

EPILOGUE

SCHOOLING IN TIMES OF WAR

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Take care of that little light that we gave you.

*Don't let it go out. Even if our light here is extinguished
by our blood, even if other lights go out in other places,
take care of yours because even when times are
difficult, we have to keep being what we are, and what
we are is women who struggle.*

– Letter from the Zapatista Women to
the Women in Struggle Around the World¹

In the intervening months between the LAPES symposium on The Pedagogies of Social Justice Movements in the Americas and the writing of this epilogue, the Zapatista movement and its autonomous territories have come under increasing existential and material threat. While the Zapatista rebellion has been “a war against oblivion” from its inception, there is a palpably heightened urgency in the current moment, an urgency that is building. In February 2019, days before the anticipated Second International Encounter of Women in Struggle in Zapatista territory, a poignant communiqué from Zapatista women announced the *encuentro* would not be taking place given increased militarization and paramilitary attacks in the region. With a renewed call for the defense of land, territory, life, and dignity addressed to all women in struggle, each in our own corner of the world, the letter signals both the possibility of local defeat and the necessity of continued struggle, everywhere.

In this epilogue, I highlight how indigenous worldviews are central to Latin American autonomous social movements’ pedagogies and their interdependence with attendant forms of governance, asking what lessons they teach to those in “other places” about surviving under globalized conditions of ever-intensifying environmental destruction, political violence, and displacement of human and nonhuman populations. To suggest that indigenous worldviews can be indispensable for

1→ The Zapatista Women, “Letter from the Zapatista Women to the Women in Struggle Around the World,” *Enlace Zapatista* (February 13, 2019), <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2019/02/13/letter-from-the-zapatista-women-to-women-in-struggle-around-the-world/>

fighting against the destructions of capitalism and for saving the planet recognizes shared challenges of living in times of war. To translate these worldviews beyond their context of Latin American autonomous movements poses challenges, for sure. Their lessons are not easily translatable to western modes of knowledge production or state structures of governance. That it is necessary to separate knowledge and governance itself instantiates the problem: the seventeenth-century western separation of nature and culture has become decisive in the contemporary threat to the Earth's survival.² Science will take nature as its object of study. Politics will enact the hierarchical orderings that position nonhuman natures as subject to human desires, no matter how destructive, and indeed *self*-destructive they may turn out to be. To risk translation, then, offers the possibility of reinventing collective human and nonhuman relations that resist the very terms of our compromised belonging. I hope to show in the following pages that the problem of translation is ultimately more a question of how Latin American social movements take shape as pedagogical practices of worlding that are incommensurable with capitalist relations and state-based forms of governance.

Different geopolitical locations shape our varied relationships to shared conditions of injustice. The Zapatista women's letter discloses a very real sense of uncertainty about survival in the face of escalating violence from the Mexican State. It also recognizes the precariousness of life resulting from the State's new political program. Naming it the Fourth Transformation, the newly elected president Andrés Manuel López Obrador explicitly situates this program as the latest in a succession of revolutionary historical transformations: Independence from Spain (1810-1821), Reformation (1857-1872), and the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). While the Fourth Transformation's full scope and specific policies are still in the making, multiple large-scale development projects have already been announced, including Special Economic Zones, the Trans-Isthmus Corridor, the Morelos Integral Plan with its thermoelectric plant, the construction of hundreds of roads in rural areas, and new mining projects. The Maya Train initiative

2→ For the history of the break between science and culture see, Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

is slated to stretch through the five southern states, cutting through Zapatista and other indigenous territories with the promise of economic opportunities primarily linked to tourism. Land dispossession, deforestation, contamination of soil and water, and the breach of regional ecosystems are some of its likely consequences.³ Faced with these possibilities, the Zapatista women refuse state-sponsored capitalism and claim their own terms of existence. “We will not stop training ourselves to work in the fields of education, health, culture, and media; we will not stop being autonomous authorities in order to become hotel and restaurant employees, serving strangers for a few pesos. It doesn’t even matter if it’s a few pesos or a lot of pesos, what matters is that our dignity has no price.”⁴ They are clear. They are fighting a war through pedagogies—ways of learning and doing—that build another world of life-sustaining practices.

