No particular application of intersectionality can, in a definitive sense, grasp the range of intersectional powers and problems that plague society. This work-in-progress understanding of intersectionality suggests that we should endeavor, on an ongoing basis, to move intersectionality to unexplored places." In this work, the focus is on what the theory 'does', seeing the theory "in places in which it is already doing work and imagin[ing] other kinds of work that agents might employ intersectionality to perform" (ibid.) In this way, the theory of intersectionality can bring transformative change by grasping the range of powers, complicating power as a dynamic and multidimensional structural repression that is not exerted in a singular focus.

[clxxii] Gray (2022: 3) quotes Stó:lō thought leader Lee Maracle's (Maracle 2015: 149) first use of the term from her seminal manuscript *I Am Woman* (1988/1996), revisited in *Memory Serves* (2015), where the term rematriation references "the restoration of matriarchal authority and the restoration of male responsibility to these matriarchal structures to reinstate respect and support for the women within them".

[clxxiii] The successes of the White Earth Land Recovery Project (2019) in tandem with restored protections to Ojibwe sacred wild rice seed; the 2020 Esselen Tribe of Monterey County's landback win of nearly 1,200 acres of land in Big Sur California, USA aided by the environmental group Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) (Esselen Tribe 2018); and the Wiyot Tribe's acquisition of 202 acres from the Eureka City Council on October 21, 2019 to regain the territory of "Indian Island", one of three islands in Humboldt Bay off of the shore of Eureka, California (Holmes 2020) are notable strides in these movements to rematriate people with ancestral lands stolen during colonization.

[clxxiv] In the Walpole Island First Nation's rematriation of its corn seeds, Meloche (2022: 211) describes the Anishinaabe communities' understanding of seeds as an integral part of their relationship with other-than-humans. A growing body of research has demonstrated the importance of reconnecting Indigenous communities with seedrelatives (Hill 2017; Herron 2018; McCune 2018).

[clxxv] For Cabnal (2010: 22), the healing of the individual also connects her to her ancestors: "[p]art of the recovery of the cosmic bodily memory of the ancestors, [is] to go weaving your own history according to your particular body memory, and how you decide to relate with others." Paredes (2010: 120) echoes the same, writing that "these body memories are built in the stories and prehistories of our people and their social movements.".

[clxxvi] See also Julieta Paredes Carvajal, co-founder of the Aymaran Bolivian group *Mujeres Creando* in 1992. Identifying as an Aymara feminista lesbiana (cited in Monasterios Pérez 2006: 61), Paredes (2017: 3) cites *feminismo comunitario* as a feminism that returns energy from [individual/white] feminisms and is born from the processes of change from social movements of the Bolivian people started in October 2003 and has a heritage in the struggles of their grandmothers of territories of Kollasuyo (Bolivia today) against forms of domination, capitalism, and exploitation.

clxxvii The territorial body or *cuerpo-territorial*, she writes, is "…before human rights (HR), it is about life principles of our cosmogonies, and because it is a political act in vindication of life." (Cabnal 2017: 102). Articulating an attachment of body to place, Aguilar-González *et al.* (2018) argue against notions of 'human rights' in favor of human rights tied to environmental space, a similar concept to that of a body-territory.

clxxviii While Lorena Cabnal and other Indigenous women do not necessarily call themselves feminists, they do "host feminist intentions" (Patiño 2023: 5) as this kind of feminism is done 'walking' (ibid.: 5), or in performance and action. They refer to themselves as "feministas de la comunidad, feministas comunitarias." [community feminists, in English] (Patiño 2023: 13; Cabnal 2017: 100).

clxxix This is also articulated by Ghelfi (2023: 197-8) as important also to permaculture, where "human activities meet interspecies engagement: making food means acting in an ecological food web in which different species exploit the same class of environmental resources."

clxxx Martínez Velarde *et al.* (2020: 10), from the Poqomchi'-Q'eqchi' communities in Baja Verapaz, Guatemala have notions described by the terms *sutam* —territory— and *komonil* —dimension and collective organization of existence—, that describe a similar notion for the body-land-territory frame that Cabnal articulates.

clxxxi As Querejazu (2016: 10) notes from the Andean ontological perspective, "knowledge is not only rational but also affective, emotional, bodily, mystic and can have origin in experience, memory, and suffering".

Chapter III
Endnotes

clxxxii Johnson (2012: 830) maintains that placelessness has been a way that Western Science and those who practice it may further disconnect or background Indigenous struggles and Indigenous ways of learning and knowing the world, that "ultimately disconnects us from engaging a place-based critical consciousness in our work."

clxxxiii Feminist epistemologies do not claim universal applicability, but opt instead to locate the viewer and situate and contextualize scientific findings by understandings of knowledge that are situated and accountable (Harding 1986, 1991; Haraway 1988; Sundberg 2014). Emphasizing this as a divergence from 'Western' philosophical positions where 'truth' is sought by way of the creation of a 'universal' Science that eliminates the observer from that which is under observation, the tradition of feminist SF brings a cyclical reflection to science as the positionality of the viewer, or the researcher, is brought into its interpretation. Using SF as a tool for creating a pluriverse of worlds, Haraway and others (Stengers 1997, 2005; Latour 2005; Escobar 2015, 2018; Blaser 2005, 2016; Tsing 2015) pose a feminist science as thus 'sited', or as happening from some*where* and some*one* (Haraway 1988; 1991).

clxxxiv Standpoint theory is perhaps most famously formulated by Nancy Harstock (1983) and Sandra Harding (1991; 1993; 2004) and elaborated on by Collins (1990); Smith (1990); Haraway (1988; 1991) and others.

clxxxv As feminist political ecologist bell hooks (2019: 68) points out, to assess power at different scales, a connection to a 'geographic center' to create 'place' with "the land, weather, seasons, plants, animals" is important to develop also a 'spiritual' center.

clxxxvi In the words of Braidotti (2017: 22), the "[f]eminist politics of location, re-elaborated through the standpoint of feminist theory and the analysis of the racialized economy of science, produced situated knowledges as the method for grounding micropolitical analyses of power".

clxxxvii Watts (2013: 23) provides a description of the 'agency of place' as conceptualized in Indigenous cosmologies with the notion of Place-Thought, a way to conceptualize more-than-human agency by understanding human agency itself as tethered to place as a part of Indigenous identity: "the agency that place possesses can be thought of in a similar way that Western thinkers locate agency in human beings. It follows that if, as Indigenous peoples, we are extensions of the very land we walk upon, then we have an obligation to maintain communication with it. A familiar warning is echoed through many communities, that if we do not care for the land we run the risk of losing who we are as Indigenous peoples. When this warning is examined in terms of original Place-Thought, it is not only the threat of a lost identity or physical displacement that is risked but our ability to think, act, and govern becomes compromised because this relationship is continuously corrupted with foreign impositions of how agency is organized."

clxxxviii One notable example of these connections to place is depicted in the map at the Tsi Ronterihwanónhnha ne Kanien'kéha Language and Cultural Centre at Kanehsatà:ke, Que area of so-called Canada described by Dan David

(2018), Kanien'ke:haka writer and journalist based in Kanehsatà:ke Mohawk Territory. The map titled "Pre-Contact Place Names of Kanehsatà:ke Kanien'ke:háka Territory" provides an outline of the original territory of the land by a 1717 grant, providing also a record of how the Kanien'ke:haka's landscape gave descriptions of the land in Kanien'ke:haka, which extended also at times to names of people as some were named by characterizations of the weather at one's time of birth. "There's a meaning behind why you have a certain name … a purpose to the names that were given," David (2018) explains, providing examples such as 'end of the river', Tkaniá:tarens; it's 'a big river', Kaniatarowanéhnhe; 'where the water falls', Tsi Tewa'sèntha or Carillon Island; Kahnehtà:ke or Oka Park, signifying the sap on the trees; and 'on the other side of the pines", Skahnéhtati. Citing cultural geographer Derek A. Smith, David (2018) notes the origin of changed names on the landscape that today reflect European values, a form of domination and control upon the landscape that reflects unequal power relations built into the landscape. Many locations in the region of Canada's Quebec province continue to bear the names of European saints or royal families of Europe.

clxxxix Specifically, "I call this place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought and practice grounded normativity, by which I mean 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" (ibid.).

cxc Haraway (1991: 191) is well cited for referring to claims of objectivity as the 'god trick', while Sundberg (2003: 188) notes the science from nowhere/everywhere as creating "conditions so crucial to masculinist forms of objectivity: namely, distance, disinterest, and disembodiment."

cxci Todd (2016: 17, emphasis in original) makes the connection to Indigenous thinking and the well-being of all with a definition of the term as "a body of thinking that is *living and practiced by peoples with whom we all share reciprocal duties as citizens of shared territories* (*be they physical or the ephemeral*)".

cxcii Identifying as an Indigenous feminist, Todd (2016: 18) critiques the citation of European thinkers who discuss the 'more-than-human' without a discussion of their Indigenous contemporaries writing on the exact same topics, linking such oversight to further "perpetuat[ing] the white supremacy of the academy".

cxciii The work of The Living Language Land project tells the stories of 25 words from Indigenous or local languages and dialects around the world, including Native American Lakota, Murui, a native language of Colombia and Peru, and Scots Gaelic, that speak to the connections to land that live in the languages of Indigenous peoples. From the project (Chedau 2021), Khwe elder and leader ǂGakaci Thaddeus Chedau shares the term *Tuuca Orodji,* translated into English as 'rainwater pan', a term that helps to demonstrate Khwe ways of knowing the landscape. For the Khwe, only those regions of the landscape with water are those given names in the Khwe language. Thaddeus notes that rainwater pans take on the characteristics of the area when named, "some are called after animals and others after trees," providing the examples of *duca* meaning 'eland water', *doaca* as 'kudu water', and *qarati* named after a specific tree of the area (Chedau 2021). For the harsh conditions of a desert landscape, where knowing where to find water and food can mean the difference between life or death, the characterization of the landscape by these critical features for human survival is invaluable knowledge embedded in Indigenous language and conceptions of place. Like the Kanien'ke:haka, colonizer-enforced separation between the Khwe and their homelands— in this case as a result of its declaration as a protected game reserve— has meant that the names of these places and the knowledge embedded in them are being lost by young generations as they are prohibited from coming closer than 5km to the bush that has historically and ancestrally been their home and sustenance in reciprocal relationship (D'Alesandro 2017, unpublished). Hearing first-hand some of the accounts of targeted discrimination directed toward Thaddeus and the San Khwe on behalf of migrant Hambukushu Bantu groups in positions of traditional and governmental power in Namibia, in one case from the Namibian president himself (D'Alesandro 2017, unpublished), the threats to biodiversity that erase connections to the land, Earth and the ecological communities that compose a more-than-human world are those same ones that have historically threatened their Indigenous Peoples. Bergstrom *et al.* (2021: 232) argue that with current evidence "it is not possible to pinpoint more precisely where in Africa the common ancestors of present-day people lived… although such a criterion currently identifies Africa as the birthplace of modern humans, it does not pinpoint a specific region inside Africa." Other scholars, however, note this region of the world as the possible birthplace of anatomically modern humans from the residual Makgadikgadi–Okavango palaeo-wetland of southern Africa (Chan et al. 2019) some 350,000 to 260,000 years ago (Schlebusch et al. 2017) where current-day southern-African San groups like the Khwe hold a long legacy of their relationships with the land from within their language and worldview that remain under threat from ongoing settler colonialism.

cxciv Bridges and Osterhoudt (2021: 4) note the importance of mapping in the making and naming of places as instrumental also for storing memories and moralities. Citing the work of Keith Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places*

(1996) on the Western Apache of Arizona as a foundational text in the study and theorization of place-making and naming, they describe Basso's work observing the Western Apache's relationships to place as creating interanimating feelings with place that establish a 'co-constitutive relationship' encapsulated by the place name and which stores memory in the landscape while also prompting it. Keeping traditions living, references to place, "revisit, review, and revise the histories connected to them by narrating the landscape … Telling and retelling narratives of the landscape is how individuals make and remake place." (Bridges and Osterhoudt 2021: 4).

[cxcv] Feminist standpoint theory, in the words of Harding (1993: 56), "claims that all knowledge attempts are socially situated and that some of these objective social locations are better than others as starting points for knowledge projects that challenge some of the most fundamental assumptions of the scientific worldview, and the Western thought that takes science as its model of how to produce knowledge".

[cxcvi] Querejazu (2016: 3) defines the pluriverse as: "the pluriverse implies the existence of many worlds somehow interconnected, in other words the human world is connected to the natural world and also to the spiritual world. This means these three kinds of worlds coexist in time and space. It entails a vision where the earth is a whole living being always emerging, encouraging the discovery and the imagination of different forms of planetarization in which human beings, along with other beings can coexist enriching each other". This is further specified as "not something that needs to be created, it is something that needs to be recognized" (ibid.: 4),

[cxcvii] Stengers (2005: 995) defines the cosmos as referring to "the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable" and Latour (2004: 454) notes the use of the term 'cosmopolitics' to expand politics beyond the human: "The presence of cosmos in cosmopolitics resists the tendency of politics to mean the give-and-take in an exclusive human club. The presence of politics in cosmopolitics resists the tendency of cosmos to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account. Cosmos protects against the premature closure of politics, and politics against the premature closure of cosmos."

[cxcviii] Maize, or the *milpa,* is quoted from Isakson (2011: 1449) as "what we Mayans do". Hellin *et al.* (2017) and others (Isakson 2009; 728) find from the subsistence farmers of Guatemala that they continue to cultivate maize despite their inability for this 'livelihood' choice to satisfy their basic human needs. They write "most farmers in the western highlands of Guatemala conserve local maize varieties for cultural and social purposes" (2017: 196). Detailed farming practices of *campesinxs* continue to bear a strong resemblance to those practiced by the Mayan groups during pre-conquest times, thus continuing a lineage of farming practices and connection to the land in these cultures into today from pre-colonial periods (Wilken 1987, cited in Ford and Nigh 2010), knowledge that often does not receive political recognition that it should. For some analysis on this, see the final chapter of the dissertation for a discussion on the food sovereignty movements in Guatemala and their political accomplishment in recent national elections.

[cxcix] Pinheiro-Barbosa and Gómez-Sollano (2014: 83; Fonteyne et al. 2023: 02) indicate that the word *milpa* is derived from the Náhuatl language where 'milli' references a 'planted plot'/'sown field' and pan 'on top of'. In the USA and Canada the milpa is often referred to as 'the three sisters' (Kimmerer 2013; Fonteyne et al. 2023: 02).

[cc] Ethnolinguistic maps that have been adapted from foreign scientific theory by the modern Maya Movement to link more than 30 autonomous languages to a Proto-Mayan tongue, further strengthen support for cultural and linguistic connections between Maya groups and maize (Fox Tree 2011: 89).

[cci] Several names of c*antóns* around the main municipal center make descriptions of the landscape according to similar criteria as the Indigenous Peoples described from other regions of the world. A canton is an administrative subdivision of smaller population centers within Guatemala's municipalities, as laid out in Decree 22-2002 of the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala, modified by Decree 22-2010 of the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala. Examples are: the *cantón* of Jactzal, is composed of the Ixil word *jaq'*, a noun related to the function of meaning 'underneath', and '*tz'a'l*', a noun that means 'tree of *cuxin'*, a tree with a pod of sweet edible skin that surrounds its beans inside. The two Ixil words together in Jaq' tz'a'l thus translate to "underneath the *cuxin* tree", naming the original place in Ixil in the village of Vitzal (the origin of Vitzal has 'Vi'', meaning 'head, point, or plant', and 'tz' a' l', meaning *cuxin* tree, together denoting a point 'above the *cuxin* tree' (Municipalidad de Nebaj [2021]: 5) where historically the *cuxin* tree or trees existed (Municipalidad de Nebaj [2021]: 4). The *cantón* of Jolopxan, under the Ixil name historically of Teleb'xan, is broken down from the Ixil language to *Teab'* which is a transitive verb that means 'making of or elaboration of' and 'xan', which is a noun that means 'adobes'. The words together mean "place of making adobe" (Municipalidad de Nebaj [2021]: 6). For *cantón* Xolacul, 'Xo'l' is a noun related to the 'location of' or 'between', *a'* is a noun that means 'water', and '*k'ul'* is a transitive verb that means 'point of encounter'. Together, Xo'l ak'u'l, as the original name of the Cantón Xolacul, means in Ixil "the place of the encounter or union of the water or river" (Municipalidad de Nebaj [2021]: 7). The present-day *cantón* of Salquillito,

known previously as Xo'l Salch'il, '*Xo'l*' is the relational noun in Ixil that means in the middle of or between and '*salch'il'l*' is the compound noun that refers to the seed of the *chilacayote* squash. Together, Xo'l salch'il means "place between the seed of the chilacayote" and was named according to the abundance of *chilacayotes* that led to the population of this center (Municipalidad de Nebaj [2021]: 9). The *cantón* of Xe'k'aax is broken down to '*Xe'*', the noun related to place meaning 'the seat of or foot of' and '*k'a'x*,' which is a noun that means "*pinabete*". Regarded together, Xe'k'aax is the name of the place in the Ixil language that means "the seat of the pinabete" (Municipalidad de Nebaj [2021]: 10). The canton of Chanchinam is broken down into '*chab*', an expression of admiration that means "abundance" and '*chinam*', a noun that means 'cotton'. Together, Chanchinam means an "abundance of cotton" (Municipalidad de Nebaj [2021]: 24) to signify the location of cotton in the region. From the *canton* of La Laguna today, historically called Tzi' yala', '*tzi*'' is an adjective that means 'mouth, rim, or around', '*yal*' is a noun that names a tree called the Chichicaste, and '*a*'' is a noun that locates water, a lagoon, or a river. Combined, the terms taken together mean "on the shore of the lagoon that is filled with chichicaste". Perhaps one of the most important examples of the Ixil names for the geography of their territory can be found in the origin of the name of the principal town and municipality in the Ixil Region, Nebaj, depicting also the significance of Ixil place names that trace historical relationships of the people with the landscape. Derived from the combination of the word '*naab*', a noun in the Ixil language meaning 'the lagoon', and '*a*ʾ', a noun in the Ixil language meaning 'water', the terms taken together become *Naab'a'* in the Ixil language which means "place of the birth or spring of the water" (Municipalidad de Nebaj [2021]: 1). Named 'Santa Maria' Nebaj in Spanish, it is not only the town names who must have Spanish equivalents but the Ixil themselves often cite their Spanish names and have these listed in official documents such as the DPI. For some, just as was done by many Indigenous men around Guatemala during the war who chose to wear Ladino clothing to avoid discrimination by State forces, using Spanish names may be a means to try to avoid further stigmatization and discrimination from a system already challenged to include Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge systems (e.g. Eulich 2011).

ccii Haraway (2013) refers to the tool of science more specifically as 'SF', or 'feminist speculative fabulation in the scholarly mode.' Haraway asserts that our material realities are, in the very unmasking and building processes that are simultaneously generated in their evolution, a practice she refers to as 'SF', very directly influenced by the immaterial networks of ideas and thought. Making the political visible, Haraway demonstrates how a feminist use of the tool of science can disrupt human-exclusive political ontologies that impart agency only to the human by expanding 'kin' and its 'kin-making' endeavors to the entirety of life's forms, dismissing inert notions of materiality. Turning to the political dimensions of uncritical and anthropocentric notions of agency, feminist collaborator Marylyn Strathern (1992: 10) concludes that "it matters what ideas one uses to think other ideas (with). Reproduction concerns everyone". Strathern (1992: 3) brings kinship thinking or 'kinning' into focus as a practice in and of the use of science. Specifically, Strathern (1992: 3) writes that "An established parallel already exists in the way the relationship of biological to social life is described in terms of a contrast between what is natural and what is artificial or socially constructed. The parallel lies in kinship thinking. Kinship systems and family structures are imagined as social arrangements not just imitating but based on and literally deploying processes of biological reproduction."

cciii Tracing the evolution of this critical perspective, until the publication of Rachel Carson's (1962) monumental publication *Silent Spring*, scientific progress and its methods went largely unchallenged, exacerbating extractivist enterprises with activities worldwide.

cciv Feminist science that puts to use the inclusivity-inviting principle of kin-making, a cross-species word for collaboration, makes for a science able to collect truths from the cross-pollination of knowledges, where, in the words of Haraway and Goodeve (2000: 120) "you are not just doing one layer of analysis—say of critique or unmasking relationships—but you are also involved in building alternative ontologies, specifically via the use of the imaginative". Thus, at two levels of interpretation, SF destabilizes Science as a linear process happening from a God's eye view (Haraway 1988: 581; 1991: 189) by generating its alternative— science that appreciates the use of a variety of tools for scientific inquiry and which does not exclude 'the body' as one tool for investigation (see Grosz 1994; Longhurst 2000; 2001; Moss 2005). As life is also an embodied exercise that we participate in with a body, the instrumentalization of the body as a tool for interpreting and meaning-making of the world is a starting point "made evident" (Haraway and Goodeve 2000) for a thread of feminist thought that brings this bodily, fleshy, material network into conversation with science's theorizing and experimentation. For feminist science, 'matter, matters' (Butler 1993). Haraway (2013: 12) writes: "It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories".

ccv From another Indigenous knowledge and education system, Gregory Cajete (1994) describes from the Tewa language and Pueblo tradition in his first book *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* a phrase that translates to 'look to the mountain', a metaphor that represents the continuity between the past, present and future of the 'natural world' as a means to think through challenging situations by thinking from the perspective of the mountain. Also a reference to the different viewpoints from a mountain that are possible when one goes up a mountain, 360 degree perspective possible from the top, the phrase denotes the historical positioning that we need to remember our place, cultural tradition, and relationships to others from the perspective of the sacred mountains that surround the valleys the Pueblo People live in. Where each mountain is also regarded as agentic, each has its own personality, as we also know is true ecologically as these same mountains provide water to people and life in an ecological importance that cannot be overstated.

ccvi Without sharing the burden of decolonizing knowledge and science, important living connections with the lifescape from Indigenous traditions are severed and can cause forms of harm to the Indigenous student. Pueblo scholar Gregory Cajete (2000b) identifies this with his discussion of the Pueblo teaching *pin geh seh*, translated into English as 'split head' (2000b: 187). *Pin geh seh* occurs when students cannot feel honored in a non-Indigenous learning environment and must present or form different expressions or 'selves' for each setting. Struggling to find their 'face', Cajete notes that the outcome of *pin geh seh* is divisive internally for Indigenous students in need of educational pathways that heal the split.

ccvii From an ontological framing of the body as also 'more-than-human', SF defines a kind of science useful in the context of specific, community-based problems, where community science can address the secularization and editing out of the spiritual particularities of knowledge systems in science. Kolia (2021) writes of ethics in the analysis of planetary ecological transformations and how an uncritical acceptance of the 'secular' in such transformations stands in the way of certain environmental futures. Introducing a critical post-secular genealogy to address the way that "colonial-capitalist geosocial relations are dependent upon processes of secularization indexed by a material and conceptual diagram of the environment disarticulated from the Sacred" (2021: 2), Kolia argues that Western Science has made a practice of disarticulating knowledge systems. Community science, however, does not use a 'nuts and bolts' approach where knowledge is dissembled and reassembled for alternative purposes, but builds instead upon the foundation of local knowledges and identity-making projects fit to specific community problems.

ccviii Citing Antonio Gramsci's coinage and use of the term, "contradictory consciousness," for "a situation in which the oppressed both reject and accept their subjugation at the same time", it is possible to see Taiaiaki Alfred (2005: 56) working through a similar concept as *Etuaptmumk* as he writes of the Gramscian term that "This is most definitely a character of aboriginalist mentality and rhetoric; piercing this crippling hypocrisy is the first step to our reawakening as peoples. Words can, in fact, be powerful shocks to the system and are capable of causing people to rethink their identity and their place within colonialism."

