



# Decoloniality as the Only Pathway to the Right to Development in Latin America

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## Abstract

This article seeks to discuss the severe economic and social impacts caused in the region by the development model in place as well as proposals for transformation advanced by different Latin American social movements. This is not a scholarly article, but rather a set of reflections gained from extensive reading and years of political activism carried out in Brazil, in the region, and worldwide. Nor is this article exhaustive; rather it consists of ideas that may contribute to the debate surrounding the right to development.

**Keywords** Latin America · Poverty · Inequality · Social movements · Development · Indigenous peoples

The Iberian governments were responsible for the colonization of Latin America and marked the beginning of colonial relations on these territories. These relations were characterized by several forms of domination and oppression through which the colonizers controlled the colonies' activities and practices, benefiting from a brutally exploited workforce and from the extraction of raw materials. It is worth stressing that this exploitation process led to capital accumulation in the European countries. The Europeans, once they settled in the colonies, controlled the knowledge and practices of the colonized, imposing on them the practices and customs of their continent of origin and consequently fomenting the devaluation of local cultures.

Colonialism was essential for the capitalist expansion cultural plan that originated in the West, specifically, in Europe. The European continent became the world's reference when it came to the Modern State and to civilization and development, a fact that would culminate in a power system strengthened by the logic of capitalism that would usher in the so-called globalization. With that, multiple forms of traditional knowledge were made subaltern and despised by a global governance plan—devised in the North Atlantic and

instrumentalized by supranational agents—that illustrates the most perverse sides of Eurocentric modernity. This way, while colonialism has been overcome, coloniality continues to be present in most diverse forms.

The concept of coloniality can be defined as a structure of domination or pattern of power that has remained rooted in our societies, even after the end of colonial relations. The culture of coloniality is capitalist, racist, patriarchal, and anti-democratic, in addition to being destructive of the environment. It reinforces a Eurocentric and hegemonic pattern of knowledge, denying or rendering invisible the knowledge of the poor and of blacks, indigenous people, and women.

Historically, Latin America has exerted great attraction on the rich countries, for, among other reasons, its enormous wealth of biodiversity, which has made it a strategic region for exploring natural resources and agriculture. The outcomes of this model have been nothing but deforestation, soil degradation, air, water, and land pollution, hunger, poverty, inequality, unemployment and underemployment, just to mention a few of the social maladies that characterize the continent. In this context, for the idea of right to development to make sense for Latin America and the Caribbean one must strip it of the oppression systems inherited from coloniality. One must stand up and deconstruct patterns, concepts, and perspectives imposed on peoples made subaltern over all these years. One must question modernity, capitalism, patriarchy, and racism.

An interesting way to that end is the one put forth by decoloniality. This concept offers, as an alternative, giving

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voice and visibility to the oppressed peoples made subaltern and silenced for so long. Decoloniality may be considered a social, political, cultural, and economic liberation plan that seeks to respect and to grant autonomy not only to individuals, but also to, among others, indigenous, black, peasant, women's groups, and social movements.

A number of processes of struggle against the various forms of oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean take inspiration from the idea of decoloniality to base their praxis. Thus, in this article we attempt to discuss the dire economic and social impacts on the region triggered by the development model in place as well as proposals for transformation advanced by different Latin American social movements. This is not a scholarly article, but rather a set of reflections gained from extensive reading and years of political activism carried out in Brazil, in the region, and worldwide. Nor is this article exhaustive; rather it consists of ideas that may contribute to the debate surrounding the right to development.

## An Unequal, Racist, and Sexist Region that Destroys Natural Resources

The economic, political, social, and cultural paths adopted by the governments of Latin America were of little benefit for the vast majority of the region's population. Despite the improved living conditions of Latin Americans in recent years, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were devastating. It is therefore essential to draw a picture of the consequences of the multiple forms of oppression pervading the region's societies, whose tackling is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the effective realization of the right to development.