John Law’s concept of the “One-World-World” (OWW) is a fitting term for the most uncurious way of knowing the world that these Zapatista women and other Latin American movements confront, one “that wishes to organize everything in terms of individuals, private property, markets, profits, and a single notion of the Real. OWW seeks to banish nature and the sacred from the domain of an exclusively human-driven life.”⁵ This worldview enacts hierarchies of nature and culture, life and populations that slide across the lines of the desirable or the dispensable, a source of profit or a cause for disposal. Or perhaps as Isabelle Stengers has recently written, “The global West is not a ‘world’ and recognizes no world.”⁶ Stengers’ work to emancipate “modern sciences” from a particular manifestation of the “modern” and its “Science” as a world-destroying machine suggests a worldview comparable to the OWW at the heart of imperialist and colonialist knowledges. “The hegemonic conquest machine Science”

3 → Gilberto López y Rivas, “¿Cuarta Transformación?” *La Jornada* (December 28, 2018), www.jornada.com.mx/2018/12/28/opinion/014a1pol.

4 → The Zapatista Women, “Letter.”

5 → John Law, “What’s Wrong with a One-World World?,” *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 16, no. 1 (2015): 126–39.

6 → Isabelle Stengers, “The Challenge of Ontological Politics,” in *A World of Many Worlds*, Marisol de La Cadena and Mario Blaser eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 83–111.

is consecrated by the trinity of rationality, objectivity, and universality to advance imperialist and capitalist interests, Stengers reminds us.⁷ It establishes the warring order of things as the very nature of the world, such that destruction becomes not only possible but even necessary in the name of progress and development.

The three essays in this volume, by Bruno Baronnet, Lia Pinheiro Barbosa, and Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti, describe in different ways how Latin American social movements ground their struggles in pedagogies that generate ways of living their own conditions of being and becoming against the One-World-World. We discover across Barbosa's and Baronnet's contributions that indigenous movements' pedagogies emerge from everyday challenges to sustaining life in the face of state-sponsored scarcity and more direct offensives. Pedagogies emerge from and contribute to the struggle to sustain life. Again and again, grassroots activist Peter Brown from the organization Schools for Chiapas, who also presented at the 2017 LAPES symposium, reminded us that the traditional Mayan farming practice of the *milpa* is a site of learning, questioning, and rediscovering ancestral traditions as well as a site of designing new strategies. The Zapatista motto *preguntando caminamos*, "walking we ask questions" is lived as a pedagogical methodology in the classroom, discussions under a tree, or walking to the *milpa*. The pedagogy of "questioning, and then questioning the questioner" described by Brown moves with exigencies of changing conditions to generate resistant worldings.⁸

Barbosa's capacious analysis of indigenous, afrolatino, and peasant movements centers the revolutionary pedagogies held in common by the Zapatistas, Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil, and *Vía Campesina*, as well as popular feminisms. As she carefully traces the history of resistance to the theft of land and liberty that gave rise to Latin American indigenous, afrolatino and peasant revolutionary subjectivities, she formulates their pedagogies as *senti-pensante* (feeling-thinking, sensing-thinking). Rooted in indigenous

7 → Stengers, "The Challenge of Ontological Politics," 87.

8 → My references to Peter Brown are from his LAPES presentation which is not reproduced in this volume. Some of the ideas he shared with us are reflected on the Schools for Chiapas website: <https://schoolsforchiapas.org/>

cosmovisions—the Mayan *Lekil Kuxlejal*, *Sumak Kawsai* in Quechua, and *Sumak Qamaña* in Aymara—these pedagogies share the general principle of *el buen vivir*, or good living. Each is interwoven with its own specific linguistic sensibilities while sharing a non-dualistic and relational worldview in which nature and culture are not separate and life-relations are forms of interconnection rather than economic exchange. *Sentipensante* pedagogies attune anew to their centuries-old ancestral knowledges, which survive through oral traditions and communal practices in the face of formal colonial education’s disavowal and prohibition. These pedagogies provide a *sentipensante* modality for practicing *el buen vivir* that is foundational for survival in ongoing times of war.