ccix 'Indigenous science' according to (Johnson et al. 2016: 5) "may be defined as a 'multi-contextual' system of thought, action and orientation applied by an Indigenous people through which they interpret how Nature works in 'their place'. Indigenous knowledge may be defined as a 'high-context' body of knowledge built up over generations by culturally distinct people living in close contact with a 'place', its plants, animals, waters, mountains, deserts, plains, etc. Epistemological characteristics of Indigenous science include oral transmission; observation over generations; cyclical time orientation; quantification is a macro level; specific cultural/literary style and symbolism; knowledge is context specific to a tribal culture and place; conservation of knowledge through time and generations. Development of knowledge through Indigenous science is therefore guided by: spirituality, ethical relationships, mutualism, reciprocity, respect, restraint, a focus on harmony, and acknowledgement of interdependence. This knowledge is integrated with regard to a particular 'place' toward the goal of sustainability. Indigenous science knowledge is derived using the same methods as modern Western science including: classifying, inferring, questioning, observing, interpreting, predicting, monitoring, problem solving, and adapting." Contrasting Indigenous science with the Western approach "that seeks to dominate and interrogate nature, Indigenous societies and knowledge systems have developed to sustain reciprocal relationships between culture and nature and therefore utilize scientific approaches that are rigorous in their own methods and rely on long-term observations. These scientific approaches are spatially localized and place-based. They integrate shortterm periods to extend upon long-term observations. Significantly, they acknowledge humans as a part of the natural world without the binary reductionism found within Cartesian constructs. In addition to providing a glimpse outside of the ontological constructs of Western scientific thought, we identify that Indigenous science also provides access to deep-spatial knowledge. This knowledge is constituted within long-term and empirical observations with landscapes and non-

human others to produce understandings based upon sustainable resilience. Indigenous science is as diverse as the groups around the world who engage local and traditional forms of ecological knowledge, but are also surprisingly similar in many regards." (Johnson et al. 2016: 8).

ccx As Nabhan (2000), Reyes-García and Fernández-Llamazares (2019), and others suggest, songs, poems, stories, and other biocultural artifacts that are part of the animal cultures of place (Brakes et al. 2019) are not only important for Indigenous Peoples and maintaining their knowledge systems, but they also contain information relevant to place and valuable knowledge about details of interaction between humans and other-than-humans across millennia that are key structures of support to preserve 'biodiversity' and the health of ecological systems.

ccxi In Dina Gilio-Whitaker's (2019) book *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*, Gilio-Whitaker highlights Indigenous activism and the importance of Indigenous women leadership on the front lines of environmental justice issues, ultimately arguing that modern environmentalists must look to the history of Indigenous resistance for wisdom and inspiration in our common fight for a just and sustainable future.

ccxii Composting is a feminist environmental humanities action concept first proposed by Jennifer Mae Hamilton and Astrida Neimanis (2018). It draws broadly on "an ethic of sustainability; it grows new worlds by putting what is already at hand into careful relation with whatever else shows up. … a feminist methodology for carefully bringing things together but in ways that pay close attention to honouring genealogies, valuing what is often discarded as no longer useful, and growing new possibilities from the mulching together of things sometimes treated as separate" (Neimanis and McLauchlan 2022: 221). A composting praxis "implores that we attend to our critical metabolisms— to notice not only what is being transmogrified, but also under what conditions, why, and to what effect" (Hamilton and Neimanis 2018: 503, cited in Neimanis and McLauchlan 2022: 223).

ccxiii Millner (2023: 29) refers to this as the idea of commoning associated with ecological repair: "commoning rejects the idea of a set of inert 'natural resources' to be managed by a set of 'users', as if they can be neatly divided. The process of commoning-- or expanding the possibilities for sharing among communities-- reveals interdependency, interconnection and liveliness, focusing repair not on the restoration of the past, but on the cultivation of ecologies of practice that are regenerative, and can heal the ground of the future."

ccxiv The adjective "multispecies" has long traveled in biological and ecological research worlds (Rose 2009; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Tsing 2012; Claire Jean and Freccero 2013; Fernández Bravo, Giorgi, and Rodríguez 2013; Yates-Doerr 2015), bringing together a range of other approaches to decolonize and challenge "dominant assumptions about knowledge, expertise, and who is authorized to speak for Nature" (van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster 2016: 8). An exploration of biocultural diversities is critical in such studies to put into focus the different manners that different human groups have and can inhabit more-than-human worlds (van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster 2016: 9).

ccxv The term 'other-than-human' is possibly first cited in de la Cadena's (2010) article discussing the inadequate conflation of Indigenous worldviews into the frame of 'culture', a term insufficient to describe indigenous ontologies. Marisol de la Cadena (2010: 341-342) uses the 'other-than-human' terminology to describe "animals, plants, and the landscape… a constellation of sentient entities known as *tirakuna*, or earth-beings with individual physiognomies more or less known by individuals involved in interactions with them" who are also imbued with political agency (2010: 341; see also Swyngedouw 2014). These 'beings' are not only being made public by indigenous movements, but through their sentience and material existence within their ontological worlds, also becoming political through the threats against them directed by the "neoliberal wedding of capital and the state" (ibid.: 342). De la Cadena (ibid.) proposes that these 'objects' have become contentious "because their presence in politics disavows the separation between "Nature" and "Humanity," on which the political theory our world abides by was historically funded." For the term 'more than human', de la Cadena (2019: 480) cites Sagan (2011). From the situated context of the Andean Runakuna's fight to save an entity that emerges as mountain and earth being, Ausangate, de la Cadena (2015: 206) describes its significance as "interactions with other-than-human entities that are neither natural nor supernatural, but beings that are with Runakuna in socio-natural collectives that do not abide by the divisions between God, nature, and humanity".

ccxvi To quote the words and analysis of Maya K'iche activist and sociologist Gladys Tzul Tzul (2018: 72) on communal work, "in indigenous communities the social unit of exchange is communal work, which fulfills the function of regulating what is shared through the community". Communal governance is "to govern life communally, to defend and preserve the concrete wealth produced by communal work" (ibid. 2018: 35). Millner (2023: 23) refers to this as 'collective work', the power of which able to "create new vocabularies that authorize marginalized ways of knowing out of shared experiences of oppression."

[ccxvii] Piperno (2011: S465) uses foraging theory as an energetic currency to measure behavior that provides some notion for how food can be conceptualized as an arena for more-than-human exchange that equalizes, explaining that "At the heart of foraging theory is the assumption that, all things being equal, more efficient food procurement strategies should be favored by natural selection over those less efficient, a largely unquestioned premise in nonhuman animal studies. The simplest version of foraging models is called the "optimal diet" model, or the "diet breadth" model (DBM). It employs a straightforward currency—energy—to measure the costs and benefits of alternative resource sets and assumes that humans will have a goal of optimizing the energetic returns of their subsistence labor." Strengths of such models include their ability to explain patterns in the archaeological record that answer important "processual questions relating to human economic decision making and its determinants vis-à-vis the focal point of energetic constraints" (Piperno 2011: S465).

[ccxviii] Ownership or sense of entitlement 'from God', as per the reference in Genesis 1:26, King James Version (as cited in Rosenfeld 2019: 3) to "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish... and over the fowl... and over the cattle... and over all the earth".

[ccxix] From the scientific perspective, this logic, has been applied to life's systems, where research on collabo/coope-ration (Kropotkin 1902; see also work from Lynn Margulis) contest Darwinian notions/interpretations of competition that have been most adopted by western science. While fundamental collaboration, such as that between fungi of earth's soils and terrestrial plants, is neither completely competitive nor completely collaborative (perhaps better described as co-designed strategies for collective survival), according to known Darwinian interpretations of species survival that link to Malthusian concepts of 'scarcity', food systems are narrated as violences as a part of a biological logos of competition. The communal sharing of the basic and fundamental ingredients for life's existence and inextricably shared amongst species, are devalued in favor of what become capitalistic-friendly explanations, despite the explanations provided by interspecies cooperation and collaboration survival strategies as equally plausible.

[ccxx] The exact phrasing used by Darwin in Origin of the Species on page 65 is the term "Struggle for Existence [used] in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny. Two canine animals in a time of dearth, may be truly said to struggle with each other which shall get food and live. But a plant on the edge of a desert is said to struggle "

[ccxxi] See, for example, Laliberté et al. (2015); Keymer et al. (2017); Liu, Li, and Kou (2020); Deslippe et al. (2016); He et al. (2004); Pirozynski and Malloch (1975); Field et al. (2015); Morris et al. (2018); and Simard (1997; 2009; 2021) on emerging literature around well-known cooperative relationships of mycorrhizal fungi, an important group of soil microorganisms, mycorrhiza, and plants. Mycorrhizal fungi form symbiotic relationships with some 97% of known terrestrial plants (Guo 2012). Other examples of multispecies collaborations include those documented in Johnson, McNaughton, and Shelley (2003); Lührs and Dammhahn (2010); Randler (2012); Suzuki (2016); Gorzelak et al. 2015; Brakes, et al. (2019), among many others. Brakes et al. (2019: 1032) articulate these as 'animal cultures' which is defined as "information or behavior—shared within a community—which is acquired from conspecifics through some form of social learning" that can have important consequences for the survival and reproduction of individuals, social groups, and potentially, entire populations. 'Culture' encompasses "those group-typical behavior patterns shared by members of a community that rely on socially learned and transmitted information" (Hoppitt and Laland 2003: 150) which may permeate beyond species boundaries and are consolidated in traditions where a tradition is defined as "a behavioral practice that is relatively enduring (i.e., is performed repeatedly over a period of time), that is shared among two or more group members, and that depends in part on socially aided learning for its generation in new practitioners" (Fragaszy and Perry 2003: 12). Taking after de Waal (Preston and de Waal 2002; Frans and de Waal 2008; de Waal 2008; de Waal 2016; de Waal and Andrews 2022; see also Ove et al. 2016; Markham 2021) and other critical animal studies scholars (Arcari, Probyn-Rapsey, and Singer 2020) at the intersection of broadly inclusive fields of animal studies, animal geographies or human/animal studies, I do not have issue with claiming anthropocentric constructs for the more-than-human as never was culture separate from the nonhuman animal in the first place (Latour 2012), nor any of the other terms that western science struggles with to keep nonhuman animal society separated and subjugated to the human. Animal cultures may also be considered those practices across species that are mutually beneficial. For example, one study in two new woodlands in lowland England found that Eurasian jays, thrushes, wood mice, and squirrels planted half of the trees in the new woodlands (Broughton et al. 2021).

[ccxxii] A definition for affluence as abundance here refers to a historical agreement between both settlers and Indigenous First Peoples when it was written by Adair (1775: 409-410, cited in Lunsford, Arthur, and Porter (2021:

247) that in the 'New World' one could hunt "wild game, fish, freshwater turtles, [and] gather a plentiful variety of vegetables and live in affluence" with "the great variety of dishes they make out of wild flesh, corn, beans, peas, potatoes, pumpkins, dried fruits, and herbs".

ccxxiii When humans are participants in the reinvesting of energy into the processes that sustain life's systems, the wealth created is enriched exponentially as it is not captured but made available for the agencies of other beings who, through their participation, recalibrate any 'limit' from a previous state. This is relevant for understanding how humans can participate in generating the opposite of 'scarcity' through the investment of their labor.

ccxxiv It is important to consider the term research in context with the framing for the work as the author acknowledges the problems linked even to the term 'research', which is itself "inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (Tuhiwai Smith 2012: 1). Tuhiwai Smith (ibid.) writes that "[t]e word itself, 'research,' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the [I]ndigenous world's vocabulary".

ccxxv Robert Nixon's concept of slow violence is defined in simple terms as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all." (2011: 2) or "a delayed destruction often dispersed across time and space" (2013: 2).

ccxxvi Lauren Berlant's (2007: 759) concept of slow death, refers to the slow death which "prospers not in traumatic events, as discrete time-frame phenomena like military encounters and genocides can appear to do, but in temporal environments whose qualities and whose contours in time and space are often identified with the presentness of ordinariness".

ccxxvii Also could be translated along the lines of 'commoning', which Millner (2023: 29) associates in the context of the Maya with ecological repair as rejecting "the idea of a set of inert 'natural resources' to be managed by a set of 'users', as if they can be neatly divided. The process of commoning-- or expanding the possibilities for sharing among communities-- reveals interdependency, interconnection and liveliness, focusing repair not on the restoration of the past, but on the cultivation of ecologies of practice that are regenerative, and can heal the ground of the future."

ccxxviii To briefly contextualize the feminist understanding of intersectionality, Black feminist scholar Kimberle Crenshaw uses the term intersectionality in her seminal work *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics* to refer to intersecting social marginalizations related to geography on the planet, race/ethnicity/religion, sex/gender/sexual orientation, language, (dis)ability, migration status, and/or physical characteristics as experienced in unique combinations that cannot simply be conceptualized as what would be for a single social marginalization (e.g. race). Her argument on intersectionality was subsequently nuanced her follow-up article *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color* (1991). Critiquing white-dominant feminism and anti-racism without gender analysis, an intersectional understanding of inequality provides a better description or viewpoint for the systematic violence of patriarchal colonial systems of oppression, in Crenshaw's (1989) writing about the specific experience of Black women. Adapting the goal of the intersectional understanding of marginalization and the experience of inequality to the multispecies lens, I add in a decolonial context that the anthropocentric nature/culture divides imposed by western/Global North/globalized imaginaries place Indigenous Peoples and their lifeways in a particular context of social marginalization at a societal level that is also an experience of marginalization and inequality that impacts individual humans just as it does their societal more-than-human infrastructure. As the theoretical unpacking of the term decolonial is relevant to the theoretical discussions of the dissertation, the feminist concept of intersectionality addresses the intersectional nature/impact of inequality that does not impact the more-than-human living community at a single entry or connection point. From the multispecies understanding of healing, where onehealth references the health of a more-than-human community, it is important to comment on the intersectional nature of intergenerational trauma (Duran and Duran 1995; Duran 2019) experienced by Indigenous communities. Under a decolonial conceptualization of 'the body' for such groups, the Maya Ixil included, for whom 'Mother Earth'/Madre Tierra as explained by Indigenous feminist scholars from Guatemala and elsewhere uses the terminology *cuerpo-tierra-territorio* (Cabnal 2010; 2017; 2019) intersectional understandings of healing are a part of the activist motivation toward restorative justice for more-than-human communities and a future, therefore, for all.

ccxxix It would be inaccurate to draw full distinction between the *milpa* garden and forest but in my observation and experience, *most of the time* where a *milpa* space is far removed from the home it is the domain of the man's work, perhaps due to the risk associated with traveling there. Where *milpa* spaces are near to the home, not only generally

are the spaces closer to home more diverse but also these are generally stewarded by women and are closely connected to food preparation and consumption directly.

ccxxx In particular, this positionality is often recognized in Spanish of the region as a '*gring/a'*. Though the word can have a pejorative connotation in some uses, for the Ixil the use of the term *gringa* signified me as a female outsider.

ccxxxi The origin of the concept of One Health is cited by (Stephen and Karesh 2014: 377) as first outlined in 2004 when the Manhattan Principles on 'One World – One Health' were developed by international experts at a symposium in New York City organised by the Wildlife Conservation Society." Stephen and Karesh (2014: 378) define the concept as able to "expand that conception of reciprocal care across and between people, animals and environments to protect and promote the health of each rather than looking to two-thirds of this triumvirate for disease hazards (animals and environment) that threaten the remaining third (people). This would require One Health to accept a modern definition of 'health' as the capacity to adapt to, respond to, or control life's challenges and changes, rather than the absence of disease."

ccxxxii From the Mayan context in particular, Millner (2023: 23) links decolonial movements with the more-than-human "portrayals of soil life, both what has been lost (land, cultural practices, soil fertility) and what is to be restored [as] joined together".

ccxxxiii Explained by Hardt (2007: ix): "Affects require us, as the term suggests, to enter the realm of causality, but they offer a complex view of causality because the affects belong simultaneously to both sides of the causal relationship. They illuminate, in other words, both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers. … every increase of the power to act and think corresponds to an increased power to be affected—the increased autonomy of the subject, in other words, always corresponds to its increased receptivity" (2007: x). To this and the discussion of affect from Clough (2007), I assert affect into a multispecies context where affects of care breed fertility of an ecosystem as labor is being reinvested for the use of other species in place of being diverted by the human as partially 'waste' products.

ccxxxiv Words from author at (Kring 2018, unpublished). The Women of Standing Rock (23 May 2018). For published event reference see https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/sv/activities/the-women-of-standing-rock.

ccxxxv Citing Harding and Rose, Sundberg (footnote Sundberg 2003: 188) notes that masculinist objectivity in science is based upon the created separations between mind/body, subject/object, nature/culture, female/male as a relic of European Enlightenment thought. With this short reflection on my positionality in this research I aim to address those "conditions so crucial to masculinist forms of objectivity: namely, distance, disinterest, and disembodiment" (Sundberg 2003: 188).

ccxxxvi Writing of Latin American field research in particular, Sundberg (2003: 183) indicates that "to represent Latin America without simultaneously positioning oneself and one's theoretical assumptions is to assume a vantage-point perspective," which she identifies as productive of "masculinist forms of objectivity by obscuring the role of the observer as an agent involved in producing knowledge that is necessarily interested and partial".

ccxxxvii On this point, and just as it is important that Indigenous scholars identify their specific lineages of knowledge and situated identities to call attention to and support the rematriation of Indigenous knowledge to life's situated communities on Earth, processes essential to keeping Earth's biodiversity and life's structural integrity, 'settler's in Turtle Island and Abya Yala are accountable for bringing, sowing, and continuing to harvest unequally from the benefits of colonial history in the same lands. Benefitting from the structural inequalities, these same positionalities are positioned also to initiate change to address unequal relations and make change to bring equal/healthful outcomes by becoming responsible for behaviors and practices of ancestors and recent generations who have brought outsized, global impacts with them. In Turtle Island most of my ancestors of human origin originate from various Europes. Acknowledging the privilege of this positionality and its role in contributing to my invitation to travel and be a guest in the lands of Abya Yala, in the first consideration of my positionality I note myself as an invited guest to Iximulew, a positionality that also strongly shapes the research findings and analysis. As a foreigner, where there was interpretation for data from Maya Ixil directly I defer to these and to definitions that they may provide. As it is an important step toward changing dynamics toward collaboration, my interest in accepting invitation to learn about healing, restoration, and lifeways connected to Earth's cycles is in the interest of learning about these transformations to further empower their momentum, *in-situ* and elsewhere. Additionally, settlers' psychological transformations away from anthropocentric society begins also the metaphysical closing of colonial era rooted traumas and reconfiguring of its structures to reduce inequality. Accountability for one's inherited position in the colonial landscape is a first step in the direction of care and what I can hope as also, eventually, care that can lead to more-than-human healing.

ccxxxviii Or plants (Hall 2011; Gagliano 2013).

ccxxxix From the 1960 perception of the Ojibwe by Irving Hallowell, Nadasdy (2007: 29, citing Hallowell 1960: 21) writes that the Ojibwe were noted to regard other beings as sentient and intelligent persons where "the concept of 'person' is not, in fact, synonymous with human being but transcends it ... [and] all animate beings of the person class are unified conceptually in Ojibwa thinking because they have a similar structure—an inner vital part that is enduring and an outward form [e.g., human, animal, stone, etc.] which can change. … [Because] the Ojibwe see themselves as enmeshed in a web of social relations not only with other human beings but also with animals (not to mention other "inanimate" objects), the only way to understand Ojibwe society is to take that into account".

ccxl Cooperative relationships with other beings of their territories are described by Simpson (2011: 111) as treaties with nations, "just like any other"; "Our relationship with the moose nation, the deer nation, and the caribou nation is a treaty relationship like any other, and all the parties involved have both rights and responsibilities in terms of maintaining the agreement. The treaty outlines a relationship that, when practiced in perpetuity, maintains peaceful coexistence, respect and mutual benefit."

ccxli Or life beings, as Craft (2014; 2019) identifies with water.

ccxlii More-than-human understandings of agency also appear elsewhere within the feminist cannon from western knowledge traditions or ways of knowing. Halberstam and Nyong'o (2018) suggest a rethink of the colonial concept of wild by situating it as a space of creativity and pluralism, stepping beyond neoliberal capitalism's ethos of competition and deadly combat. Imagining beyond the dichotomies, Halberstam and Nyong'o (2018: 456) suggest a decolonization of the term 'wild' to queer its connotation from the simplistic nature/culture binary that traces its heritage back to an evolution dominated by the selecting factor of competition, suggesting instead an alignment more with Kropotkin and Lynn Margulis's ideas around life as instead evolving through mutualisms or cooperation. Conceptualizing 'feral' and the decentralized and nonhierarchical organizing principles of relationships that could be brought about by a politics of self-recognition, Halberstam and Nyong'o (2018) suggest a feminist decolonization of the use of 'wild' to fit the multispecies context where wild instead *"refers not to the colonial fantasy of untouched and unoccupied space but rather to a sensibility, an anticolonial mode of thinking, and a poetics of power. In this context, we can understand the wild as a space rendered uninhabitable by modernity but crammed with interesting life-forms of its own"* (Halberstam and Nyong'o 2018: 459)." From the environmental humanities, Sandilands (2016: 448) rethinks 'wild' by defining an approach that "both insists on the attempt to give human-centered thinking, identity, and power configurations the slip and remembers or embodies the ways in which these anthropogenic configurations cannot really ever be escaped on this earth", advocating for a *feral feminism* as something of this tension to define human in a different relationship with more-than-human life. Various forms of art or ecology provide further creative thinking to escape the wild/domesticated binary. From the literary critique, Pugh (2015: 77-78) suggests the identification with 'ferality' as that which "does not recognize either the borders it transgresses or its own naming" but seeks to provide reference to a "creative-critical mode of thinking: associative… it does not dismantle so much as unravel" (ibid.: 97). Multispecies feminist theorist Anna Tsing travels with the undomestic-able Matsutake mushroom (2015) to portray even capitalism's "open-ended gatherings" (ibid: 23) as premised upon gifts of matter and the stories of them from Earth's soil, a multispecies endeavor that appreciates an agency beyond the human. Tsing travels with the Matsuake "freedom trophy" to chart a capitalism of an Anthropocene that changes given its sited-ness of 'place' and relationship to and with the human, emphasizing the feral agency of the mushroom to define itself variously and reanimate "blasted landscapes" (2014) of capitalism's creation. Tsing's work tells a story of the material re-biodiversification from the agency of nonhumans suggesting their role and material presence as always also an element of any 'Anthropocene'. See FeralAtlas.org for a repository of Tsing and her collaborators' work on this theme. Yoon (2017: 136) defines the concept of feral "as a way to critically reanimate wildness in feminist and queer theories, refiguring the borders between nature and culture, and by extension between body and technology. … to challenge the patriarchal domestication of gender and the homonormative taming of queer." Citing the feminist journal Feral Feminisms, Yoon (ibid.) cites 'going feral' as more emerging as "'moving to a less tamed or untamed state after (failed) domestication' than as returning to a wildness that is 'outside of power'".

ccxliii Some scholars such as Juanita Sundberg (2014: 35) are critical of the use of the term posthuman in Euro-American framings, suggesting that it may be limiting our imagination as the term itself tends to erase Indigenous location and epistemes, forgetting that the nature/culture split is a perspective of reality that has a specific history and culture derived from European originating knowledge traditions.

ccxliv About which Haraway (2016: 12–13) writes: "Ontologically heterogeneous partners become who and what they are in relational material-semiotic worlding. Natures, cultures, subjects, and objects do not preexist their intertwined worlding".

