



## Postcolonial and Anti-Systemic Resistance by Indigenous Movements in Mexico

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### Abstract

*Indigenous resistance against neoliberalism reveals numerous social transformations and political contributions in the context of a postcolonial transition from the world-system. The Mexican indigenous movement, inspired by the Zapatista rebellion, renewed conversations between the country's diverse indigenous peoples but also established new alliances with non-indigenous sectors of national society in defense of the commons and alternative ways of life to the civilizational order of capital. The radicalism, led by the indigenous peoples in their process of transformation into a social subject deploys new forms of collective action that break with the ideological discourses and narratives of modernity. As in other parts of the global South, communities in Mexico are actively engaged in consolidating their ability to govern themselves, through strategies of autonomy and self-determination, providing a wide variety of services to improve the quality of life of their members, diversifying their productive base and renewing their cultural heritage, while defending and caring for their territories. The indigenous movement is currently experiencing a conceptual and discursive renewal that inverts the assimilationist thesis implicit in the slogan of "Never again a Mexico without us," from which their historical exclusion in the project of nation was questioned, to "We, without Mexico" that poses a radical questioning of the worn-out model of the nation-state, which assumes as its main objective to think (and act) beyond the State and capital. As part of international networks and alliances, they are engaged in leaving the world-system.*

**Keywords:** Zapatistas, Decolonial, Autonomy, Self Determination, Non-State Organizations, Cosmopolitics



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Towards the end of the twentieth century, the indigenous peoples in the Americas initiated a process of politicization of ethnicity that was soon described as an “indigenous emergence” (Bengoa 2000). Their ethnopolitical movements became one of the principal protagonists in the struggle against neoliberalism throughout the continent (Bartra and Otero 2008), morphing into a series of indigenous crusades that would soon define the dynamics of political struggle. Their main demands, beyond identity claims, included the recognition of collective rights around autonomy and self-determination, constituting an open challenge relating to the liberal state from the margins, even from its antipodes, beyond a relationship of the State with the indigenous peoples, historically based on perspectives of cultural dissolution or assimilation, and diverse forms of internal colonialism whose objective is the expunging of their identities. These movements called for a different relationship based on full autonomy and self-determination. In the Mexican case, they reformulated the main demand of the national indigenous movement organized in the National Indigenous Congress that emerged from the Zapatista uprising of 1994, from the original slogan of “Never again a Mexico without us,” embodying the paradigm of the nation-state, to a new radical questioning of the model of national integration, proposing an alternative project, “We without Mexico”, whose meaning is, in short: “We without a State” (Aguilar 2018).

The importance of the indigenous movements in Mexico has been widely discussed and documented (Velasco 2003; López Bárcenas 2016; Bastos and Sierra 2017); examining their significance and scope is beyond the purpose of this article. Rather, our objective is to consider the potential for the social and political transformation of Mexico’s non-state anti-systemic movements, as reflected in the rich variety of experiences of the independent indigenous organizations that are emerging and flourishing within the framework of the complex historical transition generated by the terminal crisis of the modern/colonial world-system.

Our analysis is grounded on the vantage point of these actors, the myriad groups who are coalescing into increasingly strong organizations. As they associate with each other and develop strategies to assert their demands, they are increasingly adamant about the need to critique and go beyond the nation-state, the Mexican government, and its panoply of institutions that have systematically marginalized and impoverished them; of course, there is an ever-present tension about this relationship: for the government has the wherewithal that in part comes from the very economic system from which they are distancing themselves.

Often portrayed as “radical” by those who don’t perceive the depths of the impact of centuries of internal colonialism and exclusion under the several post-independence regimes in Mexico, these peoples are “simply” beginning to construct different worlds for themselves, worlds in which their traditions, cultures, cosmogonies, and their basic human rights are recognized and can be attended. Their strategies become “anti-systemic” because the State in the current world-system is unable and unwilling to recognize them as peoples in their own right. This anti-systemic radicalism was not limited to the claims of individual groups or even regional associations, as became evident

during the first decade of the new century, when the World Social Forums gave voice to the competing visions of how to construct the “new world in which many worlds can exist.”<sup>1</sup>

What became clear is that the worlds we are writing about are societies in which peoples are organizing to live (and thrive) on the margins of the capitalist system. Modern world-systems analysis was born out of an effort to characterize the consolidation North Atlantic sphere of influence as it tried to evolve from the colonial-imperial dynamic into control on a global scale of activities of the dynamics of capital accumulation and territorial integration; as Wallerstein (2004) characterized it: “we are dealing with a spatial/temporal zone which cuts across many political and cultural units, one that represents an integrated zone of activity and institutions which obey certain systemic rules” (Wallerstein 2004: 17). But, in the words of Gustavo Esteva (2020), an influential “deprofessionalized intellectual” who offered leadership to groups seeking to construct independent paths to separate themselves from the world-system, “the world as we knew it, in particular the economy, will fall apart. The collapse will spread like wildfire. As always, those who have less will suffer more” (Esteva 2020: 22).

The main contributions of the indigenous peoples of Mexico’s non-state movements come from their critique of the prevailing idea of a “double strategy”: the idea that they must first take power and then transform the world. They share an alternative vision of the forms of power and its exercise from a non-state-centric horizon; furthermore, they offer a profound critique of the two-phase strategy that has implications for the deconstruction of the capital-ecological trinity between power/capital/nature that organizes the world around an androcentric, anthropocentric and Eurocentric vision. From that epistemic-political perspective, it was common to understand “the idea that the needs of women, ‘minorities’ or the environment [always] were secondary and should be addressed ‘after the revolution’” (Wallerstein 2002: 35).

The current anti-systemic radicalism of the Mexican indigenous movements arises from the combination of the struggles of women and the collective defense of the commons. This new expression of ecoterritorial feminism, committed to the defense of land and territory is driven by an emerging indigenous intelligentsia; it is most clearly reflected in the activism of women involving more than 30 indigenous peoples linked to the *Tzam* initiative that focuses on the way in which each community exercises the thirteen Zapatista demands: work, land, housing, food, healthcare, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, peace, women rights, and the right to information.<sup>2</sup> For the Zapatista movement there is a time to ask, another to demand and another to exercise. Now is the time when these demands are seeds that become actions.