Translation is not only a linguistic affair. Language creates entire worlds and worldviews—our relation to other beings, our conceptions of time, space, history and memory. The lessons of *sentipensante* pedagogies can offer new approaches for those of us who are interested in practices and pedagogies of liberation within and without academic institutions, so long as we remain mindful that there is already evidence of their subjection to colonial and capitalist terms. As Catherine Walsh has pointed out, the conception of *el buen vivir* as “good living” can also mean “living well” in the capitalist sense of economic prosperity in national and international development discourses.⁹ Another interpretation of *el buen vivir* has been the “Rights of Nature.” The very invocation of “nature” as the subject of “rights” installs a dualistic relation between nature and culture alongside the juridical assumptions of rights-based governance. These interpretations violate *el buen vivir* through a constellation of modern colonial ideologies including individualism, competition, the abstraction of land and territories as natural resources available for extraction, and a linear concept of time and progress.

One way we can think about the dissonance between state practices and *el buen vivir* is through performative appropriations of indigenous identity within national development projects that override indigenous resistance movements. Photographs of Mexican president

9 → Catherine Walsh, “Development as Buen Vivir: Institutional arrangements of (de)colonial entanglements,” *Development* 50, no. 1 (2010):15-21.

López Obrador from December 2018, in which he gazes intently at a cloud of ceremonial smoke in Palenque, depict his participation in a Mayan ritual seeking permission from “Mother Earth” for the Maya Train project.¹⁰ Yet as government officials participate in indigenous ceremonies as a merely cultural gesture, calamities continue to befall subjugated communities who are organizing against mega-development projects that advance ecological destruction and their communities’ dispossession. Disappearances and assassinations are too numerous to grasp. They include the murder of Samir Flores, an opponent of the gas pipeline and thermoelectric plant in Morelos; assassinations of members of the Indigenous and Popular Council of Guerrero, Emiliano Zapata (CIPOG-EZ), who planned to receive the Caravan for Life, Peace and Justice in the Mountains of Guerrero organized by the National Indigenous Congress; paramilitary attacks, intensified militarization, and the deployment of the new National Guard to strategically anticipate the Mexican government’s Maya Train project, and countless others.

These atrocities make of the president’s ritual invocations an empty appropriation at best. We are familiar with this ploy. Government officials participating in the *Ritual de los Pueblos Originarios a la Madre Tierra* disavow indigenous resistance to the displacement of peoples, environmental destruction, and elimination of existing life relations. The State claims one thing and does another. It shows one thing and hides many others. Yet we can see that the policies and actions driving the Fourth Transformation are discontinuous with indigenous worldviews that refuse the culture/nature binary driving the modern capitalist state. The Fourth Transformation’s liturgical celebrations ultimately renew the state’s devotion to neoliberalism and advance the strategies of the Fourth World War.¹¹ While claiming a legacy of national liberation reforms, new constitutional reforms legalize the military’s presence and incursions throughout the country, including the deployment of

10 → For coverage of the Maya Train controversy and the government’s lack of consultation with indigenous groups see, Karen Castillo, “Consultas para megaproyectos siguen en 100 días de AMLO: Tren Maya, Huexca, corredor del Istmo” *SinEmbargo* (March 10, 2019), www.sinembargo.mx/10-03-2019/3542816.

11 → Subcomandante Marcos and Nathalie de Broglio, “The Fourth World War Has Begun,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 2, no. 3 (2001): 559–572.

the newly created National Guard in Zapatista and other indigenous territories. Low-intensity warfare has been an enduring reality throughout the region for at least four decades. And still, this moment of its intensification whilst government officials claim to honor indigeneity.

