Promoting Inclusion and Global Solidarity: Experiences from the Global South

David Barkin[1]

(1)Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Xochimilco Campus, Mexico City, Mexico

David Barkin
Email: barkin@correo.xoc.uam.mx

Abstract

In response to the deep social and ecological crisis that the international community is proving incapable of attenuating, many peasants and Indigenous peoples in Mexico, and in other parts of the Global South, are transforming their visions of their futures, shaping a new ethos of self-management and conviviality, consistent with a responsible relationship to their territories. From the vantage point of the Global South, these peoples constitute a social and economic force that is altering the social and productive dynamics in many countries, proposing models of organization and building alliances among themselves regionally and internationally to exchange information, develop common strategies, and provide political support. In the process, they are deepening egalitarian cultures, grounded in solidarity and reciprocity, creating a broad range of opportunities that encourage the full development of individual interests and potential. They are systematizing inherited traditions and cosmologies, creating effective models of social, political, and environmental organization, that lend authority to their claims to be able to manage their territories autonomously. In conclusion, these visions are shaping international networks, defining new channels for collaboration, and improving the quality of life for people in their regions, while protecting them from the continuing incursions of capital.

1 Introduction

Economists generally measure inequality by quantifying personal incomes and arraying this information, using indicators that purport to inform society about the problems evident in the population and the conflicts that they might occasion. This approach to describing the problem and confronting its outcomes has contributed to the construction and perpetuation of deepening poverty

around the world. There are many explanations for this situation, but in the final analysis many analysts attribute the problem to redefining poverty as the result of individual motivations, the lack of adequate stimuli in the household or community and public institutions that systematically discriminate against disadvantaged groups.

This situation raises the question of how to escape from a cumulative downward spiral that has condemned uncounted millions to poverty that generations of policy makers have attempted to identify alternative solutions. More recent historiography is posing the question of how humanity constructed today's global economy that is perpetuating uncounted hordes of people, without adequate food and shelter, who are being removed from their territories and denied their ability to continue producing their basic needs and care for their patrimony, while a very small proportion of the world's population control a disproportionate share of the wealth.

After a brief excursion into some of the roots of present thinking about inequality and the apparent certainty that it has always been with us, this chapter examines the strategies being adopted by Indigenous and peasant communities to overcome these limitations. While approaches to consolidating their communities and defending their territories are diverse, they are committed to forging diversified societies that can overcome the barriers to their collective well-being. The key challenge posed by these remarkable achievements is to identify the underlying processes at work to inform the communities in their multidimensional efforts to deliberately restructure themselves to advance toward their visions of "good society."

2 The Antecedents of Inequality

Social science discourse during the last quarter century has developed a consensus that present- day levels of inequality have gotten out of hand. This process evolved during the entire period since the end of World War II but, in reality, has its roots with the emergence of colonialism and imperialism, with the development of the "modern world system" (Wallerstein, *1974*). There are important intellectual traditions attributing these origins to the very character of human beings: In his *Leviathan* (*1651*), Thomas Hobbes proffered one of the first (and best known) condemnations of human beings as brutish, selfish creatures who emerged from a solitary, poor, and short existence in a permanent state of war. European "civilization," in this view, emerged to repress these inner instincts, creating hierarchical societies capable of imposing order at the cost of generating the origins of inequality that haunts us to the present. At the time (relatively speaking—one century later), Jean Jacques Rousseau would offer his famous *Discourse* (*1984* [1754]) pointing to the possibility of a brighter future: Humanity, organizing itself for its continual self-improvement, evolved state institutions and private property, generating the origins of "moral" inequality that placed certain groups at the service of others; in this structured society, these differences were ameliorated by the notion of "political equality" that was created by a State promoting their well-being through a "voluntary" social contract (*1762*).

With the expansion and consolidation of the system of nation-states, there was a concerted effort to assimilate all peoples within national borders into a single political culture, forcing their acquiescence to the dominating forces of political imposition and ethnic and/or cultural assimilation. During the roughly 500 years of colonial, imperial, and postcolonial restructuring the world system, peoples around the world have been forcibly removed from their territories, displaced into progressively more inhospitable corners of the countries in which they exist. Other peoples and

cultures, less fortunate, have been eradicated in systematic processes of ethnocide and cultural assimilation. Over the centuries, this progressive expansion of the European control of ever-increasing parts of the planet has been accompanied by unimaginable acts of violence and warfare, of the expropriation of the very basic elements that these peoples have required for their very survival, and the creation of vast armies of migrants forced to move from one place across the globe to another in search for the means for their very survival. The human toll of this history and the accompanying threats to the planet threatens the very existence of human society, creating new structures of inequality as a product of the most "productive" economic apparatus the world has ever known. This heritage of territorial expansion, political conquest, human brutality, and environmental degradation calls for a reexamination of the possibilities of identifying alternative social organizations capable of attending to the basic needs of people and the planet, generating the possibilities of confronting the dominant pressures of today's world system.

