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## REVIEW ESSAYS

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### THE SACRIFICIAL ZONES OF “PROGRESSIVE” EXTRACTION IN ANDEAN LATIN AMERICA

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**Subterranean Struggles: New Dynamics of Mining, Oil, and Gas in Latin America.** Edited by Anthony Bebbington and Jeffrey Bury. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013. Pp. xv + 343. \$60.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780292748620.

**Living with Oil: Promises, Peaks, and Declines on Mexico’s Gulf Coast.** By Lisa Breglia. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013. Pp. x + 313. \$55.00 cloth. \$30.00 paper. ISBN: 9780292744615.

**Oil Sparks in the Amazon: Local Conflicts, Indigenous Populations, and Natural Resources.** By Patricia I. Vasquez. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014. Pp. xix + 187. \$79.95 cloth. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780820345628.

The Peoples’ Summit on Climate Change held in Lima, Peru, during the first two weeks of December 2014 constituted a powerful statement on the dynamics of contemporary resource extraction in Latin America. Convened by a coalition of Latin American workers’, women’s, peasant, and indigenous movements and organizations, it was meant to take place simultaneously with the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP20, to emphasize the need for alternative visions of the future of development (<http://cumbrepuebloscop20.org/>). Summit participants underscored that the world is experiencing a crisis of civilization brought on by high levels of fossil fuel consumption that are taken for granted. On the first day, the Third National Unity Pact of National Organizations of Indigenous

Peoples of Peru and the Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI) stated their positions against the disproportionate effects of climate change borne by indigenous peoples. On the same day, the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) linked climate change to neocolonialism, proposing that the current waves of intensified resource extraction in countries such as Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia are a form of internal colonialism that sacrifices the lives and territories of indigenous peoples in the name of development and economic growth. The marches, protests, and strikes of rural peoples in the past few years, from Chile to Mexico, were lauded as seeds of resistance that must become global in order to protect the dignity and well-being of those whose lives are directly affected by resource extraction.

The Peoples' Summit is but one example of numerous calls for rethinking the form and ideological adherences of "progressive extraction": the contemporary push for expanding and intensifying extractive economies among so-called progressive leftist and left-of-center governments. Discussions on the Left, until recently, had challenged conventional means of development (e.g., relying on rents from traditional extractive industries such as mining and oil) but as leftist leaders succeeded in occupying national governments, their position shifted.<sup>1</sup> These governments now identify intensified resource extraction (e.g., palm oil, gas and oil, and gold and copper mining) as one major way to encourage economic growth. The rationale behind intensification is that with greater rents from high-demand resources, governments can better support the fight against deep-rooted poverty and marginalization—a direct state response to the political weight of social mobilizations in the 1990s and 2000s seeking a more responsible and responsive social contract between the state and civil society. However, the terms of trade and the rationale behind relying on extractive rather than productive sectors have continued unchanged. Latin American countries remain places of investment that attract global finance flows, and the emphasis on extractive economies continues to have high social and environmental impacts, as the Peoples' Summit demonstrates. Environmental degradation, weakened local economies, forced displacement of communities, and threats against the lives of those opposing extraction are a few of the ways that extractive economies are concretely experienced by rural peoples. Despite strong resistance and calls for a reassessment of how development promises are carried out, the drive continues toward greater extraction in traditional and nontraditional areas. The Peoples' Summit and other similar pan-regional events and forums point to the uncanny resemblance between present-day extractive economies in the region and past formulations of extraction-led development: the same territories and subjects are bearing the sacrifices intrinsic to this form of wealth generation. How are these relations of extraction taken up and how do they persist?

The three books reviewed here call for reflection on the current form and trajectories of extraction in Latin America today. Each is distinct in terms of its intended

1. Eduardo Gudynas, "The New Extractivism of the 21st Century: Ten Urgent Theses about Extractivism in Relation to Current South American Progressivism," *Americas Program Report*, January 21, 2010.

