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INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

Nancy Postero

Introduction

I begin by noting that all three of the terms in the title of this chapter are deeply contested. Who counts as indigenous? How is the category defined, enforced, and mobilized? Scholars understand that encountering indigeneity is not to "describe it as it really is," but to "explore how difference is produced culturally and politically" (García, 2008: 217). It is both a historically contingent formulation that changes over time, and a relational concept that emerges from a contested field of difference and sameness (de la Cadena and Starn, 2007: 4; Postero, 2013: 108). Development, as the chapters in this volume demonstrate, is equally complex. Is it a discourse producing "underdevelopment" (Escobar, 2011) or a set of economic practices aimed at alleviating poverty and empowering marginalized populations? Is it a familiar and understandable wish to live better, or the name given to a capitalist system of commodity production deployed by powerful actors who are destroying the planet in the process (Dinzey-Flores, 2018: 166)? Who determines the goals and the beneficiaries (McMichael, 2010)? Even the notion of Latin America can and has been contested. Is it an idea (Mignolo, 2009)? Is it a geographical region south of the Rio Grande united by history? Do its borders extend into the US along with the diaspora of migrants inhabiting transnational labour circuits (Zilberg, 2004)? Do its populations share enough to make it a meaningful term of analysis (Goodale and Postero, 2013)? It can be argued that Latin America only came into being in opposition to the West, as a site where the West engaged in a struggle to tame the savage Other (Hall, 1996; Trouillot, 1991).

While I do not pretend to answer all these questions, in this chapter, I hope to add to these important and complex debates by thinking about how development and indigeneity play out in entangled ways in Latin America. I argue that their meanings are co-constitutive, having been formulated in tandem over centuries of contestation, exploitation, and violence. What it has meant traditionally to be "developed" in Latin America is to be different from, opposed to, and superior to native peoples and their visions of life and society. This formulation ignores the fact that this development was built with and on indigenous labour and resources. The complement to this is that, as Hall (1996) has famously argued, the category of indigeneity also only has meaning in opposition to the West, as its underdeveloped Other, but also its alternative. Thus, indigenous people, who remain among the continent's poorest residents, are the

object of development, but they are also sometimes held up as the only remaining solution to it. As Nancy Fraser (1997: 15) pointed out long ago, economic and cultural injustice are fundamentally related: discursive categories and practices are underpinned by material supports, and economic institutions operate through culturally meaningful frameworks. Yet, the ways they are articulated constantly shift, depending upon the conjunctures in which they are lived. In this chapter, I briefly trace the history of colonial and capitalist development in the region to highlight the ways America's native peoples were folded into each era's notion of development and how they posed challenges at every stage. I hope to show the deeply political implications of struggles over economies, labour, land, and the distribution of the benefits of what we now might call development.

Precolonial and colonial era

Precolonial indigenous societies had their own economies and values, which, like all societies, dynamically transformed as they faced change (Postero, 2007a). The breadth of their diversity is impossible to catalogue here, but we can acknowledge that the largest civilizations, the Incas, Aztecs, and Mayans, were complex societies with extensive populations, systems of production and distribution, imperial military, and all the religious and cultural apparatuses of European societies. First-hand accounts of Spanish warriors remind us that these Europeans were stunned by their encounters with the beauty and organization of Tenochtitlán, a city of a quarter million well-fed residents (along with slaves from their imperial conquests) (see Diaz, 1963). Thus, indigenous Latin Americans were not "underdeveloped" when the conquistadors arrived, but were forced into poverty through war, massacres, slavery, dispossession, exploitative labour practices, and disease (Wright, 1992). As scholars have widely documented, native peoples and African slaves provided the labour for the plantations that produced sugar, rum, cotton, and indigo (Mintz, 1986; Wolf, 2010); the extraction of forest products like rubber and nuts (Taussig, 1987); and the deadly mines that filled European coffers with gold and silver (Galeano, 1973). Native peoples grew food, made cloth, carried out all the reproductive labour, and transported these products, making the colonial system functional. In his widely read treatise, *The Open Veins of Latin America* (1973), Galeano showed how these riches funded the Industrial Revolution in Europe, setting into place an enduring system of inequality in which the West benefitted from the resources and suffering of Latin America. The blood and sweat of native peoples were transformed into the capital that kick-started modern capitalism. Dependency theorists argued this imbalance explained the ongoing disparities between metropole and periphery (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979), offering a characterization of "underdevelopment" that still rings true today.