This reexamination also poses the question as to whether "society" has always been this way. Are these dynamics simply an intensification of history since humans emerged from the hunting-gathering societies of prehistory? Are they the inevitable consequence of the growing population and complexity of economic and technological developments? While not pretending to offer an excursion into the depths of social history, the accomplishments of past civilizations offer a platform for understanding the activities of many societies working to forge new paths toward the future.

For a dramatic and vivid example of the heritage of past civilizations, the story of the rise of the city of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico offers an example of the colorful example that belies the standard vision of small, isolated tribes inhabiting the planet until the advent of the agricultural revolution that brought on hierarchy and inequality. Sometime after 100 AD, a remarkable civilization sprung up in the Valley of Mexico, partly the result of intense volcanic activity during the previous decades that forced numerous Mesoamerican peoples to abandon their communities. Over the course of the following 500 years or so, one of the largest cities in the world at the time developed, housing at least 250,000 people from numerous cultural groups in multifamily stone constructions, profusely decorated with colorful murals depicting their family life and productive systems (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021: Chap. 9). The archeological evidence from the region suggests that the city developed with its own set of decentralized local governing mechanism, assuring a relatively comfortable and healthy standard of living based on the extraordinarily diversified maize-based agroecological system evolved during previous millennia throughout Mesoamerica; this was complemented by an array of small animals and extensive trading with peoples from both coasts that provided a regular supply of marine life for local consumption and cultural artifacts that enriched the lives of peoples throughout the subcontinent, testimony to the variety of agricultural, handicraft, and artistic activities that this civilization supported during a period of apparent pacific coexistence. The remarkable urban society in what is now known as the Valley of Mexico, with its mixture of cultures, traditions, and distributed neighborhood management system, an egalitarian world of diverse peoples without hierarchical governance structures, gradually vanished some centuries later, without indications of internal struggles or external threats. There are traces of a remarkable civilization that subsequent generations of scholars have lent precious little attention to, as it apparently was an outlier in the received wisdom of how humanity evolved.

Similarly, hundreds of years later a thriving Indigenous democratic civilization in Tlaxcala coexisted in close proximity to (and in constant struggle with) the highly structured autocratic Aztec culture before the Conquest. Here again, the scientific literature from a variety of disciplines has ignored or downplayed the significance of this political model for understanding the heritage of present-day Mesoamerican cultures in their ongoing projects to forge autonomous, self-governing communities.

This very brief excursion into evidence about societies in preconquest Mesoamerica offers a small taste of the extraordinarily suggestive "New History of Humanity" recounted in the "*Dawn of Everything*" (Graeber & Wengrow, *2021*). Their wide-ranging account of 30,000 years of social developments traces the ways in which human societies experimented with an unfathomable variety of social and productive models. During this period, the received stories of a linear evolution from hunter- gatherers to the gradual development of an "enslaving" sedentary dynamic of agricultural production are shown to be oversimplifications of the creativity and flexibility of the variegated cultural diversity characterizing human society, for example, they explain that patriarchy and matriarchy both were not preordained familiar structures and that some cultures alternated among them, depending on the seasons and the ecosystems. Their recounting of this history belies the standard version of the emergence of the agricultural "revolution" that marched humanity along the path that evolved into the urban societies and hierarchical structures, creating ever-increasing degrees of inequality that plagues today's world system. The rest of this chapter takes a "gigantic" step forward to actually existing societies in the twenty-first century actively engaged in creating the "New world in which Many Worlds fit," to quote a phrase that summarizes the emerging global social theory of the Zapatista movement in southern Mexico.

3 An Emerging Social Base

Antisystemic movements emerged with the modern world system itself. Most of them were isolated, local groups resisting the seemingly inexorable advance of capitalism as it devised new and more effective ways to extract surplus-value from the majority of the populations in it ever expanding circle of domination. With the passage of time, organized political groups coalesced into social and nationalist movements, struggling against established power structures to create more democratic and egalitarian system. European history is replete with these attempts, and its populations have benefitted or suffered from these processes as they have had greater degrees of success or failure. In the final analysis, however, their fate has been intimately enmeshed with the destiny of the "modern world system" to which most of them appeared inextricably bound.