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ccxlv Feminist scholars of the posthumanities identify the 'post' of posthumanities as intended to be "a generative shift of humanities research beyond its classical anthropocentrism" (Åsberg and Braidotti 2018: 17), a shift that brings forward political questions regarding the production of knowledge by "foregrounding material situatedness and nonhuman powers or agencies" (Williams et al. 2019: 639). Åsberg and Braidotti (2018: 17) cite feminist posthumanities as attempting to address a qualitative shift of *attention* that signals the humanities as going "onward in a feminist mode of relational affinity and integration, or not at all. Developing this 'posthuman sensibility', as Braidotti (2013: 190) argues, forms "a new way of combining ethical values with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one's territorial or environmental interconnections".

ccxlvi Making specific point to address more-than-human agency, inclusion, and cooperation in a divergent space from Science-making that assumes and accepts domination, control, superiority and hierarchy, and competition, some scholars identify the initiative to revamp oversights of the 'posthuman' with reference instead to a "critical posthumanities". Defining contemporary feminist theory as *quintessentially* posthuman, Braidotti (2017: 93) defines the critical posthumanities as "a supradisciplinary, rhizomic field of contemporary posthuman knowledges that are contiguous with, but not identical to, cognitive capitalism, being driven by radically different ethical affects". From the critical posthumanities, a 'supradisciplinary sensibility' emerges in the lack of a nature/culture divide that allows movement to alight in symphony from different fields of knowledge production, creating a porosity from the relational capacity in-between: "the acknowledgment of the porous nature not only of their institutional boundaries, but also of their epistemic core, which gets redefined in terms of relational capacity" (Braidotti 2017: 88-89).

ccxlvii It should also be noted from the field of ecology, behavioral ecologists such as Donald Griffin (1976; 1984) have long suggested that empirical evidence to substantiate discriminating with rigid partitions between humans and other species does not exist nor has it ever. Primatologist Frans de Waal and philosopher Kristin Andrews (2022: 1351) write about denying felt emotions in non-human animals "does not seem a reasonable position given the fundamental similarity between the nervous systems of humans and other animal species and the shared evolutionary history that has promoted similar emotionally mediated reactions to the environment and social partners." Instead, these scholars indicate that humans have only what could be identified as a lack of understanding of whether or not other-than-human animals engage in thought processes like our own, which, Griffin suggests, means "we should at least be open to the possibility as a working hypothesis until proven otherwise" (cited in Nadasdy 2007: 31).

ccxlviii Complicating the singularity of the human, de la Cadena (2019: 480, emphasis in original) writes that through the complex we, "'we' *are* multispecies. This 'we' confuses the requirements of the notion of 'species' conceived by Linnaeus and others as a category to classify mutually exclusive groups. Emerging from feminist reconceptualization, human and nonhuman can both include *and exceed* each other: becoming [with (Haraway 2016; 2018)] through relations humans-are-with-cows-who-are-with-grasses-who-are-with-soils-who-are-with-water … an infinite composition of life, a bios with geos intra-connection".

ccxlix The term 'Anthropocene' was set forth by Nobel Prize winner Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer (2000) to describe a transformation in planetary conditions that made 'mankind' "a major geological force for many millennia, maybe millions of years, to come" (2000: 18). It is a term used by some to refer to the current geological era that marks the presence of humans in the geological record by technological tool use, waste residues, and excessive and destructive consumption of Earth as a 'resource'. The term was officially adopted in August of 2016 by the International Geological Congress in South Africa. As the term does not adequately account for the major transitions in human-nonhuman relations that were transformed through processes of colonization, this term is only used critically in this work. Many scholars have proposed other critical framings of the Anthropocene, such as the 'Capitalocene' (Moore 2015), 'Plantationocene' (Tsing 2015), 'Mis-anthropocene' and 'Chthulucene' (Haraway 2015), the 'anthropo-not-seen' (de la Cadena 2019: 483), among others.

ccl Providing an alternative characterization of a geological age but suggesting "Zoe-centered egalitarianism", Braidotti (2017: 32) suggests the needed shift in perspective as one "toward a zoe- or geocentered approach" that references the wider scope of animal and nonhuman life also known as zoe, in collective. Toward this extent, Rosi Braidotti (2017: 87) theorizes "life as zoe" as generative, dynamic, inhuman, affective energy (Braidotti 2006: 36f; 2017: 87); "an affirmative plane of composition of transversal subjectivities. *Zoe*-centered egalitarianism, the nonhuman, vital force of life, is the transversal entity that allows us to think across previously segregated species, categories, and domains. Neomaterialist immanence leads nomadic subjects to posit collective accountability also for the sustainability of our knowledge production and to resist the opportunistic transspecies commodification of life."

ccli A theory that designs all agency beyond the human defined as "anything that … modif[ies] a state of affairs by making a difference" (Latour 2005: 71) or elements of a system (animate and inanimate objects as 'actants' Latour 2012) as agentic in their networked connections, as espoused in early work of Bruno Latour (1987), Michel Callon (1986), and others.

cclii Cajetan Nwabueze Iheka (2018: 4) discusses with the 'aesthetics of proximity' in Chapter 1 of *Naturalizing Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* a 'distributed' or 'diffuse agency' (after Bennett 2010: 37) that applies Latour's understanding of nonhumans as actants in multispecies networks, using language as a tool able to do the strategic work of translating strategic anthropomorphism to communicate conceptual changes that need to be made in human behavior to think in networks. He writes (ibid.): "Inspired by studies in indigenous cosmologies and materialist-oriented scholarship, my proposal for distributed agency – the idea that humans possess and share agency with the landscape and animals, among others – challenges the dominant anthropocentric version by recognizing varieties of actions, human and nonhuman, intentional and accidental, that permeate African and postcolonial environmental narratives. I urge readers to consider nonhumans as "actant," as Bruno Latour terms it, and recognize their participation and effects even in those instances of intentional human agency. Rather than foreground intent or purposive action, distributed or diffuse agency is concerned with the actions or the effects produced in the environment by a network of actors, human and nonhuman". Fit within the more-than-human conception of agency the expanded view of agency thus helps to bridge the gulf between postcolonial studies focused on the human and a decolonial agency that seeks to acknowledge, affirm, and appreciate indigenous, African and other human populations collectively subordinated in the processes of colonialism.

ccliii Seeking a way out of representationalism and numerous (and perhaps at a certain point inconsequential) 'turns' in the social sciences to analyze and interpret the world, Barad (2018: 225), after Rouse (1996: 209), takes aim at anthropocentric perspectives on agency by identifying representationalism itself as "a Cartesian by-product – a particularly inconspicuous consequence of the Cartesian division between 'internal' and 'external' that breaks along the line of the knowing subject". The singularly agentic human in the world she claims as a product of history but not a logical or biological necessity. Placing the performative understanding as one means of displacing representative ones, a performative focus from linguistic representations to discursive practices may "offer a posthumanist performative reformulation of the notion of discursive practices and materiality and theorize a specific causal relationship between them" (Barad 2018: 228). Barad's (2018: 228) relational ontology "rejects the metaphysics of relata, of 'words' and 'things'" to make a metaphysics of performativity where it becomes again "possible to acknowledge nature, the body, and materiality in the fullness of their becoming without resorting to the optics of transparency or opacity, the geometries of absolute exteriority or interiority, and the theoretization of the human as either pure cause or pure effect while at the same time remaining resolutely accountable for the role 'we' play in the intertwined practices of knowing and becoming".

ccliv As discursive practices "are boundary-making practices that have no finality in the ongoing dynamics of agential intra-activity" (Barad 2018: 232), Barad (2018: 224) offers a more expansive notion of performativity as "a materialist, naturalist, and posthumanist elaboration – that allows matter its due as an active participant in the world's becoming, in its ongoing "intraactivity." Barad (2007: 33) writes of this term that "intra-action recognises that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action."

cclv Barad (ibid.) writes that "[t]he separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse. *Onto-epistem-ology* – the study of practices of knowing in being – is probably a better way to think about the kind of understandings that are needed to come to terms with how specific intra-actions matter".

cclvi What is thus created instead are what Barad (2018: 231) refers to as 'apparatuses'; "Apparatuses are open-ended practices" where "Phenomena are produced through agential intra-actions of multiple apparatuses of bodily production". Barad (2018: 229, emphasis in original) refers to this as an agential realist account, which is defined as "*a causal (i.e, intra-active) relationship between specific exclusionary practices embodied as specific material configurations of the world* (i.e., discursive practices/(con)figurations rather than "words") *and specific material phenomena* (i.e., relations rather than "things"). This causal relationship between the apparatuses of bodily production and the phenomena produced is one of "agential intra-action". The emphasis with this ontological perspective as thus focused on *intra*-action instead of *inter*-action (ibid. 230).

cclvii Barad (2018: 224) thus offers a materialization of matter, recollected with more-than-human collectivized agency, summarizing that "The move toward performative alternatives shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality to matters of practices/doings/actions."

cclviii Matter thus "refers to the materiality/materialization of phenomena, not to an inherent fixed property of abstract independently existing objects of Newtonian physics" (Barad 2018: 233). Bodies, in this context, are not objects but 'material-discursive phenomena' (Barad 2018: 234).

cclix Specifically, "a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has. Agency cannot be designated as an attribute of 'subjects' or 'objects'. Agency is 'doing'/'being' in its intra-activity. Agency is the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices through the dynamics of intra-activity. Agency is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices in the enactment of a causal structure" (Barad 2018: 236).

cclx Alaimo (2008; 2010) describes agency as bodily and transcorporeal materialities, or "various bodily natures" (2010: 2), that discern a material feminism focused on the corporeal, the embodied, the 'stuff of the world'. Using the term trans-corporeality, Alaimo (2018: 49) stresses that transcorporeality signifies a positioning of the subject as "interconnected with the substances of the material world" (Alaimo 2018: 49). Alaimo (2018: 49) identifies transcorporeality as one mode of posthumanism that doubles back to begin at "the unacknowledged site of human corporeality, insisting that what we are as bodies and minds is inextricably interlinked with the circulating substances, materialities, and forces of the wider world" (Alaimo 2018: 49). Transcorporeal materiality is "Thinking materiality as agential, thinking bodies as continually transforming, and thinking across the bodies and places in ways that highlight their interactions" (Alaimo 2018: 49) and that "cut through the ostensible outline of the self, transforming the human subject into a posthuman subject who is always already the very stuff of the world" (Alaimo 2018: 49).

cclxi Highlighting the political place of responsibility that endures in the wake of anthropocentrism, trans-corporeality is "a call to engage in the political knowledge practices that reveal the specific networks of exploitation, risk and harm that capitalist consumerism attempts to conceal" (Alaimo 2018: 50).

cclxii He writes: "As food substances flow in and out of bodies, and as food becomes us, transforming itself and transforming us at the same time, not only does the boundary between inside and outside become blurry, but also the binarisms of the subject and object, and of an active human and the passive and inert food substance, fall apart. This is a human-food assemblage, a process of becoming-food, which in its turn contributes to the production of further, broader assemblages" (Hamilakis 2017: 177).

cclxiii Åsberg and Braidotti (2018: 17) call upon feminist posthumanities as "need[ing] now make clear its affinities to the decolonial option, to other queer, crip or decolonial humanities opportunities". Critique from posthuman feminism (Braidotti 2017a; 2019; 2022) makes some attempt to resituate the posthuman with the feminist ethic around relationality and care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017), community, and difference (Braidotti 2006; Todd 2016; Corman and Vandrovcová 2014).

cclxiv Specifically, Ghelfi (2024: 199) situates food as "the material mediator, the key actor that allows the construction of new alliances and tranversalities among producers, consumers and social centres, because here food brings with itself novel practices of care and commensality, solidarity and cooperation between the city and the countryside." Extending beyond just city and countryside, I interpret food as a material mediator and key actor facilitating the materialization of the more-than-human.

cclxv Specifically, Yoon (2016: 368) refers to the act of eating as an event in which "we lose ourselves in a wild morphing of the animate and the inanimate."

cclxvi Gould *et al.* (2019: 96) defines affect as "the capacity to affect and to be affected. … it has to do with a body's movement through a world of other bodies, all of which have the capacity to affect and to be affected. … when a body is affected, its capacities are either augmented or diminished, and that change in capacity, however slight it may be, is felt, that is to say, it registers, not consciously but rather as a sensory experience of having been affected and thereby changed". Yoon (2016: 369) understands affect as "an analytic tool for measuring intimacy with and distance from other bodies as well as the politics of knowledge production".

cclxvii As all beings of the more-than-human world are considered axiologically as agentic in this work, it is also necessary to consult them for consent in the processes involving them.

cclxviii Conceptualizing the space contained as a living and biocultural community, from Indigenous discussions of ethics Ermine *et al.* (2004: 20) refer to this as forming "ethical space" through the use of consent, or a process of seeking "substantial, sustained and ethical/moral understanding". Kimmerer (2013) equates the practices of humility involved in an 'honorable harvest' as protocols that petition consent and respect ethical space in a more-than-human context. Conceptualizing ethical space and consent through its enactment in how we behave and interact with the world around us, listening, interacting with, and getting to know the cycles and rhythms also beyond the human and

reconceptualizing the expressions of agency from the more-than-human involved, the process of learning *how* to enact ethical space in this work involved the active petitioning of consent to avoid imposing, a violence of unequal engagement. See Annex I's discussion on consent in the methods for further detail on this. Additionally, in Chapter VI, I delve— with the concept of *txaa* – into more detail on how the Maya Ixil share norms of respectful relation across species and my process of learning about these ways of relating iteratively through the year I spent with them in their territory.

cclxix Consent in this sense is extended beyond the human according to previous description of the Maya Ixil as ontologically understanding themselves as 'more-than-human'. From the Anishnaabe tradition, Nicholas J. Reo (2019: 71) notes deep listening in developing relational accountability includes nonhuman relatives, speaking to plants to "express our intentions and ask permission to harvest and cook" (Reo 2019: 71). Asking permission and engaging in dialogue can and should be done also with plant and animal 'nations', such conversations are "consent processes that *weweni bzindan* (require deep listening), as opposed to acts of gratitude and propitiation." (ibid. 2019: 71). For many Indigenous Peoples, the ethics of consent incorporate reciprocity by definition (Hernandez 2022). As one example of this, Hernandez (2022) notes from lessons from her Maya Chor'ti' elders that it is common in petitions of consent to also leave a gift, such as copal (*Protium copal* Engl.), in return for the plants harvested and for the soil to help it regrow.

cclxx Just as Rita Segato says that she did not arrive to the topic of researching forms of patriarchal (built from colonial) violence for choosing it necessarily, it is not her topic preferred or that she would have chosen (cited in Burt 2018: 18'), consent shaped the emergence of the research as a part of the process of the feminist method. From a focus on the problems of the community and their interest to resolve such tensions they demonstrate their own forms of consent for where me, as the guest, would be most helpful based on my area of familiarity, expertise, and skills, and available networks/resources.

cclxxi Following similar steps to what Nazarea (2005) identifies in a protocol for 'memory banking', these initial months also allowed me as the researcher to engage in deep participant observation (or 'deep hanging out', as Yates-Doerr and Carney 2016: 306 cite from Clifford 1997: 56) and context-making by setting aside this initial entry period into the community to specifically learn my place by being shown.

cclxxii Lipson (1993: 335, cited in Thomas 2005: 250) claims that it is the role of the researcher to "do everything in their power to protect the physical, social and psychological welfare of informants and to honor their dignity and privacy" unless they indicate that they want to be explicitly identified.

cclxxiii Extractivism is defined after Gudynas's work (especially Gudynas 2011) defining the term from the Latin American context as "the accelerated extraction of natural resources to satisfy a global demand for minerals and energy and to provide what national governments consider economic growth" (Blaser and de la Cadena 2018: 2).

cclxxiv As many *campesinx*s I met at the *Mercado Campesino* eventually extended invitations to me to visit their *milpas* and homes, the care and equality designed into my research project through the use of horizontal methods gave safety and protection to both myself as the guest and my Ixil hosts as relationships were built getting to know one another in the public space of the market.

cclxxv Though the markets are overwhelmingly female-dominant spaces and vendors are predominantly female, men were often co-interlocutors at some point during field visits to the *milpa* as the work in these food systems of the Ixil are often shared and/or complementary between gender roles.

cclxxvi For many Indigenous women in these settings and due to the disruptions of the internal armed conflict and violence of the genocide that forced many who survived to live hidden in the Ixil Region's forests, there are basic literacy issues that have a tendency to overlook knowledges held by these women and to articulate them accordingly as experts. Thus, at some level the inquiries and follow-up with women to demonstrate their knowledge and proficiencies in this topic area I also understood as a work of decolonizing activism.

cclxxvii Guatemala in general and the Ixil Region in particular are strongly conservative. This is evidenced by the high number of churches (Garrard-Burnett 1998) in the region. It was not uncommon to find church sound systems competing even far from the municipal centers. In the conservative context, women generally do not associate with men and tend to associate with other women and in activities dominated by women. If I was not perceived by the community as a woman the research would have likely found other locations to network than the market.

cclxxviii Though, due to space constraints, several of those topics are not covered in the dissertation. The *malanga* (*Xanthossoma sagittifolium*), Santa Catarina plant (*Dahlia imperialis*), and güisquil (*Sechium edule*) plant are three plants in particular that opened discussion from markets to memories of the trauma of the genocide and how the *milpa* has been a source of biocultural memory and restoring the more-than-human Ixil landscape.

cclxxix Working from Viveiros de Castro's (2004: 20) concept of "controlled equivocation" where difference is treated as "a condition of signification and not a hindrance to translation", Yates-Doerr (2019: 306) suggests that this work of coordinating across differences is, instead, 'careful equivocation' which provides "a better way to approach the relational and temporal space of awkward collaborations in which "sides" refuse to stay put" and where issues of incomplete 'knowing of the Other' do not eliminate the value of spaces where we can be involved together in learning and exchange. Citing Mol's redescription of the term 'care' to discuss Mam communities in Guatemala's western highlands neighboring the Ixil Region and their conceptualizations of 'health' and 'nutrition', Yates-Doerr (2019: 306) writes that care "entails the work of coordinating across differences rather than the work of dissolving boundaries entailed in the push toward holism." With this, it also acknowledges "the productive aspects of difference" (ibid.: 299).

cclxxx Emerging at the intersection of several strands of inquiry, namely environmental studies, STS, and animal studies, the method of inquiry referred to as multispecies ethnography emerged in *Cultural Anthropology*'s special issue dedicated to the topic published in 2010. From that issue, Kirksey and Helmreich (2010: 545) identify multispecies ethnography as centered on "how a multitude of organisms' livelihoods shape and are shaped by political, economic, and cultural forces."

cclxxxi Academic work from students of the Universidad Ixil are an excellent source of information on this topic, though these are published in Ixil and Spanish.

cclxxxii In the context of the nation-states of Canada and USA, Thomas (2005: 252-3) writes that "Stories and legends were our culture and tradition, and over the years these rituals were banned through legislation and then enforced and entrenched through [processes of colonization like] residential schools."

cclxxxiii Explaining the role of stories and storytelling, from her Indigenous traditions Wilson (1998: 27) speaks of the intimate hours spent with her grandmother listening to her stories as "reflections of more than a simple educational process. The stories handed down from grandmother to granddaughter are rooted in a deep sense of kinship responsibility, a responsibility that relays a culture, an identity, and a sense of belonging essential to my life."

cclxxxiv Writing of the Midewiwin conceptual framework from the Anishinaabe tradition, Burgess (2006: 22) cites the reshaping of the narrative around Christopher Columbus, the creation story for European dominance in the Americas, as a form of healing, writing that "stories can house spirits; stories can heal; and the power to heal directly coincides with the ability of the healer to elaborate on the story".

Chapter IV
Endnotes

cclxxxv CONAP is an Administrative Council with a Secretariat and a Technical Sub-Secretariat and is made up of various government institutions such as the Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (MARN), the Centro de Estudios Conservacionistas de la Universidad de San Carlos (CECON), and the Asociación Nacional de Municipalidades (ANAM). Generally, CONAP is tasked with regulating protected areas in accordance with national policies, the 1989 Law of Protected Areas, or Decree 40-89, in particular, a law also creating the Guatemalan System of Protected Areas/Sistema Guatemalteco de Áreas Protegidas (SIGAP), a state organ housed within CONAP to facilitate processes associated with the 1989 law.

cclxxxvi Cattle are not a part of the ancient Maya landscape (Tykot 2002) so their inclusion is based already upon settler prioritizations, particularly in large quantities.

cclxxxvii Kuper (2014: 5) cites the total land area of Guatemala as 108,980km2, which translates to 10,898,000 hectares.

cclxxxviii Ajmag, of the CPR-Sierra, recounted to me changing norms of communal land tenure that have slowly evolved out of the hands of community members and into a strong control over communal lands with the Ixil Region's Chajul municipal mayor as the singular authority, changes that have eventually paved the pathway for a protected area at Visis Cabá: "before our grandparents, they left two names – the muni[cipality] and the neighbor, the person who owns the land. [The document was] signed by the muni[cipality] *and* signed by the neighbor. Because now no, now only the muni[cipality] [signs]. They stopped this other way in 2010 […] In Chajul, [the titles] do not have a neighbor's name and for this in Chajul that is why they have sold all the part of the land of Visis Cabá."

cclxxxix While this history is an important genealogy to trace to understand the unequal power dynamics in the country today, due to space limitations in this dissertation it is beyond the scope of this chapter's discussion to detail those. The CEH (1999) and REMHI (1998) reports and the work of Grandin, Levenson-Estrada, and Oglesby (2011) and McAllister and Nelson (2013) provide an extensive in-depth look at the origins of the genocide and its structures of racially-motivated violence perpetuated largely by State apparatuses.

ccxc See Elliott 2021 for detail on this from the Ixil Territory.

ccxci While the reference to a Global North-South divide began as a reference to economic inequalities that separate countries wealthy off of their colonial pasts from those exploited during the colonial era, the concept also refers to the intersectionality of inequality that dictates power distributions, material flows, and a manner of other global phenomena related to who and where have dominant influence globally on human and other-than-human lives.

ccxcii For the different historical patterns of European colonization of the Americas, settler colonial societies within them have evolved with also differentiated interaction with patriarchal-colonial modernity. In settler colonial U.S.A, maternal societies such as the Iroquois Confederacy— six unified Iroquois (also known as the Haudenosaunee, or People of the Long House) nations— 'modern' notions of democracy were inspired by three core concepts of the Great Law of Peace, founded in 1142, their constitution, and into today possibly the longest standing democracy on earth (Barlow 2020). These three concepts of peace, equity, and justice from the People of the Long House were foundational in the creation of nation-state U.S.A., yet the association was not recognized by the U.S.A. Senate until 1988 (see Barlow 2020 in reference to Winnebago scholar Terri Hansen's writing on the 1744 proceedings), a gap of centuries of cross generational violence and injustice.

ccxciii Characterized by Del Bene (2018: 3) as an "undisciplined discipline". "It' s an (in)discipline that invites one to challenge concepts, methodologies and discipline boundaries, to reinvent and adapt them to the field, *en la calle*, to engage from within, feel part of and empathise with the topic being studied" (ibid.: 4).

ccxciv Schulz (2017) argues that political ecology alone is not able to diversify broadly enough away from Western research practices and paradigms and Lunsford, Arthur, and Porter (2021: 36) contend that "political ecology has largely passed over Indian Country", arguing that political ecologists have upset narratives of 'nation' and settler sovereignty but "have not discussed what this means for political–ecological analyses of territoriality, the state, and environmental governance—in other words, how the analytical categories of land and sovereignty in Native American studies inform the critical approaches of political ecology."

ccxcv See Hernandez (2022) for specifically Indigenous frames of these justice frameworks.

ccxcvi Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) writes of it as a colonial relationship of dispossession.

ccxcvii Less common biodiversity conservation models include ICCAs (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020), Indigenous Protected Areas (Youdelis et al. 2021), and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) such as Thaidene Nëné, translating to "Land of the Ancestors" in Dënesųłiné Yati which spans more than 26,000 square kilometers in the Northwest Territories of Canada, declared by the Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation under Dene Law (CRP 2020), most often lead by Indigenous Peoples.

ccxcviii From Tanzania, colonial 19th-century German settler characterizations of peasants' forest use are cited as using terms like 'raubwirtschaftlich', meaning "ruthlessly destructive and exploitative", and generally *'kulturfeindlich',* or "hostile to civilization", to characterize peasant interactions with the forest (Collins et al. 2021: 977). Furthering racist tropes, modern conservation frameworks are tied to these interpretations (ibid.). German theories of ecological succession have historically blamed locals for impeding maximum forest growth potentials, and have prescribed, in consequence, these peoples' removal from them. Resonant into today, Collins *et al.* (2021: 977) note that these German interpretations endure from the colonial model as a now an 'independent' Tanzanian forestry policy framework still regards local peoples as 'destructive' of the "natural processes" of the country's miombo woodland forests. Citing Chidumayo (2017), Collins *et al.* (2021: 10) provide a view on the shifting agriculture practice of cutting or coppicing trees for charcoal generation and the management of forests with selective burning that is characteristic of the miombo forests of Africa, showing that these practices are *not*, in fact, 'impeding' maximum succession states. Instead, they are reflective of ecological communities endemic to the area.

