



INDIGENOUS TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY AND SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE DIVERSE AMERICAS

Edited by Miguel González, Ritsuko Funaki, Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor, José Marimán, and Pablo Ortiz-T

ISBN 978-1-77385-463-2

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY NOT:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.



Acknowledgement: We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher, **re.press**, and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy <http://www.re-press.org>

Autonomy as an Assertive Practice and as a Defensive Strategy: Indigenous Shifts in Political Meanings in Response to Extreme Violence in Mexico

Mariana Mora

Introduction

This chapter reflects on the ways that the meanings of Indigenous autonomy in Mexico shifted from the peak of the multicultural era (1990-2006) to a period marked by the undeclared war on organised crime (2006-2018). It focuses primarily in those states that have a significant presence of organized Indigenous peoples, such as Guerrero and Michoacán, and that experience conditions of extreme violence, as well as de facto criminalization of its populations. A closer look into the different expressions of autonomy during these two periods demonstrates how the practice of autonomy has shifted from a series of actions aimed at questioning the government and demanding profound transformations, to measures intended to protect the collective from dispossession and extreme physical violence carried out by both legal and illegal actors – including drug-trafficking groups and extractivist companies.

What new political meanings emerge from this shift? And how do subsequent actions by organized Indigenous communities question the limits to the collective rights to autonomy and self-determination imposed by the State? This chapter responds to these questions through examples from difference local scenarios, including: the Nahua community of Santa María Ostula and the Purépecha community of Cherán in the state of Michoacán, the Cho'l ejido of Tila in the state of Chiapas, the Triqui town of San Juan Copala in Oaxaca, communities belonging to the Regional Coordinator of Community Authorities (CRAC) in Guerrero, as well as political discourse of Nahua, Yoreme, Coca and Comca'ac women who are part of the Indigenous Government Council (CIG) – a self-governing space enacted by Indigenous communities and organizations of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI). While each case is rooted in a specific historical context, and there are few explicit coordinated efforts between peoples or organizations, most are inserted within complex networks that have as a main point of reference the experiences of the autonomous Zapatista municipalities in Chiapas, and their focus on *de facto* autonomy (at the margins of State institutions and juridical frameworks). At the same time, almost all of these communities and organizations form part, or have been part, of the CNI since its foundation in 1996. The one exception is San Juan Copala of Oaxaca. For various reasons, the town remained politically isolated from the Zapatista movement, though there was a time when it was heavily influenced by the Popular Assembly of Oaxacan Peoples (APPO), which took place in June 2006 as a response to the repressive measures made by the State against the dissident teachers' group, Section 22, and was made up by more than 300 Indigenous, *mestizo* and popular organizations and collectives who took up the Zapatista Indigenous philosophical idea of "mandar obedeciendo," rule by obeying (Poole, 2009).

This chapter provides critical insight into the shifts in the meaning of autonomy by this wide range of local cases that have been influenced by this particular broader Indigenous political genealogy and that respond to changing historical contexts.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first describes the transition between the period when multiculturalism was at its peak and the current conditions of extreme violence. This context is necessary to enter into the focus of the second section, which examines Indigenous communities and organizations' initiatives that exercise their right to autonomy primarily as a mechanism of protection and defence. The third section focuses on the

changes in political discourse that are a result of distinct struggles for autonomy and self-determination in regions most affected by multiple forms of violence. The political discourses from the women of the CIG are the source of this analysis. The focus lies mostly in highlighting the ways in which the exercise of self-government and practices that define the way in which everyday politics operate against the norm that CIG members classify as a “war on life.” The fourth section describes the actions taken by the assembly of the Indigenous Ch’ol ejido in Tila, in the northern region of the state of Chiapas, as part of a territorial dispute case that reached the National Supreme Court of Justice in 2010. The *ejido* (collective landholding system) assembly ruled its own “sentence” in 2015 as part of its exercise in self-determination, rather than wait for the court’s ruling. The last section provides final reflections on the implications of these shifts during the current administration of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018–2024). Together, the elements analysed in this chapter provide a glimpse into the flexibility of the concept of autonomy and its adaptability in light of changing historical conditions, while at the same time the practices of autonomy contribute to the modification of these same conditions.

From the Multicultural Boom to Illegal Dispossession Policies

The year 1996 was a culmination of the years of tremendous efforts by Indigenous organizations and communities for the recognition of their collective rights as peoples. This year also propelled their collective energy in different directions, towards: a shift in social relations with the Mexican State; strengthening autonomous organizational processes (including supporting the Zapatista communities’ autonomous initiatives); and the forging of new types of dialogues and possible alliances with *mestizos* in the country who were sympathetic to the cause (the absence at the time was and continues to be is a close and engaged dialogue with Afro-Mexican populations). That same year, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) and the federal government signed the first round of the peace accords of San Andrés Sakamch’en de los Pobres focused on Indigenous rights and culture, which set the stage to establish a new social pact between Indigenous peoples and the Mexican State (Hernández Navarro y Vera, 1998). That year was also when several Indigenous peoples and organizations founded CNI – a unifying

space for many Indigenous organizations and communities in the country – to strengthen their political struggles and decision-making capacities.¹ This is also when Tsotsil, Tseltal, Tojolabal and Ch'ol communities, as civilian support bases to the rebel army, established new population centers in recovered land in the valleys of the Lacandon jungle and created their own government bodies and commissions as part of their autonomous municipalities.² Although academic research tends to highlight 1989 – when the Mexican State signed Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – as the year when multiculturalism began in the country, 1996 is when key grassroots proposals for profound transformation converged, as reflected through numerous academic publications (Baronnet et al., 2011; Blackwell, 2012; Burguete Cal y Mayor, 2000; Cerda, 2011; Forbis, 2006; Mattiace et al., 2002; Marcos, 2011). At that moment, few would have imagined the scenarios of violence coupled with an increase in land disposessions promoted by both legal and illegal entities, including organized criminal groups, that came to exist in Mexico for over a decade and a half.