In contrast to these political maneuverings within the global system, a new dynamic emerged toward the end of the twentieth century in the western hemisphere: ethnopolitical movements that began to define the political struggles of the coming period. Presciently identified by the original group of intellectuals who had defined the world system itself (Arrighi et al., *1989*), they saw that these new antisystemic groups were no longer interested in struggling for positions within the system itself, but rather were convinced that their only strategic option was to forge alternative approaches to assure their well-being and protect their territories on its margins.

The chapter starts from the perspective of these actors, the radical groups who are designing strategies to assert their autonomy and implement programs to strengthen their capacity for self-government and productive diversification. Their strategies become "anti-systemic" because the State in the current world-system is unable and unwilling to recognize them as peoples in their own right. This antisystemic radicalism was not limited to the claims of individual groups or even regional associations, as became evident during the first decade of the new century, as the World Social Forums gave voice to peoples around the world.

This analysis draws its strength from the central role played by cosmology defining the nature of social organization and relations within the communities. Increasingly, women are playing a

significant role in administration and defense of their societies as well as in the deepening of the political and cultural bonds that are strengthening their groups. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the coalescing of women from more than 30 ethnic groups linked to the "*Tzam*" initiative of the 13 Zapatista demands: work, land, roof, independence, food, health, education, freedom, democracy, women, justice, peace, and the right to information. This presentation of their concept of "anti-systemic radicalism" clearly highlights the intimate relations between their communities and the environment on which we all depend (https://tzamtrecesemillas.org/).

In their activities, the women are deliberately searching for ways to assure their well-being along with that of all the members of their societies. They are not individual actors, nor are they privileged recipients of the word, as some might interpret their roles as defenders and transmitters of traditions, customs, and knowledge. In this world, cosmology is not simply a catechism of the "received word," subject to interpretation by authorized "power that be." Rather cosmology itself is a powerful fount of understanding and power, a crucible to be handled with care, as its misuse can betray the very foundations from which it emerged.

The new societies that are coalescing around this new recognition of the possibilities for molding the new societies are acutely aware of the significance of their rich and diverse heritage, and the need not only to defend it but also to enhance its power. As such, they are not only involved in preserving and transmitting their cosmologies but in asserting their significance for defending their rights to create and preserve the new worlds that are better equipped to face the challenges posed by the crises that the global system generated and continues to exacerbate. They ae creating a new cosmopolitical reality that conceives of an environment quite different from the segmented and classified system that guides the current world system (Stengers, *2010*); in this understanding of science and politics, there is an explicit recognition of other forms of knowledge and social practice that can contribute significantly to peaceful coexistence. In this vision, the universe is composed of human and nonhuman actors where "animals and other non-humans are endowed with a soul, 'are seen as people', and therefore 'are people'…endowed with social relations, existing in a dual-mode of the reflective and the reciprocal, that is, of the collective" (Viveiros de Castro, *2010*, p. 35). For many of these peoples, "what we call 'environment' is a society of societies, an international arena, a cosmopolítica There is, therefore, no absolute difference in status between society and environment, as if the former were the 'subject' and the latter the 'object'. Every object is always another subject, and is always more than one" (Danowski & Viveiros de Castro, *2017*, pp. 68–69) with profound implications for the creation of a new egalitarian world.

4 Creating Equality: Rising Against International Integration

A vivid appreciation of the decisions of people in nonmarket societies was offered by the anthropologist, Marshall Sahlins, an acerbic critic of neoclassical economics, in "The original affluent society" (*1972*: Chap. 1). He observed that:

> The world's most primitive peoples have few possessions, *but they are not poor*. Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization. It has grown with civilization, at once as an invidious distinction between classes

and more importantly as a tributary relation that can render agrarian peasants more susceptible to natural catastrophes than any winter camp of Alaskan Eskimo.

This is perhaps one of the most succinct statements of the problem facing scholars trying to understand poverty and promote equality in modern social analysis.