Yet, historians caution us not to see indigenous peoples as mere victims of colonial exploitation. Steve Stern's work (1993) in what is now Peru demonstrated that native peoples were also active economic and political agents, owners of mines, merchants, and crafts people, many of them competing with Spanish colonizers. Local people used the Spanish courts to fight back against colonial practices, often forcing them to alter their policies. Colonial economic systems relied on indigenous traditional forms of organization to exist and expand (Barragán, 2015). Douglas Cope (1994) showed how racial schemes intended to keep native peoples and Afro-descendants in particular jobs and spaces to enable their exploitation, often broke down, as people intermarried and escaped spatial enclosure. The pictures contemporary historians give us show that despite the horrors of colonization, some indigenous elites gained wealth and status, inserting themselves into the economy.

Republican period

In the 19th century, Latin Americans waged wars of independence from Spain and Portugal, establishing new nations ruled by creoles, the descendants of the European colonizers. These new leaders justified their new Latin American nations in part by opposing the brutal colonial treatment of indigenous peoples, promising to establish more rational liberal societies based on Enlightenment notions. Yet, the existential question of race complicated this intention. Deep racial fears still motivated the rulers. The 1790s saw massive organized resistance to European rule – from the insurrections in the Andes to the revolution in Haiti. In Bolivia at the end of the 1899 war between Conservatives and Liberals, Andean leader Zárate Willka's troops massacred a group of white soldiers. As Nancy Egan (2007) showed, the resulting public Mohoza trial aired the deep distrust whites had; even the most fervent Liberals failed to see the universal humanity in the indigenous defendants. These attitudes of racism were linked to and justified economic regimes. Across the region, while slavery had disappeared, other forms of servitude, like *ponjeage* or debt bondage, took their place (Bernstein, 2000). As Larson (2004: 13) notes in her comprehensive treatment of the Liberal era across the region, the big paradox was how to impose universal definitions of free labour and citizenship, while at the same time creating categories of difference that would set limits on these ideals, and allow continued domination over the Indian Other and their labour. Indigenous practices were seen as obstacles to modernity. Instead, modernizers imagined indigenous peoples as leaving behind their communal societies to join in the nation's development project. In the Bolivian case, as elsewhere, the solution was to make communal property illegal, throwing land up for grabs for the criollo elite while also opening a path to modernity, as rural natives were encouraged to become small-scale farmers. The result, however, was the *latifundio* system of large landholding, in which indigenous people served not as slaves but as landless peons. While many mounted vigorous resistance, many others were integrated into this system in a position of deep disadvantage.

The modern 20th century: indigenismo and mestizaje

In the 20th century, Latin America's nation-states sought other means to integrate their indigenous populations to their development projects. In part, this was the result of widespread populist revolutions marking the deep dissatisfaction the region's people held about the decades of failed development projects. Unequal land tenure and deepening class divisions showed the need for new ways to address the structural inequalities that marked the region. In some places, popularly elected governments undertook reforms to address these concerns, often with encouragement and financial backing from the US. The Alliance for Progress, President Kennedy's aid project, targeted rural peasants likely to rise up in revolutions, hoping to seduce them with rural development projects to address their poverty. In others, Leftist sectors resisted, sometimes engaging in guerrilla wars. This produced a violent push-back from conservative forces, and a wave of military dictatorships across the region. While most countries have made a transition to formal democracy, it is clear that "the twinned legacies of revolutionary struggle and the violence of state repression continue to shape arguments for and against alternative models of social change and forms of governance in contemporary Latin America" (Goodale and Postero, 2013: 7). That is, many of the battles that produced this cycle of conflict – about what forms of development nations should pursue, and more importantly, who should benefit – continue in the present moment.