At the time, one of main political debates centered on Indigenous autonomy's relationship to the State, specifically on whether communities and organizations should focus their energy on the implementation of state and federal legal frameworks or on implementing autonomy in a semi-autonomous fashion and at the margins of State institutions. While few actors took decisive and fixed positions, some organizations gravitated more towards the first option, under the argument that the State needed to assume its obligations and grant recognition as part of new juridical frameworks (Gómez, 2004; Regino Montes, 1998); others gravitated more towards the second option. They emphasized that to demand State recognition implied granting more power to the same oppressive and exploitative structures which affected communities and organizations (Reyes & Kaufman, 2011; Speed, 2008).³

At the more extreme end of this second position, we find more than 38 autonomous municipalities, which at the time were founded by Zapatista communities within the rebel army's territory, regardless of whether the Mexican State transformed the contents of the San Andrés Accords into constitutional reforms, something that was achieved, in a significantly diluted manner, in 2001. The related autonomous governing bodies, as well as their political-administrative commissions (education, agriculture, land reform, health care, justice, among others) operate outside official institutions, reject social programs and any source of State funding, whether municipal,

state or federal. In my book, *Kuxlejal Politics, Indigenous Autonomy, Race and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities* (2017), I describe how the everyday practices of autonomy in the Zapatista municipalities led to a readjustment in relations with the State and to the *kaxlan* (local term used to refer to outsiders who are non-Indigenous peoples). The implementation of Indigenous autonomy at the margins of the State forced the government to respond under terms that were not established by its own institutions or authorities. I describe how, in the case of the implementation of justice, local people, both Indigenous and *mestizo*, had the option of resorting to an autonomous justice system or to its official counterparts, which generated a kind of competition over which institution could better resolve conflicts. At the same time, the justice commission sought to monitor the rights of people who resorted to official institutions such as the Public Prosecutor's Office, in order to avoid situations of extortion or threats. This led to a readjustment in the practices of the official institutions. In this sense, the practice of autonomy during the multicultural period, even in cases where autonomous bodies existed at the margins of the State, as in the case of autonomous Zapatista governments, was sustained by purposeful impulses, in other words by acting on the offensive.

During this period, Indigenous organizations and communities questioned the government's neoliberal policies, such as the significant cuts to farming subsidies, which began to skyrocket during the beginning of the Salinas administration (1988) and ended in 1992 with the constitutional reform to Article 27, that opened *ejido* (communal) lands to privatization. Several Indigenous communities and organizations argued that said privatizations would result in new cycles of land dispossessions (Hernández Navarro, 1992). Given that the State's multicultural policies began during the same period in which neoliberal policies intensified, many questioned whether there were possible ambiguous and uncomfortable connections between the two (Hernández Castillo et al., 2004; Speed, 2008; Maldonado Goti, 2011; Newdick, 2005) and whether this could be defined under the concept of neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale, 2004).

As critical and committed academics, we were so focused on analyzing the relationship between these two State policies that we failed to notice a third pillar of the Mexican State that similarly underwent reforms: its security apparatus (including the role of public security forces, armed forces and the justice system). Shortly after the Zapatista uprising, during the Zedillo

administration (1994–2000) and followed by the Fox administration (2000–2006), the three branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial) restructured the entire security apparatus in light of the presence of organized crime in the country (Lima Malvido, 2012).⁴ In a recent publication, we argued that these reforms laid the foundation for several expressions of de facto criminalization towards populations living in extreme poverty, both in urban centers as well as in Indigenous and rural areas (Mora & García Leyva, 2020). The strengthening of the security apparatus has had critical repercussions for Indigenous peoples and those who inhabit Indigenous regions, as these reforms produce the criminal subject categories that it similarly targets. A clear demonstration of this came at the end of the Fox administration. In May 2006, the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) deployed a brutal repressive operation against Indigenous Nahua *ejido* landowners from the town of Atenco in the state of Mexico, who were struggling against the construction of an international airport in their territory and who sympathized with the Zapatista communities. Shortly after, in the state of Oaxaca, the Popular Assembly of Oaxacan Peoples (APPO), which promoted autonomous decision-making processes, endured brutal repressive actions by paramilitary groups known as the “caravans of death,” as well as from the military and federal police. This included forced disappearances, murders, acts of torture and arbitrary arrests (Rénique & Poole 2008).

At the end of that year, Felipe Calderón took power and began his presidential mandate (2006–2012) with an undeclared war on organized crime that included the armed forces and marines (institutions which took over most public security tasks) as the main protagonists. The result was a steep rise in homicide rates, as well as grave human rights violations, particularly in regions of extreme socioeconomic marginalization, including in states with a high percentage of Indigenous population such as Guerrero and Michoacán. This State priority continued, with variations, under the Peña Nieto administration (2012–2018). Although quantitative data runs the risk of reducing human lives to mere numbers, the following statistics serve to highlight the context of de facto warfare at the time. According to official data, more than 275,000 people were murdered in Mexico between 2006 and 2019,⁵ over 40,000 people were victims of forced disappearance and an average of seven women a day were victims of femicide.⁶ It is unacceptable that, compared to other Latin American countries such as Brazil and Colombia, in Mexico there continues to be no data that identifies the ethnic and racial make-up of victims; there

are no statistics for Indigenous, Afro-Mexican or *mestizo* populations. While there is no way of knowing how many of these victims were Indigenous peoples, we can assert that states with high Indigenous populations, such as Guerrero and Michoacán, experienced some of the highest rates of extreme violence during both of those administrations. Guerrero, for example, had one of the highest homicide rates in the entire country; while official data from 2007 registered 766 cases, this number increased to 2367 in 2018.⁷ At the same time, the state also concentrated the highest number of forced disappearances, with over 544 cases reported between 2014 and 2018.⁸

While Indigenous communities and organizations initially centered their critiques on State neoliberal policies, particularly the privatization of communal land, these expanded during that period to focus on extractivist policies, promoted and backed by a series of judicial reforms, including the Mining Law, the Hydrocarbons Law and the Natural Waters Law, among others. For example, the collective *Defensa de los Territorios* (Collective in Defense of Territory) highlights that at the end of 2018, Oaxaca had 322 mining concessions, most of these located in Indigenous regions.⁹ The result was the increase in new waves of land dispossession which Indigenous organizations had been fearing and denouncing for more than a quarter of a century (Gómez Rivera, 2018).

Both processes (the increase in acts of extreme physical violence and in land dispossession pushed forth by extractivist policies) took place during the same period. However, several social actors, including human rights organizations and other civil society groups, tended to engage in separate struggles, with the activism against massive development projects largely divorced from that of victims' families struggles for justice against forced disappearances, assassinations and femicide. As we shall see in the next section, it was not until 2018, during the Indigenous Government Council's journey through several of the country's regions, that Indigenous authorities generated nuanced political discourses that connected both expressions of violence as part of the same "war on life"; they point out that both the models of economic development in place as well as illicit economies extract the life force of entire Indigenous populations and their territories.

In this context marked by territorial dispossessions and forms of extreme violence, the practice of autonomy and self-determination of Indigenous peoples transitions to actions focused on the defence and protection of life. In order to place our gaze on these transformations, we will now turn our

focus to the struggle for autonomy in the Triqui area of Oaxaca and in Nahua communities in the state of Michoacán.