Instead of analyzing the myriad proposals for reducing inequality or ameliorating poverty, this recounting takes a different approach to explaining how peoples are building more egalitarian societies, based on the cosmovisions and experience of communities organized around a commitment to assuring the well-being of all of their members. Perhaps a good place to begin is with the Zapatista movement that made its appearance in Mexico on 1 January 1994, on the occasion of the entrance in operationality of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The several ethnic groups living in the Mayan highlands in Chiapas, united under a single flag, took advantage of the occasion to signal their conviction that this process of intensifying the advance of international economic and political integration would threaten their very existence as Indigenous peoples, and as autonomous communities; in the process, it would further heighten the inequalities and injustices to which they had been subjected since the Conquest. Characterizing this movement, Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, one of Mexico's most highly considered social analysts, succinctly summed up their aspirations in his now iconic essay: "The Theory of The Jungle" (*1997*), in which he recognizes the philosophical contributions of the Indigenous peoples. Paraphrasing and summarizing, he distilled from their initial declarations a political theory:

> Power is a new form of democracy, where one rules by obeying, and where the "we" places itself above the individual, and where deliberation is advanced as a more complete form of democracy over representation…Zapatismo is a continuous form for forging a cooperative and solidarity society, mobilizing this power for the people's welfare by placing it directly in the ranks of the communities…Emerging from this experience, old clichés became the watchwords of new practices: governing by obeying; serving rather than taking; building not destroying; proposing instead of imposing; and convincing not foisting. Democracy, in this setting, became a new way of generating knowledge, expanding freedom and assuring justice for all. (My extracts, translation, and summary)

In the context of this essay, the Zapatista experience offers a: "break with the ideology of modernity as a superior and unique form of civilization…[and] as the foundation of a new process of pluralistic, truly planetary, post-racist, post-colonial and perhaps post-modern civilization" (Dos Santos, *2004*, pp. 73–74). It sets the stage for exploring some of the hundreds of experiences of peasant and Indigenous peoples throughout the Global South who are embarking on their diverse paths to move to the margins of the modern world system.

5 The Communitarian Revolutionary Subject: Shaping Institutions to Create Equality

Peoples across the Global South are actively engaged in searching for ways to transcend their long and generally unfortunate histories of repression, displacement, assimilation, and even ethnocide. Throughout the ongoing waves of European expansion many have acquiesced, assimilated, or succumbed to military might, economic pressures or enticements, political negotiations, and unfulfilled promises to find themselves structurally remanded to the lowest rungs of society, in their own countries, and on a global scale. The prevailing world order generated a structure of privilege

and power, reinforced by an institutional network that ensures the flow of resources from the very poorest to the very richest of the world along with the accompanying planetary despoliation.

In response, societies everywhere are moving beyond these histories, reclaiming their cultural heritages and philosophical roots to forge constructive responses to the deepening crises of the worlds from which they are seeking to escape. They are becoming protagonists emerging from their collectivities to explore ways to create social and political networks, lending a new-found importance to the ethics of care of members of their societies and their territories, devoting attention to designing productive structures that guarantee the sustainability of life within the community and for all the beings with whom they share the planet. These new communitarian subjects (CS) are concerned with building autonomy from the polities of which they are a part, and restoring the biophysical imbalances inherited from previous epochs of wanton destruction, all with a view to creating more just societies for themselves and their allies (Barkin *2022a*). The actions of the CS become relevant as an alternative to the socio-ecological crisis that the planet is experiencing, hence the importance of understanding and supporting them as effective proposals in the face of realities that require comprehensive solutions.

These communities are providing us with a guide for action that is proving to be politically effective throughout postconquest history, and efficient for the reproduction of life, despite the attacks of the subsequent economic development model (Fernández-Llamazares et al., *2021*). Luis Villoro moved beyond their managerial and political functions to describe the community as a Communitarian Revolutionary Subject (CRS), that is, a transformative agent committed to tracing paths that will overcome the obstacles of the past (*2003*):

- Its individuals recognize each other as part of a whole.

- Its foundation is service, seeking the common good through the set of individual and family contributions, following reciprocal relationships.

- While pursuing the common good, personal identity and individual fulfillment are not sacrificed.

- Common values are established, incorporating individual values.

- Solidarity, fraternity, equity, and social justice are promoted as strengths that enhance all of the above.