## Poverty and Exclusion

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC),<sup>1</sup> a third of the Latin American population lives in poverty, or more than 200 million people. Roughly 10% of the workers are jobless and half of the workforce does casual, informal work. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation, further penalizing the impoverished and women. Furthermore, Latin America is the world's second most unequal region after sub-Saharan Africa, according to analyses by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).<sup>2</sup> The richest 1% takes hold of

a fifth of total income and the wealthiest 10% take half of the national income. Conversely, the poorest 50% access only 10% of the wealth created in the region.<sup>3</sup> Latin America is so unequal that women who live in the poorest neighbourhoods of Santiago, Chile's capital city, are born with a life expectancy that is up to 18 years lower than that of women living in the affluent parts of the same city. In Mexico's capital city, life expectancy at birth for poor women is up to nine years lower than that of wealthy women (Bilal et al. 2019).

Inequalities are, among other reasons, the result of an asymmetric race for government resources. The budgets of the region's countries are not at the service of the working class, but instead go to wealthy minorities who hold the largest share of the income generated domestically. Tax revenues amounted to about 20% of the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019, despite huge differences across countries. In Guatemala, for example, this ratio was 13% and, in Cuba, 42%.<sup>4</sup> What's more, the region's tax systems are highly regressive, for in essence they are based on indirect taxes that amount to approximately 50% of total taxes collected. Therefore, proportionately taxes are mostly paid by the poorest populations.

Compounding this dismal situation is one that is even more perverse, that of fiscal evasion and avoidance, which amounts to approximately 6% of GDP.<sup>5</sup> ECLAC estimates that this resource drainage is equivalent to 2.3% of GDP for the value-added tax (VAT) and to 3.8% of GDP in the case of the income tax. Tax evasion also takes the form of illicit financial flows, which, according to Tax Justice Network, siphon off resources amounting to US\$ 43 billion a year from Latin America into tax havens.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, some 4% of the region's GDP amounts to tax expenditures,<sup>7</sup> or tax

Footnote 2 (continued)

<https://www.undp.org/latin-america/regional-human-development-report-2021>

<sup>3</sup> IDB. La crisis de la desigualdad. América Latina y el Caribe en la Encrucijada. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/spanish/document/La-crisis-de-la-desigualdad-America-Latina-y-el-Caribe-en-la-encrucijada.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> ECLAC; OECD; IDB; CIAT. Estadísticas Tributarias en América Latina y el Caribe 1990-2019. <https://www.cepal.org/pt-br/comunicados/receita-tributaria-america-latina-caribe-teve-crescimento-modes-to-antes-ser-duramente>

<sup>5</sup> ECLAC. Panorama Fiscal de América Latina y el Caribe 2021. Los desafíos de la política fiscal en la recuperación transformadora pos-COVID-19. [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46808/1/S2100170\\_es.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46808/1/S2100170_es.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Latindadd; Tax Justice Network. Vulnerability and exposure to illicit financial flows risk in Latin America 2021. <https://taxjustice.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Vulnerability-and-exposure-to-illicit-financial-flows-risk-in-Latin-America-Tax-Justice-Network-Jan-2021.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Inesc. Gastos Tributários e Justiça Fiscal na América Latina: Recomendações de Instituições Financeiras Internacionais e Organizações da Sociedade Civil, 2020. <https://www.inesc.org.br/wp-content/uploa>

<sup>1</sup> ECLAC. Panorama Social de América Latina 2021. [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47718/1/S2100655\\_es.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47718/1/S2100655_es.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> UNDP. Regional Human Development Report 2021. Trapped: High Inequality and Low Growth in Latin America and the Caribbean.



exemptions. Tax expenditures reduce the amount of taxable income to be paid by individuals and companies to their governments. They are called tax expenditures by the specialized literature, for they are indirect government expenses provided for by the tax policy.