Autonomy as a Mechanism of Defence and Protection

Given its contested nature, the right to Indigenous autonomy has been subjected not only to juridical disputes, but also to violent actions by opposing political actors. There are too many examples of repression against communities and organizations exercising their rights to autonomy and self-determination, including counterinsurgency strategies designed to contain, divide and limit the scope of these rights. For example, during the multicultural era, the *Máscara Roja* paramilitary group massacred 45 Tsotsil people, most of whom were women and minors, in the village of Acteal in the Chiapas highlands a few days before Christmas in 1997 (Hernández, 1998). The end of that decade also witnessed the assassinations, disappearances and forced displacement of members of Ch'ol and Tseltal communities in the Northern Zone of the state at the hands of the *Paz y Justicia* paramilitary group, which at the time was backed the local congressman of the PRI party, Samuel Sánchez Sánchez (Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, 1998). The most widely circulated representations tend to construe these acts of extreme violence as local phenomena, especially when members of paramilitary groups come from the same Indigenous communities as the victims. This often leads the mainstream media and a sector of academic scholars to claim that violence is between communities or led by *mestizo* leaders that manipulate Indigenous communities (Aguilar Camín, 2007), hence erasing from the equation the role of the State. These cases are a reminder that the exercise of autonomy always comes with measures of self-defence and protection against multi-level alliances between actors that wish to impede or contain it. Nevertheless, in this section I wish to highlight that since 2006, with the incursion of new players, mainly organized crime and extractivist companies, these measures of self-defence and protection have intensified as part of the exercise of autonomy.

In Mexico, this transition had, as a first anchor point, a series of violent events that began in 2007 in the Indigenous Triqui village of San Juan Copala in the state of Oaxaca. That year, Copala inhabitants released a public statement in which they declared themselves an autonomous municipality. The

statement was the first of its kind outside of Zapatista territory and responded to the attempts to put into practice rights to self-determination, through the use of *usos y costumbres* (customary law) and the principles of direct democracy such as the Zapatista concept of *mandar obedeciendo* (lead by obeying), which had been taken up by the APPO the previous year. The public statement attracted the attention and support from organizations and collectives from across the country. Natalia de Marinis in her book, *Desplazadas por la guerra, Estado, género y violencia en la región Triqui* (2020), describes how she decided to do field work for her master's degree in the village in order to document the process of autonomy. However, shortly after, between the end of 2009 and the end of 2010, a wave of violent events in the region culminated in a massacre of more than 30 people. Survivors and families who had supported the initiative for autonomy were forced to relocate from the village to the state capital, Mexico City, and other places. De Marinis explains how the initial push for autonomy was replaced by the creation of complex networks between displaced inhabitants of San Juan Copala that could provide alerts of possible incursions by violent actors in order to avoid more assassinations while also serving as protection mechanisms. Displaced groups, particularly Triqui women, set up camp in the main square of the city of Oaxaca to denounce impunity for wrongdoers and demand justice. The political focus shifted to prioritize survival strategies.

In contrast to the arguments that suggest that the violence in the Triqui region is the result of inter-community battles, de Marinis details several ways in which the State plays a key role. This includes accounts of the local reconfiguration of the State through the reactivation of PRI leadership networks, as well as a revamped articulation of local interests with State and federal ones. The incursion of new players in an interconnected web of political and economic interests created extremely adverse conditions for autonomy projects. Similar situations occurred in other regions of the country, particularly Michoacán and Guerrero, which had their complexities. It is evident in both these states that the introduction of organized crime and the increase in extractivist projects added even more complexity to this framework.

To provide an example, I now turn to the struggle over the recuperation of ancestral territories in 2009 by the Nahua community of Santa María Ostula in the state of Michoacán. Similarly to San Juan Copala, when Ostula declared that it would revert land dispossession through the establishment of its own governing body, it received the backing of several Indigenous and *mestizo*

organizations and collectives, especially by the network of Indigenous organizations that make up the CNI. On 14 June 2009, during a regional meeting for the Central Pacific region of the CNI, Purépecha, Wixaritari, Rarámuri, Hñahñü, Binnizá, Coca, Tsetal, Na'saavi as well as other Nahua communities backed Ostula's decision by way of their declaration, "Manifiesto por el derecho a la autodefensa" (Manifesto for the right to self-defence). The joint statement argued that as Indigenous peoples:

We have exhausted all legal and judicial venues for the defence and recognition of our lands, territories. We have only received negative responses, deferrals, threats and repression from the State, as in the case of this community of Santa María Ostula. The road ahead implies the continuation of exercising our historic right to autonomy and self-determination. We insist that the Earth, that is our mother, is not for sale: we protect it with our life.¹⁰

The initial fight was against local *mestizo* leaders of La Pacita area, who decades before had confiscated lands recognized in the colonial Primary Titles of Ostula.¹¹ In 2009, Nahua inhabitants were able to recover most of their ancestral lands, more than 13,000 hectares that extend from the Pacific coast area to the highlands (Hernández Navarro, 2009). In an event carried out in Ostula to celebrate the anniversary of the recovery, one community member remembered that particular day:

I arrived here in a caravan. There is an entrance through El Zalate, where the caravan went through, we were able to start entering. We were cut off by a black car with several people carrying high caliber weapons. They called out to us, "What do you want, damn dirty, foul, smelly Indians?" "Go back where you came from, or we will beat you up." I was sitting in the passenger seat ... They started shooting at us. I heard several shots in front of me. I realized my friend was bleeding. They shot him. It was really sad. The missing and the dead ... they gave their lives for the mothers and the children, and for the ground we are standing on.¹²

Once established in a new village, the first community actions were to organize a collective vigil system and police force to protect communal lands, both under the supervision of the community assembly. According to studies on Indigenous autonomous practices in the region, this General Government Assembly names and supervises other communal responsibilities, including the role of land, civilian and religious authorities. The decision to establish their own community police force as part of the exercise of autonomy resonates with other Indigenous communities and organizations, including the Purépecha community of Cherán, also in Michoacán, that in 2011 expelled organized criminal groups and corrupted members of political parties and was effectively able to keep them out of their territory through a form of self-siege that the community established through barricades and surveillance mechanisms set in place around bonfires placed in strategic corners of the village (Aragón, 2019).

Such actions also resonate with much longer autonomous processes, such as that of the Regional Coordinator of Indigenous Authorities (CRAC) and its Communal Police (PC), an organization made up by Me'phaa, Na Savi, Nahua and *mestizo* communities of the Guerrero Mountain that emerged in 1996 as part of the struggle against violence in the region and to implement its own justice system (Sierra, 2013). While the CRAC was originally created to tackle violence led by local authorities, party interests and other actors linked to local government and state government interests, in more recent years its activities of self-defence and justice have expanded to include actions against local drug-trafficking networks, which undoubtedly increased the risks of its membership. In addition, between 2013 and 2014, when so-called self-defence *mestizo*-led groups began to carry out their own self-defense actions throughout different regions of the country, government representatives of Guerrero took measures to criminalize the CRAC's administration of justice. Although their collective rights for self-determination as Indigenous peoples is protected by Law 701 of the state of Guerrero, government officials detained CRAC members, including almost a dozen of its leaders who were accused of crimes such as kidnapping and possession of weapons (Ocampo, 2013).