These debates over development were often articulated in a complex register of race and class. In Mexico, for example, after the 1910 Revolution, a new discourse about Mexican national

identity emerged. The discourse of *indigenismo* replaced the brutal suppression of native peoples with a narrative of the *raza cósmica*, the cosmic race resulting from the mixture of indigenous and European peoples. Indigeneity was recognized, yet placed in the past, as a glorious foundation of the progressive and modern *mestizo*, who would lead the country to a new form of economic and social development (Knight, 1990). Friedlander's (1975) work in the 1970s demonstrated the effects this model had on rural indigenous people: they were devalued and left out of the modern world, shamed by their links to traditional practices. Elsewhere, indigeneity also gave way to other power-laden categories. In Bolivia, after a coalition of miners, peasants, and petty bourgeoisie led a successful revolution against the oligarchy in 1952, the new revolutionary state formulated a development model to incorporate all these sectors. There, as in other countries in the region, land reform, universal suffrage, and general education sought to benefit the poor and rural citizens, who were identified in terms of class relations rather than race/ethnicity. Indians became peasants, and they organized in *sindicatos* (unions) to demand their rights. The modern state's development model brought these formerly excluded segments into its embrace through a vertical model of patronage and assistance. Across the region, peasants, miners, and factory workers produced for the national market, and rural people streamed into cities to become the labour force for new forms of industrialized national production. They built homes in the barren outskirts of what became the megacities like Mexico City and São Paulo, forming new working classes (Holston, 2008).

But race never left the scene. The "poor Indian" still needed help to advance. George Foster (1965) studied the peasant (read indigenous) people of central Mexico, arguing their cultural models, especially one he called " the image of limited good," limited their ability to enter the rational modern market. State policies especially targeted indigenous women and their homes as sites of intervention, teaching them hygiene and enforcing Western notions of family structures (Larson, 2005; Stephenson, 1999). As Laura Gotkowitz (2007) argues, race and gender became central sites of nation-making, as indigenous people, especially indigenous women, were disciplined to be proper members of a modern nation-state. However, indigeneity did not melt away under the pressures of the modernization development model. June Nash's (1979) early work with tin miners in Bolivia showed how these proletarians also engaged their indigenous cultural values to understand their work as a meaningful contribution to the cosmos as well as the nation. Her images of Andean miners worshipping the subterranean deities through rituals of tobacco and coca leaves showed the endurance of indigenous values. In Mexico, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1996) pushed back against the inevitability of *mestizaje*, arguing that indigenous Mesoamerican society, what he termed *México profundo*, or deep Mexico, was still present, underlying all contemporary life. He thought modern industrialized *mestizo* Mexico was an illusion, doomed to failure if it did not take into account indigenous understandings of the land.

Neoliberal multiculturalism

The late 20th century brought a new capitalist development model: neoliberalism. David Harvey's oft-cited definition captures its gist:

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.
>
> *(Harvey, 2005: 2)*

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, Latin American countries adopted neoliberal policies, restructuring their economies to adhere to the orthodox norms of what was called the "Washington Consensus." In Chile, the shift to neoliberalism was imposed by a military dictatorship, responding in part to the Leftist development models introduced by socialist President Allende. Naomi Klein (2005) described the violent imposition of neoliberalism there as a form of "disaster capitalism" because Pinochet was able to force the unpopular model on a population already stunned by the military coup. In other places, countries were forced to accept the new policies as part of the conditions of World Bank and the International Monetary Fund loans to repay foreign debt. Called "Structural Adjustment Programs," these policies forced the privatization of public enterprises, radical cutbacks on social spending, fiscal and monetary reforms, and the end to tariffs and subsidies for national industries. As many scholars have documented, this had drastic impacts on the rural populations of the region, as their agricultural products were replaced by cheap imports (see Ugarteche, 1999). For Mexican rural indigenous people, for instance, corn, the staff of Mayan life, was now imported from large agribusinesses in the US. These policies were accompanied by an increased emphasis on natural resource extraction, as neoliberal governments opened their economies to transnational companies. Mines, roads, dams, and hydrocarbon exploration spread across indigenous lands from the Andes to the Amazon, leading to substantial resistance (Sawyer, 2004: Hindery, 2013; Perreault, 2005). Large-scale agricultural businesses expanded in the lowlands. Global commodities, like soy, safflower, cattle, and sugar cane, destroy vulnerable tropical forests, spread pesticides, and use enormous quantities of water, affecting the lands and livelihoods of lowland indigenous groups (Fabricant and Postero, 2015).

Neoliberalism was not just economic policy and practices, however. Much as modernization was paired with the cultural discourse of *mestizaje* to enlist popular participation in that development model, in the neoliberal era, the market was paired with a cultural formulation called multiculturalism. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, indigenous peoples began to organize in many parts of the region, renewing their cultural identity as indigenous (rather than peasants), and making demands for lands, political participation, and substantive citizenship (Postero and Zamosc, 2004). This was part of a larger international push by the indigenous movement, which received substantial support from international institutions. The International Labor Organization's Convention 169 (1989) declared that states should recognize indigenous people, their cultures, and their territories, and this was followed up by the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007. "Neoliberal multiculturalism" refers to the policies of neoliberal states to respond to this movement, to recognize the cultural differences of their diverse populations, and to articulate those segments to its national development project. If in past regimes indigeneity was seen as an obstacle to progress, in this new era, indigeneity was recognized, institutionalized, and made functional to global capitalist economic systems (Hale, 2002; Postero, 2007b: 14–18). In his analysis of reforms in Guatemala, Charles Hale concluded that neoliberalism includes a seductive cultural project. He identified a form of governmentality through which citizens – be they individuals or indigenous collectivities – take on the responsibility of resolving their problems, governing themselves in accordance with the logics of global capitalism. The result, what Hale calls the "menace" of neoliberal multiculturalism, is that those indigenous people who conduct (2002) themselves with this logic are rewarded and empowered. He terms them "*indios permitidos*," or authorized Indians, (a term drawn from Rivera Cusicanqui). Unruly conflict-prone Indians are condemned to the racialized spaces of poverty and social exclusion (Hale, 2004). Patricia Richards (2013) showed the extreme version of this in neoliberal Chile, where Mapuche indigenous people have pushed back against land dispossession and the dams and large-scale forest plantations on their former lands. These "*indios*

prohibidos," or unauthorized Indians, are treated as terrorists, their lands militarized, and those seen as violators given harsh jail sentences.

Neoliberal reforms took many forms. Bilingual or intercultural education taught indigenous languages. States surveyed and titled collectively held indigenous territories, giving indigenous people some renewed control over their lands (Anthias and Radcliffe, 2015). In others, indigenous organizations were recognized as appropriate representatives in local development projects. For instance, in the Bolivian case I studied in the early 1990s, the new Law of Popular Participation allowed indigenous leaders, selected through traditional norms called *usos y costumbres*, to determine how municipal funds should be allocated. I found that the reforms were insufficient to overcome the overarching racism and the domination of white-*mestizo* political parties. Yet, in the long run, I argued, indigenous people were able to utilize some aspects of the reforms to gain political power (Postero, 2007b). Winning positions in local towns, indigenous people and other popular sectors were able to join forces, build a new political party, and elect the first indigenous president, Evo Morales, in 2005. Morales campaigned on an anti–neoliberalism platform, promising to push back the economic policies that gave away the country's resources to transnational corporations. I discuss below the efforts to "decolonize" Bolivia's society and economy.