In spite of the many differences among the communities, and the ecosystems in which they call home, our collaborations and discussion with colleagues in other parts of the region suggest that they are developing a common commitment to organize themselves and consolidate their productive capabilities to achieve the goals of:

1.
Improve their quality of life
2.
Prevent and restore biophysical imbalances
3.
Create more equitable societies

There are five basic principles that set the agenda for the CRS. These societies seek to reconstruct or recover dynamics, identities, and knowledge that were eroded during their long journeys through the colonial and capitalist systems. This recovery includes the reassessment of their own characteristics, and the incorporation of new elements (scientific, political, economic, and ecological knowledge) that enrich the heritage of knowledge and facilitate the implementation of activities and programs contemplated in their strategies for the future. Likewise, it implies creating new options that allow the flourishing of the community, its members, and the members of their networks. One of the main

characteristics of these postcapitalist societies is their community or collective character, which transcends the individualistic rationality of capitalism, seeking the common good above individual interest. This set of processes makes it easier to overcome resistance before the State's actions, and walk toward a strengthened resilience. These principles are:

(a)
Autonomy, as a capacity for community self-management, and alliances between communities.

(b)
Social solidarity and reciprocity as essential elements for productive organization and the control of direct or participatory democracy within it and in its relations with other communities. They include the equitable distribution of responsibilities and benefits.

(c)
Self-sufficiency in all facets of human and social sustenance, to the extent permitted by their environment.

(d)
Productive diversification, to promote and deepen exchanges among communities in a region and the nation as well as on international markets.

(e)
Sustainable management of regional ecosystems, so that new socio-metabolic configurations are generated.

6 The Massification of Agroecology, Promotion of Food Sovereignty, and Participation in La Via Campesina

One of the most pervasive and effective strategies generally adopted by CRS is its concern to transform food production, reclaiming traditional practices, learning from other peasant communities, and implementing alternative market channels controlled by the communities themselves. These strategies are being implemented on local and regional levels, spearheaded by participants in La Vía Campesina and producers actively involved in reclaiming traditional farming systems. La Vía Campesina is the largest social organization in the world with more than 220 million members in 81 countries; its local chapters promote ecologically and politically appropriate production strategies to contribute to the global process of advancing toward food sovereignty in each of its regions (www.laviacampesina.org). Throughout Latin America, collective actors are actively involved in promoting food self-sufficiency, prioritizing culturally appropriate production techniques, and demanding that governments respect their economic, social, and cultural rights.

They are producing socioecological transformations driven by agroecology through the recovery of Indigenous and peasant knowledge, the strengthening of local production systems, and technical innovation to achieve healthy, ecologically sustainable food systems with the capacity to supply enough food to peoples and communities. The movements for food sovereignty and the scaling of agroecology promote relationships and interactions to generate social metabolisms with lower entropic levels, considering the biophysical limits and the biogeochemical cycles of the territory, fostering the care and restoration of ecosystems. In this way, they seek to avoid or reverse metabolic rifts through the construction of technical-productive alternatives that are committed to socio-

environmental well-being, up to the rehabilitation of ecosystems impacted by the agro- industrial system in recent decades.

One of the outstanding features of this rebirth of attention to food sovereignty is the renewed attention to one of the oldest farming systems in the world: the milpa, shaped at least 8000 years ago in Mesoamerica in communities that carefully selected seeds to produce what has become one of the world's most important grains: maize. Through generations of experimentation, they continue to improve on one of the most complex productive agricultural systems that continues to provide a nutritious and balanced diet for those rural communities who combine the lessons of intercropping with the fruits of collaborative networking. The movements for food sovereignty and the scaling of agroecology promote relationships and interactions to generate social metabolisms with lower entropic levels, considering the biophysical limits and the biogeochemical cycles of the territory, fostering the care and restoration of ecosystems. In this way, they seek to avoid or reverse metabolic rifts through the construction of technical-productive alternatives that are committed to socio-environmental well-being, up to the rehabilitation of ecosystems impacted by the agro-industrial system in recent decades.

The milpa and agroecological approaches to sustaining and enriching rural productive systems were often managed by individual producers during the past epochs. In more recent times, however, communities are embracing a more collective approach to productive innovation and collaboration, clearly conscious of the need to assure adequate production for their own needs and to exchange with others. In the process, they are reinforcing their collective commitments to ameliorate material and personal differences within their ranks and promoting the political solidarity that motivate their withdrawal from the nation-state in the first place.