audience, methodology, and theoretical framework. *Oil Sparks* is written by Patricia I. Vasquez, former fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace and previously the head of the Latin America desk at Energy Intelligence, a firm specializing in information and research on energy. Focusing on fifty-five separate events between 1992 and 2010 in Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia, Vasquez examines conflict as a symptom of structural problems in political systems and offers policy-level recommendations for their successful resolution. *Subterranean Struggles* is edited by geographers Anthony Bebbington and Jeffrey Bury, who have extensive experience investigating and consulting on the relationship between development, social movements, and the political economy of natural resources. The contributors to their edited volume are similarly immersed in various scholarly activist networks and research initiatives that focus on the study of natural resources and development in the Andes, particularly Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. *Living with Oil* is written by Lisa Breglia, who brings a cultural anthropology perspective and ethnographic approach to the study of how citizens of Isla Aguada, Campeche, Mexico, live with the national oil complex (e.g., infrastructure, spills, income). While Bebbington and Bury and Vasquez are concerned with resistance and/or negotiation of the establishment and expansion of extractive industries, Breglia explores how the oil complex has become part of everyday life in extractive areas.

These texts claim to go beyond simplistic explanations of the resource curse and point toward ways to better understand the workings of a “failed” social contract between resource-rich states and citizens who live in extractive areas.<sup>2</sup> They offer a complex picture of the intersection of petroleum and citizenship in zones of extraction and illustrate how the social contract binding government and citizens does not work for the protection of indigenous citizens’ rights. Moreover, and not always explicitly, each reflects on the spatiotemporal dimensions of capitalist economies. To varying degrees, each retraces well-known critiques of the naturalness of capitalism as development, an expression of capitalism that differentiates between spaces of extraction (the periphery) and spaces of power (the core), and how trade and government structures perpetuate inequality, poverty, and environmental degradation. Rather than proclaiming that something new is happening in regard to the extractive sector, they point to the engrained continuities of a geoculture of modernity where nations are considered sovereign and free to continue the extraction of resources as the best way to solve inequality and poverty—even if this implies the sacrifice of rural peoples and environments. Development, a hegemonic denomination of responsibility, is also the site of profound violence, both material and epistemic.<sup>3</sup> Next, I turn to how these books frame development continuities and the critique of the existing social contract between extractive industries and rural peoples, to reflect on how uneven relations of power are perpetuated through progressive extractivism.

2. Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

3. Joel Wainwright, *Decolonizing Development: Colonial Power and the Maya* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2011).

## THE EXTRACTIVIST STATE

One of the main obligations of states is to govern the natural body of the nation, its resources, to best benefit its political body, its citizens. States do this by regulating the terms and magnitude of resource extraction, use, and marketization in order to extract wealth from resources and invest it in improving the living standards of the national collective. Progressive extractivism operates under this same logic of liberal governance in countries where resource extraction contributes a large percentage of national income. States act in the best interest of the nation, doing what is in their power to realize a desired political vision of the economic future, even if the process leads some to experience the loss of lives, livelihoods, belonging, and existence—the sorts of losses described at the Peoples' Summit and what Norman E. Whitten elsewhere calls “ethnocide”—in order to benefit the greater collective.<sup>4</sup> The implied necessity to sacrifice landscapes and ways of living is evident, for example, in presidential speeches on the need to “open up the Amazon” in Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru.<sup>5</sup> The state, of course, cannot be easily collapsed into single policies or into the figures of high-profile political leaders, charismatic, quick-witted, and larger-than-life as these might seem. An assemblage of actors, regulations, rules, practices, and political imaginaries makes it possible to see presidential speeches on the promises of resource territories as a national strategy of development.

All three texts recognize this assembled form of the state and its entanglement with extractive economies, albeit in different ways. In some instances, the state is conceived of as a force to oppose and resist; in others as a caregiver who grants rights, protection, and services; and in yet other cases, the state is known best for its absence. These formulations of state presence or absence are central to how indigenous peoples engage with extractive economies. Moreover, the methodologies and theoretical frameworks used in each of these texts offer diverse ways of representing the state and evaluating state actions in zones of extraction.

Bebbington and Bury, for example, examine the state in two roles: as facilitator of links between global flows and territorial dynamics, and as the guarantor of citizen rights. In the introductory chapters written by the editors, foreign direct investment has movement and direction; it is a force that enables the expansion of extractive industries—new and traditional—through the legislative framework secured by Andean states. Bury and Bebbington (“New Geographies of Extractive Industries in Latin America”) contend that these flows have geographic effects and make these visually and cartographically explicit by mapping the trends of extractivist intensification and expansion (e.g., gold, copper, hydrocarbons) in ru-

4. Norman E. Whitten Jr., *Ecuadorian Ethnocide and Indigenous Ethnogenesis: Amazonian Resurgence amidst Andean Colonialism* (Copenhagen: International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1976), 10–12.