In the case of Ostula, the declaration of autonomy received an immediate repressive response, which began on the same day of recovery, as evidenced by the testimony above. Shortly thereafter, conditions became more complex, along with those actors participating in acts of violence. According to research conducted by Salvador Maldonado, in Ostula various interests

converged, including not only local interests but also those related to economic development as well as those of mining and tourism companies. This is partially due to its location on the coast. In this sense, Maldonado describes that, “The territorial deployment of security forces on behalf of these groups is reflected in disputes over spatial control for mining production, logging, animal and vegetation trafficking, etc.” (2017). At the same time, since 2013, organized crime uses the region as a trafficking route, mostly to transport illicit merchandise to the state’s main port, Lázaro Cárdenas, which is located a little over 100km away.

On several occasions, community members denounced that these actors are backed and protected by the armed forces. In 2010, a year after recovering its ancestral lands, 12 community members were killed and four were “*levantados*,” a phrase used to refer to disappeared persons. In each of these cases, community members accused a group of heavily-armed local *mestizos*, backed by the armed forces, as those responsible (Camacho, 2010). In response, Ostula community members established road blockades to monitor the presence of these actors, as well as surveillance spots which were then violently targeted by State security forces.¹³

The complexity of the actors participating whether in an active or passive manner makes it likely for land dispossession, murders, and forced disappearances to replicate in other regions of the country, each with its own nuances and historical frameworks. Throughout the first years of Zapatista autonomous municipalities to the end of the 1990s, the aspects of autonomy related to self-protection strategies were mainly against the so-called “Guardias Blancas,” private security forces of the local elite of *mestizo* landowner families, many of which were colluding with political parties or political authorities. However, starting in 2006, there was a diversification of players who were actively pushing land dispossession and spreading conditions of terror throughout different regions, which shifted the sense of autonomy towards defence, shelter and protection of the traditional lifestyle linked to a territory.

Patrick Wolfe, an Australian scholar, argued that settler states, that is to say, nation-states that emerge from the conquering of Indigenous peoples and the enslavement of people from the African continent, and that continue to be sustained by these colonial structures, maintain an eliminatory logic (2006). As a whole, both calculated and directed expressions, including genocide, land dispossessions as well as passive and seemingly non-violent ones, including integration policies based on “melting pot” ideologies, activate this

eliminary logic directed towards Indigenous peoples. Depending on historical conditions, some of these elements take on more relevant roles than others. In this sense, we could say that during the multicultural period, this logic of elimination was expressed mainly in policies of State-recognition that did not alter the privileged location of *mestizo* populations within nation-state building and without dismantling the dominating neoliberal development model. However, in a context marked by the active participation of organised crime and extractivist companies, and by the militarization of everyday life, the balance is tipped towards actions that are openly eliminary. The responses enacted by many organizations and communities, as seen in the case of Ostula, have been to protect and defend themselves, which at the same time modifies the meanings posited to the right of autonomy. Within these transitions, which political discourses emerge and in what ways do Indigenous authorities name current forms of violence? The answers to these questions are the focus of the following section.

Against the Permanence of Colonial Structures in the Present

They do not care about polluting the water which runs beneath the Earth and becomes life for our peoples. They spread death with the wells, releasing vented gas and toxic spills due to damaged pipes. They pollute our communities' rivers and springs, which are our source of water. They dispossess and destroy the land spreading death, destruction, exploitation, contempt and repression against us. The capitalists want to make us believe that our territory is the thousands of oil wells, dozens of mining concessions, the murdered women, all of those who are missing ... They spread fear, disappear our people, while the drug-trafficking violence seems more similar to the actions of mining companies, those that extract hydrocarbons through fracking, those that traffic and profit from our migrant brothers and sisters who cross through these lands, those that kill women just for being women, and those that ill-advisedly govern for the boss with the money. (National Indigenous Congress, 2017)

María de Jesús Patricio, popularly known as Marichuy, a Nahua Indigenous woman who is a traditional medicine healer and member of CNI, gave this speech in Totonacapan, Veracruz, during a tour through several locations in the country, which intended to gather enough signatures to assure her registration as an independent candidate for the 2018 presidential elections.¹⁴ Between the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, Marichuy, along with other members of the Indigenous Government Council (CIG), a council made up by representatives, a man a woman, from each of the 90 Indigenous regions linked to the CNI, visited several cities, towns and communities throughout the country to listen to the needs and life conditions of local populations, and to learn about their struggles. In each location, these words were renewed and returned to other communities through speeches that were the result of dialogues with those previously visited communities and collectives. In this sense, the CIG's tour was one propelled by two overarching goals – achieving Marichuy's registration as an independent candidate (which was not accomplished) and as a practice of multiple listening, that is to say a back-and-forth of exchanges that in total generated novel grassroots narratives against violent conditions. This section begins with the words of Marichuy, as they reflect the type of political statements and analysis that resulted in this collective practice.

In order to analyze these narratives and reflect on their political implications, I reviewed all the transcripts and audio recordings of the political events of the CIG's tour between 2017 and 2018 that were available on the CNI's website, including the one stated in Totonacapan. I also reviewed the life stories of CIG members published in the multimedia project, *Flores en el desierto*, of the journalistic collective *Desinformémonos*, which is under the coordination of writer Gloria Muñoz. As for the speech that begins this section, I would like to start by stating that while Marichuy is referencing the specific conditions of that region of Veracruz, she offers a mapping of the kind of interconnected violence found in several Indigenous communities in the country. Thus, her words are a relevant starting point to understand how she, along other CIG members, name different forms of structural violence (land dispossession, racism, environmental destruction) as well as acts of physical violence (disappearances, murders, femicide) as part of what is called a “war on life.” Both forms of dispossession act in an interconnected way against Indigenous territories and the bodies of those people inhabiting said territories, and have now spread to *mestizo* regions of the country.

While Marichuy's speech markedly focused on capitalist exploitation, she defines these relations as part of the forced occupation of Indigenous territories, along with the systematic devaluation of human and non-human life. In sum, these are tangible expressions of attempts to eliminate Indigenous peoples, given that they direct populations to the brink of social and biological death. At the same time, such expressions of territorial occupation are repeated and intensified through multiple acts of extreme violence, such as cases of femicide, murder and forced disappearances, within a narco-state economy. In the way that Marichuy weaves capital interests with the continuation of colonial forces, including patriarchal and racist structures that prevail in society, it would be erroneous to think that she is referring exclusively to class exploitation.

This "war on life" is also described and developed by other CIG women members when they refer to their experiences and to the struggles of their communities. As we will see below, the elements that these women highlight and repeat in their testimonies include the ways in which their peoples' territories are subject to threats of new cycles of land dispossession. At the same time, they highlight the multiple effects of these dispossessions including labour exploitation, forced displacement, assassinations, political repression and systematic acts that treat the communities as if they were strangers or foreigners in their own land. The combination weakens collective resilience to survive and creates conditions for a slow death pierced by extreme acts of violence.