Thereby, in terms of the national governments' revenues, the tax collection level is below the potential of most of the region's countries, not only because of deficiencies in tax conception and administration, but mainly because of high tax evasion and avoidance, both nationally and internationally, of illicit financial flows, and of significant tax incentives that account for tax collection losses.

In short, the extremely rich Latin American minority have organized themselves, legally and illegally, to pay less taxes and to receive sizeable tax incentives; this shows they feel free from any solidarity-driven obligations toward the poor majorities. Moreover, while the population in general became poorer during the COVID-19 pandemic, the region's billionaires increased their wealth by US\$ 48.2 billion. Oxfam's report 'Quem Paga a Conta?'<sup>8</sup>—literally, 'Who foots the bill?'—shows that the total wealth accumulated by the richest stratum is a third of all resources provided by the economic stimulus packages adopted in the region.

In order to tackle their social problems, which were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the governments of Latin America indebted themselves to bolster the economy and to fund social policies. The rise in interest rates resulting from the monetary policies adopted by the region's central banks to respond to high inflation levels further increased the region's countries' debts, entrapping some countries in the vicious circle of getting more indebted to be able to service the debt. This is the case of Honduras, for instance, which between 2009 and 2022 saw its domestic and foreign debts grow exponentially, such that today interest- and capital-related expenditures consume a significant part of the public budget. Which is why it is called 'odious debt' by Honduran civil society organizations.

While tax collection systems contribute to increase inequalities, the social spending of Latin America's countries does little to improve the exclusion setting that characterizes the region. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the national governments' social spending was, on average, 11% of GDP; however, in 2020 and 2021 public spending rose. Over the last 20 years, social spending per capita more than doubled

in real terms,<sup>9</sup> though reaching levels still far below what is needed in face of the challenges the region has to meet.

## Structural Racism

Latin America is pervaded by structural racism, where it is widely viewed as normal, thus working both as ideology and as naturalization-of-inequality practices. Thus, the colour of the skin or the ethnicity do matter: in comparison with whites, blacks and indigenous peoples are more likely to be poor and less likely to finish school, to have access to health services, and to land a formal job. This pattern of power, in place ever since the colonial era in Latin America, found in the concept of race a preponderant mode of reproduction within the colonized and enslaved populations that has managed to continue after the colonization process.

In the region, 134 million people declare themselves to be Afro-descendants, the equivalent of a fifth of the Latin American population, and mostly living in Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia, as well as in Cuba, Mexico, and Ecuador.

The mechanisms of exclusion and oppression inherited from the colony are still active. According to a study published by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO),<sup>10</sup> disadvantages are abysmal. For example,

- In Ecuador, the maternal mortality rate for Afro-descendants is three times higher than the overall maternal mortality rate. In Colombia, the mortality rate of Afro-descendant women is 1.8 times higher, and in Brazil, 36% higher;
- In Uruguay, the proportion of Afro-descendants with limited access to drinking water (42%) is nearly twice that of white people (24%); and,
- In Nicaragua's urban areas, 81% of Afro-descendant people have limited access to water, in comparison with 35% of non-Afro-descendants.

The Indigenous Peoples of Latin America account for some 10% of the region's population, totalling approximately 60 million people distributed over 800 different peoples.<sup>11</sup> These Peoples are mostly concentrated in Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, and Bolivia exhibiting broad demographic, social, territorial, and political diversity, ranging

Footnote 7 (continued)

[ds/2021/05/Gastos-Tributarios-e-Justica-Fiscal-na-America-Latina-Recomendacoes-de-Instituicoes-Financeiras-Internacionais-e-Organizacoes-da-Sociedade-Civil-1.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47718/1/S2100655_es.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Oxfam. Quem paga a conta? <https://www.oxfam.org.br/noticias/bilionarios-da-america-latina-e-do-caribe-aumentaram-fortuna-em-us-482-bilhoes-durante-a-pandemia-enquanto-maioria-da-populacao-perdeu-emprego-e-renda/>

<sup>9</sup> ECLAC. Panorama Social de América Latina 2021. [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47718/1/S2100655\\_es.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47718/1/S2100655_es.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> PAHO. La salud de la población afrodescendiente en América Latina 2021. <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/54503>

<sup>11</sup> ECLAC. Los pueblos indígenas de América Latina—Abya Yala y la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible: tensiones y desafíos desde una perspectiva territorial. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/45664>



from isolated peoples to being present in reservations and in small, medium-sized, and big cities.