The unprecedented case of Ecuador's and Bolivia's adoption of *el buen vivir* in their constitutions tells us something different about how the State engages in translation. The 2009 Ecuadorian Constitution and the "Plan Nacional para El Buen Vivir 2009-2013" (National Plan for Buen Vivir 2009-2013) center a plurinational state for the recognition of different indigenous groups, their cosmologies and knowledges. Yet here too there are stories of ongoing struggle and rebellion against State actions that are discontinuous with the promising visions of the new Constitution. One unfolding conflict concerns the extraordinarily rich complex of life in the Yasuní region, an area of rainforest in eastern Ecuador where the Amazon, the Andes, and the equator come together with the largest variety of tree species on earth and the richest diversity of all other life forms. It is also land rich in oil, the country's main export, also known by the Uw'a of Colombia as the "Earth's blood." The region's history is a battleground where, first, missionaries and, then, illegal loggers and oil companies war with the Waorani (also rendered as Huaronani) and their relatives, the Tagaeri and Taromenane.

Decree 552. In 1999, president of Ecuador Jamil Mahuad Witt decreed the *Zona Intangible Tagaeri Taromenane* (ZITT) or the Intangible Zone, in the southern Yasuní region to protect the Tagaeri- and Taromenane-inhabited area from oil extraction and illegal logging.¹² At least two contradictions emerged. Illegal logging actually increased substantially. The boundaries of the Intangible Zone remained undefined, making it less clear where new road projects could create new inroads for oil concessions to come. Ecuador famously initiated the Yasuní-ITT Treaty, an international campaign to protect the region from oil extraction by raising funds to offset the loss of revenue. Launched in 2008, the Yasuní-ITT Initiative held much promise. By 2013, however, it was declared unsuccessful due to the state's inability to raise the

12 → Salvatore Eugenio Pappalardo et al., "Uncontacted Waorani in the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve: Geographical Validation of the Zona Intangible Tagaeri Taromenane (ZITT)," *PLoS one* 8 (June 2013), doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0066293.

necessary funds from abroad. In the interim, Ecuador has borrowed billions from China and contracted Petroecuador to sell crude oil to Petrochina. In February of 2019, the Waorani brought a lawsuit in the Pastaza Provincial Court against the government for auctioning off blocks of their land for lease to oil prospectors without adequate consultation of the inhabitants. In April of the same year, the court ruled to suspend auctioning, but the government appealed the ruling.

Another decree. More concessions. In May of 2019, a month after the court's suspension of land auctioning, the president of Ecuador signed Decree 751 which expands the Intangible Zone by 59,000 hectares. But it also includes a clause permitting oil platforms in the Intangible Zone's buffer zones. Ecuador's limited efforts to protect the Intangible Zone demonstrate how capitalist relations are not bound by the nation-state alone but are rather part of a capitalist world-system. Yet the nation state persists as a site of resistance for struggles organizing from below. Legal contestations and other forms of organizing will no doubt continue, but these enduring struggles over territory and the extractive advance of capital—in Ecuador as well as Mexico—need not suggest that colonial capitalist appropriations are absolute. That resistances continue points to the non-totalizing movement of capitalist expansion. In a chapter of *The Extractive Zone* dedicated to “The Intangibility of the Yasuní,” Macarena Gómez-Barris lingers on the term “intangible” to point to ecological agency and the resistance of living systems to scientific and capitalist classification and ordering of the world.¹³ Seen in terms of indigenous conceptions of history, we might conceive of resistance itself as outside the linear time of development. In this volume, Barbosa writes about the indigenous relation to time and history conveyed by the Aymara expression ñawpaj *manpuni*, a “looking backward that is also a moving forward.”¹⁴ Along with Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, she describes an indigenous conception of history that, moving in cycles, continuously reprises the past to anticipate the future. This past is not a static sequence of events but an unsettled

13 → Macarena Gómez-Barris, “The Intangibility of the Yasuní,” in *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 17-38.

14 → Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui as quoted by Lia Pinheiro Barbosa in “The *Sentipensante* and Revolutionary Pedagogies of Latin American Social Movements,” 30.

battleground whose wreckage collective energies can reanimate.