In an interview by a Spanish radio station, Bettina Cruz of the Binnizá community, from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and leader of the Assembly of Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Defence of Land and Territory (APIITDTT), refers to co-investments between transnational Spanish companies with the Mexican State for wind-energy projects in the Isthmus, calling it a form of "new colonization" (Ellos y Nosotros Show, April 26, 2018). In order to explain why these projects are defined as contemporary colonialism, Bettina explains that these were imposed by the Mexican State under the argument that energy sources are a common good that reflects on the "interests of the nation." Her criticism is that the government is essentially claiming that "the nation" does not include Indigenous peoples or their territories, which are impacted by these kinds of projects; she denounces that the affected peoples were not even consulted and that the benefits of the electric power generated barely reaches these communities. However,

the impacts experienced by the Binnizá inhabitants of the Isthmus include alterations to the landscape and farming activities. The vibration emanating from wind plants drive animals away and limit the growth of vegetation, and locals detect significant changes in the water and soil nutrients. These wind-energy projects do not represent the first megadevelopment project in the region, but are rather part of a long chain stemming back into the initial decades of conquest and that has included salt, gold, iron and silver mines (Desinformémonos 2018a).

From her region in the northern state of Sonora, Myrna Valencia of the Yoreme people refers to the destruction of the river that crosses the community's territory, the Mayo River, by agribusiness as that which has transformed "water that is life, into death." This is because the river as well as subterranean water sources have become polluted. As she describes the impacts this has on their territory, Myrna compares the project of "death" of private interests with the region's drug-trafficking economy that has had a particular impact on the community's youth. To emphasize her point, she describes young people under the influence of narcotics. This type of aggravated impacts brought about by the combination of extractivist projects with that of drug-trafficking activities is similarly described by the Comca'ac people's CIG member, Gabriela Molina Moreno, of the Desemboque de los Seris community, also in Sonora, who details how her people have been equally threatened by mining companies and organized crime. The presence of drug-trafficking organizations has served as a justification for the semi-permanent settlement of marine forces in Tiburón island (a sacred island of the Comca'ac, as it is considered to be the cradle of origin of its people). This third actor plays the part of a multidimensional forced occupation that, "instead of protecting our territory, defends organized crime" (Desinformémonos, 2018b.).

In speeches and interviews, other CIG members claim that the combination of these actions activates a "war on life," a war, that may have begun as part of the sociobiological erasure of Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant peoples, but has since then expanded to include the transformation into waste of the life energy of other sectors of society. The widespread presence of security forces in Indigenous territories, the occupation of their lands by actors positioned outside of the collective interests, the imposition of external forms of government and modes of political participation, along with the extraction of people's life force in order to maintain the privileges of other sectors of society – these make up the historical colonial ground on which current forms

of extreme and structural violence find anchor. The shift towards conditions of extreme violence that threaten Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, together with land dispossession and social geographical policies, is not something unique to Mexico. It is part of the trend towards the regression of multicultural policies, as well as the reactivation of explicit racism and land dispossession that several studies have documented across the continent (Hooker, 2020). In this sense, what we witness in Mexico represents an intensification of what Ayuuk scholar Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil refers to as the illegitimate pact of the Mexican State. Aguilar Gil states that the origin of the Mexican nation-state is illegitimate as Indigenous peoples were never asked whether or not they wanted to be part of Mexico (Aguilar Gil, 2020), which thus excludes Indigenous peoples from the social pact which established it.

If the struggle for autonomy and self-determination generates these types of political narratives, to which political horizon do they point? If we are to take the speech in Totonacapan, Veracruz, as a reference point, self-government continues to be at the center of such proposals. Marichuy insists that, when faced with land dispossession and projects that spread death, the responses lie in:

Our lands are the Indigenous languages, the ancestral cultures, our resistance, community organizing which remind us to not sell out, to not give up, to not forget what we have inherited from our ancestors in order to protect, that invites us to coordinate and govern ourselves by practicing what we decide as a collective. (National Indigenous Congress, 2017)

Marichuy brings back the practice of autonomy as an axis for political action. She and other CIG members claim that these actions are created and nourished through collective care-work, which ensures material and sociospiritual conditions for the reproduction of social life as peoples (Mora 2020). It is important to point out that many women who are members of CIG are midwives or traditional healers, or come from a matriarchal lineage of *curanderas* (healers). Others participate in their communities by growing medicinal plants, while others, such as Marichuy, are traditional healers themselves. For her part, Gabriela Molina went to culinary school in Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora state, where she did research into traditional ingredients that generations of members of her community have used to strengthen and heal the

body of ailments, including diabetes (which has exponentially increased in the region). Osbelia, a Nahua woman of the village of Tepoztlán in Morelos state, trained as a teacher during the 1950s, when Indigenous women's access to education was rare. Myrna Valencia, also a teacher, teaches at a secondary school in her town. Lucero Alicia, Kumiaia of the state of Baja California Sur, followed the footsteps of her mother and other women in her community in working not only as a teacher but also as a spiritual guide and *curandera*.

In her testimony included in *Flores en el desierto*, Myrna states that these professions have an influence in how women who are members of CIG take on positions of authority within their communities and provide new meanings to the practices of self-government and autonomy, as they understand that their obligations are part of their everyday life, rather than seeing these leadership positions as being separate from the everyday. She describes the figure of authority as “being a guardian of life, [which is based on] protecting life and defending the people as a collective” (Desinformémonos, 2018c). The everyday practices through which they practice self-determination nourishes the conditions of the collective wellbeing as part of socioenvironmental relations.

Tila Before the Supreme Court: Fighting for Ethno-Racial Justice and against Colonial Legacies

Until this point in the chapter, I have referred to changes in the meanings posited for Indigenous autonomy as responses to the intensification of multiple expressions of dispossession carried forth by “legal” and “illegal” actors. I have also paused to focus on the type of political discourse which emerges from these experiences, specifically how women CIG members interpret their peoples' experiences, elaborate narratives through their interactions with people from different regions of the country and map out novel political horizons for the practice of autonomy. In an earlier section, I referred to the practice of de facto autonomy that exists at the margin of formal judicial recognition. In this section, I will reflect on how particular de facto autonomy practices question the juridical and political limits imposed by State institutions.

The focus will be on the land dispute case of the Indigenous *ejido* of Tila of the Ch'ol people, located in the northern region of the state of Chiapas, which

reached the Supreme Court in 2010. The Court debated the case in 2013 but failed to reach a verdict at the time. It was not until 2018 that the judges issued a tepid sentence, even though the *ejido*'s assembly had essentially resolved the dispute three years prior, at the end of 2015. In this section, I reflect upon this case, given that I participated in the elaboration of an expert witness report, in collaboration with Rodrigo Gutiérrez, researcher of the Institute of Judicial Investigation of Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM), upon the direct request by the Court.