Indigenous Peoples (also identified in Spanish as *pueblos originarios*—original peoples in English) are the region's most disadvantaged due to processes of oppression that date back to the early days of colonization, more than 500 years ago, and continue to our days. The development model adopted since the invasion by the Europeans—which remains in place—is heavily dependent on natural resources and leads to the violent expulsion of indigenous peoples from their lands and territories and to systematic violation of their rights. Still, the unwavering resistance of the Indigenous Peoples, their ancestral knowledge and innovations, and their traditional practices of coexisting sustainably with socio-biodiversity provide an invaluable opportunity for the construction of new societal paradigms.

One way of keeping these mechanisms of oppression in place is through violence. Latin America boasts the dishonourable title of most violent region in the world. Of the total homicides reported all over the planet, 34% took place in Latin America, even though the region only concentrates 9% of the world's population.<sup>12</sup> While globally the homicide rate is 6.1 per 100,000 people, in Central America it is 25.9 and in South America, 24.2, according to the UN.<sup>13</sup> In Brazil, 77% of homicide victims are black people, and, black people represent 56% of total population. Thus, the likelihood of a black person being murdered is 2.5 times higher than that of a white person.<sup>14</sup> In Latin America, on average, four indigenous people are murdered every month, just for defending their rights.<sup>15</sup>

### **Patriarchy as a Mechanism of Oppression**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, gender inequality is a structural part of societies and of the dominant development style based on patriarchy. In a patriarchal society, a man enjoys privileged status and social, economic, and political power, while a woman and other individuals not conforming to the norm are relegated to submission and invisibility. In

other words, a man has better opportunities and benefits in society, while women and marginalized groups do not enjoy the same rights.

For Latin American and Caribbean it is much harder for women to join the labour market than for men. Only half of working-age women are in the labour market, against three quarters of men. Most of these women work in the informal economy, with little or no social protection, and earn low wages. They are over-represented in poverty and are also met with difficulties in exercising their sexual and reproductive rights. Besides that, the region's women also spend, on average, three times more time than men on unpaid care activities and on domestic labour, which hinders access to opportunities. They can hardly be seen in spaces of power. For example, women are less than 30% of all parliamentarians in the region, yet account for more than half of the population.

Gender inequalities are intensified when they interact with other structural inequalities such as those driven by race, ethnicity, and social class, leading to multiple discrimination experiences in women's everyday lives. In the social and historical making of Latin America's countries, patriarchy and racism work as one of the cornerstones of capitalist development, within which particular forms of oppression and exploitation take shape.

To a great extent, gender inequalities are prompted by a failure to acknowledge the importance of caregiving in the provision of social well-being. In addition, the economic system depends, to a great measure, on activities that the orthodox economy has traditionally considered as not being economic, such as the care economy and caring for the environment. However, these are two spheres that produce value in the form of public goods and whose provision is essential both for the sustainability of life and for the very functioning of the economy. This has prompted historical effects on the labour market, as this is structured to privilege the fulfilment of working hours that hinder time management for other activities that are also essential to the sustainability of life, caregiving in particular. As a result, women face hurdles to their full participation in opportunities of paid work. Moreover, in order to harmonize care activities with income generation, women are forced to work on a part-time basis and in informal economic activities.