7 A Community Shaping Its Future

One of the most striking examples of a community deliberately embarking on a road to the future is the Indigenous collective in the mountainous region of west-central Mexico, the Cooperative Union Tosepan Titataniske. Formed more than 40 years ago, the Union has consolidated itself, creating the full panoply of social, political, and productive organizations that are now assuring its members a good quality of life; it now includes about 40,000 families, more than 200,000 people. Through a conscientious and deliberate series of activities, including collaboration with the state university and other groups, they created a capacity to protect themselves from the designs of outside forces that are still trying to encroach on their territory. During this formative period, the group was able to promulgate a land-use program that acquired the force of law, creating a collective decision-making process that effectively incorporated the whole population in an effective participatory democracy. An important facet of this institution building was the ongoing insistence on recovering their language and history. They phrased it concisely in a recent publication that involved a reflection on where they had come from and where they were going:

> The Masewal are a people who identify themselves with what we do in the territory in which we live. Our "yeknemilis" involved walking together for a good life. We should live according to our values, values that will guide us as we walk along a path that identifies us and defines our route. (Boege & Fernández, *2021*)

In this search to define themselves, they sought answers from their forebearers: "What is this 'yeknemilis'"? Their response was clear:

We are a peaceful people where caring for communitarian life is our greatest strength. We are a happy people, without fear and with great spiritual fortitude. This is what makes us Masewal and makes us different. Things change, and we do too. What does it mean to live in the XXI century, according to the Masewal tradition that guides our path in these ancient lands, according to those ways of life, with autonomy and self-determination?

This spiritual foundation for their activities and organization has been crucial in shaping their collective being, and defining their community and its activities. Through the years, the Tosepan Collectives have gradually assured their ability to supply their basic needs, to finance their activities through a credit union, and to create profitable enterprises that allow them to care for their environment, while attracting "ecotourists" to generate income and gainful employment.

Perhaps most remarkable is the clarity with which they are taking advantage of their ongoing assemblies to help define the ways in which they are planning to move forward. As part of their thoughts about their considerable history, they also ventured into lengthy discussions about their paths moving forward. In the resulting document, they present a serious program for living responsibly in the middle of an unfolding global crisis. Insisting on their basic values and the rich heritage from the "ancient ones," they set out a ten-point program to fix priorities for themselves. The list of activities in which they are engaged is itself striking: honey, ecotourism, basic food production, basic schooling, housing, technical training centers, cafeterias, coffee and pepper for export, health centers, etc. As they summarized it:

Among all of us we have to continue gathering, talking to not remain quiet, consolidate and push our strategic areas forward with specific programs and projects. It is like our bodies, if we remain still our bones are going to atrophy, therefore our culture needs to be in constant motion, as we have been struggling in the past. The original peoples have to walk into the future into the footsteps of our ancestors.

In producing their community plan for the next 40 years, they explained: "We want to assemble these ideas, write them down, so that there will be a testimony that will not evaporate, to define where we are going, and that they will be carefully secured in our hearts." Their plan is ambitious and all-encompassing, including traditions and culture; linguistic recuperation; education, and the "good life"; governance and participatory democracy; financial autonomy and social-solidarity economy; care for the land and water; health, including preventative and curative facilities, as well as balanced diets; energy autonomy; and dignified housing.

8 A Community Recovering Its Lands, Its Traditions, and Its Self-Respect

In another Indigenous region of Mexico—the highlands of west central Mexico—communities have confronted a long history of lumber thieves, accompanied by extortion and myriad forms of violence for generations. The situation became particularly destructive with the expansion of commercial agroindustrial production and the spread of the drug trade by regional cartels. In 2011, Cheran, one of the larger Indigenous communities, was particularly impacted, as the thieves were threatening its water supplies in the local forest. In response, a group of women from the community, bringing along their younger children, decided to take matters into their own hands, directly confronting the gangs without weapons by physically blocking the roads to put a stop to the practice.

During the ensuing weeks, this audacious action galvanized the community in unforeseen ways. A dramatic mobilization of all sectors of the population initiated a profound discussion of the next

steps. The traditional process of local decision-making was revived around neighborhood fires, along with the organization of a voluntary local police force to control access to the town and its forests. The heated neighborhood debates soon morphed into concrete proposals to create a new local government along with a more ambitious plan to reclaim the Indigenous culture and language that had eroded during past decades.

In the following decade, Cheran became a symbol of a resurgence of Indigenous activism and alternative paths to decolonial construction. Intransigent local government institutions tried to thwart their efforts to build new institutions for self-government and then deny the new "non- political" administrative structures the resources to which they were entitled. It took a concerted effort with allies from civil society up to the Supreme Court to resolve the dispute in the community's favor, on the basis of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (1989). Since then, self-managed enterprises and a citizen police force are part of the panoply of advances generating new opportunities in a setting in which many other communities in the region are learning from this experience (Gasparello, *2021*).