ccxcix African protected areas show many cases of conservation-justified violence against Indigenous Peoples (Neumann 2004) as they are forced out of ancestral homelands (Duffy 2014; Witter and Satterfield 2019), often a result of acute vulnerabilities stemming from a lack of formalized tenure rights (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020).

ccc They also remark on "the embeddedness of many conservation programs in global capitalism, in such a way that conservation and neoliberal agendas are usually controversially intertwined" (Bontempi et al. 2023: 2). Indeed, histories of colonial dispossession and enslavement to create global capitalist exchange form the foundation of the cycles of anthropogenic change (Davis and Todd 2017).

ccci Characterizing today's brand of racism in Guatemala, Martínez-Salazar (2012) quotes the words of her father, a man killed in the atrocities of the Guatemalan genocide, to diagram the creation of different social categories that were brought from social stratifications of European culture and implemented by the Spanish in the 'New World'. Creating what she characterizes as two kinds of Guatemalans, she writes of her father's words that there are "those who feel they are descended from Europeans—even though they are brown-skinned and are actually Indigenous or Mestizos, but are being taught to be ashamed of their [Indigenous] ancestry—and those who are the descendants of original peoples [who claim it proudly]" (Martínez-Salazar 2012: 2).

cccii For context on how critical historical revisionism is for authoritarian or illiberal regimes see Radó and Mikola (2023).

ccciii Gould (2018: 154) defines counterinsurgency by the Kennedy era definition in the US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as: "those military, paramilitary, political economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat the subversive insurgency".

ccciv A notable example beyond Guatemala is documented by Vidal (2020) from the Congo Basin. Armed eco-guards funded by the international conservation organization WWF reportedly beat up and intimidated hundreds of Baka pygmies, the Indigenous Peoples of northern Congo, in the 1,456 sq km patch of forest called Messok Dja. This region is part of the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkebe (TRIDOM) landscape where WWF conservation efforts operate and contribute funding. It is also an area that receives some $21.4 million (16.6 million English pounds) for the TRIDOM 11 project. According to one widow, her Baka husband was taken to prison in a WWF-marked vehicle and tortured and raped so brutally that he died shortly after his release. Seeking help from an international community, the Baka wrote letters to the UNDP that they had been restricted from going into ancestral forests and were beginning to see deaths and worsening conditions of the health of the population because of the WWF-imposed restrictions. As is the case in many large-scale conservation projects such as these where funding is brought together by many partners, funding filtered into the collaborative TRIDOM interzone project (ETIC) and distributed by the Congolese Government also gave training to the eco-guards through WWF. Salaries of the guards, equipment, and other aspects of the eco-guard position were also paid by the funding. Local Congolese WWF officials indicated that the presence of the uniforms that the eco-guards wear had inspired some of the eco-guards to use coercive psychological intimidation against the Baku. NGOs in the region indicated that the embodied presence of a political power to control 'nature' was inciting violent dynamics in the community that collaborated with logging, palm oil, and lucrative tourism attractions that collaborated with conservation NGOs to steal Baka land. For the widespread attention in 2018 that this particular set of rights abuses by a well-known conservation NGO received, allegations of violence and abuse of the local Baka population resulted in a suspension of funds for the project by the UNDP as of 2019.

cccv Scarcity is designed, according to (Mehta 2010: 25) "as the result of powerful actors getting away with resource appropriation and thus enhancing degradation".

cccvi Specifically, CONAP (2020: 81, translation mine) writes: "However, it has been identified outside SIGAP-protected areas, that communal lands are areas of forest connectivity between protected areas, which is why they can complement the conservation and management gaps that SIGAP presents. The main challenge today is the recognition of the traditional management of communal lands and forests of indigenous peoples and local communities, respecting their particular system of governance, to achieve the formation of a management system for protected areas and biological diversity that is more inclusive and adapted to the different ways of life of the population of each region of the country."

cccvii "USAID has expanded its successful concessions model of forestry management to protect and enhance the natural resources that underpin the Guatemalan economy, partnering with the Government of Guatemala to extend the concession contracts and create new ones. Community forest concessions have proven highly successful at conserving forest cover, improving rural livelihoods, and generating jobs. They strengthen existing and new forest enterprises and diversify community incomes by strengthening tourism enterprises. USAID focuses on increasing and protecting economic gains for families and communities in a sustainable manner, preserving Guatemala's natural resources for citizens and tourists for present and future generations." (USAID [2022?]: 2).

cccviii Pulling communities out of previous relationships of reciprocity and into the capital economy, USAID ([2023?]) cites its goal to integrate forests and their 'products' into the capital economy along with communities who are no longer self-sufficient, but have questionably "lasting" employment in a new arrangement that 'engages' them in conservation; "USAID's comprehensive approach has opened high value international markets for timber and non-timber forest products, increased incomes well above the minimum wage, generated lasting employment, and engaged local communities in conservation initiatives".

cccix Though this white paper and documents from USAID give information about its projects, there ability of international funders to distance themselves from the real world effects of their money is an additional strategy of foreclosure and injustice for Indigenous Peoples impacted as this document is intentional to assert that it does not provide an "official account" of the situation at Visis Cabá from Guatemalan government officials.

cccx With an emphasis on "protecting … virgin mountains", the "last refuges for the area's biodiversity, a natural wealth", the protected area is positioned in the document as saving these from being "diminished" by "pressure on the land, population growth and *inadequate* [sic] management practices of crops in particular, the cultivation of maize, and the extension of land for livestock" (Cabrera Hidalgo 2000: 2, emphasis mine).

cccxi It is also important to note here the historical issues of land tenure from these particular lands. As Del Águila (2021: footnote on page 76) documents poignantly of that history, the Arenas Menes family became owners of community lands in Chajul and other municipalities of the Ixil Region "through fraud, bribery and pressure of community lands" after the counterrevolution of 1954.

cccxii For this in the context of the Maya Biosphere Reserve and how USAID often performed the functions of CONAP directly, see Sundberg (1998).

cccxiii The incorporation of Indigenous expressions of knowledge are mandatory by a variety of legal mechanisms. From Article 67 of the Guatemalan Constitution/Constitución Política de la República (1985), the rights to communal lands outline the use, possession, and ownership of communal lands for cooperatives, indigenous communities, or other forms of communal or collective ownership. These forms of Indigenous expression should be given special protection and guarantee of development; historical right to communal lands that have been administered in traditional ways for generations; and the right to inalienable, unseizable, and imprescriptible communal lands (Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales 2009: 28). From Guatemala's ratification of the ILO 169 by the Congress of the Republic on May 18, 1995, Municipal Code Law 12-2002 (Gobierno de Guatemala 2002), Decree No. 9-96, and provisions of the Articles 66, 67, 68, and 69 of the Constitution, national and international instruments further reinforce these rights of Indigenous Peoples and societal organization in Guatemala (Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales 2009: 30), citing the State's lack of action to fulfill its obligations (PBI 2012: 7) as having sizable effects on the human rights of its people (Gantenbein 2006). Notes citing the Public Prosecutor's Office (2010) from Zúñiga (2023) highlight the rights to mechanisms that guarantee community members the use, conservation, and administration of community lands whose administration has traditionally been entrusted to the municipal government are guaranteed under Municipal Code Law 12-2002 after consultation with community authorities.

cccxiv Reference to an assembly attended on October 24, 2019, where residents of the impacted Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve met in the 1st Assembly of the Chajul Community Network. "Fighting for life" the 32 communities in the meeting, the Network of Communities, "expressed the need to defend the territory and presented a Proposal for the Mayor to issue a Municipal Agreement for the defense of the territory and natural assets, to defend the life of the communities, peoples and living beings" (López 2019). I also attended this meeting.

cccxv Curiously, the narrative of defense (used by those against the Reserve) is cited by the white paper from those 'in support' of the protected area, doing so to "defend their own lands" and to "seek a more adequate use of their natural resources" (2000: 2) from these minority groups.

cccxvi Cabrera Hidalgo (2000: 3) suggests that "explain[ing] the objectives of the reserve" will "inform the inhabitants of the municipality in a more truthful way", thus dismissing communication about consent issues of the protected area declaration as a "disinformation campaign" spread by "users of the natural resources of the reserve" (2000: 2).

cccxvii The official Ixil Visis-Cabá Biosphere Reserve Technical Study (Page 4, cited in Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 104, emphasis in original, translation mine) recognized that "it would be unfair not to recognize the obvious reality: *VISIS CABA BELONGS TO THE IXIL PEOPLE AND THEY HAVE DECIDED TO KEEP IT*. The rest is an accident that will [or should] facilitate this desire."

cccxviii The present-day town of Ilom and the land around it (then called Bayal I') in the Chajul municipality is cited by Archeologist Monica Banach (2017a: 16; 2017b: 4) to have been inhabited "uninterruptedly" between 500 BC (Medium Preclassic) and 1530 AD (Late Postclassic period). Banach (2017b: 4) documents the prohibition imposed upon communities of Ilom at the initiation of construction for the HydroXacbal *hidroelectrica*, erected at the site of the first settlement of the Ixil communities of Tx'aul (Chajul), Naab A'(Nebaj) and Kusal (Cotzal) (2017b: 3) in Ilom. *Finca* La Perla (Banach 2017: 7), designated the area for the creation of a *hidroelectrica* in 2008, also prompting the initiation of archeological research to find out more about the structures once improper protocols were found to be "devastating" part of the site (Banach 2017: 4). This sacred site was one of many in Ilom where 12 to 16 Sajb'ichil (ceremonies) occurred throughout the year (Banach 2017: 4). Locations like mountaintops, hills,

watersprings, rocks, remains of pre-Columbian buildings, and cemeteries or caves are common sacred locations for the Maya (Banach 2017: 4), but this one in particular, on a piece of terrain called Xamal A', was the Atimb'al I'lamb'al ('The Place of Rest') for the Ixil's first Ixil ancestor, Tx'ol Winaq, (or El Lacandon). Referred to as B'ayal l' or Xe' Kuxhab' in Ixil (settled by the Lacandon, the ancestors of today's Maya Ixil (Banach 2017a: 16; Banach 2017b)), the location holds significant meaning in Maya Ixil cosmology as this first ancestor took to resting there after a long journey from the northern forests of Ixcan (Banach 2017: 2). B'ayalI', continues to be cited across the Ixil Region as also the dwelling place of Tx'ol Winaq and the first ancestors (Banach 2017: 14; see also Law, Danny. 2017. History of Xe' Naaloj and also the Village of Ilom, https://www.ailla.utexas.org/islandora/object/ailla%3A260901 once accessible). The people of Ilom maintain that the place has a special meaning for the agricultural cycle and that ceremonies are held there to ask for the maize and a good harvest (Banach 2017: 8).

cccxix Del Águila (2021: 76) confirms that many communities were cut off from their farmland in the process of creating the protected area, a direct blow to communities also meeting basic subsistence needs through the same lands.

cccxx These communities are Chel, Xesayl, Juá, Vichox, Visiquichum, Juil, Visich, Cabá, Paal, Xaxboq, Chexá, Santa Clara, Xeputul, and Santa Rosa (Pelicó-Caballeros 2011: 30, 68) and Las Flores (Iniciativa para la Reconstrucción y Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica 2012: 77)

cccxxi In a Facebook post from Manuel Asicona Rivera on 23 May 2023 as he was running for election again in 2023 a third time for Chajul mayor with the VIVA party and cites these previous terms, he writes of being proud to open paths of development: "my satisfaction is having opened the path of development for my people, especially in the North Vertice".

cccxxii On the importance of social connections for capitalist-fringe societies see Nikhil Chaudhury's work (Chaudhary and Salali (2022); Chaudhary and Swanepoel (2023); Major-Smith et al. (2023)) from the field of mental health.

cccxxiii These activities are confirmed by Cabrera Hidalgo (2000: 7) in a document that also confirms financial support from USAID and its various Guatemalan governmental affiliated projects and departments for the provision of a savings and credit bank to increase the production of organic coffee.

cccxxiv The Facebook post reads: "We work through USAID Guatemala and #SociosEnDevelopment to strengthen the Government of Guatemala's efforts to increase the income, resilience and nutrition of small coffee producers by improving agricultural productivity and promoting diversification alternatives. #InternationalCoffeeDay ☕ ".

cccxxv Asociación Chajulense Va'l Vaq Quyol. 2022. Asociación Chajulense "Va'l Vaq Quyol". Facebook page. Accessed 1 November 2022. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/asociacionchajulense/.

cccxxvi Not only assisting to lay the groundwork for further extractive projects after 'conservation' plans are set into motion, the white paper mentions the collection of digital information carried out with radar technology within the framework of the MOU NASA/CCAD to document the physical characteristics of the area. Digital knowledge as a tool of further dispossession and likely extraction, the digital record is identified as needing to be held at the municipality where a license is required to access it and "manage it properly" (Cabrera Hidalgo 2000: 8). Tiu López (2004: 242) confirms that "[t]he argument that indigenous peoples do not have any idea about the management of natural resources is used regularly, as well as the argument that "modern" technical elements are needed to preserve the resources mentioned." Some 20 years later, Gonzalez-Bernat, Clifton, and Pauli (2019) cite a lack of data as a chronic issue with top-down conservation models in Guatemala where available data is difficult to access, the case of Visis Cabá here seen as structured from the outset for such conclusions.

cccxxvii With specific reference to Visís Cabá and other areas in Alta Verapaz and Petén, the Grupo Promotor de Tierras Comunales (2009: 30) notes that the Protected Areas Law in Guatemala (Decree Law 4-89) may declare protected areas from areas of Indigenous territories but does not provide the financial resources to orchestrate these changes accordingly. Additionally, no formal consultation procedure exists to consult communities as their rights over communal lands are exchanged with such declarations. Like the Forest Law, no regulations are provided either to recognize the rights of Indigenous communities and the management practices that they have carried out over such lands for generations, thus fueling further conflict once these areas are established.

cccxxviii By some accounts, "the furniture and stationary shop of the municipality were destroyed" (Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 70). In others, a forestry office was burned down (Larson and Pulhin 2012) or a fire of the building that houses the municipal mayor's office of San Gaspar Chajul (Del Águila 2021: 77) was burned.

cccxxix Not the only cause for public discontent toward the municipal mayor and his affiliates, Del Águila (2021: 77) indicates that the protests around the protected area exacerbated existing tensions that also gave rise to a series of mobilizations from 1997 to 1999 in response to public discontent with the mismanagement of funds agreed to in the Peace Accords that covered budgeting and allocating 12% of income from the Value Added Tax (VAT-Paz) to communities impacted by Guatemala's conflict. These funds allegedly encountered troubled trajectories on their way to distribution to the communities after arriving to Municipal Councils and mayors (Del Águila 2021: 77).

cccxxx From the context of the African continent, Neumann (2004: 813) notes how violence and conservation have been normalized: "[w]ar is now a common model and metaphor for conceptualising and planning biodiversity protection in Africa", while Lunstrum (2014: 818) similarly uses the term 'green militarisation' to describe "a process by which military approaches and values are increasingly embedded in conservation practice".

cccxxxi Lisa Ford (2010: 3) argues that depictions of Indigenous violence were influential in discussions of sovereignty in Australia and the United States. From these prominent examples, the management and control of violence could thus be argued as a central point of power for the settler state.

cccxxxii Regarding their work in Guatemala related to the 'Environment' which prioritizes "improved security" in the fight against "environmental crime" beyond just Guatemala, U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) ([2023?]) cautions on their website that: "Reducing environmental crime is a critical step to weakening organized criminal networks in Guatemala and improving overall security in the country and region".

cccxxxiii "[C]omfortable with the idea that the military does not respect the human rights of drug traffickers", Ybarra (2018: 20) writes that the general Guatemalan public "would be concerned about the military displacing Indigenous genocide survivors for conservation", the discourse of illicit industry as a convenient ruse for increased state control.

cccxxxiv López de La Vega (2019: 160) writes that the increase in social conflict in Guatemala during recent periods has seen the State of Guatemala resume the use of state violence, through declarations of "States of Exception" which include the state of siege and State of Prevention (PBI 2021), and forms of harassment in communities to "leave no doubt that it can use terror strategies at any time". By the Guatemalan gradation of ''States of Exception,'' the 'estado de prevención', or state of prevention, is a step down from the harsher 'Estadio de Sitio', State of Siege, but both authorize and deploy the use of martial law measures for security reasons (Ybarra 2016: 203). In accordance with Decree 28-2012, the law follows previous presidents' actions to declare temporary martial law (Estados de Sitio) in the Maya Forest, stripping residents of freedom of assembly, giving police and soldiers the right to search and arrest without a warrant, and to censor press coverage of these activities." (Ybarra 2016: 202) 'Estadios de Sitio' or temporary martial law, Ybarra (2016: 202) notes from Alta Verapaz and Petén were declared as early as 2010 and 2011 to combat drug trafficking, declarations that, through Decree 28-2012 could then be supplied with planes, ships, and guns in order to secure the threats to conservation and 'sovereignty' and 'security'. One of the best examples of these states used to further dispossess and displace Indigenous Peoples with violence and intimidation in Guatemala is in the case of the Extracción Minera Fénix which functions through subsidiary HMI Nickel Inc. and the Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel, S.A. of the Canadian company Hudbay Minerals Inc. Continuing protests of the community over their right to consultation, in October 2023 Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei issued a state of siege in El Estor following Q'eqchi'-led protests and roadblocks that blocked access to the Fénix mine and processing facility. Dozens of raids and arrests stifled the protest by soldiers and police in riot gear. In a historic decision in December 2023 from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Corte IDH 96/2023) in the case *Comunidad indígena Maya Q'eqchi' Agua Caliente vs. Guatemala,* however, the case set a precedent declaring the State responsible for several violations of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples related to free, prior, and informed consent. The court decision also confirmed that the government had engaged in a pattern of deception against the Agua Caliente Maya Q'eqchi' community that included their refusal to replace missing pages in a registry that documented the community's long struggle for title.

cccxxxv After Bastos and De León (2015), López de La Vega (2019: 161) refers to the use of force as creating a hegemony of fear and obligatory consensus in the form of "militarized neoliberalism" where terror and fear become an essential mediation strategy when fused. From a different but similar context of Colombia's 2002-2010 *falsos positivos* extrajudicial killings, Giraldo (2021: 68-69) characterizes the 'affective pedagogy', operating "through a network of channels constituted both by state apparatuses and the mass media", that attaches negative emotions such as hate, fear, and disgust to the 'guerrilla figure' (*guerrillero*) while attaching to the 'fine citizen' (*ciudadano de bien*) positive emotions such as affection, empathy, and respect. Drawing emotions of the public toward opposite poles through discursive techniques reinforced by policies and threats of violence, this is the obligatory consensus generated for the broader public.

cccxxxvi Gould (2018) argues that Guatemalan military-led nation-building has been a part of counterinsurgency efforts during the internal armed conflict as the State intentionally targeted regional and often Indigenous movements for suppression, orchestrated and aided by veins of support and connection with a Global North. Linking the nation-state elites of Guatemala with global political alliances, Gould draws attention to Guatemala's military, actively trained and financed by the United States, Chile, Argentina, and Israel. Broadly supported by political powers in a Global North opposed to the development of popular communist movements, in nearby Latin America and elsewhere (Brett 2006), local elites in Guatemala became connected with tools and power networks of the Global North to execute new, more encompassing but subtle violence toward an Indigenous population and following the initial intervention of covert U.S. forces in Guatemalan matters from the 1954 coup de état. Corruption at the international/nation-state level welcomed violence into the formal infrastructure of the State as private benefactors sought to prevent political transformation that would result in land reform from large landowners into the hands of peasants. Proximate to 'security', Gould (2018) argues that humanitarianism and militarism were strategically combined during this period of Cold War in Guatemala and the era of the U.S.A.'s War on Terror offensives globally. Support from foreign governments, bilateral and multilateral development organizations, and 'host'-country governments following the Administration of U.S. President Kennedy and its counterinsurgency programs of Latin America during the 1960s forward served as a backdrop of infrastructural equipment of and for violence against 'internal enemies' (CEH 1999: conclusions and recommendations^{cccxxxvi}) of the state during this Cold War period in Guatemala. Nation-building activities militarized State agencies according to 'security' objectives and military dictatorships leveraged by foreign support built a new counterinsurgency uncritical to racist orientations with internal Indigenous Peoples/Nations. Formally encouraging U.S. military involvement in Guatemalan 'internal security' and economic development under and according to the U.S. National Security Doctrine, between 1963 and 1969 the US Military Assistance Program formally supported Guatemalan counterinsurgency efforts for the first time when some US $ 12.6 million was channeled into Guatemala's military budget, 11% of the Guatemalan military budget at the time. As Gould (2018: 155, citing Sereseres 1971: 195) notes, these funds were used to "supply operations, internal security", and a general mobilization of military forces and military-led organizations characterized as military 'civic action'.

cccxxxvii Often dubbed by U.S. media as the "Northern Triangle", a hotbed of 'security threat', Guatemala is named as one of three Central American countries where militarized forces are needed to suppress drug trafficking, declared a threat to Global North U.S.A.'s Security (Ybarra 2016), since its identification as such in the 1986 US National Security Decision Directive No. 22 (McCoy 2004). The U.S. contributes to the generation of fear, danger, and security threat discourses regarding Central Americans for these reasons and mainstream misconceptions about migrants accepting work in the U.S. Many of the available jobs for undocumented migrants would be unlikely to be taken by Americans according to employers, "even … if wage came into it" (Altan and Cediel 2018: Min. 19:59).

cccxxxviii From the 1996 Peace Accords under the Annex's point 8 concerning the 'Separation of Forces', it is clearly stated that the Guatemalan military must withdraw from "Redeployment of Guatemalan armed forces units: withdrawal means the establishment of spaces in which there is no Guatemalan armed forces presence of any kind. These spaces are to ensure safety and logistical support for URNG in order to facilitate verification by the United Nations." (Joshi, Quinn, and Regan 2015: n.p.).

cccxxxix It should be noted that the *campesino* also corrected this phrasing to note that the phrasing of 'internal armed conflict' or 'civil war' does not address the Indigenous Peoples who were not given agency to opt-out of the fighting. He said: "We say 'internal armed conflict' but this is an error that we use, that [those against us] put there because when we say 'internal' this is as if saying a problem with my neighbor, but this excuses the fact that they have never accepted that it was a violation of human rights [what they did]. If it is an 'internal armed conflict' then they have the power [to define it]."

cccxl Well-known Q'eqchi' Maya leader Bernardo Caal Xol is one notable example from the fight to protect his community's sacred Cahabón River from the effects of the OXEC hydroelectric plant in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala (Kirkpatrick 2021; Amnesty International 2022; Caal Xol 2022). Community members indicate him as "symbolically embodi[ng] the Indigenous Peoples exercising the right to self-determination in the face of the voracity of corporate power and the lack of State will to fulfill its duty to respect, protect and guarantee our rights". (Kirkpatrick 2021: n.p.). Other examples are the cases of Rigoberto Juárez, Arturo Pablo, Francisco Juan Pedro, Domingo Baltazar, Ermitaño López, Adalberto Villatoro and Mynor López, 7 human rights defenders from northern Huehuetenango criminalized in the defense their water rights (Amnesty International 2016: 7). Justino Xollim was imprisoned in 2021 after leaving the Public Ministry to report the felling of trees by a worker at the Maderas Fillips Diaz company. He was arrested by the company and charged for defending his community's forests against them

(Morales Tot 2019). Maya K'iche human rights defender Daniel Pascual, Coordinator for the grassroots organization Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC), was also jailed for speaking out publicly against widespread attacks on and intimidation of land rights defenders in Guatemala. Though he was eventually acquitted, he fought a 7-year legal battle for his advocacy against criminal charges of libel, defamation, and slander (International Service for Human Rights 2020). These are just some of the examples from Guatemala.