Gender inequality in the labour market is also expressed by segregation and segmentation. Women who are able to access the labour market, in general, have jobs in traditionally undervalued industries and professions, a situation that affects wages and working conditions, and are over-represented in the care economy. At the same time, sectors of the care economy also reproduce hierarchies that assign lower status and wages to feminized tasks, generally associated with direct care, e.g., care and domestic workers, whereas

<sup>12</sup> UNDP. Regional Human Development Report 2021. Trapped: High Inequality and Low Growth in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.undp.org/latin-america/regional-human-development-report-2021>

<sup>13</sup> PAHO; Iris. Global Study on Homicides 2019. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>

<sup>14</sup> Ipea; Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública. Atlas da Violência 2021. <https://www.ipea.gov.br/atlasviolencia/arquivos/artigos/3956-dashboard-atlas-2021.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> ECLAC. Los pueblos indígenas de América Latina—Abya Yala y la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible: tensiones y desafíos desde una perspectiva territorial. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/45664>



the better paid jobs and management positions are mostly occupied by men.

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the region's pre-existing inequalities, including gender inequalities. Poverty, gender-based domestic violence, and care-related responsibilities increased significantly, while access to health services was restricted and the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights violated, disproportionately affecting women, the poorest women in particular. Similarly, the rise of neoliberal political projects led to the appearance and consolidation of conservative and far right sectors that promote anti-rights agendas, especially as regards gender and sexual orientation. Sexism and racism share the same propensity to naturalize social difference and inequality, using nature as an argument to justify and reproduce power relations based on phenotypic differences—in addition to linking 'corporeal' reality to social reality, embedding the meaning of this social reality in the body and considering the otherness of women, indigenous peoples, and black people as being predisposed to submission. Just like women are reified as sexual objects, others are reified as racial or ethnic objects.

### Environmental Degradation and Racism

Compounding all the social and economic vulnerabilities it faces, Latin America is also one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, despite not being quite responsible for this global problem. The Latin America and the Caribbean region accounts for less than 10% of greenhouse gas emissions, yet it has been increasingly affected by extreme climate events such as hurricanes, floods, prolonged droughts, glacier melting, propagation of diseases e.g. dengue fever, and the disappearance of species. These impacts threaten the physical integrity of people, especially of the most impoverished, as well as the region's food-and-nutrition, water, and energy security, in addition to leading to migration and causing great economic losses that must be paid for with local resources or more indebtedness.

The degradation of the Amazon Forest, the result of predatory development based on big mining, agribusiness, illegal mining, and logging, is one of the main causes of environmental degradation in the region. That directly affects the global climate, mostly due to the role of the forest in the carbon cycle. Indeed, the region's forests account for more than half of all the primary forests remaining in the world and have an enormous carbon storage capacity. Fires and deforestation threaten one of the largest carbon sinkholes in the world, with far-reaching and long-lasting effects.

The consequences of nature's destruction do not affect the different groups of the population in the same way. The kind of racism and patriarchy that is embedded in Latin American societies affects women, blacks, indigenous peoples, and other traditional peoples and communities more than other

people. Women are particularly affected by environmental devastation. For example, when there is an energy crisis, the trend is to source raw materials from other countries, not by chance from poorer countries. In order to obtain these resources, the population is expelled from their lands and territories, losing their livelihoods. As women possess fewer assets and are confined to care activities and informal jobs, they are the most penalized, for as they lose everything, they are forced to migrate, increasing the cities' impoverished outskirts. In the case of Indigenous Peoples and of other peoples of the forests, rivers, waters, and fields, the wisdom that has been transmitted orally over hundreds of years, mostly by women, is deeply impacted by forced land and territorial displacement. This wisdom and knowledge is mostly about promoting health and protecting nature, and once its transmission is interrupted with the disruption of these communities, ancestral information, crucial for a harmonious coexistence with nature, is lost. These situations, together with natural catastrophes caused by climate change, force women to become uprooted and impoverished climate refugees.