Bret Leraul's introduction to this volume reminds us of Cusicanqui's critical warning: the anticolonial re-articulation of the past as "principle of hope" or "anticipatory consciousness" is not a labor of words alone but requires acts of rebellion. *Sentipensante* pedagogies do not simply refuse the dualism of thinking and feeling: resistance to formations of colonial capitalist consciousness entails the pedagogical practice of living relational and non-dualist knowledges in non-separate relations of schooling and governance. In contrast to the current leftist Mexican government and Ecuador's Buen Vivir by State Decree, revolutionary pedagogies cultivate horizontal communal relations of governance. Zapatista historiography and political theory narrate multiple origin stories of rebellion over a 500-year anti-colonial struggle, in which structures such as the nation-state and its modes of governmentality rearticulate colonial legacies not bounded by a simple past. Its pedagogies connect in a feedback loop to governance, generating new political subjects according to principles of shared, horizontal stewardship that these subjects enact in turn.

This unfolding of *sentipensante's* cosmological and non-dualistic ways of knowing into pedagogies—ways of learning that generate and constitute ways of living in community—can be seen across different Latin American communities. The knowledge practices of the riverine communities of Mompox in Colombia first inspired sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda to propose *sentipensante* not just as a pedagogy, but as *sentipensar*, a distinctly Latin American pedagogical action. Thinking-feeling necessarily moves with the cadence of the elements. Naming *sentipensar* a social science, Fals-Borda lays claim to its domain through its disruption.¹⁵ *Sentipensar* challenge the designation of scientific knowledge as legitimate against all others, constituting otherwise the dualisms of nature/culture and human/nonhuman that underlie the capitalist harms to people and the planet. In another context, anthropologist Carlos Lenkersdorf relates how he learned from the Mayan language community of Tojolabal that "We, the humans, are not the knowing subjects facing the objects to be studied, but whatever

15 → Arturo Escobar, *Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia* (Medellín: Ediciones Unala, 2014).

we investigate is a subject we learn to know and which, in turn, is knowing us.”¹⁶ For Lenkersdorf, this Tojolabal pedagogy makes sense of the Tojolabal herbalist who “speaks with the herbs before he cuts them down and prepares the medicine,”¹⁷ one who lives the world’s aliveness.

In this volume, Andreotti finds a similar challenge to the division of knowing human subjects from their objects of knowledge in the Peruvian Quechua practice of ancestral medicinal knowledges, for which plants are active agents. Here, plants nurture *el buen vivir*, Andreotti argues, as their self-dissociative properties enable an experience of interconnectedness that sustains this philosophy. In conversation with the small Quechua community she works with, Andreotti further speculates on the neuro-biological and neuro-chemical consequences that result from the separation of individual humans from other forms of human and nonhuman life and their multiple intelligences. Quechua medicinal practice does not merely challenge western science, Andreotti argues, but has the capacity to heal this dis-ease of colonial modernity, its one-world-worlding.

We see a very different approach to creating *a world in which many worlds fit* in Zapatista communities of resistance. Zapatista autonomous schools, Baronnet tells us, are charged with the creation of *Educación Verdadera*, “Real Education,” that situates the emancipatory practice of teaching and learning within its region’s cultural, linguistic, and territorial specificity. The cultivation of a collective political identity central to autonomous education and the creation of revolutionary subjects necessarily engages different Mayan communities’ specific historical struggles and languages. In practice, family and community members working together with education promoters contribute collectively to a school curriculum, rooting it in the local knowledges that tend to everyday needs as they persist and change. This rooting in the most basic requirements for the sustenance of life defines autonomous education, for which the spaces of learning extend beyond physical schools to support engagement in the Zapatista movement’s participatory practices of democracy. Community-based

16 → Carlos Lenkersdorf, “The Tojolabal Language and Their Social Sciences,” *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 1, no. 2 (2006): 111, doi.org/10.2167/md015.0.

17 → Lenkersdorf, “Tojolabal Language,” 111.

and rotating autonomous councils both enact and depend on pedagogies of collective autonomy. “Indeed, this participatory model of radical democracy turns the organization of the social movement itself into a kind of school.”¹⁸