cccxli Speaking to Amnesty International, these are the words of the first female Attorney General, also the first official to prosecute orchestrators of state-led human rights abuses that indicted former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt for genocide, Claudia Paz y Paz. She spoke about the "erosion of the separation of powers" contributing to the political persecution and criminalization of human, environmental, and land rights defenders in Guatemala where criminalization is "a very powerful weapon against dissidence because it implies the loss of your freedom and a very grave risk to your physical safety… It's a way of silencing the voices that denounce corruption and impunity" (Tucker 2021: n.p.).

cccxlii Pay y Paz described the existence of "a pact, an arrangement between the head of the executive, the legislature and, sadly, the judiciary as well" where citizens are left "absolutely defenseless – not just in the face of crimes committed against them going unpunished – but also against the fabricated cases of criminalization that we're seeing. Accusations are inflated or invented. Evidence is forged and fabricated. The situation in the country is very, very delicate" (cited in Tucker 2021: n.p.).

cccxliii Though initial steps toward resolution of the conflict involved allowing Asociación Chajulense to be a part of the co-management of the reserve, as previously stated many of the communities in the reserve *reject* this Association as their representative and as such this remains an insufficient means to address the core issue of the conflict. While the passed but unimplemented Decree 128-97 modified Decree 40-97 allowing the inclusion of more than one representative group from the region to participate in the administration of the Reserve, this effort still failed to address the initial consent trespasses of the community. Under Act Number 006- 2000, del Infrascrito Secretario de la Municipalidad de Chajul, Municipio del Departamento de El Quiché, a meeting was held to try to quell the community's complaints for the many still displeased with the anointment of CONAP as administrator over the reserve and thus new 'owner' of the communal lands of the protected area. In the meeting, the protestors were told to direct their complaints to the Congress of the República de Guatemala to resolve the administrative concern because CONAP had no initiative to repeal or otherwise modify the decree in question (Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 78-79). Effectively shut out at the local level from processes to determine the use of communal lands, the communities were deferred to the new settler state to further contest the issues associated with the Reserve.

cccxliv After he and colleagues were hit by a moving vehicle leaving a government building. After the attack, Xi'ben was hospitalized for several days from his injuries. Infuriatingly, Xi'ben's is not an exceptional case in Guatemala. Many Indigenous land defenders in Guatemala also suffer the highest price for defending their land and Indigenous identity as they are murdered at exceptionally high rates (Amnesty International 2016). In 2020, Guatemala ranked the 4th highest country in the world for rate of land and environmental defenders killed per capita (Global Witness 2021). From 2012 to 2022, 81 land defenders were killed in Guatemala (Amnesty International [2024]). Most of these land defenders are Indigenous, but as was the case of an ally to the Ixil I met during my fieldwork in the region, Benoit Maria, murdered in April 2020, any who side with biodiversity's real protectors are at risk. Part of a larger, violent colonization in the general geographies of the Global South, Global Witness (2021: 16) reports from 2020 that all but 1 of 227 killings of land and environmental defenders that were recorded took place in the Global North. Since Global Witness began collecting data, less than 1% of all recorded lethal attacks are documented to have been from geographies in the Global North. In this specific context, the Global North is in reference to the United States, Canada, Europe, Israel, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

cccxlv Commenting on the RBM case, Grünberg and Elías (2018: 27) note that the final stage of the re-valuation of protected area lands is only facilitated once communities are relocated and concessions and rights to access the same lands can be granted to corporations and extractive industry. Stripping newly minted 'protected areas' of their on-the-ground caretakers while at the same time preparing them for consumption within the capital economy that forces Guatemalan subservience to the demands of a Global North's consumptive appetite, corruption and competition are the diseases of inequality that draw upon colonial hierarchies to steal homes and food from biodiversity after stealing the same from its dispossessed Indigenous Peoples.

cccxlvi The preference for the international system of capitalist relations is manifested quite explicitly in Guatemala's energy policy (Alford-Jones 2022) which, moderated by State laws and orchestrated and facilitated by government players, facilitates the establishment of large corporations with responsibilities to a 'consumer' instead of in alignment with pathways to conserve biodiversity.

cccxlvii As BINGOs are often allied through national government structures with extractive industry to take 'double profit' off of conservation spaces, the same spaces are harvested for resources despite their conservation status (Le Billion 2021). Deploying military and paramilitary actors to biodiverse regions of Guatemala to 'protect' what are more accurately forms of neoliberal investment, 'green security' (Ybarra 2016) discourses allow conservation to become complicit in continuing forms of colonial violence while insulating a powerful *criollo* elite (Flores 2017). Indigenous commons become stores of newly defined forms of wealth defined, controlled, and protected by and from the Global North from these discourses, as also previously described.

cccxlviii Sveinsdóttir *et al*. (2021: 118, citing Alonso-Fradejas 2018a; 2018b) provide elaboration on the political constellation of public fears about violence as constructive of "authoritarian corporate populism", or "authoritarian corpopopulism".

cccxlix Guatemala's CONAP, in particular, holds weak legitimacy for not integrating with traditional authorities and has limited institutional capacity from the State to enforce compliance, establish penalties for deterrence, or protect against corporate interests (Gonzalez-Bernat, Clifton, and Pauli 2019: 133).

cccl Gonzalez-Bernat, Clifton, and Pauli (2019: 133) document from interviews with 145 interviewees with key stakeholders in conservation planning across Guatemala, representatives of national and local government, domestic and regional NGOs, the private sector, academia, independent experts, and local community leaders and members, that "every newly elected mayor comes with a political agenda in mind"; ultimately, "municipal initiatives mostly focus on building roads, and other infrastructure projects as a way to attain more votes for the party." The cases of PERENCO in Parque Nacional Laguna del Tigre in the north of Guatemala's contested Petén department and TOMZA in the Refugio de Vida Silvestre Punta de Manabique (Izabal) provide examples where natural resources are being exported from protected areas as profitable commodities with suspect results for biodiversity (García 2011; Solano and García 2012). Within the Laguna del Tigre protected area boundaries, the extraction of oil by Basic Resources and later Perenco, a French transnational corporation, was State authorized (United Nations General Assembly 2012; Del Águila 2021: 78). A report titled 'Grupos de Poder en Petén: Territorio, política y negocios' (Power Groups in Petén: Territory, Politics and Deals) published in 2011 by the US organisation Insight Crime depicted PERENCO collaborating with a network of wealthy alliances in Petén's Laguna del Tigre National Park and thus facilitating the growth of illicit industry and an economy of extractivism within protected area boundaries (Escalón 2017). Public protests and controversy over the granted industrial activity licenses in the protected areas forced a number of CONAP officials to resign (UN General Assembly 2012) but the general trend has become less uncommon.

cccli Paulson Priebe *et al*. (2015: 427) writes of the permitting system: "In Guatemala, municipal governments can issue and tax logging permits on private, public, or municipal forest property for up to 10 m^3 of timber per household per year. Guatemalan municipalities now may own, manage, and even rent out their forests. Within municipal forests, local governments are authorized to regulate and tax forest use, charge fees for services as they see fit, and create and enforce their own management rules as long as their rules do not contradict the national forest laws. On the other hand, many municipalities lack the funds or technical capabilities to implement their own management plans or rules. In addition to the revenue raised by the municipalities themselves, they are authorized to receive 50% of the timber harvesting taxes collected by the central government, although most municipalities receive insignificant amounts. There are many ways in which municipalities have applied their taxing authority, some of which include increasing the number of forestry personnel, intensifying forest harvest, or expanding reforestation efforts".

ccclii Other parts of the Ixil Region and Quiché have also pressed municipal and national authorities over the issue of deforestation by corruption in the territory. For coverage of these see manifestations against INAB authority in Quiché from 15 June 2016 and comments in posts @knal4quiche. 15 June 2016. Accessed Nov 22, 2022. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/knal4quiche/posts/pfbid02kcbjBE1T31reWLZ75z89gLrZnBb6P73JpuYV9jnUugYqPJwHK23VYmRMuxwcbChDl.

cccliii Guatemala is cited as becoming increasingly favorable land for growing coca leaf (Dittmar 2018; Voss 2023; Murillo-Sandoval et al. 2024) and a first seizure of the crop in the country from 2017 was from a mountainous region 6 hours by foot from Coban, in the Alta Verapaz department (Dittmar 2018). Also a department sharing a border with Mexico and near to the Ixil Region, the similarities and increasing development of this illicit agricultural crop in the region lend credibility to Papjux's statements here.

cccliv The presence of illicit activity in protected areas not uncommon also in Guatemala's conservation-area heavy Petén department. Escalón (2017) and Escalón and Morilla (2017) document the discovery of one secret runway

found in Guatemala's Laguna del Tigre National Park, 25 meters from one of the Franco-British company Perenco's oil wells.

ccclv Papjux suggested that being extracted was a "petroleum that is mercury, for which one liter is worth 400,000 Quetzales. It is red and a liter weighs about 40 pounds per liter. It's there, they say. It could be this that they are transporting out."

ccclvi Del Águila (2021: 98) cites research from the NGO Fundación para el Desarrollo y Fortalecimiento de las Organizaciones de Base (FUNDEBASE) report from October 2015 entitled "Estudio de situación de los recursos naturales, industria extractiva, monocultivos y megaproyectos en el departamento de Quiché, Guatemala" that noted the purchase of 28 *caballerías* within the reserve by the Italian transnational corporation Enel (see also Iniciativa para la Reconstrucción y Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica 2012: 77). After purchase, these lands on the east of the Reserve were subsequently used to dam the Jute River, born in the heart of the reserve (Figure 14) and emptying into the Cutzalá-Cotzal River (see Figure 13 for landscape view) after Mayor José Pérez Chen assisted the company in deceiving residents (Escalón 2012).

ccclvii As of 2019, Palo Viejo I was the fifth largest hydroelectric power plant in the country (Cabria and Villagrán 2019).

ccclviii Del Águila (2021: 98) confirms that Enel may still intend to build another hydroelectric plant on the Cabá River where the (re)settlement of the population would impact the five communities of P'al, Xaxá, Santa Rosa, Tzacbatzá and Cimientos (Del Águila 2021: footnote 75; see also Iniciativa para la Reconstrucción y Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica 2012: 77). These hydropower plants, Bella Vista I and II in the north of the Reserve (Figure 14), are suspected to have been halted before the construction stage after community activism against them (Del Águila 2021: 44). Time will tell if these protests permanently halt construction.

ccclix Guatemala's Transportadora de Energía de Centroamérica S.A. (Trecsa), a subsidiary of Colombian power corporation Grupo Energía de Bogotá, provides energy transmission services and related projects in Guatemala and Central America since 2010 and holds a 50-year concession to build and operate Guatemala's transmission expansion plan (PET).

ccclx Del Águila (2021: 93) notes that in the Xacbal River basin on the west side of the Visis Cabá Biosphere Reserve, the Guatemalan State, by way of Ministries such as the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), has authorized and allowed the construction of at least five hydroelectric plants; two in operation (HidroXacbal and HidroXacbal Delta), and three paralyzed for the moment (La Vega I, La Vega II and Las Brisas) (see Figure 13). As the Environmental Impact Studies (EIA) are performed by MEM and MARN, ministries of the state, these studies are responsible for addressing the real socio-environmental effects of these investments and impacts of the plants upon the Indigenous populations of the region. A 2016 study done by Rafael Landívar University (URL)'s Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment (IARNA) evaluated, among other aspects, the socio-ecological viability of installing hydroelectric power plants in the Xacbal River basin as a line of action of the Energy Policy 2013-2027. That study points out: "The authorization of these hydroelectric projects has been based on the approval of the environmental impact studies by the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources and of Energy and Mines, which have not contemplated the necessary consultation processes to guarantee democracy in the decision making. In addition, in this authorization process the analysis of a territorial nature has not been incorporated, nor has the accumulation of environmental impacts along the river bed and the socio-ecological environment of the basin, produced by the construction and operation processes of all existing and authorized hydroelectric projects" (IARNA 2016 cited in Del Águila 2021: 93, translation mine). Nevertheless, no investigation was done for these hydroelectric power plants and communities were not consulted on either of the projects in operation (Escalón 2012). HidroXacbal in 2019 was the third largest hydroelectric power plant in Guatemala, its partner Delta the eighth (Cabria and Villagrán 2019). For the three hydroelectric projects given authorization by the state to proceed, all have been paralyzed by community injunctions that identified trespasses of consent on the part of the Indigenous [Ixil] population of the region as the reason for their contestation of the projects.

ccclxi With few officials from MARN to review Environmental Impact Studies prior to the construction of these projects, it is not unlikely that the State of Guatemala approved the projects without anyone fully reading any environmental impact study (Escalón 2012).

ccclxii A Xeputul elder commented on these losses of biocultural diversity as weakening their overall sense of identity: "[The animal] was killed, defeated, like this it disappeared. The animal they say was a carnivore and you can also see it in the huipil of the women. There are different huipiles, they were imprinted there in the huipiles.

Now they only use blouses and pants, we are losing our culture… we have to identify ourselves as the ones of Cotzal with our *indumentaria* (traditional clothing), with our language, we have to identify ourselves."

ccclxiii But not only, see Borras, Franco, and Nam (2020) for a discussion on how territorial lands are part of cultural identities in the context of Myanmar's indigenous communities.

ccclxiv Indigenous and traditional peoples are increasingly being positioned as part of the solution in sustainable tropical forest development and reform within the field of conservation (Roberts et al. 2017: 17101). Ellis *et al.* (2021: 2) recognize the 'deep cultural connection with biodiversity' held in Indigenous societies and the knowledge systems is "essential to resolve the [biodiversity] crisis".

Chapter V
Endnotes

ccclxv Implicated here in this definition of health is conserving traditional knowledge systems as Reyes *et al.* (2008: 217) connect traditional knowledge with better health outcomes: "Drawing on data from 450 adults (16+ years of age) from an indigenous Amazonian society in Bolivia, we estimate the association between traditional plant knowledge and nutritional status as measured by body-mass index" finding that "doubling an adult's traditional knowledge is associated with a mean improvement in BMI of 6.3 per cent; the association is stronger for unschooled adults and for those living far from the market town" (2008a: 217)

ccclxvi Focusing the locus of change to conservation paradigms at the level of community where it can be feasibly enacted, the literature around community science (Charles et al. 2020) and community-based conservation notes the important role of community building and social cohesion in the success of these forms of conservation (Wilkie and Painter 2021). Charles *et al.* (2020: 77) define community science as "scientific research and monitoring, based on scientific modes of inquiry, which are (i) community-driven and community-controlled, (ii) characterized by place-based knowledge and social learning, collective action and empowerment, and (iii) with the normative aim to negotiate, improve and/or transform governance for stewardship and social-ecological sustainability." Lopez-Maldonado and Berkes (2017: 7) define community-based conservation as *distinctly* people-d: "resource management or biodiversity protection by, for, and with local communities, recognizing the coexistence of people and nature, as distinct from protectionism, and the exclusion of people from nature." Wilkie and Painter (2021: 1) cite the origins of community-based conservation literature as growing from the observations of Graham Child (1970; 1982), Rowan Martin (1986), Dale Lewis (and Carter 1993), and others in Zimbabwe and Zambia in the early 1980s who noted the continuous decline of wildlife populations in these regions. A result of human pressures, despite insufficient efforts on the behalf of National Parks managed by state agencies, the continued loss of biodiversity and consistent issues from local communities in a perpetual state of human-wildlife conflict over habitat and food resources (Wilkie and Painter 2021), community-based conservation was proposed as a solution to provide effective implementation from governments for the equitable sharing of conservation management with communities. The positive effects on wildlife populations for biodiversity and local livelihoods were conceptualized as community-based conservation (Murphree 1990), the sharing of authority and allowing community autonomy as critical ingredients of success.

ccclxvii Looking closer into the ingredients necessary to allow such schemes to work effectively, Wilkie and Painter (2021) apply theories of social cohesion from Mancur Lloyd Olson, Jr. (Olson, 1965) to examine the role of social cohesion in creating the fabric of community for solving community problems using the theories of collective action. These include and necessitate the following criteria: "1. Knowing one another, 2. Interacting frequently, 3. Getting help from one another, 4. Trusting neighbors, and 5. Feeling that they belong to a group or neighborhood with a shared identity" (Wilkie and Painter 2021: 2). Coupling social cohesion with theories around common pool resource management from Elinor Ostrum (Gardner, Ostrom, and Walker 1990; Gibson et al. 2000; Ostrom 1990; Ostrom 2000), Wilkie and Painter (2021) find support for Olson's thesis from structured interviews with 29 conservation practitioners with first-hand experience working with successful community forest conservation projects in eight countries around the world. Identifying social cohesion as a common attribute for successful community forest management efforts, their findings go further to identify a sense of shared identity as *the* most important factor for social cohesion. They note that this sense of shared identity can occur without necessitating regular, positive face-to-face interactions, as Olson theorized (Wilkie and Painter 2021: 10). Recognizing the

discrepancies between the ideation of such schemes and their actualization, Wilkie and Painter (2021: 11) make clear the conditions for such conservation schemes are rooted in clearly defined territorial or resource access rights— "the point of departure" for the success of community-based conservation schemes.

ccclxviii Government efforts to enact socially-just nature conservation policies, such as community forestry in Mexico, have facilitated better management of conflicts over these resources when Indigenous and local rural communities are included under these pre-conditions (Kashwan 2017). The recommendation from the 2008 World Bank report 'The Role of Indigenous Peoples in Biodiversity Conservation: The Natural but Often Forgotten Partners' specifically cites assigned indigenous land rights as productive of projects with fewer conflicts during implementation. From the report, is the conclusion that "empowering Indigenous Peoples to manage biodiversity in their own territories has resulted in a more sustained and cost-effective way to protect biodiversity" (Sobrevila 2008: 45). Biodiversity conservation that addresses and reverses the tide of social inequality has proven ecological results (Pritchard and Brockington 2019). Addressing human rights dimensions of conservation directly, the restoration of cultural values has been noted to promote conservation and solve issues related to collective action and conservation of biodiversity when individuals show lacking incentive to act alone regarding such initiatives (Nybord et al. 2016). Conservation efforts that build-in cultural contextualization are cited as more sustainable into the long-term compared to purely legislative or regulative approaches to conservation (Berkes 2001; Infield 2001).

ccclxix Gorenflo *et al.* (2014: x) find a strong correlation between language density and biodiversity density as 70% of the world's languages were found by their study to lie within 25% of the planet's land area considered as either "biodiversity hotspots" or a "high-biodiversity wilderness areas". Maffi's research (2002; 2005; 2007) reports consistently on the high biodiversity associated with Indigenous groups by the presence of cultural/linguistic diversity indicators, demonstrating the overlap between regions with high other-than-human biodiversity and the presence of Indigenous groups and languages. Supporting these conclusions from the world's tropical belt, Stepp *et al.* (2004) cite a strong association between Indigenous language diversity and plant diversity. As one of the first to draw connections between threats to biodiversity and human language diversity, Krauss (1992: 4) also links their interconnected 'endangerment', that "[l]anguage endangerment is significantly comparable to—and related to—endangerment of biological species in the natural world". More recent research from Gavin *et al.* (2013) notes the steep decline in linguistic diversity, leading to the probable extinction of some 25 percent of the world's 7,000 oral languages, is happening at the same fast pace as the loss of biodiversity.

ccclxx From the two communities Sajbatza' and Vitzich within the Reserve (Gómez Ibarra 2011) and from the communities in or near it of Chel, Vitzich, Cabá, Paal, and Viputul in Chajul and the Maya-Q'eqchi' people of the San Miguel Uspantán municipality in the communities of La Gloria, La Taña and Putul (Girón Arana 2010), critically endangered mammals such as the Jaguar (*Panthera onca*), Jaguarundi (*Herpailurus yagouaruundi)*, Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*), Puma *(Puma concolor)*, Black-handed spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*), Mantled howler monkey (*Alouatta palliata*), tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*), and Yucatán Black Howler Monkey (*Alouatta pigra*) have been recorded or observed (Gómez Ibarra 2011: 52, 59 - 61). More recently, species such as the Pavo de Cacho, or the Horned Guan, (*Oreophasis derbianus*) and the endangered Yucatán black howler monkey (*Alouatta pigra*) (Cortes-Ortíz et al. 2020) have been cited. Other common mammals, such as the lowland paca (*Cuniculus paca)*, peccary (*Tayassu pecari*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor)* (Gómez Ibarra 2011: 53), and the tree squirrel *Sciurus deppei* (ibid.: 58), among others (ibid.: 60-62), have been recorded from encounters and observations in the Reserve. From footprint tracks, the peccary, paca, raccoon, wild deer, jaguars, coatis, and bush pigs were cited as animals common to the region (Girón Arana 2010). Guatemala's iconic bird the Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*), toucans, owls, pheasants, and many other species of orchids and ferns were all cited as common in the region at large (Girón Arana 2010) and from Olfactory Attraction Stations (EAO) that drew animals near using pheromones, perfumes, and baits, white-tailed deer, collared peccary, jaguar, jaguarundí, tepezcuintle, armadillo, pizote, mycoleon, gray fox, huitzizil kid, raccoon, ocelot, and howler or black monkey were identified in the area as well.

ccclxxi Interviews with community members (Girón Arana 2010) using oral histories identified 29 mammal species once seen or encountered in the area. These specifically were: the puma (*Puma concolor*), red brocket deer (*Mazama americana*), agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*), lion monkey (*Potos flavus*), Yucatan spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi yucatanensis*), jaguarundi (*Herpailurus yagouaroundi*), beehive bear (*Tamandua mexicana*), tayra (*Eira barbara*), river otter (*Lontra longicaudis*), porcupine (*Coendou mexicanus*), common possum (*Didelphis marsupialis*), the tiger cat (*Leopardus tigrinus),* Lowland or Spotted Paca (*Cuniculus paca*), coati (*Nasua nasua*), black howler monkey, tapir, gopher, deer, skunk, bat, shrew, squirrel, armadillo, civet, bush or wild boar, weasel, jaguar, raccoon, and fox or gray fox (Girón Arana 2010).

ccclxxii While this list is not exhaustive, among those 'endangered' are the Oak Forest Salamander (*Bolitoglossa cuchumatana*) (IUCN SSC 2020a), Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*) (BirdLife International 2020b), and the black howler monkey (*Alouatta pigra*) (Cortes-Ortíz et al. 2020); those as 'vulnerable' are the Spanish Cedar (*Cedrela odorata)* (Mark and Rivers 2017), Eastern Pipistrelle *Perimyotis subflavus) (*Solari 2018a), *Craugastor brocchi* frog (IUCN SSC 2020c), *Craugastor rivulus* frog (IUCN SSC 2020g), Ixil Spikethumb Frog (*Plectrohyla Ixil*) (IUCN SSC 2020b), Guatemala Plateau Frog (*Lithobates macroglossa)* (IUCN SSC 2020f), Xucaneb Rubber Frog *Craugastor xucanebi* (IUCN SSC 2020d); Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger)* (BirdLife International 2021); Highland Guan (*Penelopina nigra)* (BirdLife International 2020c), Ocellated Quail (*Cyrtonyx ocellatus)* (BirdLife International 2020d), Thomas's Sac-winged Bat (*Balantiopteryx io*) (Lim 2015), Chiapas Catfish *(Lacantunia enigmatica)* (Schmitter-Soto 2019*),* Yellow-blotched Palm Pit Viper (*Bothriechis aurifer)* (Campbell and Muñoz-Alonso 2014), Cloud Forest Parrot Snake (*Leptophis modestus)* (Campbell and Muñoz-Alonso 2013), Stuart's Burrowing Snake (*Adelphicos veraepacis)* (Acevedo, Ariano-Sánchez and Johnson 2014); 'near threatened' as the Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*) (BirdLife International 2023), Guatemalan Vole (*Microtus guatemalensis)* (Matson 2020), Lincoln's Mushroomtongue Salamander (*Bolitoglossa lincolni*) (IUCN SSC 2020e), Peter's Anole (*Anolis petersii),* (Campbell, Luque, and Wilson 2021), Mexican Long-Tongued Bat (*Choeronycteris mexicana)* (Solari 2018b); and those of 'least concern', among many others, are the *Ontherus azteca* (Vaz-de-Mello et al. 2014), and the Machaca Tetra (*Brycon guatemalensis)* (Lyons 2019).