Historical forms of discrimination are exacerbated by the differentiated impact of climate alterations and the ensuing catastrophes on the populations affected. We are witnessing an alarming deterioration of the right to health and basic goods such as food and access to water and housing. Environmental impact has a racial dimension when it drives displacement, inequalities, and poverty in certain social groups. Racial discrimination in environmental policies, or in their absence, leads to environmental racism, which further compounds historical and structural racism. Environmental racism is the set of social and environmental injustices that more strongly affect ethnic groups already made vulnerable as well as other groups discriminated against for their race, origin, or colour. This means that it affects not only black people, but also indigenous, and river communities, as well as people living in the poor outskirts of big cities. The combination of multiple oppressions characteristic of Latin America makes poor, black, indigenous, and outskirts-dwelling women those most affected by environmental racism. A recent and tragic example happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, when a sharp rise in domestic violence was observed. The side effect of the social isolation measures adopted by the governments in the region to minimize contamination of the population by the new virus was extremely harmful for women facing domestic violence. That was because, in addition to being forced to stay home with their aggressors, women were faced with yet more barriers to access women's protection networks and reporting channels. According to data by ECLAC, in 2020 femicide claimed the lives of 4091 Latin American women: every two hours a woman was assassinated in the region just because she was a woman.



In Latin America, resistance movements share a common bond, the fight against the multiple oppressions stemming from an also common factor, i.e., the principles proposed by racist and patriarchal societies that despise the poor, all that coupled with neoliberalism and inability to look at the other. For this reason, taking a stand against environmental injustices produced by this system is also taking a stand for the poor, black people, women, and the environment, as well as for other minority groups.

## A Region Pregnant with Transformative Solutions

In the end of the 2010s, Latin America was rocked by a wave of demonstrations, especially in Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia, but also in Haiti and Honduras. These rallies—which were triggered by such issues as the end of subsidies to fossil fuels, increased public transportation fares, changes to the social security, health, and education systems, and corruption and electoral frauds—have in common a deep discontent with the major setbacks for the civil and social rights of a greater part of the population of the region's countries. The protests have been received with disdain by governments that show no respect for the population and little empathy for social and environmental issues, further stirring tension in zones of conflict.

A main driver of these demonstrations was the youth. Their claims are quite varied and respond to each country's urgent needs. At times the youth support the agendas of other groups such as that of the Indigenous Peoples of Ecuador. But they also make their own demands, as in the case of Chile, where the young people took to the streets to demand a more equitable economic system. There is, however, a common denominator: the generational factor, accompanied by instruments and communication codes common among the youth. For example, the use of social media. The demonstrators use social media to receive, organize, and help the wounded or to look for those missing. They also use social media to make their demands known and to document the demonstrations through self-created channels on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok, with which they challenge the traditional media's narrative when they consider it not to reflect their points of view.

This wave of dissatisfaction coupled by the serious health, economic, and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the election of more progressive rulers, as in the cases of Mexico (Lopez Obrador 2018), Argentina (Fernandez, 2019), Bolivia (Arce, 2020), Chile (Boric, 2021), Peru (Castillo, 2021), Honduras (Xiomara Castro, 2021), and Colombia (Petro, 2022). Despite the progress made with the election of heads of the executive branch representing the youth (Boric), women (Xiomara Castro),

unions (Castillo), and black people (Márquez, vice-president of Colombia), and with the election in 2021 of a Mapuche indigenous woman (Elisa Loncón) to chair Chile's constitutional assembly, the majority of the leaders in power are white men. And the deep inequalities that pervade Latin America's societies and are structured around patriarchy, racism, classism, and coloniality make it difficult to build more inclusive and just societies. Perhaps one of the most dramatic examples thereof was the massive rejection of a progressive constitution in Chile in September 2022.