5. Paul Dosh and Nicole Kligerman, “Correa vs. Social Movements: Showdown in Ecuador,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 42, no. 5 (2009): 21–24; Paulo Drinot, “The Meaning of Alan Garcia: Sovereignty and Governmentality in Neoliberal Peru,” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 20, no. 2 (2011): 179–195; Neil Hughes, “Indigenous Protest in Peru: The ‘Orchard Dog’ Bites Back,” *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 1 (2010): 85–90.

ral areas. Reminiscent of late nineteenth-century postindependence maps that mapped rural areas as resource territories of coffee, bananas, and gold, these maps offer a present-day perspective on the sites marked as concessions for new foreign investment. They remind us that while much attention has focused on the role of the state, foreign capital and investment also shape the expansion of extractive frontiers and the reimagining of resource territories.

The remaining chapters complement this narrative, bringing attention to how financial flows are grounded in specific places and struggles. These chapters also highlight another reading of state power: the state as guarantor of the rights of the political body. In these chapters, struggles against new and renewed extraction projects reflect demands for a stronger state—for stronger regulatory presence, planning, and protection of human rights and environmental assets, and for predictability in the lived environment of rural populations. The final measure of the success of struggles is the extent to which they are vehicles for institutional change. State–civil society relations are richly treated in this edited volume, a result of the attentive ethnographic work of its contributors.

Breglia offers a different perspective on the relationship between nation, resources, and state. Echoing the work of Fernando Coronil, Breglia's analysis of Mexico as an oil nation pivots around the notion of the state that governs the relation between the "nation's two bodies": a political body made up of its citizens and a natural body made up of its rich subsoil.<sup>6</sup> The state's role is to bring these two bodies together. The state disburses funds to local states (e.g., through various aid programs) to compensate for the socioenvironmental burdens of oil extraction. Through attentive ethnographic detail on the entanglements of state, modernization, and resources, Breglia demonstrates the ambiguities of the state–civil society relationship, where citizens affected by downstream practices understand the inequalities they experience but also recognize that their lives are tied to the oil income they receive from Pemex, the national Mexican oil company.

While for Bebbington and Bury and for Breglia the state is a composite of historically situated agencies, policies, and interests, Vasquez describes the state more as a singular entity that is erratic and contradictory, supporting policies that call for environmental protection while at the same time allowing for the expansion of the oil frontier in those zones. For Vasquez, the structure of the state is critical to a healthy social contract with the body politic: "The lack of strong state presence at the local level and weak communication between the central government and subnational authorities" (64) are key to the reproduction of conflict, as local community members see themselves as "abandoned" by policy makers. Under neoliberal restructuring, private oil companies often fill this governmental void, providing basic services in exchange for consent to carry out operations in indigenous territories. Vasquez's account of the state is quite thin, however, often equating the provision of services with state action/inaction. As Aihwa Ong suggests, the shifting relations between market, state, and society prompted by neoliberal reforms resulted in "flexible experimentations," a sort of compartmentalized state

6. Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

sovereignty where different segments of the population are served differently, depending on the legal compromises and controls tailored to special production zones.<sup>7</sup> In other words, it is not solely the absence of the state that engenders conflict but the particular configuration of state, community, and firm. The context of liberalized extractive markets in which these relationships are configured also needs to be taken into account in the analysis of conflict.

#### INDIGENOUS CITIZENS

As the Peoples' Summit underscored, resistance to and struggle over the effects of extractive economies takes place within an uneven political terrain. Citizen subjectivities are forged in this uneven political terrain as individuals and groups strive for state recognition and response to their claims and demands. Each of the texts reviewed here reminds us that belonging to a national or collective project is not singularly defined but is shaped by the diversity of experiences, positions, and interests of the peoples and institutions involved. Moreover, the ability of individuals and collectives to shape how resistance and struggle are expressed and made sense of is conditioned by what Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui refers to as the "colonial condition": the dominance of a particular conception of the world, based on linear readings of time and culture, that denies the coevalness of different peoples so that the claims of some (e.g., indigenous peoples) are seen as less valuable and subaltern to the interests of others.<sup>8</sup> This colonial condition enables and justifies exclusion and discrimination, even dehumanization, suggests Cusicanqui, leading to the treatment of indigenous peoples as citizens with *different* claims.