I will provide a brief description of the case in order to later reflect on the role of each of the players involved. The *ejido* of Tila is largely inhabited by Indigenous Ch'ol and Tseltal people and is located in the northern region of Chiapas, within the municipality of the same name. At the same time, within the Tila *ejido* lies the town of Tila, an urban center that is the political-administrative center of the region and that houses public services and the Catholic religious image of the Lord of Tila, a black Christ image that is venerated by Indigenous and *mestizo* people throughout the Mexican southeast. The Tila *ejido* was founded in 1934, after a presidential decree expropriated 5,400 hectares that had previously belonged to Ladino and German estate-owning families. Through interviews conducted as part of the expert witness report, we described how the *ejido* was essentially the only available agrarian legal option for the Ch'ol and Tseltal population in the post-revolutionary period to recover patchworks of their territory. For that reason, the *ejido* symbolises a triumph against the local *kaxlan* elite (a local term for non-Indigenous outsiders) and against long-standing cycles of dispossession and repression (Mora, 2020).

The land dispute began in 1971, during the first attempt to expropriate 130 hectares of the center of the *ejido*, which includes more than half of the town of Tila. This first attempt was an indirect result of external circumstances. Years back, an outbreak of disease caused the municipal center, which at the time was based in the nearby town of Petalcingo, to temporarily relocate to the town of Tila. However, in 1971 a *mestizo* lawyer aligned with local public officials attempted to make the change permanent. The lawyer altered the *ejido*'s maps in order to justify that those 130 hectares had never belonged to the *ejido*. The *ejido* authorities initiated an *amparo*, or protective action, against this alteration. While waiting for a resolution, a parallel legal battle began as the Chiapas state's legislative branch approved a decree to separate the 130 hectares from *ejido* lands. Members of the *ejido* responded by way of another

amparo, which was conceded in 2009. However, the judge at the time declared that land restitution of those 130 hectares was physically impossible, hence proposing an alternate implementation of the ruling in the form of substitute compliance, which in this case meant economic compensation or granting of equivalent land. Finally, in 2010, the case reached the Supreme Court.

Between 2010 and 2018, when the Court finally issued the ruling, a re-configuration of actors within the legal field took place, including human rights organizations, the judges themselves and us, as anthropologists and academics. In order to analyze the case of Tila *ejido*, the Supreme Court requested a total of four surveys, two of which were focused on sociocultural issues. This was one of the few occasions when the highest court in the country agreed to review a non-legal expert opinion for a case. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the case of Tila was one of the first cases involving Indigenous collective rights that at the time had reached the highest institution of justice. Other cases at the time included the 2013 case of the Yaqui tribe's fight against an aqueduct in Sonora state; the recognition of political participation rights for the Purépecha community in Cherán in 2014; and the recognition of the collective rights of the Me'phaa people in San Miguel el Progreso in Guerrero state, against extractivist policies in 2016. In this sense, at the time it appeared that the juridical terrain was shifting to rather favorable conditions for Indigenous rights, despite the overall context of adverse violence and dispossession.

In order to reflect on this possible new scenario, in March 2015 the forum "Identity, Territory and Jurisdiction: The Role of Anthropological Surveying in the Enforcement of Indigenous People's Collective Rights" took place at the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM). Speakers included Supreme Court judges, judges of other courts (particularly those that had ruled in favor of peoples' collective rights) and anthropologists who participated in these landmark cases as cultural experts. Most of the discussions focused on the perspective that judicial institutions were entering a phase that provided new opportunities to strengthen collective rights claims through the use of anthropological expert witness reports. However, some attendees noted the marked absence of members of these communities themselves, who need to be considered political actors within the judicial arena. One of main critical voices was Magdalena Gómez, an Indigenous rights lawyer who has worked closely with Zapatista communities and has been an advisor to many collective rights struggles. During her intervention, she pointed out a deep

contradiction, “Why is it that during judicial processes the anthropologist becomes the expert for interpreting Indigenous cultural practices instead of the authorities with these communities, who are the subjects seeking autonomy and self-determination?” Through this statement, Gómez demonstrated a critical limit to the rights to autonomy and self-determination (Mora, 2020). In contrast to Colombia, Canada and Australia, where spoken testimony and written documentation presented by representatives of Indigenous peoples or First Nations is a key aspect of judicial proceedings, in Mexico Indigenous authorities can solve internal issues but cannot be intermediaries for the State’s institutions.

While several anthropologists, including myself, agree with Gómez’s commentary, members of Tila *ejido* made this critique evident through political actions employed at the end of 2015. In December of that year, a sector of *ejido* members called for an assembly which reached the verdict of recovering the 130 hectares under dispute. They stated that after searching for justice against land dispossessions for more than half a century, the Indigenous assembly of the *ejido* decided to destroy anything that symbolized “the origins of all the acts of injustice and discrimination,” which was the building housing the municipal government of Tila. They argued that their decision was based on the fact that their “ancestors founded Tila before colonial times” (Tila Ejido statement, December 2015) and that the multiple attempts to strip them of their land was part of the continuation of colonization which was evident in recent years through development projects promoted by the *Kaxlan* in alliance with a sector of the Ch’ol *ejido* members. They were designated as the guilty party, and as such they needed to be removed from their posts, in order for Indigenous *ejido* authorities to be established as the only legitimate local government in Tila *ejido*. While the case continued officially on the list of cases awaiting a verdict, the parastatal verdict implied a kind of de facto withdrawal from the Supreme Court (Mora 2020).

In order to implement this self-verdict and assure the necessary conditions to then implement their rights to autonomy and self-determination, the physical facilities of the municipal government were torn down. The municipal offices were forced to temporarily relocate, though two years later, through a decree from the local Congress, a decision was made for the municipal government to establish permanently in the village of El Limar (Chiapas, 2017). On the other hand, almost all *mestizo* and Ch’ol families that had remained on the side of the municipal government left the *ejido* in order

to establish themselves in other towns and communities.¹⁵ After decades of a power balance in favor of the political and economic privileges of a local *mestizo* elite supported by other Ch'ol and Tseltal factions, the result was a tipping of power in favor of the faction of Ch'ol *ejido* members who promoted autonomy.

Rather than delegating the verdict to the state's judicial branch, the *ejido* members affirmed that their assembly, which is governed by "*usos y costumbres*," was the legitimate sphere to exercise their right to self-determination. Through their actions, this faction of Tila *ejido* members situated itself within a political genealogy that exercises autonomy at the margins of State institutions. At the same time, the *ejido* members responded directly to the contradiction raised by Magdalena Gómez at the ITAM forum in 2015. Rather than human rights organizations or anthropologists acting as the intermediary advocates in favor of the community's right to autonomy and self-determination, the *ejido* members demonstrated that they, too, form part of the judicial arena, and that they in fact can set the terms of their participation. In this sense, they questioned the mechanisms through which the judicial apparatus recognizes and limits their right to autonomy and self-determination, opening new possibilities.