ccclxxiii IPLCs also invest toward conservation from an economic perspective, measurable from the financial profits of conservation by IPLCs. Globally, IPLCs are credited as investing more financially in conservation than governments, donors, foundations, and NGOs, combined. Investing some 15–23% (about US$3.16 billion to US$4.57 billion) more resources toward conserving areas for less money per hectare, with similar if not better conservation outcomes than the former groups (Tauli-Corpuz et al. 2020: 4), the efforts of Indigenous peoples also speak to better financial outcomes for conservation. Even more evident of the restorative justice potential possible from investing in Indigenous peoples, most of these IPLCs investments in conservation happen in developing countries where fewer public spending dollars are devoted toward conservation purposes (ibid.). Bray (2020: 6, 18) asserts that the example of communal forest management in Mexico provides "the largest and most commercially successful common property regime that exists globally".

ccclxxiv Armstrong *et al*. (2021) conduct what they refer to as the first systematic study applying functional diversity metrics to Indigenous peoples' managed landscapes to evaluate how plant functional trait distributions and functional diversity are impacted by ancient and historical Indigenous management from the context of forests in the Pacific Northwest of Turtle Island. They define plant functional diversity or traits as "readily measurable characteristics of plant species that can give insights into community assembly processes and ecological interactions (e.g., drought tolerance, nitrogen-fixing capabilities, etc.)" (ibid.: 6).

ccclxxv Commenting on the oversight by many ecological studies to rarely incorporate Indigenous land-use legacies, their findings suggest to ecologists that "the effects of land-use legacies on functional diversity may vary culturally and temporally" and that ecological studies must include Indigenous peoples' land-use legacies to *accurately* understand contemporary plant species composition and functional diversity (Armstrong et al. 2021: 11). Their study provides further compelling evidence of the positive effects of Indigenous management practices and their inherent tie to ecosystem health and resilience as they observe the effects of Indigenous land use on contemporary functional and taxonomic diversity (ibid.: 6).

ccclxxvi From a governance perspective, Fletcher (2010, citing Neves-Graça 2004: 299), suggests that devolved government structures can become a main means for state institutions and nongovernmental organizations to enact effective ecological policies, 'letting go' of "dominant managerial perspectives".

ccclxxvii Citing human rights reform and the consideration of the realities of collective tenure and communal rights to land that structure pre-Columbian Indigenous societies by different understandings, Tauli-Corpuz *et al.* (2020) advocate for one alternative to 'fortress conservation' or protected area models of conservation that keep people out. They support Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs), a model of conservation productive of not only more equitable conservation models, but generative of more effective conservation measures/outcomes as well. Tauli-Corpuz *et al.* (2020) identify the rights-focused conservation at the center of the ICCA model as a means to re-center the locus of conservation efforts at local grassroots efforts where Indigenous knowledge systems and local culture in communities can serve to reinforce and build community out of conservation measures.

ccclxxviii In addition to measures that promote further IPLC decision-making rights and respect for IPLC laws, treaties, principles, worldviews, and customary practices, while further addressing Indigenous peoples' relationship with

states Reyes-Garcia *et al.* (2021) advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous and local peoples as rights-holders in the design and implementation process of biodiversity policy, at *all* levels of its creation. Kashwan (2017) notes that the creation of socially-just nature conservation requires not only that Indigenous and rural communities have concrete stakes in protecting resources within their care, but also that such groups are present and participate in the creation of policy that governs how such resources can be managed. Indigenous scholars (McGregor et al. 2018) insist that conservation policy must recognize the worldviews Indigenous and local peoples as these begin from the cultivation of responsible relationships among and between humans and nonhumans. Current efforts do not fully acknowledge the value of Indigenous and local knowledges, yet the potential for "transformative change" to biodiversity policy necessitates the recognition of these rights and agencies (Reyes-Garcia et al. 2021) should biodiversity be effectively preserved within these spaces. Including and valuing Indigenous knowledge, rights, and agency as a basis for biodiversity policy is strongly recommended by scholars across disciplines (Armstrong et al. 2021; Johnston 2022).

ccclxxix The promise of community-based conservation and the benefits of such initiatives at the community level, for both social equity and biodiversity metrics, are well documented and working examples do exist. Though IPLC conserved territories and areas is included as a governance type for PAs (ICCAs) in the IUCN classification system, it is acknowledged by IPLC communities that the knowledges cosmological perspectives of Indigenous Peoples are still left largely unaccounted for within the broader conservation community for cultural and other assumptions as such perspectives are, erroneously, not considered fit for the mission of conservation (McCarthy et al. 2018).

ccclxxx Various shifts to reframe conservation as 'convivial' (See, for example, Turnhout *et al.* 2013; Büscher *et al.* 2017; Büscher and Fletcher 2019; Oommen *et al.* 2019; Büscher and Fletcher 2020a; Fletcher and Büscher 2020b; Fletcher *et al.* 2020a; Fletcher *et al.* 2020b; Fletcher *et al.* 2020c; Büscher *et al.* 2021; Fletcher and Toncheva 2021b; Toncheva and Fletcher 2021; Toncheva, Fletcher, and Turnhout 2021; and Büscher *et al.* 2021) are a step in the right direction to address conservation's perception as a "neutral, neatly packaged and rational intervention into societies marked as problematic" (Collins et al. 2021: 3). Arguing that the valuation of nature should not be the exclusive domain of those interested in capital accumulation and that we can "overcome the 'age of capital'" (2020a: 116), Büscher and Fletcher (2020a) propose 'convivial conservation' after Ivan Illich's conviviality as a way to reimagine landscapes with the recognition of the humans that participate in them, a part of a multispecies social community that holds 'nature' and 'society' as "dialectically integrated" (ibid.: 142). Büscher and Fletcher (2020a) identify several shifts necessary for their proposal to move toward convivial conservation. To put the Capitalocene behind us, these shifts consist of the arrival to forms of tourism which imagine "long-term visitation focused on social and ecological justice" (ibid.: 169); a "focus on 'everyday nature', in all its splendor and mundaneness" (ibid.: 171); and forms of conservation which proffer democratic methods in its forms of engagement that make nature accessible to everyone locally. These shifts, building upon forms of social cohesion and shared community identity, Büscher and Fletcher (2020a) argue may work "to actively create networks and alliances across disciplines for taking political action" (2020a: 135-136) and bring conservation into the political. Collins et al. (2021) and Krauss (2021), Mabele, Krauss, and Kiwango (2022) and others, however, argue that without addressing the specific inequalities created by colonialism, dialectically reintegrating nature and culture will not sufficiently address the issues threatening biodiversity.

ccclxxxi Similarly, from the Guatemalan highlands in a wide mountain valley just outside of Totonicapan, Isakson (2009: 732), notes that the K'iche' Maya village's name of Nimasac means in the local K'iche' language 'big field'.

ccclxxxii Teosinte is a plant now native to the lower, warmer, moister habitats of Mexico's Guerrero and Michoacan states, where the landscape is represented by seasonal tropical forest as opposed to the semiarid highlands (Matsuoka et al. 2002; Doebley 2004; van Heerwaarden et al. 2011).

ccclxxxiii Research from Matsuoka *et al.* (2002) connect maize to a single domestication point from Balsas teosinte (*Zea mays* ssp. *parviglumis*), its wild common ancestor (Piperno et al. 2009; Matsuoka et al. 2002; Kistler et al. 2018) which still grows today alongside maize in parts of Mexico. While there is strong evidence that *milpa* landscapes evolved with humans in these geographies in reciprocal relationship (Brown et al. 2009; Allaby et al. 2021), Allaby *et al.* (2021)'s new landscape framework of crop origins supports a shift in thinking from simple single-localized crop origins and domestications to more complex origins, according to new genetic and archaeological evidence of evolution as a slow process involving large populations over wide areas. Allaby *et al.* (2021: 276) write of the case of maize thus as 'semidomesticated' as 'multiple extractions' selected by humans allowed gene flow to create maize next to wild teosinte grass populations, writing that "analysis of the soft selection of domestication syndrome alleles from wild standing variation demonstrates that different waves of semidomesticated maize dispersed from the Mesoamerican range, and show different biases in teosinte background, … maize origins resulted from multiple extractions over time from the region of origin against a background of

extensive geneflow across wild teosinte populations." Several plants of the *milpa* continue to pass these various archaeogenomic and archaobotanical tests of origin that trace them back to Mesoamerica.

[ccclxxxiv] From the Central Balsas River Valley of Mexico, maize phytoliths and starch grains date back to 8700 B.P. (Piperno 2011: S460) or 9000 years B.P.

[ccclxxxv] By way of both group-to-group diffusion and relatively short-distance migrations of local farming populations who took advantage of damp floodplains and conditions amenable to maize, maize agriculture was spread across much of the southwestern United States and adjacent areas of northwestern Mexico (Merrill et al. 2009) and has a long history in these regions today.

[ccclxxxvi] Using paleogenomic techniques, da Fonseca *et al.* (2015: 1) comment that the initial diffusion of maize into the Southwest about 4,000 years ago "is likely to have occurred along a highland route, followed by gene flow from a lowland coastal maize beginning at least 2,000 years ago." Other scholars cited the introduction of maize to the lands of the so-called U.S. Southwest some 4100-4300 years B.C.E. (Merrill et al. 2009), spreading by about 800 (Perdue and Green 2010: 10) - 1000 A.D./C.E. throughout Turtle Island/North America (Mann 2022). Building upon Staller *et al.* (2006)'s findings, with software-based methods to date and locate proto-languages, Brown *et al.* (2014: S459) found that maize was also widely dispersed south into lower Central America by 7600 years B.P. (see also Kistler et al. 2018: 1309). From the late Pleistocene from the Jemez Cave, located within San Diego Canyon in the center of the Jemez Plateau in today's so-called New Mexico, a long record of Archaic period use (approximately 5500 BCE to 700 cal CE) locates some of the oldest dated maize (Zea mays) in the American Southwest (Roos et al. 2021: 3). Figures 31 and 32 depict the paleobiolinguistical maize reconstructs from Mesoamerica and on into Turtle Island territory farther north. As far south in the hemisphere as Amazonia researchers have documented the adoption of Mesoamerican maize (*Zea mays*) from at least 6,000 B.P. (Bush, Piperno, and Colinvaux 1989) to ~6500 yr B.P. (Allaby et al. 2021) or 7000 B.P. in the inter-Andean valleys of Colombia (Brown et al. 2014: S459) where the Tequinho and JK geoglyph study sites in Acre state, Brazil recovered maize (*Zea mays*) and squash (*Cucurbita* sp.) phytoliths (Watling et al. 2015).

[ccclxxxvii] From the relatively new field of paleogenomics, approaches to well-documented temporal sequences of archaeological assemblages has also opened new possibilities to study domestication, moving beyond simple distinctions of 'wild' versus 'domesticated' to track sequence changes from a wide range of genes over the course of thousands of years (da Fonseca et al. 2015: 3).

[ccclxxxviii] Though maize is an important actor in the evolution of food systems throughout North and South America, with the exception of groups along the Pacific Coast, Great Basin, in the far north, and those hunting on the plains, "everywhere else, in the desert Southwest, in the Missouri River system, and east of the Mississippi River from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash, revered by the Iroquois as the Three Sisters, produced the bulk of the food for Indian people" (Perdue and Green 2010: 10). A 1677 description from Jacques Marquette who spent a bit of time with the Illinois in the 1670s is quoted in Morrissey (2019: 52) shows that maize and squash were present as far up as the Illinois Confederacy of the Illinois Valley: "They [the Illinois] raise Indian corn, which they have in great abundance, have squashes as large as those of France, and have a great many roots and fruits. There is fine hunting there of Wild Cattle, Bears, Stags, Turkeys, Ducks, Bustards, Pigeons, and Cranes." Around the time the United States was founded, the Great Lakes Anishinaabek (or Anishinaabeg) grew the three sisters of corn, beans, and squash during the summer in fields and near the beaches of the Great Lakes as part of a seasonal diverse food system (Fletcher and Singel 2017: 892). As far north in Turtle Island as the territory of the Wampanoag Native Americans, whose ancestors met European colonists in 1621, we know that maize was a local staple food of the continent's Indigenous peoples. One man by the name of Tisquantum taught colonists how to plant corn and many traditional Wampanoag dishes continue to contain maize (Buettner 2022), as well as the other two 'sisters' of this pan-American food system (Kimmerer 2013). The Wampanoag staple stew of *msíckquatash* contains hominy, a nixtamalized corn-porridge, beans, and squash, while other dishes include a squash stuffed with hazelnuts, dried blueberries, and maple syrup; *nasaump*, a cornmeal soup; and poached pumpkin slices in sassafras tea (Buettner 2022). At times sharing similar landscape ecologies, oak and forbs are also shared food sources from the Hemish or Ancestral Pueblo farmers' gardens (Roos et al. 2021) in the middle of the continent and the Maya Forest Gardens (Ford and Nigh 2009: Table 1, p. 217) in the south. From the Riverton site in today's southern Illinois, the earliest North American setting to show evidence of a complex of many known and potential crops grown together by low-level food producers shows pale chenopod grown with squash (*Cucurbita pepo*) and bottle gourd (*Lagenaria siceraria*), among other large-scale harvesting among oak-savannah and oak-hickory forests (Fritz et al. 2017: 61, 64).

cccclxxxix Staller *et al.*'s (2006) finding of the shared cognates for 'maize' from the Proto-Mayan term for it that is common to 29 of the 30 modern Mayan languages today indicates that the northern migration of proto-Huastecan Mayan speakers from the Proto-Mayan homelands of highland Guatemala to northeastern Mexico occurred after the Proto-Mayans had maize, likely bringing the domesticated companion with them as they traveled and interacted with other native peoples of the continent. Hill (2010: 236) depicts some of the historical linguistics of maize cultivation in Mesoamerica and North America as the cultivation of maize spread out across the continent, shared or exchanged by pre-Columbian peoples. Recognizing the cognate density for maize-related terms in the Southern Uto-Aztecan languages in the areas of Mexico and the United States today, Merrill *et al.* (2009) suggest that Southern Uto-Aztecan bands were critical facilitators of the diffusion of maize agriculture as they migrated southward across the desert lowlands of today's Arizona-Sonora borderlands. As a result of this companion migration, from Mesoamerica to the U.S. Southwest, a Southern Uto-Aztecan linguistic continuum was created as these groups moved northward.

cccxc Maize cultures are found up to Anishinaabe peoples (Kimmerer 2013) to the southwestern U.S. (Merrill et al. 2009; Piperno et al. 2009) and in a great variety of conditions throughout the Western Hemisphere and globe today.

cccxci From other studies done in nearby Huehuetenango (FAO 2001) and from the language of Mam, the Maya language with which Ixil shares its roots, the word for maize is similarly 'ixim'. Bassie-Sweet (2008: 19), cites Kaufman and Norman (1984)'s classification of the three proto-Ch'olan corn types as *ajän*, "roasting maize" (green maize); *nal*, "ear of maize" and *ixim*, "grain maize" where the latter term *ixim* is also used to describe maize in general (Bassie-Sweet 2008: 19; Banach 2016: 28).

cccxcii Accounts back to 1934 (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934: 128-129) document maize-based foods as deemed suitable for gods, for traditional reasons, a belief that maize brings rain from gods, and that it signifies purity and divinity, thus showing this spiritual place of maize for many Maya.

cccxciii The *Popul Vuh* is the most well-known historical sacred text of the ancient Maya, continues to form an integral part of the processes of knowing for Maya of today (Battiste and Henderson 2000), and is considered the most comprehensive on the topic of Maya creation, performed by a family of creator deities (Laughlin, Hopkins, and Casimir 2015: 107). Though the exact author of the version that survives today is unknown, this version is thought to have been recorded from oral dictation and translated into Spanish some years after any original versions were destroyed by the Spanish. Christenson (2007: 15) cites a member of the Maya lineage of Kavek of Quiché-Maya nobility, likely Diego Reynoso, as the figure who set down during the years of 1550 to 1555 to write a version of the Popul Vuh, the Santa Cruz del Quiché text that survives in some version still today (de la Garza 1992: xvi). Recinos (1992) identifies this as perhaps done by the colonial-era Spanish friar Francisco Ximénes. The *Popul Vuh* continues to be a part of the oral inherited stories for the Quiché region's contemporary Maya K'iche' people and others throughout the former Mayan civilization's lands today (Battiste and Henderson 2000).

cccxciv According to Spanish arrivals from the 16th century, a great number of written texts once existed from the Mayan peoples of Mesoamerica, written on various materials including rocks, wood, ceramics, bone, jade, and some specific codices written on animal skin or paper of fig trees (de la Garza 1992). In the Spanish quest to "banish idolatry", however, most of these written texts or codices were found by the Spanish and systematically destroyed, their indigenous Maya *sacerdote* keepers persecuted, tortured, and murdered alongside them (ibid.: x). Quoting earlier research (1975: 68), Mercedes de la Garza (1992: x, translation mine) cites the importance of these texts lost to the Maya peoples: "los códices eran para los mayas algo más que el medio de conservar sus conocimientos y sus tradiciones; eran el símbolo de todo lo sagrado y digno de respeto, la clave para comprender el espacio y el tiempo y para situarse en ellos, la norma de vida y el principio de identidad de su ser comunitario".

cccxcv The similarities of this process and the nixtamalization of maize that must occur in its preparation to be eaten could also be noted from the passage which she writes: "In the final creation, the creator grandmother ground corn seeds into a fine paste and mixed this dough with water; from this mixture the first human bodies were modeled (Christenson 2003a: 193-95). The text specifically states that the corn dough became flesh and the water became blood. The corn seeds were obtained from a sacred mountain known as Paxil, "split," and Cayala, "lime water, bitter or stagnant water." (ibid.).

cccxcvi Bassie-Sweet (2008:7) cites the location of Paxil Mountain to be in northwestern Guatemala, a geography also home to the Ixil Territory. Chapter 13 of her text *Maya Sacred Geography and the Creator Deities* discusses the mountain's location in detail. Banach (2016; 2017a; 2017b) provides further detail on the specific knowledge traditions of the Maya Ixil that trace origins to Paxil Mountain that lies within the Ixil Territory.

cccxcvii The Q'eqchi' define themselves as *Aj Ral Ch'och'* (sons and daughters of the earth) from the territories they continue to inhabit into today (Mingorría 2021).

cccxcviii In Mingorría's (2021: 4) words, the Q'eqchi' have helped to create "an identity that has been politicized and reconfigured to face continuous threats. Like that of other indigenous peoples in Guatemala, the Maya-Q'eqchi' community identity has been the product of a history of repression and racism."

cccxcix From the Maya cosmovision, each individual is also born with a *nawale* that gives guidance on their roles and responsibilities more specifically. Ixil Alcalde Indigena Don Diego explained that *Nawales* correspond to one's day of birth and designate which certain traits or capabilities one carries. He tells a group and me that, according to the *abuelos*, "each one of us is on a mission— we meet here, and we go there. Sometimes we are used toward a mission". He gives himself as an example: "I studied to be a teacher [but], it turns out, that it is not my role. I study medicine and it's hard for me to learn because it's not my function [according to my nawale]. Each one of us here has a chosen mission and we fulfill our mission, we do it with enthusiasm, I would say with pleasure. But when the will to do it is a little weak, we are lazy to teach— right? [Whereas, for example you, (pointing to a teacher in the group)] you are a pedagogue, [so] you love it. You like to prepare your classes because it is [your passion]; this is what you have to offer to the world. We all have a mission in this world. What happens is that when we do not know [what is our function], when we [apply ourselves] badly. We [were meant to] do the work that is dictated at our birth."

cd Nazarea (2005) speaks of this process conceptually as creating 'memory banks' instead of disaggregated plant seed banks.

cdi Spouse of Pablo Ceto, Universidad Ixil's current rector and founder.

cdii "*Tiichajil* is understood not only in an individual perspective, but also as the collective values of the community: harmony, equal opportunities, and the role that each person plays." (Banach and Herrera 2021: 49-50).

cdiii Focusing on 'completeness' and 'balance' as the important most prominent general characteristics of *tiichajil* Banach and Brito Herrera (2021: 52), they use another term, '*eela chil vatz'*, to define *tiichajil* "in an everyday sense", breaking down the phrase from Ixil to also mean "balance", or "the parts have to be equal".

Chapter VI
Endnotes:

cdiv The Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*), a long-tailed striking but aloof bird, is also green, allowing it to blend into the canopy of this habitat. The bird is Guatemala's national bird.

cdv Watts (2013: 23) provides a description of the 'agency of place' as conceptualized in Indigenous cosmologies with the notion of Place-Thought, a way to conceptualize more-than-human agency by understanding human agency itself as tethered to place as a part of Indigenous identity: "the agency that place possesses can be thought of in a similar way that Western thinkers locate agency in human beings. It follows that if, as Indigenous peoples, we are extensions of the very land we walk upon, then we have an obligation to maintain communication with it. A familiar warning is echoed through many communities, that if we do not care for the land we run the risk of losing who we are as Indigenous peoples. When this warning is examined in terms of original Place-Thought, it is not only the threat of a lost identity or physical displacement that is risked but our ability to think, act, and govern becomes compromised because this relationship is continuously corrupted with foreign impositions of how agency is organized."

cdvi Monika Banach and partner of Pablo Ceto, Universidad Ixil's current rector and founder, Elena Brito Herrera (2021: 49-50) define *tiichajil* as a term that: "refers to freedom, peace, life without violence, conflicts or any type of discrimination or persecution, because of the defense of goods or life itself. *Tiichajil* is understood not only in an individual perspective, but also as the collective values of the community: harmony, equal opportunities, and the role that each person plays. These values are practiced as *tiichajil tenam*, where the word *tenam* refers to the community or the pueblo. An inherent element of this thinking is that well-being among all beings, human and other-than-human, is necessary for the collective experience to allow *tiichajil tenam* to occur."

cdvii See also Lope-Alzina (2017) for analysis of the *milpa*, or homegardens, as a social practice.

cdviii Also referred to as '*tiichajil tenam'* by the Universidad Ixil (Banach and Brito Herrera, 2021; Universidad Ixil, 2022)

cdix For more information on the Universidad Ixil performing decolonization see Batz (2022).

cdx This feminism is described as "a process of epistemic construction, is woven from the territory; from the body and its relationship with the land" (Gargallo 2012: 177, cited in Patiño Niño 2023: 3)

cdxi Isakson (2011) cites specifically those departments in the western highlands of Sololá, Quezaltenango, and Totonicapán as holding the highest concentrations of maize diversity in the Mesoamerican region.

cdxii According to the UNEP GRID profile for Guatemala, the country holds high endemism of amphibians and reptiles globally (Townsend 2014; Johnson et al. 2017). For the North American continent as a whole, the total levels of herpetofaunal endemism decreases gradually from the United States and Canada at 61.2%, to Mexico at 61.1% and Central America at 55.6%. Guatemala is included in the 'Central America' category in this analysis from Johnson et al. (2017: 614). For all species, Guatemala holds "perhaps the highest rates of endemism in Central America" with over 13% of the known species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and plants identified as endemic to the country, according to the EC and UNEP/GRID Interactive Country Fiches project (a database that contributes to the UN Environment Programme of Work Sub-programme 7 Environment) and Guatemala's summary on biodiversity at EC and UNEP/GRID [2022].

cdxiii Or MIAF, for the abbreviation of the Spanish "Milpa Intercalada con Arboles Frutales" which translates to "Milpa Intercropped with Fruit Trees" (Cadena-Iñiguez et al. 2018; Fonteyne et al. 2023).

cdxiv Conclusions from Islebe *et al.* (2022: 4) indicate "The fossil pollen maize data and their relationship with alternating precipitation levels indicated increased maize production after 300–200 BCE as a response to regional dry climatic conditions, local environmental conditions, and tropical forest disturbance. The ancient Maya culture did not depend exclusively on maize, as many other edible plant species were available. The importance of maize during dry stages of the Preclassic period, after climate-induced forest openings, was essential. We agree with Tuxill et al. that maize was a famine breaker during drought periods. The geographical extension of droughts and their effect on tropical forests, and maize agriculture, is a key factor to understand how ancient Maya culture developed."

cdxv This study used the Land Equivalent Ratio (LER) for analysis, the LER representing the area that would be necessary to produce what is obtained from a polyculture on monoculture land area (Fonteyne et al. 2023).

cdxvi When this is done, the exchange of seed is heavily influenced by networks of trust among people. Studies from Guatemala show that from the local perspective, family and neighbors in a community share close proximity, deciding seed flow to more local boundaries, whereas in more regional exchange of seed exchange the relations are more distant, happening more characteristically between traders, shop-keepers, NGO personnel, or vague acquaintances, where factors such as centrality to a provincial market or interest in innovative characteristics of seed are more strongly influencing the flow of seed between people (Perales et al. 2005; Perales et al. 2003; van Etten and De Bruin 2007; van Etten et al. 2008: 316). In the Guatemalan highlands, Isakson's (2011) findings support these conclusions as most of the region's seed exchange happens within the family structure. In the larger more urbanized environment of Chimaltenango, Guatemala, one study drawing from 455 responses of individual seed lots about their seed sources found that 58.7% of the seed in these individual agricultural systems came from the household itself, making household autonomy in seed production as "the most common form of seed procurement" (van Etten and Bruin 2007: 62). Blood relations and neighbors (22%) were other significant sources of seed reported from the study (ibid.). Similar studies from eastern Mexico show that both family or acquaintances (Badstue et al. 2006) and proximity are the strong deciding factors for how maize seed travels among local farmers. In 20 communities 0–2,980 meters above sea level in five states of eastern Mexico most of the seed trade was found to happen within a radius of 10 km from a single farmer's community (Bellon et al. 2011). Furthermore, despite the correlation between trading seed farther distances for larger commercial areas, research on maize seed from Chimaltenango, a medium-sized centrally located Guatemalan town which sees the passage of many transportation routes and connections for commerce, showed that regional differences in seed here too were found to be small (van Etten et al. 2008). Citing the regional exchange that did occur as appearing most often in association with the acquisition of innovative varieties (ibid.), even in larger cities maize seed seems to stay within close human circles. For the very practical reason of reducing uncertainty surrounding seed viability and the social transaction costs associated with the exchange of seed Badstue *et al.* (2007: 1588) remark that: "acquiring seed via one's social network can be seen as a way of reducing the risk of planting inappropriate seed." In the context of food sovereignty where these seeds directly feed families, such assurances of the quality of seed are of the utmost importance. In this regard, social or known actors provide not only higher confidence to a buyer, but also these nested networks of community allow better communication and first-hand information about the seed to be transmitted with the material substance (Badstue et al. 2006).