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<sup>1</sup> A uniquely North American (but insightful) history of this anti-systemic dynamic is briefly outlined in the keynote address by Wallerstein to the Political Economy of the World System Group (2014). For a more detailed analysis of the rise of anti-systemic movements, see Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein (1989).

<sup>2</sup> This very ambitious initiative is an effort to clarify the concept of “anti-systemic radicalism,” encompassing these 13 dimensions of community life and relations with the national society within which they live. The alternative press organization, *Desinformémonos*, organized the project, which was coordinated by the Ayuujk (Mixe) linguist Yásnaya Aguilar and Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, a leading participant in these movements. *Tzam* means “to discuss” in “ayapaneco,” one of more than 60 indigenous languages that are spoken in ancestral territories in Mexico, in danger of disappearing as only ten people speak it at present. (<https://tzamtrecesemillas.org/>).

These ethnopolitical movements have historically questioned the effects and consequences of state domination and oppression over indigenous cultures. They are creating alternative institutional configurations, located in a liminal ground between statehood and non-statehood space, forging a new status in which they do not seek to occupy or replace the current institutions of the State, but rather to assume some (or all) of its functions in areas of collective organization that encompass their productive, cultural and social activities to strengthen their communities and conserve the environment; this explicitly encompasses an intensifying challenge to the present criminal phase of necropolitical capitalism that is placing profitability over life, reorganizing territories and the commons for the benefit of extractivism and death itself.<sup>3</sup> The Zapatista organization is the most all-embracing of these processes in Mexico, having consolidated a system of self-governance and self-reliance that incorporates virtually all dimensions of life: including social, economic, political, ideological, and environmental dimensions. Other groups are implementing profound transformations in one or more of these areas. In the educational sphere, indigenous organizations achieved the recognition of impressive projects, elaborating indigenous and intercultural curricula and creating new institutions; one of the most notable achievements may be the creation of the Autonomous Communal University of Oaxaca in 2020, an expansion of the view of indigenous education to create its own educational system from the basic level to the university, that condenses efforts of the last three or four decades; in the economic-productive area there is the consolidated experience of the Tosepan Titataniske Cooperatives that accumulated more than forty years of experience; in the juridical-political-administrative area, many different forms of autonomy and self-government are emerging by *de facto* and *de jure* means in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Michoacán. In the territorial context, the peoples of Oaxaca now have a long and celebrated experience in creating and managing community forest management cooperatives in the Sierra Juárez as well as the defending the largest tropical rain forest in Mexico (1.5 million acres) as a peasant ecological reserve of the Zoque community of Chimalapas, among other equally relevant processes (Toledo and Ortiz-Espejel 2014; Garcia 2015).

In this article, we examine many of these experiences and offer details about their effects on consolidating non-state alternatives. By providing specific examples of how these different strategies are being deliberately shaped by indigenous groups explicitly exploring ways to create a new institutional nexus in which to operate, we suggest that this anti-systemic radicalism is shaping new possibilities for the resolution of the demands of the indigenous peoples to escape from the history of oppression and discrimination that has characterized the past 500 years. But this model of a non-state organization of societies offers more: it provides a rich array of examples of how local communities can forge alliances or networks among themselves and with other organizations to strengthen their local initiatives and strategies, reorganizing themselves to confront the economic, social, and environmental crises that currently afflict humanity.

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<sup>3</sup> These defensive practices “move in an ambiguous [political] space, pushing its expansion. The group rejects state institutions as inefficient and corrupt but at the same time demands its recognition by them. It abandons the institutional scheme, although not completely. It moves between one and other, in the slippery ways of resisters” (Calveiro 2019: 118).

The case studies outlined in this essay offer an introduction to the profound underlying cultural and philosophical tenets that are informing the institutional process common to the societies implicated in this transformation. This involves a superficial mention of the considerable cosmopolitical differences that are essential to understanding the roots of the demands for territorial integrity and socio-political autonomy. Isabelle Stengers ([1996] 2010, 2011), a well-known Belgian philosopher of science coined this term, rejecting the notion of a universal politics (or science), calling for modern scientific practices to peacefully coexist with other forms of knowledge; as Bruno Latour phrased it, in an introduction to a later book of Stengers': "it is a great pleasure...to imagine that English-speaking readers...be forced to modify their definition of hard science and of radical politics by using Stengers' shibboleth" (Latour 1997: 12).

This cosmopolitical perspective "starts from the qualitative difference in the modes of existence and the practices of knowledge linked to them, associated with different actors in different places. In other words, it starts from the recognition of a variety of ontologies" (Cañedo 2013: 10). Cosmopolitics involves a vision of the universe composed of human and non-human actors where "animals and other non-humans are endowed with a soul, 'are seen as people', and therefore 'are people'...endowed with social relations, existing in a dual-mode of the reflective and the reciprocal, that is, of the collective" (Viveiros de Castro 2010: 35). For many of these peoples, "what we call 'environment' is a society of societies, an international arena, a *cosmopoliteia*. There is, therefore, no absolute difference in status between society and environment, as if the former were the 'subject' and the latter the 'object'. Every object is always another subject, and is always more than one" (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017: 68–69).

In the next section, we offer a brief analysis of the unique contribution of the Zapatista experience to enriching our understanding of the possibilities of non-state processes to move societies ahead in the struggle to overcome the constraints of the existing world system. The subsequent sections provide some concrete examples of how several communities in Mexico with which we are familiar are implementing strategies to strengthen their autonomy and community institutions as well as the health of their ecosystems. In closing, we mention the importance of the global processes to stimulate cross-cultural exchanges and political support for the individual communities that are involved in the local struggles to assert their historical and political rights to exercise this autonomy. However, the anti-systemic quality of the indigenous movements in Mexico is seen in this article through several dimensions expressed in the Zapatista political legacy, the importance of communalism, cooperativism, the defense of territory, and the new grammars of recognition of indigenous communal governments. Each topic will be discussed in a section before the conclusions, where the expansion of international networks and alliances in the framework of pluriversal alternatives is briefly addressed (e.g., Escobar 2020).