9 Conclusions: Defending Territory, Redefining Nature, and Building New Worlds

Throughout the world, capital continues to advance in search for new supplies of resources and new areas to degrade. With today's burgeoning populations and the need for minerals, lands, and food, the expansion of private enterprise seems to have no limits. New technologies require different inputs, the climate crisis calls for new sources of energy, and the social crises demand some new ways to supply peoples with their basic needs. Each of these "news" creates opportunities not even conceived of in the recent past. But all of them imply upending communities from their territories, destroying cultures, and creating new metabolic rifts. Of course, each of these dynamics also increases inequality, locally as well as globally.

The counterforces are everywhere. There are pious global declarations about the need to limit atmospheric warming, to reduce fossil fuels use, and to protect the seas, and the world's forests. But there is an overriding contradiction: As long as nature is an object to be studied and exploited, rather than a part of humanity itself, there is no way to confront one of the fundamental contradictions facing society. Many Indigenous peoples understand this—it is a fundamental part of their cosmologies, their understanding of fundamental workings of the planet, and the basis for their commitments to forging a more equitable society.

Today's defense of territory is not just a demand for property. It involves the defense of culture, of language, and also of the planet. The Communitarian Revolutionary Subject clearly understands this. It learns from their inherited cosmovisions and other ways of understanding the union of the human with the nonhuman, of the unity of society and nature, taking advantage of science and technology to innovate in harmony with local processes. Thus, they implement strategies to avoid or restore metabolic rifts through traditional or innovative approaches to take advantage of their natural endowments. Many communities are identifying and attempting to repair these rifts, through the restoration and conservation of ecosystems. They are creating new sociometabolic configurations of productive systems as important contributions to fostering autonomy (Barkin & Fuente, *2021*; Barkin, *2022b*). The renewed appreciation for their cosmopolitical reality in which inherited knowledge and traditions are proving unexpectedly and surprisingly valuable in confronting regional

imbalances will be even more significant in the near future as the depths of the environmental crises begin to intensify their impacts on other societies around the globe.

The rural, peasant, and Indigenous communities who are organizing themselves as CRS are reconfiguring the social metabolisms of their productive activities and in the reproduction of life in its broadest sense in accordance with their cosmovisions. These belief systems are based on relationships with the land, biodiversity, ecosystems, and landscapes, mediated by sociocultural and economic practices rooted in historically constructed territories. Natural goods are appropriated collectively, which implies both the right to their enjoyment and their care, based on a community-nature relationship that is transferred from generation to generation. Many local worldviews do not consider the land as a commodity but as a giver of life (Mother Earth—Pachamama), and its defense is an obligation (Fernández-Llamazares et al., *2021*).

These political advances reflect important transformations in the worlds being shaped by the CRS. They involve a deliberate commitment to (re)organize themselves in the ways that the Tosepan cooperatives propose in their plan for the future. This has profound implications that offer dynamics to create more egalitarian societies, with particular emphasis on the ways in which all segments of the population are incorporated into decision-making processes as well as opening avenues to enable them to contribute to the community's well-being. As they are reorganizing society, explicitly considering these nonmercantile facets, and incorporating of women, as well as the young and the elderly, in the intergenerational dialogue, the communities are discovering new-found capacities to generate reserves for expanding the number of activities in which they are involved and for enriching the quality of goods and services they can offer to their members.

This widening realm of activities with the inclusion of people who are frequently excluded from society or discriminated against for racial, ethnic, or other personal traits offers an insight into the sociopolitical dynamics undergirding the new worlds that are under construction. Traditional societies are often considered incapable of escaping from the "vicious cycle of poverty" to which their inability to accumulate surpluses condemns them. Often overlooked in this facile oversimplification are the ways in which they choose to organize themselves, devoting important shares of their production to traditional activities, including festive celebrations and other cultural events that are significant in cementing the personal social and political bonds that have been important in strengthening their resistance to assimilation and even ethnocide.