^{cdxvii} Fonteyne *et al.* (2023: 05) refer to this as a MIAF (Milpa Intercalada con Arbolos Frutales), Milpa intercropped with fruit trees, typical of *milpa* throughout Mesoamerica.

^{cdxviii} Fonteyne *et al.* (2023) point out that the amount of labor the *milpa* requires is one of the main challenges farmers express as to why these food systems are becoming challenging to maintain. Workloads of 27 to 401 days per hectare, per crop cycle are required human labor inputs for *milpa* systems, the amount of time contingent upon the management intensity and the length of time a field has been under cultivation, according to Table 1 in Fonteyen *et al.* (2023: 10).

^{cdxix} In a review of the scientific literature on the agronomy of the *milpa*, Fonteyne *et al.* (2023: 05) note that studies on the effect of modified crop placements on associated crops of the *milpa* are very rare but cite Aguilar-Jiménez *et al.* (2011) and Caudillo Caudillo *et al.* (2006) when suggesting the effect of the densities of the crops together as helping to reduce light, nutrients, and water available to unwanted crops in the *milpa*.

^{cdxx} See coverage (such as Xiong, McCarthy, and Culver 2024) of human migrations through the Darian Gap for some sense of the scale of inequality these systems exert to force many to migrate to survive.

^{cdxxi} For high altitudes, *tierra fria* (cold land), as many as ten months are needed to grow maize. Here, farmers often sow seed in January and harvest in November and December. In *tierra caliente* (hot land), more common across the country and where lower altitude varieties are grown, a shorter growing season occurs for maize between April or May to October or December (Hellin et al. 2017) and may allow for multiple plantings. Grandia (2014) notes that in the north of the country in Guatemala's Peten department, the climate allows for up to three maize harvests per year. Given multiple harvests, she notes that typically the first harvest is for home consumption and the second may be for sale in markets and for the planting of special occasion crops. Climate, rainfall patterns, and geography are still significant considerations for *milpa* agricultural systems grown in tandem with natural cycles, but, increasingly, particularly in parts of the country where multiple harvests are possible, the influx of foreign seeds into traditional *milpa* systems after CAFTA-DR has flooded traditional *milpa* production systems with hybrid seed. Grandia (2014) finds that the most resilient and desirable seeds are still used for the first *milpa* harvest in these parts – as "they are more likely to use local varieties because these store better for family consumption and can be saved as seed for the next season". It is a second *milpa* harvest, usually destined for local markets, where it is more likely to find a field planted with hybrid seed (ibid.: 93).

^{cdxxii} As Horst (1989: 24) notes, the western highland varieties of maize are often preferred by farmers for their better taste and texture. See also Guzzon *et al.* (2021).

^{cdxxiii} Kuokkanen (2007: 41) cites the words of Tom Mexsis Happynook, Nuu-chah-nulth hereditary whaling chief and founding chair of the World Council of Whalers, to refer to laws of a more-than-human social order where Indigenous Peoples' practices reflect a sense of responsibility that is cultural and form laws across species: "When we talk about indigenous cultural practices we are in fact talking about responsibilities that have evolved into unwritten tribal laws over millennia. These responsibilities and laws are directly tied to nature and are a product of the slow integration of cultures within their environment and the ecosystems." According to the 'laws' of these place-specific Peoples, the 'environment' is a place where such rules guide relations in support of one another.

^{cdxxiv} D'Alesandro (2024, forthcoming) expands upon this term in support of elaboration of scholars from external relation and Ixil internal cosmological perspective, respectively, in Banach and Brito Herrera (2021: 52) to broadly understand this term to reference Ixil ancestral and cultural social norms.

^{cdxxv} Citing Wies *et al.* (2022), Fonteyne *et al.* (2023: 2) note that the use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides, or herbicides has little effect on maize productivity as they are often applying improperly. Osorio Alcalá and Fabián (2019, cited in Fonteyne et al. 2023: 07) found yields with maize increased with synthetic fertilizers while beans were not affected and squash responded better to organic inputs. Fertilizer use has become common in *milpas* of Yucatán, Chiapas, and Puebla, Mexico (Mascorro De Loera et al., 2019; Espidio-Balbuena et al., 2020; Haas, 2021, cited in Fonteyne et al. 2023).

Chapter VII
Endnotes:

^{cdxxvi} Demonstrating the continued interest in the novel, from many different languages, the novel will receive another English language publication in 2024 (Etchart, forthcoming).

[cdxxvii] Among those that I can share is that Rodrigo Asturias Amado, son of the Nobel Prize-winning writer Miguel Angel Asturias, who took as a nom de guerre Gaspar Ilom after a protagonist in *Hombres de Maize's*, his father's novel, was a known guerilla commander, also known in the Ixil Region. Born in Guatemala City in 1939, Rodrigo Asturias was educated and felt convinced the only resolution for Guatemala's injustice was through armed struggle, becoming a guerrilla commander and left-wing politician in his life. He founded the guerrilla army known as the ORPA (Revolutionary Organisation of the People in Arms) which united with other armed groups to form the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union, or URNG, in 1980. Leading the guerilla forces, the group believed "just one final push was needed to defeat the Guatemalan army", a push instead the military to respond with ruthless scorched-earth campaigns and extermination strategies that brought genocide for Indigenous People, particularly the Ixil, during the 1980s. As a member of the URNG high command, Asturias was a signatory to the 1996 Peace Accords. The former guerrillas thereafter turned the URNG into a political party that Asturias unsuccessfully ran for president afront (Harding 2005). Regarding the internalized significance of Asturias's character Gaspar Ilom as the character fused with Indigenous Ixil and other Maya traditions from the region, the following declaration was made by a young anthropologist who lived in the Ixil Region at the end of the 1970s (cited in Simon 2012: 76). The passage provides some idea for what the literary genre of magical realism connotates with a story that becomes reality and reality interwoven with stories, particularly where cultural traditions meet, and where people from these different realities of Guatemala such as those gathered with me that day, also meet: "Hay un personaje mítico, tomado de la novela, *Hombres de Maíz,* de Miguel Ángel Asturias, que representa al indígena tradicional. Su nombre es Gaspar o Xan y es la identidad del pueblo de Chajul. Por eso es que el pueblo se llama San Gaspar Chajul; él es su espíritu. La gente empezó a hablar de él, como si hubiera sido atrapado por el Ejército, pero al final Gaspar siempre le jugaba la vuelta al Ejército, si el Ejército quería cometer un acto de violencia en su contra, o torturarlo, lo hundían y lo ahogaban con un palo, pero de pronto, él aparecía detrás de ellos, como magia. Les había jugado la vuelta, se les había escapado". "La gente contaba tantas historias de tortura y cómo Gaspar se burlaba del Ejército, y eso les daba gran orgullo. La población repetía estas historias como un medio de identificación propia y como una forma para mantener a la comunidad orgullosa de cara a la invasión. Era una forma de escape, porque este sonaje mágico se las arreglaba para hacer lo que ellos no podían. Se burlaba del Ejército, se les pasaba y el Ejército moría y Gaspar sobrevivía".

[cdxxviii] Toft (2021: np) summarizes: "an Indian guerrilla leader poisoned by the Machojóns. He fought against the maize growers, who were destroying the forests. The Indians believed that he rose from the dead to continue to curse those who burn down the forest to cultivate maize as a cash crop instead of treating it as a sacred food."

[cdxxix] As documented by Royano Gutiérrez (1993: 90) Asturias detailed of his methods that "I listened a lot, I imagined a little, and invented the rest" ("Oí mucho, supuse un poco más e inventé el resto").

[cdxxx] Some of the parallels were uncanny. The encounter with Gaspar Ilom's in 2019 as I visited Ixil farmers with these Guatemalans from the city to grow the Ixil *Mercado Campesino* existing market was probably the most notable one. Through the successful shipment of 'canastas', or what could be considered community supported agriculture (CSA) I was able to help connect these city men with other buyers and a market in the city, allowing Ixil harvests to improve nutritional access to others in the urban setting while amplifying economic possibilities for farmers growing and harvesting their milpas. In some kind of parallel with the novel, with initiatives like these that allowed Guatemalans to help one another in mutual benefit, reciprocity, there is a parallel that could be seen with the novel as people turn to ants and collect the harvest together at its conclusion (Prieto 1986; 1988): "Wealth of men, wealth of women, to have many children. Old folk, young folk, men and women, they all became ants after the harvest, to carry home the maize" (Asturias 1993: 306). Prieto (1986: 365) refers to *Hombres de Maize* as "thus a wistful invitation, through language, to participate in the social revolution which Asturias advocated throughout his life." This chapter hopes to demonstrate how that social revolution marks a critical point of convergence into the political national stage through the democratic election of the *Semilla Movimiento* party.

[cdxxxi] Here I am specifically referring to Asturias's son Rodrigo's guerilla leader affiliation in the western highlands during the internal armed conflict years after the novel was published. Rodrigo was an important guerilla leader, one present and signing the Peace Accords in 1996.

[cdxxxii] As suggested by his less than flattering treatment of them in his 1923 law degree thesis (Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2024) entitled "The Social Problem of the Indian".

[cdxxxiii] As noted previously, Asturias's son Rodrigo was a very well known guerilla leader of the ORPA and then subsequently the URNG. As I will be referring to Asturias Senor throughout this text, this is who is referred to with the name surname Asturias.

cdxxxiv A scholar of Indigenous Maya cultural histories in Guatemala and translator of the *Popul Vuh* over several decades, he was born into a Guatemalan family who could trace themselves back to Spanish colonists arriving in the 1660s. Placing him most accurately as a part of Guatemala's *criollo* elite at an intersection of where the colonial powers fracture, he was introduced to alternatives beyond the state at a young age after his father's political trouble with the early 20th century Cabrera dictatorship. The political troubles of his father caused Asturias's family to move to the departmental capital of Salamá for a few years during his early childhood to live with his grandparents. It was also likely here where he was first exposed to Indigenous Guatemalan culture by way of exposure to it from an Indigenous nanny, Lola Reyes. Other than this, however, Asturias does not appear to have background with Indigenous communities beyond what might be expected from the average Guatemalan city Ladino. As he was Guatemalan, however, and took a great interest in Maya cosmology for much of his life, many of his stories likely came from study of Guatemala's Indigenous cultures.

cdxxxv With protagonist Gaspar Ilom of the first story and the real history of the Ixil People it is possible to see how the cycles of violence continue to purge commons and life from Indigenous peoples in the country, an all too familiar narrative for the Ixil and many Indigenous populations in Guatemala. In popular culture, it is also possible to see how the stories of *Hombres de Maize* have been adopted in Indigenous culture. See, for example, Marimba Contemporánea de Guatemala (2018).

cdxxxvi Commenting on the comparison between the way of addressing Guatemala's issues for Asturias and Arévalo, Prieto (1988: 355) writes that "The distinction between them was methodological rather than ideological; their goal was always the same, different only the way to attain it. While Arévalo set out to physically transform Guatemala by giving land to the peasants, Asturias strove to transfigure the soul and conscience of his people. This is why in *Men of Maize* he denounces the exploitation of the soil, the plight of the Indian and, for the first time in his fiction, offers a remedy and shows his countrymen the path to recovery. The education of the men of maize would be initiated through the written word, their renewal be effected by redrafting the social contract with ideas which, if executed, would crystalize into "the architecture of the new life" which he had indited as early as 1928."

cdxxxvii Important in this analysis, it is not the intention of this chapter to speak from the perspectives of the Indigenous in the country on what the election of Arévalo and the *Semilla* Movement has meant or means to them. The chapter does not feature that discussion but is focused instead on how the *Semilla* Movement has built its platform atop existing energies from Indigenous struggles over land in the country.

cdxxxviii The power over land is cited as one of the key factors "central to the war", according to Curruchich Cúmez 2006: 48 (cited in Gellman and Bellino 2019: 17): "The concentrated occupation of land among the few, the exploitation of cheap labor in the plantations on the southern coast, the discrimination, the racism, the complete abandonment of the indigenous populations, clearly demonstrate a state constructed on the foundation of excluding the majority and representing one of the factors that caused the internal armed conflict".

cdxxxix Namely, the Molina resignation and the efforts of the UN-sponsored, and now disbanded, CICIG, which pursued Guatemala's corrupt oligarchy and attempted to eliminate it within the country

cdxl Located at a distance of about 15 minutes to the power plant and another 20 minutes to the municipal center of San Juan Cotzal by vehicle, the village of San Felipe Chenlá and its neighbor, Santa Avelina, host approximately 1,700 inhabitants. Residents were brought to this village and others in the territory by force in the 1980s with the creation of 'model villages', measures imposed upon the Ixil population by the Guatemalan military as a means of control and surveillance against guerrilla groups during the war (REMHI 1998; CEH 1999).

cdxli At the national level, from Guatemala's 1985 Constitution, Articles 66, 67, and 68 assert that the State must recognize and respect Indigenous customs, social organizations, and traditional land administration with a specific law for these outlined in Article 70. The law, however, has never been formally passed. From the 2002 Municipal Code Article 20, there is a recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights to legal personhood and to have Indigenous authorities recognized by the State. The Law of Urban and Rural Development Councils (Decree 11-2002) specifically regulates the consultation of Maya, Xinca, and Garífuna Indigenous Peoples in the country for projects that concern local communities. Problematically, Article 55 of the code identifies the traditional authorities from these communities as a parallel, yet *subordinate*, authority to municipal mayors, further stipulating in Article 109 that municipal governments should consult with traditional authorities to establish mechanisms regarding the use, management, and administration of communal land presided over by the Municipal Government (Kuper 2014: 63). While laws and regulations do exist, a parallel system of norms that place power beyond Indigenous structures of society tends to usurp any of their authority.

cdxlii Under Decree 6 from 1996, made into law on June 5, 1997, Guatemala is a signatory of the ILO Convention 169, an international agreement that oversees Indigenous communities and communities impacted by development

and industrial projects and their right to free, prior and informed consent on any legislative or administrative measures that could impact them directly. From the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Guatemala voted in favor of the General Assembly resolution that stipulated the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before the adoption of any measures that might impact such populations, their territorial spaces, or their resources. In Guatemala's case with the ILO, power asymmetries are showcased in the decision of the Constitutional Court of Guatemala, however, as exchanges within consultations with communities were not made legally binding (Aguilar-González et al. 2018: 249). Contributing in large part to the antagonistic dynamics between corporations and communities, the convention and the declaration, both international instruments make only small progress as they fail to bind signatories to any implementation and force Indigenous Peoples themselves to realize the potential of these tools (Costanza 2015). In the context of mining, Aguilar-González *et al.* (2018: 252) indicate that Indigenous communities have developed their own processes to express sentiments on projects impacting them, known as "community consultations of good faith" that use established methodology in the Municipal Code. Though the processes are ruled to be legal, they are still discredited by the State, mining companies, and local public officials.

[cdxliii] Kuper (2014: 26) explains that the formal mechanisms for the consultation process are vested in governmental structures in Guatemala, institutions at the community level that are an extension of the State called the Community and Municipal Development Councils (COCODE and COMUDE). These councils, however, do not address or include traditional community assemblies or councils which are composed of different individuals and function differently. Larson (2008, cited in Prado Córdova 2021: 16) notes that from the perspective of communities, Guatemala's community councils are recognized in various ways, yet due to these institutionalized power inequalities that leave them beyond the state and outside of formal governmental structures, they have no legally binding authority.

[cdxliv] Enel's annual contribution to the municipal government is cited by Batz (2023) as $294,871, less than 1% of Enel's estimated earnings. Batz (2023) also documents Enel's reports from 2022 that boast of the potential from Palo Viejo hydroelectric to generate the equivalent energy required by 133,920 homes in Guatemala. Of the 5,624 homes in Cotzal in 2018, however, a majority of residents did not have access to electricity (ibid.). In 2021 Enel agreed "to provide 100% renewable energy" to McDonald's restaurants in Guatemala, (ibid.), clear signal of its interest to elevate corporate alliances over giving back to the community.

[cdxlv] Depicting a delegation of 12 representatives from the National Association of Generators (ANG) and U.S. Embassy officials in a meeting on September 7, 2005, the cable documents a discussion the discussion of those in attendance. The document is accessible here:
https://wikileaks.jcvignoli.com/cable_05GUATEMALA2250?hl=GUATEMALA.

[cdxlvi] Data from the UN General Assembly (2012) around the time of 2011 Palo Viejo Hydroelectric Power Plant protests (cited in Fernández and Marcos 2012) in Cotzal note that Guatemala's Ministry of Energy and Mines granted four licenses in 2011 for the installation of hydroelectric plants in indigenous territories with an additional eight underway toward approval. These, already additional concessions, were added to a total of 15 concessions for hydroelectric projects after 2008; 18 further concessions for exploration and exploitation of construction material, and 33 beyond these figures for exploration and exploitation of metals and non-metals (ibid.), concessions also granted in that time. In all of Guatemala, as a result of changes to mining laws that opened the country to foreign investment in the late 1990s, Dougherty (2011) documents an increase of 1,000 percent in mining and exploration licenses between 1998 and 2008.

[cdxlvii] Of the community consultations that were objected to by Indigenous and local communities, most of the conflicts that they instigated could not stop the projects, most of which in operation today, Palo Viejo included. See the EJAtlas (2022) for cases where objections have mobilized community movements against such projects, a small minority of which could be considered successful. One successful case of Indigenous mobilization, however, is from the municipality of San Juan de Barillas in the neighboring department of Huehuetenango where a social movement mounted against the Galician company Ecoener-Hidralia resulted in the renouncement of a project that would have taken place (Público 2016).

[cdxlviii] Schwartz and Isaacs (2023: 23) use the term 'oligarchy' to make sense of 'Guatemala's brand of authoritarianism' after Maxwell A. Cameron's definition of the term. They define oligarchy as "rule by the wealthy. In such a regime, political power flows from wealth, and is used to defend wealth by securing property and resisting redistribution." As Guatemala's wealthy interests are "neither static nor unified" (ibid.: 24), beyond "just landed elites" (ibid: 34), the criminal oligarchy gains power "from illicit as well as licit wealth. Alongside traditional wealth sources such as agriculture, commerce, industry, and service provision lie illegal wellsprings such as the corrupt

capture of state resources and organized crime in the form of drug trafficking, money laundering, and extortion" (ibid.: 23). The term is now util for including the "role of political officials and criminals who become rich by illicit means" (ibid.: 34).

cdxlix Schwartz and Isaacs (2023: 24) note that although interests of the criminal oligarchy are not necessarily overlapping, they converge against threats to their power: "[p]olitical or judicial challenges that threaten rent-seeking and corruption or the reign of impunity tend to run into a united front against reform".

cdl Media reports and Batz (2022: 1) cite from the incident in 2011 that as many as 500-1000 soldiers and policemen from various ranks of the police force were stationed in San Felipe Chenlá.

cdli Identifying the processes of history instead of as unilinear "general historical patterns", sociologist Charles Tilly theorizes social movements as a function of interrelated mechanisms (Tilly 2001: 401) where boundary construction provides a means to identify the emergence of shifting political identities encapsulated by such movements (Tilly 2004). From his well-known essay entitled "Social Movements and National Politics" Tilly (1984: 306) defines a social movement broadly as: "a sustained series of interactions between power holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly visible demands for changes in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support".

cdlii For marginalized populations like the Maya Ixil, who have been "dispossessed of their livelihood resources [and] forced to undergo a metabolic transition of their own" (Brototi and Schaffartzik 2021: 9), contesting transformation is a means to address the loss of land for their polycultural subsistence lifeways and the particular precarity such changes bring through inequalities that remove farmers and biodiversity caretakers from their lands at unprecedented rates (Borras et al. 2010; Scheidel and Sorman 2012). This process implicit in the development of capitalism, from the Marxist canon, Tilly (1986: 5) theorizes that the "proletarianization of work" leaves "the declining control of households over their own means of production, and the increasing dependence of those households on the sale of their labor power". These processes occur simultaneously for many Indigenous Peoples as their territories are repurposed by capitalist elites for profit from the large-scale export of primary commodities made from these territories (Svampa 2012).

cdliii Finding one another in a differential understanding of space, Muradian et al. (2012) write that inter- and intra-scale networks tend to evolve in the process of liaising between local peasant groups, indigenous communities, and urban environmental NGOs that weave their self-organization into various international campaigns and networks of the larger environmental justice movement.

cdliv Specifically, they write: "Environmental justice movements, born out of such conflicts, can become, therefore, key actors in politicizing and confronting such unsustainable resource uses, by pushing public debates on the use of the environment, and also through formal means of contestation, and through direct and disruptive actions to stop unsustainabilities."

cdlv From a context specific to Guatemala, Aguilar-González et al. (2018: 244) write that tracing the origins of these movements to rooted injustices of the colonial era, add the element of place as these 'nested ecological distribution conflicts' (NEDC) "cannot be understood in an isolated manner as it is deeply nested in the background of inequality and violence of the studied reality".

cdlvi A worldwide struggle that already engages millions of small-scale farmers fighting for food sovereignty, the effort, they write (Perfecto, Vandermeer, and Wright 2019: 248), is "more likely to yield long-term biodiversity benefits than buying a patch of so-called 'pristine' forest".

cdlvii Martinez-Alier et al. (2016: 731) include food sovereignty, along with environmental racism, popular epidemiology, the environmentalism of the poor and the indigenous, biopiracy, tree plantations are not forests, the ecological debt, climate justice, land grabbing and water justice, as intersectional terms that emerge from social activism to describe the environmental justice movement since the 1980s and 1990s, the movement itself developing these concepts and its own campaign slogans to describe and intervene in the inequality-based conflicts they describe since. The 'environmental justice' social movement and the ecological distribution conflicts that provide it with substance for transformation (Temper et al. 2018), have at least a 60-year history of connection to the rise of pro-peasant movements and theorization about them from left-wing ecologism. Left-wing ecologism was developed between the pacifist communalism introduced by U.S. counterculture from the 1960s and the anarchist communalism of Murray Bookchin (Vianna Franco 2021: 426-7). These set the scene for the more articulated environmental justice movements of the early 1980s as a formal political popular movement in Europe and the United States. The concept of environmental justice emerged as one dimension of a global Civil Rights movement in the 1980s (Montenegro de Wit 2021: 112) but has become popular in India, parts of Africa, and Latin America as

sizable populations have been drawn to the contestation of injustice through this environmental dimension. Decolonial theorists have linked the struggles to maintain knowledges of and practices with the land and the transformation of social-ecological relations in food systems to the same issues of race and racism that influenced the growth of inequality and unequal power relations in communities confronting oppressions during the Civil Rights movement (Montenegro de Wit 2021: 112). Calling for an environmental justice movement to address the environmental dimensions of social inequality (Scheidel et al. 2018), proponents of the environmental justice movement identified the racial dimensions of injustice to note the disproportionate and acute effects of environmental pollution and degradation upon communities of color all over the world. Unequal ecological exchanges along a Global North/South axis (Vianna Franco 2021: 427) mirror inequalities established amid the transcontinental slave trade and European colonialization that mobilized divisions based on race.