Final Reflections Regarding the 4T (Mexico's "Fourth Transformation")

This chapter has reflected on how the practices of autonomy have shifted towards prioritizing mechanisms of collective protection and defence against the heightened eliminatory logics of the Mexican State. The focus was primarily on the period marked by the Calderón and Peña Nieto administrations. In 2018, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, of the center-left Morena party took office. The change in the federal government initially appeared to set the stage for the pendulum to swing towards the establishment of new relations between Indigenous peoples and the State, with executive promises to prioritize the protection and strengthening of Indigenous peoples' collective rights. At the same time, the recognition of Afro-Mexican populations was incorporated into Article 2 of the Constitution in 2019. During the first year of the new administration, the recently created National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI) carried out hundreds of consultative forums throughout different Indigenous regions in the country in order to present a legislative

proposal for a constitutional reform that would enhance the collective rights of Indigenous peoples to autonomy and self-determination. Similarly, the executive branch declared that it was against security policies based on the militarization of public security and in favor of integrative “peace-making” strategies.

In terms of the first initiative mentioned, this was rapidly watered-down by the priority granted to mega-development projects and extractivist policies. One example of this is that during the COVID-19 pandemic, mining was considered as an essential activity starting June 1st 2020, and the same happened with the highly debated infrastructure and tourism project of the *Tren Maya* (the Mayan train). This mega-development project is the most controversial of the administration, as the train is projected to cross through Indigenous territories in four of the country’s states, as well as invaluable archaeological areas and protected natural reserves. Despite strong mobilizations against the project, and the fact that international institutions like the UN declared that the “consultation” did not meet the required international standards, the Executive insisted on continuing forward. As for the second matter mentioned above, the Executive has resumed the militarization of public security through a decree that created the National Guard, a security force of more than 70,000 agents that are mainly former military and police agents and that are involved in matters deemed issues of national security. As for the data regarding extreme violence, rather than decreasing, it has increased significantly. According to a report published by NGO Frontline Defenders, Mexico is second to Colombia as the most dangerous country in the world for human rights advocates. Out of the 321 murders of social leaders in 2018, 54% of these took place in both of these countries – 126 in Colombia and 48 in Mexico (Front Line Defenders, 2019). All of this points to the fact that despite the change in the federal administration, these different forms of violence continue to frame the terrain on which autonomy is granted meaning.

This scenario leads to a series of critical reflections as to the tensions that emerge when transitions in the federal administration fail to substantially modify the conditions of extreme structural violence, forcing Indigenous communities and organizations to continue emphasizing autonomy as a measure of self-preservation and as a mechanism for the protection of life. One of the main tensions has to do with those priorities of protecting life, as highlighted by women who are members of CIG and the initiatives to create

protection mechanisms, such as barricades in the communities or the creation of community police as a way to protect land from dispossession by organized crime or extractivist companies. One of the main challenges is keeping these different defence barriers, which are at times enacted through the use of weapons, without leaving aside and possibly even strengthening collective care. Another challenge is reflected in the types of political debates held by Tila *ejido* members in their assembly before emitting their own sentence: In what ways should struggle prioritize political arenas limited by State juridical frameworks? And how much should be invested in highlighting the need for the practice of the right to autonomy and self-determination by para-state institutions? What are the implications of prioritizing one over the other, particularly in struggles taking place during the López Obrador administration, such as the Tren Maya? Finally, how can political proposals and initiatives among the different practices of autonomy be interwoven in order to incentivise a new set of conditions that would lead to the creation of protection and defence mechanisms, as well as social transformation? This last question prioritizes collective and interdependent care-work at the heart of new sets of relations to be established with Indigenous peoples, *mestizo* populations and Afro-Mexican communities so as to fissure the colonial structures that continue to sustain the Mexican State.

NOTES

- 1 Please see statement, “Declaración I del Congreso Nacional Indígena, Nunca más un México sin nosotros.” (“Declaration I of the National Indigenous Congress, never again a Mexico without us.”) <https://bit.ly/34d9ZKQ>
- 2 In a statement released in December 1994, the EZLN announced the creation of 38 autonomous Zapatista municipalities divided in five regions, at the time called Aguascalientes, within the territory under its influence.
- 3 Other important debates at the time were related to the level of autonomy, with some organizations (mostly in the state of Oaxaca) focusing on the communal sphere, while others such as ANIPA, on a regional level, or in the case of Zapatista communities in Chiapas, on a municipal level. There was also discussion on whether autonomy should be reduced to identity claims from Indigenous peoples, or a collectivity or network of collectivities that shared particular political concepts in regards to state institutions.
- 4 The reforms included constitutional reforms to Articles 21 and 73 which regulated coordination and networking of all of the institutions that intervene in preventing and combating crime; the creation of new police institutions such as the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) in 1999; and five theses published between 1996 and 2017 by the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJN) which allowed the participation of the military for policing tasks.

- 5 See: <https://bit.ly/3jb94P3>
- 6 See: <https://bit.ly/2TarftL>
- 7 Data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), cited in the Crisis Group report (2020).
- 8 See: <https://bit.ly/3dPcG8r>
- 9 See: <https://bit.ly/37BQwFR>
- 10 See “Manifiesto de Ostula,” 17 June 2009: <https://bit.ly/34bi5DE>
- 11 Primary titles are documents written during the 17th and 18th centuries, mainly by the same Indigenous groups that describe the founding of these communities. The primary titles play a relevant part in arguing for the recognition of territorial rights of Indigenous peoples.
- 12 Audio recordings from the event, Xayakalan, 10 years building community resistance, can be found on: <https://bit.ly/34g4fzT>
- 13 By 2016, the forced disappearance and murder of more than 34 men, children and women were added to this growing violence. Refer to: (Redacción, 2019).
- 14 The National Electoral Institute’s guidelines state that an independent candidate can be registered if they are able to collect signatures from 1% of the electorate in at least 17 states, which is equivalent to almost 900,000 signatures. Marichuy was able to collect almost 300,000 signatures.
- 15 Please see the statements released by members of the ejido: <https://bit.ly/2T8bgwe>

References

- Aguilar Camín, H. (2007). Regreso a Acteal, el camino de los muertos. *Nexos*, 358.
- Aguilar Gil, Y. E. (2020, 16 de mayo). El amor por México. *El País*. <https://bit.ly/2HgIBTr>
- Aragón, O. (2019). *El derecho en insurrección. Hacia una antropología jurídica militante desde la experiencia de Cherán, México*. UNAM.
- Baronett, B., Mora, M., & Stahler Sholk, R. (2011). *Luchas muy otras”: Zapatismo y autonomía en las comunidades indígenas de Chiapas*. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, CIESAS, UNACH.
- Blackwell, M. (2012). The Practice of Autonomy in the Age of Neoliberalism: Strategies from Indigenous Women’s Organising in Mexico. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 44(02), 703-732. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X12000788>
- Burguete Cal y Mayor, A. (2000). *Indigenous Autonomy in Mexico*. IWGIA.
- Camacho, Z. (2010). Ostula, autonomía bajo asedio narcoparamilitar. *Contralínea*, 26 de septiembre. <https://bit.ly/3ob06Fq>
- Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (1998). *Ni paz ni justicia: Informe general y amplio acerca de la guerra civil que sufren los ch’oles en la Zona Norte de Chiapas*. San Cristóbal de las Casas: CDHFCB.