In today's world, however, the emerging organizations are engaged in new social constructions, moving to the margins of the nation-states in which they live to create postcapitalist societies. Based on the principles outlined above and the capacity to generate surpluses by diversifying their production and improving their capabilities, they are carefully creating new institutions and governance procedures that contribute to forging inclusive societies, reducing the invidious interpersonal dynamics that have become an ingrained feature of the societies from which they are escaping. The reigning legacy of inequality, with its terrible toll of human suffering, and environmental destruction are no longer the scourge of those societies that are choosing to move to the margins of the global market place, with its dynamic of private accumulation and heightened individualism. In the face of an often antagonistic opposition, they are moving forward to foster communitarian commitments to collective well-being and environmental conservation, solidly grounded in alternative cosmogonies, strengthening alliances with like-minded peoples around the world.

References

Arrighi, G., Hopkins, T. K., & Wallerstein, I. (1989). *Anti-systemic movements*. Verso.

Barkin, D. (2022a). Shaping a communitarian ethos in an era of ecological crisis. *Frontiers in Sustainability, 3*, art:944252. https://doi.org/10.3389/frsus.2022.944252 CrossRef

Barkin, D. (2022b). Radical ecological economics: Decolonizing our work. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology, 21*, 526–540. https://doi.org/10.1163/15691497-12341646 CrossRef

Barkin, D., & Fuente Carrasco, M. E. (2021). El sujeto comunitario frente a las configuraciones sociometabólicas. In *Economía Ecológica Latinoamericana* (pp. 401–428). Compiled by Azamar Alonso, A., Silva Macher, J. C. and Zuberman, F. Colección Miradas Latinoamericanas, CLACSO and Siglo XXI editores.

Boege, E., & Fernández, L. E. (2021). *Codíce Masewal: Plan de Vida: Soñando los próximos 40 años.* 2 Vols. Tosepan Titataniske. Retrieved from: https://patrimoniobiocultural.com/subidas/2022/06/PARTE-1-CO%CC%81DICE-MASEWAL-2022.pdf; and https://patrimoniobiocultural.com/subidas/2022/06/PARTE-2-CO%CC%81DICE-MASEWAL-2022.pdf

Danowski, D., & Viveiros de Castro, E. (2017). *The ends of the world*. Translated by R. Guimaraes Nunes. Polity Press.

Dos Santos, T. (2004). De la resistencia a la ofensiva: el programa alternativo de los movimientos sociales. *OSAL, 15*, 65–76. Retrieved from http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/ar/libros/osal/osal15/dossantos15.pdf

Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Lepofsky, D., Lertzman, K., Armstrong, C. G., Brondizio, E. S., Gavin, M. C., Lyver, P. O.'. B., Nicholas, G. P., Pascua, P., Reo, N. J., Reyes-García, V., Turner, N. J., Yletyinen, J., Anderson, E. N., Balée, W., Cariño, J., David-Chavez, D. M., Dunn, C. P., Garnett, S. C., Greening (La'goot), S., Jackson (Niniwum Selapem), S., Kuhnlein, H., Molnár, Z., Odonne, G., Retter, G.-B., Ripple, W. J., Sáfián, L., Bahraman, A. S., Torrents-Ticó, M., & Vaughan, M. B. (2021). Scientists' warning to humanity on threats to indigenous and local knowledge systems. *Journal of Ethnobiology, 41*(2), 144–169. https://doi.org/10.2993/0278-0771-41.2.144

Gasparello, G. (2021). Communal responses to structural violence and dispossession in Cherán, Mexico. *Latin American Perspectives, 48*(1)(236), 42–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X20975004

González Casanova, P. (1997). La Teoría de la Selva: Contra el neoliberalismo y por la humanidad. *La Jornada*. Retrieved from https://www.jornada.com.mx/1997/03/06/perfil.html

Graeber, D., & Wengrow, D. (2021). *The Dawn of everything: A new history of humanity*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Hobbes, T. (1651). Leviathan.

Rousseau, J.-J. (Transl. Cole, G.D.H.). (1762). *The social contract*. Retrieved from: https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/cole-the-social-contract-and-discourses

Rousseau, J.-J. (transl. Cranston, M.). (1984 [1754]). *A discourse on inequality*. Penguin.

Sahlins, M. (1972). *Stone Age economics*. University of Chicago Press.

Stengers, I. (Transl. Bononno, R.) (2010, 2011). *Cosmopolitics I and II*. University of Minnesota Press.

Villoro, L. (2003). *De la Libertad a la Comunidad*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Viveiros de Castro, E. (2010). *Metafísicas caníbales. Líneas de antropología posestructural*. Katz Editores.
CrossRef

Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system I: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. Cambridge University Press.