Those who actually bring about change are those men and women who stand up and fight against these forms of oppression. Those groups in the population who carry out political action that challenges the institutional framework set in place, who stand for radical reconstruction of—labour, family, institutional, social, and environment-related—relations. In Latin America, a number of social movements are for proposals that are deeply transformative of the development models in place. That is the case of the women's movement, of ecofeminism and decolonial feminism, of the Afro-Latino and indigenous movements, and of *Bien Vivir*. Here a list that is by no means exhaustive of some of these new paradigms.

## Buen Vivir (Good Living)

*Buen Vivir* can be interpreted as a thought that breaks from modern imperial European rationality. *Buen Vivir* gained formal and official contours upon adoption by the constitutions of Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, in 2008 and 2009, respectively. These constitutional reforms may be construed as Latin America's milestone in the resistance against western domination. The set of ideas that characterize *Buen Vivir* as a worldview that is distinct from the hegemonic ruling order is founded on the notion of cosmovision, of a pan-indigenous speech. This is rendered clear by the public appeal enjoyed by the utopian territory of *Abya Yala* or 'land in its full maturity'.

The origin of *Buen Vivir* lies in the thousand-year-long philosophy of life of Indigenous Peoples and nationalities that for centuries have fought to defend their ancestral thought, their way of life, and the territories where they achieved sustainability of life. For this reason, speaking of *Buen Vivir* is recognizing these peoples' roots and observing these peoples' various approaches to conservation of and respect for their territories, with their wealth of biodiversity and ancestral knowledge made invisible for centuries.

This cosmovision seeks to restore traditional Andean knowledge; not a dual, but a unified relation between human being and nature. Restoring this relation that pictures the human being as part of nature necessarily entails a series of alterations of a practical nature in the political, economic, social, and cultural realms. To indigenous feminism, *Buen*



*Vivir* has to do with communitarian economy, female solidarity, territory as body, collective reproductive labour, and antimilitarism, among other concepts. Resistance to land privatization is a cornerstone, just as the struggle not to be assimilated into the western and patriarchal culture prevailing in Latin America is. The idea of culture advocated by indigenous feminists is geared toward the valorization of body, memory, and difference, understood as a representation by the subject that does not coincide with the rational and self-controlled subject of the dominant masculinity. That is, it does not coincide with the mandatory heterosexuality that organizes capitalist affection, or with assigned genders, or with an education that denies the teachings of peoples that have resisted the oppression of racism.

These contributions are built in a social setting of extreme inequality, where indigenous women in Latin America are invisible, excluded, and condemned to poverty, to dependence on markets that purchase their ‘crafts’ (a name that belittles indigenous art). and to dependence on men.

### **Vivir Sabroso (Living Joyfully)**

*Vivir Sabroso* is a term made known by the recently elected vice-president of Colombia, Francia Márquez. In the Colombian Pacific region, in the rural communities where she comes from, the expression is used to criticize unbridled, unsustainable progress that fails to respect the local wishes for caring for the land, the community, and the environment, this last one also called the ‘big house’. *Vivir Sabroso*, to Márquez, is living without fear of being assassinated, discriminated against, or stigmatized. Márquez is a black leader who has always dedicated herself to defending access to the land and territories and to protecting natural resources.

### **Care Economy**

Women have been playing a leading role in defence of life: in defence of the body-territory, of communitarian life, and of their ways of life. Thus, women become the guardians of the territories, being cocreators to exist and reinvent the struggle in defence of human lives and the environment. The care economy proposes implementing measures to prioritize caregiving so that everyone may benefit from care with social and gender justice. Feminist economics and the paradigm of sustainability of life advocate removing markets from the centrality of life in order to restore the well-being of all peoples. They defend, therefore, the centrality of care work as activities that greatly impact well-being and sustain all other human needs, including markets. This analysis, therefore, is integrative in that it breaks with such dichotomies as public–private, production–reproduction, homework, work–nonwork, and binary–nonbinary.