### **The Potential for Political and Epistemic Transformation of Zapatismo**

The proposal of the Zapatista indigenous movement continues to be, at least in this "calendar and geography," as the EZLN (Zapatista Army for National Liberation, its military arm) phrases it,

one of the most powerful forces questioning neoliberalism; the movement poses a warning about neoliberalism's most devastating impacts which, far from being limited to the economic sphere, tend to configure and subordinate all aspects of existence in economic terms. That is, neoliberalism operates as a "total social structure" (Dardot and Laval 2014), whose economic rationality constitutes a new normative order that "takes shape as a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices, and metrics to every dimension of human life" (Brown 2015: 30). In this sense, the market determines social relations, reducing the social to the economic, establishing a set of institutions and procedures aimed at the population, in a growing governmentalization (Foucault 1991) of the State and society, transforming subjectivities and deepening the logics of modernity/coloniality. However, as its community structure matured, the Zapatista movement advanced with the construction of "relatively autonomous microsystems of power [that behave like] local sovereignties at the margins of the State" (Calveiro 2019: 22); they constitute the germ for overcoming, on several levels, of the *telos* of modernized reason, radicalized by globalization (Escobar 2003). This modernized reason reached far beyond the dualisms, reductionisms, and determinisms that were the basis of "a project of domination by the North over the South, by corporations over citizens, by patriarchal structures over women, by humans over other species" (Slater 2004: 173).

Furthermore, as Pablo González Casanova (2001), a former rector of the National University and a highly regarded Latin American social scientist, argued: the Zapatista movement "has been the most important of our epoch, in terms of theoretical, practical, rhetorical, pedagogic, and practices of resistance and struggle" (Casanova 2001: 108). Wallerstein (2005, 2014b) also recognized its global significance as the source of inspiration for other anti-systemic movements in all parts of the planet, initiating a counteroffensive of the global left against neoliberalism based on its conviction that "another world is possible." This "war against oblivion," as the Zapatistas characterized it, is nothing other than a struggle against more than 520 years of oppression against indigenous peoples and, in reality, a substantial contribution to the war against subsistence that was waged against most of the world's population; which, until about 50 years ago, remained under the boots of different colonial regimes based on different forms of racial supremacy (Illich 1981). As Achille Mbembe (2021), a leading scholar of decolonization and autonomic crusades in the global South, expressed it: the struggles for independence became one of the key moments in the history of modernity, but it is not surprising that despite the importance of these grammars of decolonization, their effects have not "left their mark on the philosophical spirit of our time" (Mbembe 2021: 13).

However, just as modernity is presumed to be an unfinished project (Habermas 1985), decolonization is also an unfinished process that implies a critique and overcoming of the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being (Maldonado Torres 2011). In this sense, the processes of liberation awaken a theoretical and political revolution that has enormous implications in both ontological and epistemological terms as can be seen with different examples such as the Zapatista, for its capacity to think from an interstitial place that arises from the margins or the edge, between

indigenous cosmology and some currents of Western critical thought, such as Marxism (Mignolo 2011).

Its epistemological tension lies in the articulation of that in-between-place or border thought (Bhabha 1994), that opens up new forms of meaning, displacing the binary sets that enclosed knowledge in a paradigmatic dilemma, establishing dichotomies between supposedly universal values and particular values. This critique by the indigenous movement implies a radical questioning of the structure of domination that shapes the world-system into a set of structures of control that are intertwined in complex ways, in different contexts articulated by relations of production, significance, and power (Foucault 1982).

The Zapatista demand for the recognition of indigenous dignity constitutes a moral grammar that questions the rhetoric of *otherness* that modernity projected on non-Western peoples; in this way, the North Atlantic cultures were able to justify their discrimination, from which the discourses on the denial, assimilation, and incorporation of the Other in the societal project of modernity were anchored. This allowed them to classify, declassify, and reclassify the world's population in terms of race, class, and gender (Quijano 2000). Unraveling this discursive *continuum* of colonial origin constitutes a “dismantling of power relations and structures of thought that encourage the reproduction of racial, geopolitical, and gender hierarchies that were created or that found new forms of expression in the modern/colonial world” (Maldonado-Torres 2006: 175).

The Zapatista rebellion is one of the most outstanding examples of how a political practice of subaltern subjects has implications on an epistemological level. According to Esteva and Prakash, “currently revealed in their struggles from the margins, long absent at state centers, these virtues are desperately needed to put an end to the era marked by the hubris of modern man and woman” (Esteva and Prakash 2014: 202). The grammar of recognition plus the break with the Western episteme give rise to a true grammar of decolonization. Robert and Rahnama (2011) call this insurrection of subjugated knowledges the return of subsistence knowledge, as an episteme of the poor who are deployed in the community sphere and form a set of knowledge rooted in specific places and spaces, related to an ethic of subsistence that Scott (1976) labeled the moral economy of the peasants. The recovery of the contributions of the Zapatista rebellion makes it possible for us to distinguish them in various fields—political, social, and epistemic—because they propose a new perspective of political exercise, in the promotion of new social subjects, in the vindication of their uniqueness as an element for the refoundation of the political space when it is addressed to all those who are discriminated against because of their differences, be they sexual, gender, or ethnic, rather than merely economic—that is to say, class. In this sense, the subaltern position of indigenous peoples is revealed as part of those subjugated knowledges that are now the points of reference, the lines of demarcation from where other forms of rationality are configured.

The theoretical radicality of Zapatismo is not only an exercise from which it is possible to develop a critique of the geopolitics of power and knowledge, but a political practice that allows rethinking the social transformation beyond the State and capital, in addition to the fact that its political strategy can also be understood as a policy of resistance based on the objective of learning to listen, or in the design of a “politics of listening,” as Mora said, “to construct temporary fluid

spaces through which voices and opinions could be shared, listened to and acted upon” (Mora 2003: 22). In essence, we are faced with a new type of behavior, a “rationality of resistance;” it brings together a vision that assumes multiple voices, “all with the same right to express themselves, to denounce, to demand, to fight. It would be like moving from a representative conception of the world to a democratic conception that excels for promoting participation and collective decisions” (Herrera 2004: 46).

The Zapatista experience is one of the most complex experiences of social and political creativity among indigenous peoples, as well as one of the most novel witnessed in recent years. Luis Villoro (2015), labeled the “philosopher of the Zapatistas” characterized their indigenous cosmovision as guide, transforming their communitarian practice into a means for integrating society into the totality—the natural world—on which it depends. It has become a cornerstone of social organizations that question the political-cultural and economic-social structure of modern society to “break with the ideology of modernity as a superior and unique form of civilization...[and] as the foundation of a new process of pluralistic, truly planetary, post-racist, post-colonial and perhaps post-modern civilization” (Dos Santos 2004: 73–74). This legacy of indigenous construction is now clearly evident in other political processes of indigenous movements throughout Mexico and elsewhere.