Martinez-Alier *et al.* (2016) note that political ecologists and ecological economists have contributed terms that draw attention to the inequalities present in a global environmental justice movement with concepts around an 'ecological footprint' and notions of a social metabolism (Brototi and Schaffartzik 2021).

[cdlviii] Characterizing agroecology as referring broadly to a set of social, political, and agronomic principles useful for advancing transitions toward a sustainable global food system (Altieri 2018; Gleissman 2018) and its knowledges as combined with "the latest insights from the science of ecology" (Pimbert 2015: 288), gained also in response to what industrial agriculture has taught us what *not* to do (Perfecto, Vandermeer, and Wright 2019: 93), agroecology is both a method and a philosophy for sustainable local-scale agroforestry projects and agriculture. Gliessman (2018: 599) defines agroecology as "the integration of research, education, action and change that brings sustainability to all parts of the food system: ecological, economic, and social. It's transdisciplinary in that it values all forms of knowledge and experience in food system change. It's participatory in that it requires the involvement of all stakeholders from the farm to the table and everyone in between. And it is action-oriented because it confronts the economic and political power structures of the current industrial food system with alternative social structures and policy action. The approach is grounded in ecological thinking where a holistic, systems-level understanding of food system sustainability is required."

[cdlix] The work of Eric Holt-Giménez (2001; 2006) on Latin America's '*campesinx-a-campesinx*' movement, places the origins of the food sovereignty movement and the agroecology revolution from Guatemala's western highland region of Chimaltenango as early as the 1970s.

[cdlx] Though Altieri and Toledo (2011) were hardly noting the first instance of the practice, their documentation of a specific exchange of these Maya Kaqchikel farmers initiating a visit to Mexican farmers of Tlaxcala (Vicente Guerrero), to see for themselves and learn from northern colleagues about the creation of a school of soil and water conservation (Altieri and Toledo 2011: 601), has become a pivotal reference for the global agroecological revolution that began in Latin America from the praxis of these farmers.

[cdlxi] "Undoubtedly, the myriad of traditional systems still existing in Latin America comprise a globally important ingenious agricultural heritage that reflects the value of the diversity of agricultural systems adapted to different environments and tells a fascinating story of the ability and ingenuity of humans to adjust and adapt to the vagaries of a changing physical and material environment from generation to generation".

[cdlxii] Looking into the connection between the concept of territory in its complex definition and agrocology, it is important to note that the term agroecology is helpful to identify the work of peasants at a global level but the term alone is not specific enough to denote the aspects of justice that is woven into the concept of food sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples. The term in isolation does not specify the organicity needed to define it as a movement tied to human cultural interactions and political dimensions, both of which significantly contributing to the rise of transnational agrarian movements like LVC that mobilize around environmental justice more broadly (Giraldo and Rosset 2018).

[cdlxiii] Transition, or 'transformation' (Temper et al. 2018) is identified by Scheidel et al. (2018: 588) after Geels (2010) from an STS perspective as seeking to understand the historical technological change and how the development of specific technologies and institutional frameworks lead to the reconfiguration of socio-technical relationships.

[cdlxiv] the Pan-Maya movement today is referenced by many names— Mayanization, Mayan nationalism, the Mayanist movement, Mayan revitalization movement among these—, and has a great diversity of individuals connected to and supportive of its progress. As Cano Contreras, Page Pliego, and Estrada Lugo (2018: 22) note, references to a Maya identity and cosmovisions associated with such identities opens wider reflection on Guatemala's historical past, a topic that remains contentious and political in the country still today. Its proponents, however, transect positions in Guatemalan society. In recent years, Maya identities are being strengthened from their

use in academic, legal, cultural, economic and other circles to further political claims where a pan-ethnic identity references a continuity of tradition from Maya ancestral origins, languages of Maya descent, and Maya worldviews that have traveled in oral traditions (Cano Contreras, Page Pliego, and Estrada Lugo 2018: 15). Nevertheless, Scheidel *et al.* (2018: 595) call for the alliances of academics and activists, through means of co-producing knowledge and institutional support for threatened grassroots activists as a support structure that must do better to support Indigenous and environmental earth caretakers who pay the high price of these active battles on the frontlines of protecting the more-than-human world, where these identities are perhaps most strongly tested.

cdlxv Among the Maya-Q'eqchi' peoples, Alonso-Fradejas (2012: 523) writes that different generations, genders, and classes of labor have organized to challenge corporate land deals that usurp communal lands from Indigenous Pueblos.

cdlxvi Ybarra (2011: 805) makes the point of community formation that occurs from the shared experience of being torn apart and coming back together with shared language and shared experience that is now part of a regional identity of 'being Q'eqchi'. She describes this as a "self-conscious construction of place through active processes of work". Alonso-Fradejas (2012: 523) connects the understanding of *buen vivir* or 'good living' with the defense of territory and the resignification of what it means to be Q'eqchi' through a term for this collective identity of Q'eqchi' peoples from the Q'eqchi language as "*R'al Ch'och*" ("Sons and Daughters of the Earth", who live off and care for Mother Earth, who reciprocally cares for them)" indicating that "It is under this shared and powerfully ideologising identity as *R'al Ch'och* that different classes of labour, generations and genders among the Q'eqchi' peoples are gathering to defend their access and control over territorial land resources, and to struggle for alternative, non-extractivist livelihoods on the basis of their own understanding of "good living" (*sahil ch'ool*)."

cdlxvii The signing of the Peace Accords in Guatemala in 1996 further reified Maya identities as the *Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas* (Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples) became the signatory party to the 1996 agreement, gaining them from then on an internationally recognized historical-political subjectivity. Articulating and expressing themselves as Indigenous '*Pueblos',* or Peoples before the Guatemalan state and the international community, in this pivotal historical moment for Guatemala and the Maya community within it, Indigenous Peoples affirmed their existence also as one political group representing several Indigenous Peoples within Guatemala (Cano Contreras, Page Pliego, and Estrada Lugo 2018: 14).

cdlxviii Non-Indigenous terminology for these identities has adopted terminology from these defenders of territory, adapting it to these identities as 'environmental and land defenders' (Menton and Le Billon 2021; Le Billion and Lujala 2020), which appears more formally now in activist and academic circles after the defense of territory has become nearly ubiquitous shared terminology across global Indigenous social justice movements. Referring to the inequities of these grassroots activists who fight for better environmental conditions on their own lands, 'environmentalists of the poor' (Martinez-Alier 2002; 2014) for the marginalized economic conditions shared by these activists, the formation of decolonial more-than-human identities is also a defense of life as asserting rights to territory and access to food in connection with the land also comes with increased threats, repression, and violence against those advocating for themselves who contest neoliberal and militarized interests.

cdlxix Land and seed are conceptualized interchangeably by the same understanding. Brush (1999: 543) makes a comparison with culture that also should not be commodified: "Just as cultures cannot be described as bounded or essentially derived entities, neither can crops."

cdlxx Yagenova and García (2009: 158) note that the strategic slogan "In Defense of the Territory" was used by the Council of the Peoples of the West (Consejo de los Pueblos de Occidente) that shared "strong community support" in western Guatemala where the group was active then in six mostly indigenous departments, Quiché among these.

cdlxxi For a detailed discussion from Guatemalan archives on land tenure in the Ixil Region, Elliott (2021) is an excellent resource.

cdlxxii From Canada's Idle No More movement, Calderon (2014: 33) describes decolonization generally as "a grassroots response to legislation in Canada that undermines environmental protections of that settler nation's water systems and diminishes First Nations' sovereignty and ability to protect their homelands."

cdlxxiii The concept of Indigenousness or indigeneity is articulated by Alfred and Corntassel (2005: 597) as "an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism".

cdlxxiv Citing national regulations that guarantee Indigenous structures be recognized, these authorities previously eroded by a repressive State have been consolidated again in their defense of territory, as Ixil *Alcaldia Indigena* of Nebaj Don Ajmag explained, to enforce existing laws that guarantee such rights: "In the case of ancestral authorities, there was an Ixil case that had a recognition of the forms [of ancestral authorities]. [Thus,] we have come out managing ourselves also in this [Guatemalan] system. When they violate our collective rights on all

concerned with the topic of territory, we make use of this human right [to territory]. Because they are there, we only say respect your law, sir.”

cdlxxv See also Konforti's (2022) documentation of the Q'eqchi' territorial defense struggles against the EXMIBAL project (Fénix nickel mine in El Estor) run by the Swiss-based Solway Investment Group Fénix-El Estor), “emblematic of the overlap in interests between transnational companies and the political and economic elites of the country” (Aguilar-González et al. 2018: 244), and the sugarcane company Chabil Utza in the Polochic lowlands and the landmark December 2023 Inter-American Court of Human Rights successful verdict for the Agua Caliente community against the state of Guatemala case (Shailer 2023). In the latter, the ruling declared that the Guatemalan government violated the rights of the Indigenous Q'eqchi' people to property and consultation when it issued mining permits on lands that members of the Agua Caliente community have lived on since at least the 1800s. An immediate stop to mining without the consent of the community was also issued in the verdict.

cdlxxvi Networking the efforts at one point beyond even Guatemala, the Cotzal villages impacted by the power plant tried to connect with an international community for help and support. Photos in the Cotzal Exposition documented the arrival of the Ambassador to the United States to Cotzal in 2011 to sign an act of solidarity with the community and the *Alcaldia Indigena* fighting on their behalf (Figure 23). Additionally, two Maya Ixil representatives took the issue to Enel's headquarters in Rome, Italy on April 20, 2012, attending the corporate assembly meeting there to press for justice from the company. Asserting their ancestral rights over the mountains, rivers, and forests back home, they petitioned executives to regard them as equals: “We are Mayan Communities and Pueblos with our own history, values and norms; We seek a relationship between equals. We have ancestral rights over the mountains, forests and rivers that will produce the million-dollar business of electrical energy. Without them, financial power will not produce energy or million-dollar profits” (Fernández and Marcos 2012, translation mine).

cdlxxvii To explore their responses to the elders, Joselito asked: “Suppose that we brought [the *finquero* and first ‘landowner’] Pedro Brol here, what would you tell him?”. One of the young men responded angrily, “now I wouldn't say anything to him, he killed our people” suggesting with his next words that the community would kill him instead. Reminding the young men of the known assassination in 1975 of Luis Arenas, the owner and another *finquero* from Chajul's *Finca* La Perla, and the 1978 murder of former *Finca* San Francisco inheritor Enrique Brol (Palencia Frener 2021: 129) during the same period, Joselito reminded them “…and what happened to the Finca [afterwards]? It continued operating, do you remember? The Finca is still here. So give me another idea because this didn't work! They already tried it and it didn't change anything! Your grandmothers and grandfathers already did it and it didn't do the job! The one who killed Brol was killed himself afterward. How many of them do you have to kill for the prize of recuperating the land of the Finca?”

cdlxxviii López (2019) reports on this *assemblea* that took place on October 25, 2019, as the Chajul Community Network.

cdlxxix “Now [these] lands are in their hands,” Lu told me, “they maintain them. Now they don't let us enter to reach them because we are locals and now we do not have permission.”

cdlxxx Abbreviation for the Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas’. The National Council for Protected Areas, in English, is the government agency tasked with conserving and managing biological diversity for sustainable use in protected areas of Guatemala.

cdlxxxi In full, Cornelio said: “What happened was that, historically, there was a territory occupied by more than 20 communities. In 1997, that territory was declared a protected area and they did not consult the inhabitants. This is a custom, always, of the state, going to put something there without consulting the inhabitants. That is part of the problem. So within the map of this made protected area, there are settlements of about 18 communities. *Campesinos.* Some live within the communities on the map and others have their lands within that map. The congressional decree arrived saying that human settlement is prohibited within the protected area. Many in these communities are afraid that at some point they are going to lose their land, be forcibly relocated, though they have not done this because Chajul on the 27th heard the news and demonstrated. …and there is also an agreement that, in the first place, we want to be consulted. Without having consulted the communities, only with the authorization of the state and the notified authorities, they have given everything over to a company.”

cdlxxxii Reflecting on the intricate organization needed from this Chajul and Ixil land defense collective meeting that day, to not only understand the state and international structures of dispossession against them but to also effectively communicate their struggles, organize themselves to confront them peacefully, and assemble tools for that defense of life as they know it in a second language, the challenges facing this small community are immense. Simple financial barriers to mounting the defense of their territory, such as a lack of funding to hire a Spanish-proficient lawyer. Specifically, in the areas of Chajul designated under the Reserve, the general population has access to

primary and basic education only (Alfredo Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 59). Assemblies, or *assembleas*, and self-organization methods like these, are the very grassroots efforts of the defense of Indigenous ancestral lands, and through them, access to the most basic necessities guaranteed through food and seed sovereignties.

cdlxxxiii Organized from Ixil leadership structures, *Alcalde Comunitaria* (a term which literally means 'community mayor' but references leadership in the most local level of society according to Ixil traditional governance structures) leaders from each village within the threatened areas in or on the boundary of the park were in attendance at the event, as well as residents from the 12 communities of the declared protected area Visis Cabá -- Juil, Bichox, Bisiquiquichún, Bisich, Juá, Chel, Las Flores, Xesaí, Cabá, Xaxboc, Pal, Tziajá and Chaxá (Alfredo Pelicó Caballeros 2011: 83)—, at least one representative from each community and *Alcaldia Indigena* leaders from each municipality. Ixil elders ('*Principales*'), a vestige of formal traditional governance structures that continue to be chosen by the community and perform duties of leadership without monetary compensation, were also in attendance with other supporting groups from the community that included representatives of local Ixil NGOs, community-led associations, radio stations, faith-based leaders and organizations/NGOs, departmental representatives, one Guatemalan City small-business owner, and various individuals from an international community, some, like myself, fulfilling the role of 'international observer'. Among these were the the Misión de Naciones Unidas para Guatemala (MINUGUA), the pan-Maya group Defensoría Maya, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman in Guatemala, and la Comisión Presidencial de Derechos Humanos (COPREDEH), and myself, representing the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary/Vienna, Austria.

cdlxxxiv Though diverse, the meeting counted the absence of one notable actor, an actor critical in the creation of the conflict in the first place. Noting the clear lack of participation toward "peace", the self-appointed administrator and owner of the land at Visis Cabá, the State, was not represented by any in the crowd. Addressing that tension, Poncho, the event's moderator, opened the event clearly and succinctly with the articulation of the simple goal of achieving 'peace': "This meeting, this gathering where we are finding each other, aims to reach the *bien común* [common good] and peace between communities". Neither CONAP nor any representative from the nation-state mechanisms appointed to oversee the administration of the protected area –the reason for the gathering that day— joined them in attendance to work toward an amenable solution. The long process of community consultation and organization of this communal governance structure together to discuss the threat to the communal and ancestral lands of Visis Cabá was very clearly an arduous planning and coordination project but at no point was the State or its representatives interested in getting involved to find amenable solution for all impacted.

cdlxxxv One simple comment from a woman in the audience gave some dimension for the enormity of taking on the State as an opponent for the simple freedom to access land to live on and grow food from. After some 45 minutes of the event's proceedings, one woman in full *indumentaria* characteristic of Chajul Ixil women elders (a handmade blood red wrapped *corte* [fitted skirt] and *huipile* [woven blouse], a tasseled *cinta* [woven thread adornment] around the hair and old Reales coins crafted into earrings, also a mark of her generation of Ixil women with embodied experience living through the internal armed conflict) stood up abruptly and requested Ixil translation from the event organizers. A room mostly full of Ixil men, the suddenly central presence and voice of the woman to point to a simple but obvious request gave a preview into the dimension of organization that these bottom-up Indigenous land defenses of the collective must evolve into. A comment that lead to notably increased engagement from the crowd, making clear a simple comprehension challenge of the Ixil room to understand Spanish speeches, the woman's comment and presence in the community should indicate that space where these processes are less visible. From homes and on the sites of the landscape itself, also those places where the Ixil and, relevant here Ixil women, perform their food sovereignties directly, many Ixil, for the same reason, cannot spare time for the less immediate tasks of defending their lands as they are engaged in the immediate work of caretaking them and their families to survive first and foremost. This is the premise, also, of food and seed sovereignty, protecting this work and right to food, seed, land, and a healthy life.

cdlxxxvi The patchy Anthropocene is defined by Tsing, Matthews, and Bubandt (2019: S186) as "the uneven conditions of more-than-human livability in landscapes increasingly dominated by industrial forms."

cdlxxxvii See Alonso-Fradejas (2015: 507) regarding 'The Popular, Peasant, Women and Indigenous March' (La Marcha Indígena, Campesina, Popular y de Mujeres) on 27 March 2012.

cdlxxxviii Citing OBS (2016: 11), Borras et al. (2016: 48) notes that a direct action is a specific form of protest, "such as the refusal to comply with an eviction order, the occupation of a house or piece of land as a symbolic act to oppose eviction or reclaim rights ("land occupation"), the blocking of roads or the entrance of a project site, or other forms of direct action."

cdlxxxix A group of Maya Ixil and I merged with the gathering at the urban transit point of Chimaltenango, Guatemala, marching the last 118 km with them into the capital city.

cdxc This is especially effective when *campesinxs* take to the streets for long periods, as they did in 2023 to enforce their vote at the polls (Schwartz and Isaacs 2023).

cdxci Photo and video from the event are also documented by the following organizations, among others: Federación Guatemalteca de Escuelas Radiofónicas FGER Facebook post from May 7 2019:

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=2266995090178925&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia;

Red K'at Guatemala May 6, 2019:

https://www.facebook.com/watch?ref=search&v=824046317954140&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia; and May 3, 2019 :

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=412479909336449&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia;

Asociación de Abogados Mayas - Nim Ajpu ON May 8, 2019:

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=2268647639845059&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia;

Movimiento De Radios Comunitarias post from May 3, 2019:

https://www.facebook.com/100008279410138/videos/2324310194521605;

Autoridades Ancestrales de Guatemala post on May 3, 2019:
https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=250418895792233&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia

Voces de Mujeres post on May 2, 2019: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=1158921454296510&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia

Guatevisión on May 8, 2019: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=446909385851127&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia

ALBATV post on May 7, 2019: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=2439621372723957&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia

Emisoras Unidas Xela post on May 1, 2019: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=452008112042499&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia;

Waqib Kej Convergencia post on May 9, 2019:
https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=680358482765311&external_log_id=30a04ba3-ddad-4e52-a35b-8190cc483080&q=marcha%20de%20la%20dignidad%20por%20la%20vida%20y%20justicia

cdxcii Some of those signs read: "No more corruption by the megaprojects! Let CICIG continue with investigations. It's a right"; "The organization of Q'imb'al Women of the Ixil Pueblo demand justice for the dignity of the Indigenous peoples"; "The Communities of Chajul are present to defend our communitary territory, mountains, forests, and protected areas. To the government, respect our rights as Indigenous peoples"; "We are opposed to the new Law 5377"; "The [Pueblo Ixil] demands that justice is provided according to the CICIG"; "The women of the Ixil Territory/[Pueblo Ixil] demand justice for corruption."

cdxciii One speaker states: "So you see, in the inside of the country, for the fight of our Maya People is achieving more than in Guatemala, all brothers, all together, as the Popul Vuh says, let's go forward. All together, we have the right, the political constitution of the republic clearly states that we all have rights, the only thing we have to do is wake them up, no we won't any longer drive them away, deceive them. The Pubelo Maya is weaving together, the Pueblo GuateMaya… what the Pueblo Maya says is the truth and not a lie, it is not politicking, it is what they are doing."

cdxciv Connecting *Pueblos Originarios* and *Indigenas* of today with the fight of ancestors and past generations in the last 500 years, the speaker said "we are not on our knees, we are not forced, because we are determined to follow the example [of specific named nonhuman ancestors]. All of our ancestors, and more, grandmothers, have given their lives in this fight."

cdxcv "We have united our steps to reject the criminal alliance, which currently has control of the three powers of the state. ... we carry out this march because we have the firm conviction that it is urgent to confront the actions of the corrupt pact and that is why we call on everyone to once again carry out indignation and action because it is not only about confronting the corruption of the point is to create greater conditions for the dispossession of towns, communities, and individuals. We walk because we reject the nomination of candidates with judicial processes against them, defenders of genocide, and the death violence that strikes our towns, drug traffickers, corrupt, and other disastrous candidacies that show the poverty and collapse of a system of political parties that they can't classify you as democratic."

Chapter VIII
Endnotes

[cdxcvi] The influence between the various nested scales of the defense of territory movements is multidirectional as different local movements may also gather different groups within their local territories in the name of the wider movement. One such example is the September 5 and 6, 2018 meeting in the Ixil Region's Nebaj, Quiché at the offices of the Network of Ixil Women. Approximately 30 women from different resistances around the country participated in a meeting for female defenders of territory, body-land, where they "worked on healing as a fundamental tool for security and protection" (PBI 2018: 6).

[cdxcvii] Schwartz and Isaacs (2023: 32) express some concern that Semilla and Arévalo could become "the common enemy that the coalition can use to reconstitute itself", and the "likely event" that Arévalo and Semilla cannot surmount their impasse to implement their domestic agenda (ibid.: 33).

[cdxcviii] Lehoucq (2023: 108) finds, explicitly, that the "inequality of land ownership (or any other measure of economic and social power, for that matter) is an indirect measure of the influence of the upper class or any other set of interests in politics", pointing out that those who own a disproportionate share of the wealth are easily able to mobilize and come together to protect their interests, often with unexpected or unwanted results.

[cdxcix] Not insignificant offering, Arévalo's connection to land reform would be transformative should he be able to address the injustice of reform left after the 1954 coup de état's undemocratic interruption. Going forward, unless Arévalo can uphold his personal history's promise of substantiating material change to the partnership with Indigenous territorial defense movements, the potential for transformation will continue to be captured by the neocolonial political elite until the grassroots movements like the one documented in this chapter can fully materialize structural change.

[d] Sanford (2003: 153) notes comment four from a declassified cable sent in 1982 from the United States' Central Intelligence Agency, which assisted the Guatemalan military, stating that it was a "well documented belief by the army that the entire Ixil Indian population is pro-EGP [creating] a situation in which the army can be expected to give no quarter to combatants and non-combatants alike," showing the Guatemalan military regarding the entire Ixil Maya population as supporters of the guerrillas. According to Sanford's (2003: 158) statistical analysis of the CEH's findings, 14.5 % of the Ixil Maya population were killed during the La Violencia period of the war.

[di] Sanford (2003: 155) notes that as early as 1982, "it was clear to human rights observers that the Guatemalan "Indians" were the target of the army's campaign of terror."