There were also other significant forms of resistance to neoliberal development visions. As local rural communities felt the impacts of neoliberal trade policies, farmers and indigenous producers joined together to advocate for sustainable and just food production systems. Producers pushed for "fair trade" systems that took the middlemen out of the commodity chains, leaving more for the producers themselves (Moberg, 2010). Forest certification projects guaranteed more environmentally friendly production processes and fair labour conditions. The Via Campesina organization brought together many of these concerns, pushing for food sovereignty, a notion that combined food security for vulnerable farmers and peasants, with the right of farmers and states to make decisions about agricultural policy. It prioritizes local food production and protecting local peoples and their lands and water over the rights of transnational corporations (Via Campesina, 2003; McMichael, 2006). A more radical form of resistance emerged in Mexico, as the Zapatista army rose up to protest the NAFTA agreements and the effects of neoliberalism on Mexico's indigenous peasant populations. Over the next decades, the Zapatista autonomous communities in resistance created a new political and economic model, which respects indigenous culture and practices an alternative to market-driven development (Earle and Simonelli, 2005; Dinerstein and Deneulin, 2012). As Alicia Swords (2010) shows, their development model engages political education and community organizing to enable the development of cooperatives, push for gender equality, and promote resistance to neoliberal policies.

Challenges today

In the current era, as in previous ones, indigenous responses to globalized capitalist models of development vary widely. I focus in this last section on two opposing poles, but remind the reader that there is a wide spectrum in between.

The first pole I characterize as engaging with capitalism. Here I refer to the large numbers of indigenous people who, willingly or not, work in the global system – as producers, merchants, or servants. One example is the diaspora of Mexican indigenous workers who have migrated to the US to work in the agricultural fields. Lynn Stephen (2007) has documented their migration, showing the harrowing journeys North, the difficult conditions in which they work, and the constant fear of surveillance and discipline from the US government – the latter, I note, increasingly daily under the Trump administration (Stephen, 2007). For many, this is a

development model: their children receive education and chances not possible in rural Mexico ravaged by neoliberalism. Their remittances to their home communities are also a form of development, enabling cross-border organizations that sustain indigenous cultural practices and intervene in local political struggles at home (Blackwell, 2015). Indigenous peoples also serve across the region in the burgeoning tourist industry. Castellanos (2010) documents the migration of Mayan peoples into the service industry for Cancún's hotels, showing how their labour is fundamental to the whole industry. But the growing eco-ethno-tourism industry also relies on indigenous participants to demonstrate their authenticity, to share their "ancient wisdom" with visitors (see Córdoba Azcárate, 2011). Meisch (2002) describes how Otavalo musicians from Ecuador travel the world selling their music and recordings, packaged to appeal to Western notions of authentic indigenous culture, including feathers and mountains. Yet, despite their globe-trotting entrepreneurship, she argues the living they make allows them to sustain a strong and meaningful cultural identity at home, one even the youth continue to support. The final example is the rapidly growing middle class of Aymara merchants in Bolivia, who are engaged in transnational circuits of commerce connecting China, Bolivia, and Brazil. Nico Tassi and his colleagues (2013) have shown how these merchants utilize kinship relations and Aymara understandings of growth and abundance to build their businesses, asserting a proud sense of Aymara identity in their extravagant colourful homes.

The other pole is the important push from indigenous organizations towards autonomy and decolonization. Since the arrival of the European colonizers, native peoples have been resisting the destruction of their own political and cultural institutions. Since the insurrections of the colonial period, there have been calls for autonomy and self-determination. As mentioned above, the international indigenous movement codified many of these long-held demands in ILO 169 and the UNDRIP, but while nation-states signed onto these declarations, in practice indigenous communities remained inserted into states. Demands for real self-government were seen as challenges to national sovereignty, and so indigenous peoples used other less threatening frameworks, like human rights or cultural rights (Engle, 2010). In the last decade or so, however, indigenous organizations and their allies have articulated a strong discourse of decolonization, calling for an end to the colonialism that discriminates against indigenous epistemologies, practices, and forms of government (see Walsh, 2007). They have urged the decolonization of nation-states, to allow for indigenous structures of self-government (see Postero, 2017). This has been linked to a decolonized notion of development, arguing that instead of continuing the mad dash for consumption that is destroying the planet and its climate, development should be driven by "*buen vivir*" or living well, an indigenous form of sustainable life that protects collective society as well as nature (Radcliffe, 2012). In both Bolivia and Ecuador, this discourse is now codified in the constitution, which calls the state to enact this alternative post-neoliberal form of development.