### **Towards a Radical Critical Pedagogy: A Communal Educational Experience in Oaxaca**

One of the most important challenges in the path of building autonomy is creating educational processes incorporating a communalist vision. In this regard, the Oaxacan indigenous movement has a long tradition of struggle, based on the multidimensional reconstitution of indigenous societies, as well as on the defense of land and territory and their cultures. The Mixes (*Ayuukjä'äy*) and Zapotec (*Binnizá*) peoples of the Sierra Norte are leaders in elaborating community proposals that integrate education as a key institution for an ongoing process of training and personal development based on their own cultural reality and, therefore, on the reaffirmation of identity and the strengthening of community life. In this process, the communities began to intervene in the definition of the contents of the educational projects to shape institutions that avoided the dynamics and schemes of domination of the national systems. These initiatives evolved to promote a comprehensive and community-based educational system to include the entire curriculum from preschool to higher education while avoiding many of the pitfalls of the hierarchical system of learning dominant in the national educational structure.

A significant experience in this regard was the creation of the Ayuuk Study Center, an intercultural university in the Mixe territory, in December 2004, the antecedent of the present-day Ayuuk Intercultural Institute for Higher Education. The Institute offers the opportunity to implement a long-standing demand of the Mixe peoples for the right to an education that “responds to our thoughts, to our needs and our concerns” (Martínez Luna 2007: 367); this movement sought to create their own educational institutions, in which the communities could participate in the definition and application of the contents of educational programs “from a long-term ethnopolitical



vision, [in which] they seek re-education to be able to face the challenges of domination” (Maldonado Alvarado 2010: 130).

The organization Servicios del Pueblo Mixe (Ser Mixe), created the Ayuuk Study Centre, integrated into the Jesuit University System, contributing to the “integral reconstitution of the Mixe people” as “an [autonomous] experience of intercultural education of higher level promoted by civil society” (Estrada 2008: 372). It was the result of almost twenty years of reflection and intense community meetings, seminars, and research projects on history, territory, and autonomy to strengthen the political, territorial, and cultural organization of the Mixe peoples. This coalesced into the Ayuuk Intercultural Indigenous University, created in 2006 with two bachelor’s degree programs in Administration and Sustainable Development and Communication for Social Development; a recent addition is Intercultural Education.

Ser Mixe took a decisive step to address one of its main shortcomings, designing its own way of producing knowledge, an endogenous solution to its needs for educational and cultural development. In Jaltepec de Candayoc, a community in Oaxaca highlands, they created a new institution infused with the community reality, promoting the “full development of the human dimensions of thinking, feeling and doing” (Vargas Vazquez 2008: 11) based on the *Wijèn Kajèn Maa Naax Kajp* (*knowing to know for the community*). This process integrates schooling with training for communality, strengthening culture, as part of a process of formation for life that also depends on the family and the community. They were convinced that it offered an effective way of incorporating their vision of education based on local cultural values, built from the world of Ayuuk life, offering “an integral community system, from preschool to higher education,” (Díaz 2007: 298) as the highly respected indigenous philosopher Floriberto Díaz envisioned it, more than a decade before.

This history of self-managed consolidation is an important example of a broader movement to foster the development of educational models that contribute to the recognition of ethnic and linguistic diversity and reaffirm the capacity of local peoples to be the actors and subjects of their own history. In this way “the struggle of the original peoples of Latin America for political-educational autonomy emerges as a condition for the emergence of a more accessible and appropriate education from the social and cultural point of view” (Baronnet 2009: 426). The very recent (2020) creation of the Autonomous Communal University of Oaxaca (UACO) did not occur in a vacuum; it is a product of a long tradition of struggle for the creation of communal educational spaces reflected in the examples of the Bilingual and Intercultural Normal School of Oaxaca, the Intercultural Communal University of Cempoaltépetl, the intercultural and community baccalaureates, and the different intercultural universities and other autonomous educational experiences emerging in various regions of Oaxaca, and are now articulated with the 16 university centers of the UACO, distributed throughout the state (Maldonado Ramírez 2022).

## **Productive Organization to Consolidate Community and Improve Environmental Stewardship**

The recent notable mobilization of communities to assume control of their resources and manage them differently contrasts sharply with the period when these resources were controlled by corporate interests. This change in patterns is also extending to decisions by many of these groups to forego exploitation or to become involved in legal, administrative, and other types of actions to reverse decisions by governments that allow outside groups to establish a broad variety of productive installations in their communities or in the territories to which they assert historical claims. These increasingly well-organized mobilizations are frequently informed and supported by civil society groups as a result of their concerns for social, economic, or environmental matters. This dynamic process has been developing for more than one-half century in Mexico, reinforcing the communities' resolve to prosecute their demands for autonomy and to strengthen their institutional structures to assure their ability to care for their members and the effectiveness of their governance processes.

One of the earliest examples of this history in Mexico is the increasingly militant mobilizations of the Zapotec communities in the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca to terminate the onerous concessions for the exploitation of their forest resources granted to the state-owned paper factory, FAPATUX, since early in the twentieth century. With the expiration of the concessions in the 1980s, the communities began demanding rights to manage their own forests, forming collective organizations, and allying with experts to advise them on alternative strategies to protect their biodiversity while extracting sustainable volumes of lumber for viable processing enterprises. As these enterprises matured, communities in other parts of the country also began to assert their rights and now more than three-quarters of the nation's rich forest wealth is under communal management, which is generally considered to offer an outstanding example of a combination of biodiversity protection, informed exploitation, and economic success (Barkin and Fuente 2013). An examination of the Mexican experience as part of an evaluation of community forest management experience internationally found that there is a "growing body of evidence linking community forest rights with healthier forests and lower carbon dioxide emissions from deforestation and forest degradation" (Stevens Winterbottom, Reytar, and Springer 2014: 2). The report noted the particular success of the Mexican indigenous communities that transformed their early struggles for recognition and autonomy into cohesive collective organizations; many of these are now part of the network of non-state groups that are consolidating while assuming an expanding range of activities and responsibilities (Bray 2020). Of particular note is the staunch defense of community institutions of self-governance that are central to protecting and deepening their exercise of autonomy; the well-documented history of Capulálpam in the Sierra Juárez de Oaxaca offers an example of their importance and the need to continually reassert their claim to

this unique form of independence (Toledo and Ortiz-Espejel 2014).<sup>4</sup> Other communities are also actively engaged in the same battles, taking control of their forest areas and developing local enterprises to transform the lumber into finished products for local and foreign fair-trade markets, using the benefits from these operations to expand the range of services they provide to their members.