Feminist economics politicizes the ideas of universal vulnerability and interdependence. Care is needed throughout one’s life, however variable the intensity of care may be over time. Addressing a universal need on which human life depends is a political matter that requires a collective solution. Feminist economics calls for a complete change in social organization, including a reorganization of (business and care) schedules and work, changes in everyday life, a new production and consumption structure, and a change in values.

### **Ecofeminism**

Ecofeminism offers a view of social necessities not on in terms of what is lacking but of restoring the care culture as a core inspiration toward devising a sustainable society underpinned by values such as reciprocity, cooperation, and complementarity. Ecofeminism and feminist economics highlight the parallelism between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of nature through reproductive labour that is both invisible and unrecognized.

Latin American ecofeminism, in an attempt to narrate its own worldview, had to remake its own history. A road of resistance to indigenous genocide and slavery, the violence of colonization, the denial of one’s own culture as well as to dismissing one’s knowledge and skills and to compulsory miscegenation. In this sense, ecofeminism has moved forward by relating the domination and exploitation of nature to the gender issue, as well as to the advance of capital over territories and the objectification of commons, now turned into commodities. The oppressions involved in exploitation of nature and violence against women are not casual; rather, they reflect the colonization of bodies and nature that has been integrated into this neoliberal model of production and consumption. Patriarchy is the system of all oppressions, of all the violence and discrimination against humanity (women, men, and intersex people) and nature, as a system built and objectified through history in the sexualized female body.

### **Resistances of the Afro-Latin American Movement**

As highlighted earlier, Latin America is pervaded by structural racism expressed as socio-economic gaps between blacks and whites, as lack of political representation of the black population, as absence of Afro-Latin American histories and cultures in school curricula, as negative depictions of blackness in the media, and as everyday discriminatory practices against the Afro-American population, among other processes of exclusion.

A major space of struggle of the black movement is the Regional Coordination of Afro-descendants in the Americas and the Caribbean (ARAAC). One of ARAAC’s



main goals is to serve as an organizing and political space, bringing together the critical Afro-descendant sector of Latin America to formulate and to disseminate proposals. These proposals aim to face the (racial-ethnic, social, gender- and sexuality-based, cultural, epistemic, ecological, economic, political) oppressions associated with the neoliberal globalization and to contribute to build a more just, democratic, and equitable world. ARAAC also seeks to clarify the relations of subjugation derived from capitalism, racism, imperialism, and patriarchy, as well as to formulate the conceptions of black power and antiracist policy, and their implications. Ultimately, eradication of the scourge of racism is the greater goal, as well as an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchal, and ecologically oriented goal.

Another major space of struggle is the Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean and Diaspora Women's Network, which rallies and builds the capacities of Afro-descendant women toward the construction and recognition of democratic, equitable, just, and multicultural societies, free from racism, racial discrimination, sexism and exclusion, and toward the promotion of 'interculturality'.

## Final Remarks

It is through the struggle for autonomy of peoples and decolonization of mind and bodies that we shall move forward toward a *Buen Vivir*, plurinational, popular, democratic, and ecofeminist Latin America. We know that mechanisms of oppression have no boundaries, which is why the struggles of women, indigenous, and Afro-Latin American peoples must not have them either. Thus, for the idea of the right to development to make sense to the region, it must include all these dimensions.

A possible way to move in that direction is offered to us by Nancy Fraser (1998) and the notion of parity of social participation, construed as collective deliberative spaces where redistribution and recognition are discussed on equal terms. In the case of redistribution, the concern is related to the economic structure of society and class differentials. Recognition, in turn, focuses on identities and their culturally defined hierarchies. Thus, a bivalent conception of justice oriented to the norm of participatory parity encompasses both redistribution and recognition without reducing either one to the other.

The challenge lies in continuing to struggle, to stand up against old structures, to experiment with new ones and, thereby, to broaden the scope of justice and of a society that is more equitable and in harmony with life and nature.

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