Constitutional reforms have also created spaces for experiments in political autonomy. This is a critical turn for development, as indigenous peoples are beginning to make decisions about what forms of development can and cannot take place in their communities. Scholars are now studying the diverse forms this trend is taking – from *usos y costumbres* in Oaxaca, Mexico to the new *autonomía indígena originaria campesina* (AIOC) in Bolivia (Tockman, Cameron, and Plata, 2015). While these new structures are the site of great hope, it is important to recognize their limitations, as national governments continue to assert sovereignty over subsoil rights, granting oil concessions to transnational corporations for exploitation of natural resources. Understandably, a central site of struggle has become "free, prior, and informed consent" (FPIC), which both international instruments and national constitutions guarantee whenever local communities might be impacted by development. These rights are regularly disregarded, but even when there

are formal consultation processes, the radical power imbalances between international companies and the state, on one hand, and small local communities, on the other, make it very difficult for communities to resist the projects (Schilling Vacaflor, 2011). Thus, a central concern for development studies now is how indigenous communities can engage in "indigenous resource governance." This term recognizes that indigenous communities are agentive actors, negotiating between powerful entities. In some cases, they may resist. The Sarayacu community in Ecuador is perhaps the most emblematic case, having taken their objections to petroleum exploration on their lands to the Inter American Court of Human Rights and won (Cultural Survival, 2012). But other communities make strategic decisions to participate in extractivism, negotiating directly with TNCs for funding and resources. Penelope Anthias (2018) documents the case of Guaranís in Bolivia, who defined autonomy not in terms of their relation to the state, but in terms of their ability to negotiate with petroleum companies. What notions of development will these autonomous indigenous communities enact? How will they engage and challenge global capitalism as they work to benefit their own communities?

Conclusion

In every era, indigenous peoples have been deeply enmeshed in the development models of the day, pulled into exploitative relations with capitalism, engaging it, resisting it, and posing alternatives to it. Their relation to development in each era is the result of particular articulations of economic, political, and cultural forces, which shift over time. Indigenous "difference" has been mobilized by states and the market to formulate visions of progress to enlist the productive labours of the nation. In the contemporary era, indigenous communities have gained new power to enact their own visions of development. But their visions must be carried out within the constraints of larger forces – global capital and the sovereign nation-state. The case of Bolivia is a cautionary tale. There, despite an indigenous president who espouses decolonization and *vivir bien*, and a constitution sworn to protect indigenous peoples and their autonomy, the state continues and expands a national developmental model based on extractivism, and continues to sacrifice indigenous lands to this model (Postero, 2017). Yet, as Sarah Radcliffe (2015: 278) concludes in her analysis of decolonization and development in Ecuador, indigenous grounded ontologies – their experiences and understandings of the world – offer a profound challenge to mainstream development. The indigenous women she worked with argue that to make their visions of living well into reality requires a thoroughgoing political revolution, decolonizing the state and the institutions of development. Will that be the next era of indigenous development? It appears that the particular conjunctures in which we live today – the terrifying implications of climate change; the continuing lack of social equality due to the excesses and failures of global capitalism; and the increasing political conflicts that result – may be leading to a renewed valuation of indigeneity as offering solutions to the world's problems. But, as we have seen throughout this essay, states and markets have continuously found ways to articulate these challenges to their interests.

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