Another indigenous community that gradually evolved into an influential example is the regional cooperative organization Tosepan Titataniske in the mountainous area in the eastern part of the state of Puebla. Since its founding in 1974, it has managed a steadfast advance in its ability to consolidate and expand the range of activities in which it is involved while improving the material conditions of its members and defending its territory. One of its most articulate spokespeople explained that its

*raison d'être* is to improve the quality of life of the families of the members [of the cooperatives] by working to advance in the construction of a project of the “Good Life,” a concept that in Nahuatl [the local indigenous language] goes by the name of *Yekenemilis*. (González 2015: 296; Boege 2021)

Today, the Union of Cooperatives includes nine regional organizations that bring together several hundred local cooperatives involved in the production of goods and services, consumption, marketing, savings and credit activities, as well as social services. But the group is more than an assemblage of producing organizations: through its local and regional assemblies, it has reinvigorated the cultural and political identity of the people, “rescuing” a disappearing language and the cultural and philosophical beliefs that undergird the eroding traditions and customs that now are assuming an important place in the larger community. This also encompasses the complex strengthening of agriculture by enriching traditional systems of organizing production based on inherited knowledge with the integration of agroecological systems to increase quality and volume while diversifying output; a notable achievement in this regard is the dramatic increase in the pepper and coffee crops, marketed by the union in local and foreign markets that value the quality of the offering and its collective organization. In a strategic collaboration with the state university, they promulgated a land use planning system that prevented several important mining, hydroelectric and other projects from being established in their territory (more details below). The 38,000 families who participate in the union enjoy a better quality of life and the security of being able to protect their lands in the face of continuing pressures from outside interests (Boege 2021: Ch. 5).

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<sup>4</sup> In Capulálpam this is particularly evident as shown in the analysis of its staunch rejection of a Canadian mining concession and the ensuing conflict with a neighboring community (Jiménez Sandoval 2019; Torres Wong 2019). See also: Juan Mayorga, “Capulálpam, una comunidad forestal modelo y su lucha contra la minería” (Mongabay March 23, 2020; <https://es.mongabay.com/2020/03/mexico-capulalpam-comunidad-forestal-modelo-mineria/>.) Mongabay has numerous articles on community forestry that generates jobs and social benefits while assuring conservation (e.g., <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/01/mexico-community-forestry-boosts-conservation-jobs-and-social-benefits/> and <https://es.mongabay.com/2020/07/mexico-el-oasis-forestal-purepecha/>).

A third example of collective action to stimulate production through environmental remediation by non-state organizations is the ambitious “Water Forever Program” that rehabilitated dozens of watersheds in an area of more than 1.5 million hectares in a degraded region south of the city of Tehuacán, Puebla (Hernández Garciadiego and Herrerías Guerra 2008). Begun in the early 1980s, the effort brings together people from numerous communities rescuing landscapes using traditional approaches, reversing erosion by rebuilding soils that have (re)created aquifers to support viable areas for agriculture, livestock, and forestry. To finance the project and contribute to other objectives, they were able to “recover” ancient varieties of amaranth that they now harvest to supply several cooperatives that produce healthy snacks and other products that are distributed through alternative social marketing channels. As a result of the inability of local governments in the region to provide the services and infrastructure that the communities require, the cooperatives have gradually assumed responsibility for providing these services and acquired their own equipment and expertise to build and maintain the facilities that are directly improving the lives of the communities.

Another outstanding collective community organization to confront centuries of socio-political isolation and environmental destruction is the creation of the Center for the Integral Development of the Peasants in the Mixteca (CEDICAM) that built upon a long tradition among the indigenous peoples in this very large region, preserved in a few richly illustrated surviving codices from the pre-conquest era. Employing a proven method of peasant-to-peasant rural extensionism, they implemented a diversified agroecological system, including an ambitious reforestation program that contributed to rebuilding the region’s aquifers; the organization now integrates more than 30 communities with thousands of participants. Its success was recognized in 2008 when one of its leaders, Jesus Leon Santos, was awarded the 2008 Goldman Prize for Environmental Activism (Boege and Carranza 2009).

Agroecological initiatives are frequently an integral part of the strategy for institutional consolidation of groups asserting their independence. In Mexico, this process has been developing for decades. A consolidated group has been implementing and innovating in this direction since 1988, beginning with its commitment to reorganize its production to promote food sovereignty with an ecologically balanced approach. The Vicente Guerrero collective has steadfastly resisted official attempts to transform their system and now collaborates with several dozen neighboring communities to diversify production and increase output with a combination of traditional knowledge and productive innovations that are effectively transforming the landscape in their region while assisting their partners to gradually adopt systems of local self-governance while promoting demands for autonomy (Toledo and Ortiz-Espejel 2014). In other regions of Mexico, the “massification of agroecology” employing the peasant-to-peasant approach is contributing to community efforts to strengthen local institutions and exert their independence from state-controlled programs that are oriented towards productivism without regard to the social or ecological impacts (Altieri and Toledo 2011; Giraldo and Rosset 2021).

One last example involves the particularly successful efforts of local communities producing commercial products to participate in creating larger cooperative efforts to insulate themselves

from government programs that would integrate them into the world market. Similar to the initiative implemented by the Tosepan Cooperatives, other groups have organized to protect their coffee production from aggressive marketing efforts by transnational corporations to control distribution channels and prices. Ts'umbal Xitalhá is an indigenous organization in Chiapas that seeks to reinforce its "spirituality" and health (in a multidimensional sense) by implementing traditional practices of social justice, limiting the marketing of its considerable coffee production to fair trade organizations that are also supporting local efforts to use biological approaches to combat a threatening plague. The group is also promoting honey production and handicrafts while partnering with others to operate cafeterias and a coffee processing plant; it also has started a training school to systematize and promote its traditional values among its members (Toledo and Ortiz-Espejel 2014). In contrast, the Coordinator of Coffee Producers in the state of Oaxaca (CEPCO) now has about 3,500 members in a very strong organization that supports community efforts toward autonomous organization and diversified production, with a strong marketing structure that supplies domestic and foreign markets with a range of products at fair trade prices that insulate it from the vagaries of the capitalist trading system. Its consistent growth over the past 40 years and its clear vision of promoting small-scale coffee production by integrating all activities from sustainable land management and cultivation practices to the final consumer, including processing and cafeterias, are contributing to the regional political commitment to local self-governance and strengthening the strong cultural heritage that characterizes the region's communities.