At the 2017 LAPES symposium, Peter Brown shared many stories and insights from more than twenty years of accompanying the Zapatista movement. He remarked on how a new generation of Zapatistas who grew up in revolutionary schools now engage in schooling themselves, working as education and health promoters, and running women’s cooperatives and ecological agricultural centers. Zapatista schooling emerges from community needs nested in villages, municipalities, regions, and we might say the Earth itself. What has remained consistent for Brown over the last twenty years is the Zapatista’s understanding that the conditions that have threatened the existence of their communities are endangering the entire planet. According to Brown, a crucial turning point in Zapatista ecological agriculture came with the discovery of transgenic contamination of Mexican corn in Oaxaca from Monsanto seeds. This alerted the Zapatistas to the need to protect their crops by changing their agricultural practice. For fifty years, farmers had been using glyphosate-based herbicides that effectively destroyed all the mushrooms in the area that had been a central part of the traditional diet. It also eradicated all greens and depleted the soil, creating the need for expensive fertilizers. The Zapatistas consulted with scientists, and educated their promoters of health, medicine, and education, who in turn educated their various communities.

Currently the majority of Zapatistas are farming organically, and they have influenced neighboring communities to do the same. They also complement their return to traditional Mayan *milpa* farming with reforestation projects that include medicinal and fruit trees. Training “promoters of agroecology,” researching, and experimenting are part of the agroecology project—efforts which Brown directly supports through Schools for Chiapas. Referring to the construction of the very first secondary school during the early years of the Zapatista uprising, Brown recalled Comandante David’s vision of building an institution

18 → Bruno Baronnet, “Pedagogical Strategies in the Struggle for Indigenous Autonomy in Mexico,” 52

that would address the problems of “having a hole in the ozone layer and a hole in our hearts.”¹⁹ For the new generation, Zapatista schooling takes form in actively working to save the planet through a tending and relational engagement.

In cultivating ways of living according to non-dualist and relational worldviews that challenge formal state education as a primary site of ideological and political domination, revolutionary pedagogies, Barbosa tells us, animate political projects for collective emancipation, actively cultivating revolutionary consciousness from indigenous cosmologies, their epistemic matrix and their linguistic distributions of the sensible. For instance, no thing and no being is ever an object in the Mayan language community of Tojolabal. Lenkersdorf translates the sentence “He told me,” as *yala kab’i’* or “He told; I listened.”²⁰ Two subjects complete an activity without one subjecting the other as object. This plurality of subjects without objects enacts not only a linguistic structure of intersubjectivity but also its lived sensibility. “From the Tojolabal perspective, we have all the same status, we are all subjects, humans, plants, animals, rivers, mountains and clouds. They talk with us, we talk with them.”²¹ In a similar way, Barbosa sees an important connection between the linguistic matrix of indigenous languages and the horizontality of being in an I-we-community relation and its non-hierarchical mind-heart-spirit way of knowing. The implications are more far-reaching than any single thinker or writer could address. In fact, Lenkersdorf describes how in Tojolabal education—and its sciences in general—pedagogy engages in “we-ification” because it is the “we” that the process of collective learning nourishes. There is no individual Tojolabal scientist because knowledge is a collective activity, but there is Tojolabal science, generated from collective experiments and experiences.

To ask how indigenous worldviews can be indispensable for battling issues we face today in fighting against the destructions of capitalism and for saving the planet is neither to romanticize nor fetishize these epistemologies. It is a question that brings our attention to living and

19 → <https://schoolsforchiapas.org/advances/>

20 → Lenkersdorf, “Tojolabal Language,” 97-114.

21 → Lenkersdorf, “Tojolabal Language,” 110.

schooling in times of war. Together, the *sentipensante* pedagogies oriented towards *el buen vivir* that Barbosa writes about, the Zapatista's autonomous education that Baronnet describes, and the "we" of Tojolabal and other indigenous pedagogical worldings present us with the indivisibility of knowing, being, learning, and living that constitutes governance as a *tending of worlds*. The Zapatistas cannot include the One-World-World in their proposition of *a world in which many worlds fit*. But they engage anticapitalist sciences and indeed welcome all knowledges that can be helpful in the fight for our collective, planetary survival.²² The Zapatista's persistence arises in living the flow of life with all its uncertainty, in a cosmivision that is ultimately much more expansive and powerful than the contemporary conditions in which that living also occurs. ■

22 → The 2016 and 2017 Zapatista conferences *Las ConCiencias por la Humanidad* invited scientists from all over the world to question and consult with for a "sciences together with a conscience."