- Cerda, A. (2011). *Imaginando zapatismo, multiculturalidad y autonomía indígena en Chiapas desde un municipio autónomo*. UAM Xochimilco.
- Congreso Nacional Indígena (2017). Palabra de Marichuy en Neza. Sobre las Mujeres y los feminicidios. <https://bit.ly/35eEoaR>
- de Marinis, N. (2020). *Desplazadas por la guerra, Estado, género y violencia en la región Triqui*. CIESAS.
- Desinformemonos (2018a). *Flores en el desierto. Entrevista Bettina Lucila Cruz Velazquez, Consejala Binnizá, Juchitán, Oaxaca*. <https://bit.ly/2TcLhUk>
- . (2018b). *Flores en el desierto. Entrevista Gabriela Molina Morena, Consejala comca'ac. Comunidad Desemboque de los Seris, Sonora*. <https://bit.ly/37s95vQ>
- . (2018c). Entrevista Myrna Dolores Valencia Banda, Consejala yoreme, Comunidad Cohuirimpo, Sonora. <https://bit.ly/37oY5Q3>
- Forbis, M. (2006). Autonomy and a Handful of Herbs: Contesting Gender and Ethnic Identities Through Healing. En Shannon Speed, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, Lynn Stephen (Coords.), *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*. University of Texas Press.
- Front Line Defenders (2019). Global Analysis 2018. Front line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders: Dublin. <https://bit.ly/3ojR5Ki>
- Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas (2017, 10 de mayo). Periódico oficial del Estado de Chiapas 2017, 16-17.
- Gómez, M. (2004). La constitucionalidad pendiente. La hora indígena en la Corte. En Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, Sarela Paz y María Teresa Sierra (Coords.), *El Estado y los indígenas en los tiempos del PAN* (pp. 175- 206). CIESAS.
- . (2018). Extractivismo y pueblos indígenas en México. *El Cotidiano* 34(210), 93-106.
- Hale, Ch. R. (2002). Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 34(03), 485-524. <https://bit.ly/34f7R5h>
- Hernández, R.A. (1998). *La otra palabra: Mujeres y violencia en Chiapas, antes y después de Acteal*. CIESAS/IWGIA.
- Hernández Navarro, L. (1992). Las convulsiones rurales. En Julio Moguel, Carlota Botey y Luis Hernández (Coords.), *Autonomía y nuevos sujetos sociales en el desarrollo rural*. Siglo XXI Editores, Ceham.
- . (2009, 7 de julio). Ostula: la autodefensa indígena. *La Jornada*. <https://bit.ly/3jbirOJ>
- Hernández Navarro, L., & Vera, R. (1998). *Los Acuerdos de San Andrés*. Ediciones Era.
- Hooker, J. (2020). *Black and Indigenous Resistance in the Americas, From Multiculturalism to Racist Backlash*. Lexington Books.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (2016). *Principales resultados encuesta intercensal 2015 Chiapas*. Aguascalientes: INEGI.
- Lima Malvido, M. de la L. (2012). De la política criminal a la seguridad nacional. *Acervo del Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas de la UNAM*, 395-420. <https://bit.ly/2FOxKPY>

- Maldonado, S. (2017). Ostula, entre el crimen organizado y los intereses transnacionales. *Nexos*. <https://bit.ly/34db45a>
- Maldonado Goti, K. (2011). El Juzgado Indígena de Huehuetla, Sierra Norte de Puebla: construyendo la totonaqueidad en el contexto del multiculturalismo mexicano. En Victoria Chenaut, Magdalena Gómez, Héctor Ortiz y María Teresa Sierra (Coords.), *Justicia y diversidad en América Latina. Pueblos indígenas ante la globalización* (pp. 487-506). CIESAS.
- Marcos, S. (2011). *Mujeres, indígenas, rebeldes, zapatistas*. Ediciones y gráficos Eón.
- Mattiace, Sh., Hernández, R.A., & Rus, J. (Coords.) (2002). *Tierra, libertad y autonomía: Impactos regionales del zapatismo en México*. CIESAS, IWGIA.
- Mora, M. (2017). *Kuxlejal Politics: Indigenous Autonomy, Race and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities*. University of Texas Press.
- . (2018). *Política Kuxlejal, autonomía indígena, Estado racial e investigación descolonizante en comunidades zapatistas*. CIESAS.
- . (2020). (Dis)placement of anthropological legal activism, racial justice and the Ejido Tila, Mexico. *American Anthropologist*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13426>
- Mora, M., & García Leyva, J. (2020). Racist Criminalization, Anti-Racist Pedagogies, and Indigenous Teacher Dissidence in the Montaña of Guerrero, Mexico. En Juliet Hooker (Coord), *Black and Indigenous Resistance in the Americas, From Multiculturalism to Racist Backlash*. Lexington Books.
- Newdick, V. (2005). The Indigenous Woman as Victim of Her Culture in Neoliberal Mexico. *Cultural Dynamics*, 17(1), 73-92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0921374005058027>
- Ocampo, S. (2013, 24 de agosto). Militares detienen a 10 policías comunitarios en Ayutla de los Libres; van 29 en dos días. *La Jornada*. <https://bit.ly/3jg4q2q>
- Planeta Latino Radio (2018, 26 de abril). Bettina Cruz en Madrid. Charla sobre las empresas eólicas en el Istmo de Oaxaca. *Program Ellos y Nosotros*. <https://bit.ly/3ktx81n>
- Poole, D. (2009). Autonomía desterritorializada. En Carmen Martínez (Coord.), *Repensando los Movimientos Indígenas* (pp. 49-68). FLACSO.
- Redacción (2019, 2 de marzo). Comunidad de Águila denuncia hostigamiento del gobierno. *El Universal*. <https://bit.ly/3m49pVF>
- Regino Montes, A. (1998). San Andrés: el lugar de las muchas verdades y los muchos caminos. En Luis Hernández Navarro y Ramón Vera (Coords.), *Los Acuerdos de San Andrés*. Ediciones Era.
- Rénique, G., & Poole, D. (2008). The Oaxaca Commune: Struggling for Autonomy and Dignity. *NACLA*. <https://bit.ly/2T9do6P>
- Reyes, A., & Kaufman, M. (2011). Sovereignty, Indigeneity, Territory: Zapatista Autonomy and the New Practices of Decolonization. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 110(2), 505-525. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1162561>
- Sierra, M.T. (2013). Desafíos al Estado desde los márgenes: justicia y seguridad en la experiencia de la policía comunitaria. En María Teresa Sierra, Rosalva Aída Hernández y Rachel Sieder (Coords.), *Justicias indígenas y Estado: Violencias contemporáneas*, FLACSO, CIESAS.

Speed, Sh. (2008). *Rights in Rebellion Indigenous Struggle and Human Rights in Chiapas*. Stanford University Press.

Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(4), 387-409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>