### **The Defense of Territory: A Fundamental Strategy for Consolidating Non-State Organizations**

Societies exist in defined spaces. For them to operate, to guarantee the well-being of their members, they must have areas in which to organize their social life, their production, and the institutions that enable them to give continuity to their traditions, their culture, and the interactions that are essential for flourishing. The societies with which we are writing and collaborating, however, are much more than agglomerations of people, activities, and organizations; they are dynamic organizations whose very existence and vitality depend on their unique relationships with their environment, with their territory. These relationships are defined by the complex histories involving struggles to assert their rights, often challenged by newcomers who seek to exercise their power or their capital, or by the State that sometimes belatedly discovers the extraordinary value of the resources hidden beneath the surface or the attractiveness of the biodiversity so carefully husbanded by the denizens from time immemorial or even in the recent past. The history of colonial and capitalist expansion is replete with stories of forced displacements and violent takings of lands, resources, and revered landmarks, valuable pillars that frequently have unfathomed significance (to outsiders) for the peoples defending these areas. We briefly trace two varied histories of societies to offer an entry into the complexity of the global struggles of indigenous and

peasant societies in the face of the continuing attempts to remove them from their homelands, the source of their livelihoods, and oftentimes the fount of their cultural and social integrity.

The Tosepan Titataniske strategy for defending its territories involved a strategic alliance with the state university of Puebla to develop a land use and management ordinance. The initiative took advantage of a legal structure that accords these municipal decrees the force of law, once approved by the appropriate administrative institutions in state government and ratified by the legislature. In this case, the Union initiated a process to defend against a proposal to establish a resort facility in the area of one of its members, harnessing pristine spring water for commercial exploitation by an outside enterprise; the springs supply water to most of the county. This process is particularly notable because it was initiated by an indigenous organization and supported by the public university, and approved by the state environmental agency. The land use and management proposal was also unique because the joint working group that drew up the plan developed a participatory mapping dynamic in which a significant proportion of the people in the jurisdiction were not simply consulted but were integrated into the complex and lengthy discussions about the appropriate regulations for their communities. The plan also drew up a program for sustainable urban development for the county seat, Cuetzalán. Since its approval, the participants in the program commented on its significance: An important factor in facilitating its broad scale approval by the variety of social groups in the community was its explicit

consideration of the interests of the productive sectors and the deliberate weighing of the environmental impacts of their activities. There was a careful consideration of the possibility of intersectoral conflicts resulting from the differing values and perceptions of these issues on the quality of the environment (CUPreDeR 2010: 6)

that facilitated the complex agreements leading to the final ordinance that was approved by the state government. This process has served as an outstanding model of a non-state group carefully negotiating with the formal institutions to advance its own project of autonomy and local self-governance (Massieu Trigo 2017). To celebrate its 40th anniversary, the Cooperative of Cooperatives, the organization that presently guides the life of the community, undertook an ambitious planning effort to explore how its underlying cosmogony, *yekenemilis*, or Masewal Codice, would guide the community's future development during the next 40 years (Boege and Fernández 2017).<sup>5</sup>

The indigenous community of Cherán, in the mountainous Purhépecha region of the state of Michoacán, offers another window on the significance of territorial defense that forced state authorities to recognize their specific rights to self-rule and autonomous development. Struggling for years against the scourge of kidnappings, extortion, and illegal logging in its substantial forest areas, in 2011 a group of women and young people in the community decided that they had enough,

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<sup>5</sup> This remarkable retrospection exercise was a prelude to a prospective plan for its next four decades. The publication deserves careful study by anyone concerned with understanding the capacity of indigenous peoples to exercise their autonomy and organize to forge the post-capitalist societies that we are describing.

directly confronting the culprits by blocking the exits with their bodies. The criminals stood down as more people joined in the confrontation; the incident galvanized the community which launched a campaign to organize itself, mobilizing virtually all of its 30,000 people to reconsider their political future and the significance of their indigenous heritage. Gathered around the outdoor wood fires (*fogatas*, a meeting and surveillance mechanism) they lit in each neighborhood, they began lengthy discussions about how to reorganize themselves. They created a patrol system and heatedly debated the problems of reclaiming their rich cultural legacy, with all that this entailed: increasing the use of their native language, developing an institutional basis for a governance structure, mechanisms to rebuild and diversify their forests, and, perhaps most significantly, developing a program to demand recognition by the state and national authorities as a communal government. With considerable support from local experts, they developed a critical program to assert their autonomy and demand the right to administer their own budget with funds that were previously disbursed by governmental agencies. Although they often met with intransigence, they stiffened their resolve and proceeded on a tedious course that gradually took them to the Supreme Court which finally granted their petitions for autonomy, based on the national constitution and international conventions to which Mexico was a party. At this writing, eleven years later, Cherán continues to experiment with new ways to extend and strengthen its early initiatives to recuperate their cultural heritage and their ability to effectively govern themselves. Significantly, they are successfully protecting their forests, improving their management capabilities, and proudly invite visitors to visit the rainwater reservoir they created to assure adequate supplies for production and environmental management; it is the largest of its kind in all of Latin America.<sup>6</sup> Today Cherán offers a model of the complexity of insisting on its autonomy while remaining within the institutional bounds of the nation-state as the fourth level of government (federal, state, municipal, and communal), developing processes to protect its territory and people from the pressures that the government has proved incapable of guaranteeing and creating opportunities for its members that nearby communities are trying to emulate.

### **New Grammars of Autonomy through the Judicialization of Indigenous Struggles**

The constitutional reforms of 1992 (within the framework of the fifth centenary remembrance of the Spanish Conquest) and 2001 (a result of negotiations with the EZLN) sought to recognize indigenous rights and culture. They did not produce significant changes in the context of the relationship of indigenous peoples with the State, a tension that continued to increase in the neoliberal period due to the dynamics of “accumulation by dispossession” that characterized this cycle of accumulation (Harvey 2007). The indigenous territories that still extend over 12 percent of Mexico, are composed of 24 million hectares and are the main stage of dispute for the biological and cultural megadiversity that continues in most of their regions. These corridors are the result of

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<sup>6</sup> For more information about the legal history and its important implications for other communities’ efforts to assert their independence see Aragón (2019). Gasparello (2021) and Calveiro (2019) also published valuable accounts on this topic.

long-term human occupation and concentrate the greatest biocultural diversity in Mexico, located at the headwaters of many river basins, accounting for 23 percent of the nation's water resources and encompassing 84 percent of its humid forests, 55 percent of its montane mesophilic forests, and 21 percent of its temperate forests; among other natural resources and vegetation types (Boege 2008). This dispute, according to Veltmeyer and Petras “pit[s] peasant and indigenous movements against agents of global capital, and more often than not against nation-states in which the extractive activities and indigenous communities are located” (Veltmeyer and Petras 2015: 1).

This “Eldorado” vision of the natural wealth of Latin America, frequently denounced by Svampa (2013) and other analysts, conceived of these natural resources as a prize to be captured in the context of the commodity boom. But, in effect, this “curse of abundance” had a counterproductive effect, generating a “perverse relationship between natural resources and underdevelopment” (Acosta 2009: 10). The problem is that extractive dynamics only reinforce a subordinate integration of the Latin American region into the world economy and, in this context, lead to development projects under the banner of modernization and progress that constitute successive processes of (re)colonization, the result of the expansion of the extractive frontier over territories, ecosystems, and human communities, in a complex and expanding process of (post)colonial relations (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010, 2018). However, according to the current Mexican government, the mechanisms of exploitation and domination of the neoliberal period are a thing of the past, since the neoliberal regime is dead, as the president of Mexico assures us, but paraphrasing Octavio Paz, if “that tradition is already dead. In any case, the ghost inhabits us.”

In 2011, Article 1 of the Mexican Constitution was amended to integrate the terms of several international human rights agreements that Mexico had acceded to, laying the foundation for “judicializing” various indigenous conflicts and “forcing a discussion of the rights to self-determination of indigenous peoples, guaranteeing access to the court system, justice, involving an important change in the liberal paradigm of law” (Bastos and Sierra 2017: xxiii). As a result, a new set of legal tools generated sufficient jurisprudence to defend indigenous territories against extractive energy and mining megaprojects; but it also facilitated the establishment of new structures of autonomy and self-government at the community and municipal levels throughout the country. Particularly illustrative of this new direction was the introduction of the possibility of traditional local governance institutions (*usos y costumbres*) in the state of Oaxaca in 1995 (Recondo 2007) and more recently (2022) in the state of Michoacán, with the approval of a General Protocol of Action for the Transition of Indigenous Communities to Self-Government and the Exercise of the Direct Budget.<sup>7</sup>

The legislative change in Oaxaca opened the possibility for selecting municipal authorities through the system of election by “uses and customs,” paving the way for the exercise of indigenous autonomy, at the political-electoral level; 418 Indigenous municipalities of the 570 in the state chose to elect their authorities independently of the national party structures, based on

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.michoacan.gob.mx/noticias/presentan-protocolo-para-ejercicio-de-presupuesto-directo-y-autogobierno/>



local decision-making assemblies. This remarkable change was motivated by the widespread sympathies for the Zapatista uprising of the previous year in the neighboring state of Chiapas, leading the government to attempt to reduce tensions by adopting multicultural approaches to indigenous aspirations by reforming its electoral law. The dramatic change in the rights of indigenous peoples, enabled a new approach to overcome historical prejudices about their rights, as embodied in the dominant liberal legal paradigm, with its positivist and state-centered framework, to transform them from objects to subjects of law.

As a result of these advances in the process of recognition of indigenous rights and institutions, the legal and political system ceased being the only guarantor of their rights. The implementation of the customary approach created a new jurisdictional route for the protection and exercise of the political rights of indigenous peoples. According to Aguilar and Velásquez, this new architecture would contribute to transcending the legal model of the ethnocentric State “that inhibits the formation of a plural national State” (Aguilar and Velásquez 2008: 425). The dominant model of the State as a single entity, characterized by cultural homogeneity, misinterpreted and completely distorted the historical and cultural condition of the indigenous peoples.

The demands for autonomy and respect for diversity appeal to the redefinition of the State in a plurinational, intercultural and postcolonial context. This leads toward a transformative constitutionalism, promoting the participation of indigenous peoples historically excluded from the jurisdiction of the State. It is promoting the construction from below of a new regulatory framework that, in the words of Santos (2010), a leading intellectual advocating for the needs for an explicitly “southern” epistemology, expands the scope “of the political beyond the liberal horizon, through a new (plurinational) institutionality, a new territoriality (asymmetric autonomies), a new legality (legal pluralism), a new political regime (intercultural democracy) and new individual and collective subjectivities (individuals, communities, nationals, peoples, nationalities)” (Santos 2010: 85).

Another historic triumph for indigenous autonomies was achieved after the Purépecha uprising of Cherán in April 2011. From then on, the indigenous communities of the region saw the opportunity, through the implementation of innovative legal strategies, to advance on the complex and tortuous path of self-government and self-determination. Unlike Cherán, whose territorial overlap between its agrarian nucleus and the municipal boundaries allowed it to declare an autonomous municipality and install the system of *usos y costumbres*, the other indigenous communities are part of larger municipal territories, composed of dominant mestizo populations, very similar to Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán’s ([1967] 1979) description in *Regions of Refuge*, where the polarization between indigenous and mestizos is compounded by the dominance of the political center (Ladino population) over its satellites (indigenous peoples). Thus, only Cherán was able to demand autonomy as a municipal unit whereas, in the rest of the cases the demand for autonomy is limited to the community’s area.

To adapt to this reality, the Indigenous communities in Michoacán are generating new grammars of recognition through the judicialization of Indigenous struggles, demanding control

over the use of the local budget to which they are entitled based on their relative population. This long-standing demand of Indigenous communities gained greater visibility in recent years, as a result of the successful legal strategy undertaken by the community of Cherán to guarantee its right to self-determination, in which they established an important precedent of jurisprudence on indigenous rights in Michoacán.

Other Purépecha communities were pioneers in demanding a proportional part of the municipal budget to which they are entitled since the early 2000s. The case of Nurío stands out: since 2005 it negotiated an agreement with the municipality of Paracho to exercise the proportional part of municipal resources through a communal council (Ventura 2017, 2018); in this way, they negotiated a form of *de facto* autonomy, without additional legal reforms, except those that occur in customary law known as *usos y costumbres*. As a result, there are now 15 communities that achieved legal recognition of the exercise of the direct budget, but with the new Protocol (cf. footnote 7) it will be extended to the 129 indigenous communities in the state of Michoacán.

In summary, the constitutional reform on human rights of 2011 that modified Article 1 established “the broadest protection to the people at all times” in accordance with the rights recognized in the Constitution, as well as in the international agreements ratified by Mexico, specifically, ILO Convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This fundamental change expanded judicial protection of indigenous rights. It also coincides (analogously) with how indigenous peoples are advancing “against the grain” of the essence of a centralized State, producing a colonization “in reverse,” achieving autonomy and respect for their unique political and cultural organizations; in essence, the indigenous “played in the field of the colonizers to colonize the State from below” (Stern 2000: 73), creating the foundations for a model of conviviality, foreseen by Illich (1973) more than a quarter-century before. These new grammars of recognition constitute forms of peer governance made by ordinary people “which is distinct from governing *for* the people and from governing *with* the people. It is governing through the people” (Bollier and Helfrich 2019: 85).

### **Cross-Cultural and International Solidarity: Consolidating and Expanding Networks and Alliances**

The concerted efforts of thousands of communities across the globe to demand their autonomy, strengthen their local identities, and forge the institutions necessary to enable them to govern responsibly, did not occur in a vacuum. During the past half-century, they have been organizing to rise above the long history of oppression and discrimination, to demand recognition as groups with their own identities and abilities to govern themselves and protect the territories that they inherited or to which they have been relegated by the expansion of the colonial and capitalist systems (Barkin and Sánchez 2020). To construct a world of many worlds (de la Cadena and Blaser 2018), they are implementing new social, productive, and territorial management strategies that are contributing to constructively confronting the effects of the economic, social, and environmental crises facing humanity. This construction is not an ideological or political

occurrence of a newly emerging political group, but rather the logical outcome of the flow of a deeply embedded *cosmopolitics* (Stengers 2011) in the vibrant and diverse histories of peoples in the global South, actively engaged in interconnected struggles for an ecosocial transition. This history is not well-known in the North Atlantic sphere, and contradicts the prevailing understanding of backwardness and even stagnation in the global South; even more, perhaps there is an antipathy and repudiation of these dynamics, accompanied by a view that significant segments of societies in this part of the globe are stubbornly rejecting the possibilities of and benefits from their incorporation into the world-system. Although there is a burgeoning literature on decolonization, it has just barely penetrated the political or even the academic discussions of international relations or the formulation of peaceful approaches to global economic crises or environmental problems.

The non-state institutions and organizations examined in this article are changing the constellation of social and political forces in Mexican society. There is a growing and perhaps begrudging recognition of their significance and the need to modify, if not transform, national institutions to recognize their rights as Mexicans and accommodate their righteous demands. These complex processes are provoking important and serious debates within the ranks of the non-state community as well as in its dealings with the national State; perhaps the most transcendental issue is synthesized in the difference between the early Zapatista call for “Never again a Mexico without us,” and the more recent and radical slogan: “We, without Mexico!”

In this article, we traced some of the philosophical, paradigmatic, and practical ways in which the non-state sector is consolidating and expanding. This involves all forms of struggle: ideological, social, political, and even economic. But it also involves the proliferation of many organizations that are supporting and broadening alliances among the communities and with sympathetic sectors of Mexican society; among the organizations that continue to play a significant role in this regard are: Red Mexicana de Afectados por la Minería (REMA); Consejo Mexicana por la Silvicultura Sustentable (CMSS); Coalición de Organizaciones Mexicanas por el Derecho del Agua (COMDA); Movimiento Mexicano de Afectados por las Presas y en Defensa de los Ríos (MAPDER); and Congreso Nacional Indígena (CNI). Although some of these coalitions involve important bonds with professional and social organizations committed to accompanying the communities, their strength and vitality depend on an understanding and commitment to the need to create parallel structures that can support the activities of each of the participants.

The postcolonial and anti-systemic dynamics in Mexico analyzed in this text are becoming increasingly integrated into global networks and alliances that are strengthening each of the individual actors. Two of these networks are described below.

Territories of Life is a global consortium formally created in 2010, to support

indigenous peoples and local communities who are governing and conserving their lands, waters, and territories. Its membership in more than 80 countries is undertaking collective actions at the local, national, regional and international levels across several thematic streams, including documenting, sustaining and defending territories of life, as well as youth and intergenerational relations. (<https://report.territoriesoflife.org/>)

It provides a forum for the exchange of experiences, training workshops, and collective action to secure their human rights, and particularly their rights to self-determined governance systems, cultures, and collective lands and territories.<sup>8</sup>

The Global Tapestry of Alternatives is creating solidarity networks and strategic alliances amongst an immense variety of radical alternatives to the dominant regimes in each of their countries. It locates itself in or helps initiate interactions among alternatives. It operates through varied and light structures, defined in each space, that are horizontal, democratic, inclusive, and non-centralized, using diverse local languages and other ways of communicating. The initiative has no central structure or control mechanisms. It spreads step by step as an ever-expanding, complex set of tapestries, woven together by already existing communal or collective webs, building on already existing and new alternatives to dominant regimes<sup>9</sup>. It promotes or joins regional, national, and global encounters, when the conditions allow for them, as well as close and synergistic linkages with existing organizations, like the World Social Forum.

This global array of activities confirms the observation of the leading exponents of world-systems theory more than three decades ago: “The world-system of historical capitalism...has given rise to a set of anti-systemic movements” (Arrighi et al. 1989: 1). In closing, we can reaffirm our initial contention: The current anti-systemic radicalism of the Mexican indigenous struggles is creating alternative structural configurations, forging a new status between statehood and non-statehood, in which they do not seek to occupy or replace the current institutions of the State, but rather to assume some of its functions in areas of collective organization that encompass their productive, cultural and social activities to consolidate their autonomy, strengthen their communities, protect their territories and conserve the environment.

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<sup>8</sup> Indigenous communities around the world now occupy more than one-quarter of the land surface of the planet Earth (Garnett, Burgess, Fa, Fernández-Llamazares, et al. 2018).

<sup>9</sup> <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/weavers>

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