This coloniality of indigenous citizenship is examined in distinct ways in the three texts. For Bebbington and Bury, indigenous citizenship emerges from struggle: how people cope with extractive industry to respond to and resist extraction, how they maneuver among and make sense of shifting contours of identity politics, and how they demand new ways of governing extraction. Struggle also exists within movements, groups, and communities, as they mobilize differing interests and agendas, and tensions that accompany the rise of extraction. In other words, struggle is part of everyday life. Resource struggles are not always dramatic, armed, and organized but also can involve mundane and painful calculations. Ximena Warnaars ("Territorial Transformations in El Pangui, Ecuador: Understanding How Mining Conflict Affects Territorial Dynamics, Social Mobilization, and Daily Life"), for example, offers an example of the routine and banal spaces in which struggle is lived and anticipated, what could be referred to as the experiences of everyday citizenship in extractive sector areas. Looking at the expansion of gold and copper mining projects sponsored by Canadian mining companies, Warnaars is more concerned with how these mining projects transform territorial

7. Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

8. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 1 (2012): 95–109.

dynamics than how they induce conflict. And Thomas Perreault ("Nature and Nation: Hydrocarbons, Governance, and the Territorial Logics of 'Resource Nationalism' in Bolivia") projects this question on struggles that transform citizenship to the national level, examining the entanglements between subsoil resources and national and subnational politics. Through the analysis of historical memory and imagined natures of the nation, Perreault outlines the role of the state and social movements in making governable territories.

Breglia offers a similar understanding of citizenship vis-à-vis Mexico as an oil nation. On the one hand, like Warnars, Breglia pays attention to the mundane dimensions of citizenship in what she terms "frontline" communities: the everyday spaces of communities that live in close proximity to oil operations. For example, she offers a close reading of how people in Isla Aguada interact with infrastructure, oil spills, and oil wealth in a diversity of ways—from elections to interpersonal relations to urbanization. On the other hand, she focuses on the relationship between the political body of Mexico and the state in matters of oil governance, paying attention to the mobilization of nationalism and patrimony in determining the future of the national oil company. Breglia seems to treat these expressions of citizenship—frontline and national—as two distinct worlds of oil and struggle that do not seem to meet analytically or geographically. It is unclear whether the analytical scalar divide stems from her methods, drawing on ethnography on one hand and archival research on the other, or from the geographic realities of how people live with oil in Mexico (decision making takes place at "the core," extraction takes place in "the periphery" of power). Where do core and periphery or state and front line meet? What would national expressions of nationalism and "el petróleo es nuestro"—one of the political positions mobilized during attempts to liberalize the oil industry—look like in the frontline communities?

Structural inequalities are central to the arguments about indigenous citizenship struggle presented in all three books. While Bebbington and Bury and Breglia point to the multiple forms in which local communities engage with the limits of recognition in extractive sites, Vasquez centers on another dimensions of struggle: the need to minimize conflict in order to enable a peaceful transition to progressive development. The conflicts reviewed by Vasquez fit within the paradigm of struggle outlined by Bebbington and Bury, yet her analysis characterizes them differently. Grading conflict as events of diverse "intensity" (on a scale of zero to five), she seeks to understand how the regulatory system of Amazonian countries reproduce inequalities and poverty among communities in extractive areas. In choosing this formulation of "conflict due to failed states" as the central analytic, Vasquez bounds the field of politics as a space of opposites and disagreements, which narrows down her analysis of ways to get beyond conflict. While Bebbington and Bury and Breglia analyze work to open up what counts as struggle and conflict (e.g., incorporating the mundane and strategic dimensions of how people resist, negotiate, or acquiesce to the presence and expansion of extractive economies), Vasquez looks at overt events as symptoms of an ailing system. For example, in the chapter "Tracing Oil- and Gas-Related Conflicts," she paints a regional landscape of violent, confrontational conflict, based on the review of secondary

and archival information on where conflict has been reported, and how often. In this context, conflict is called disputes or troubles and described as bloody, volatile, and militant, to name a few descriptors used in the book. Conflict, more importantly, marks distinct moments when local communities interrupt the flow of capital or when firms are forced to stop operating. Conflicts, by this definition, are local events “that involved mainly indigenous groups who had a *different* cultural and social identity from the rest of the population”; such factors made these conflicts “particularly intricate” (xvi; my emphasis). As Vasquez rightly points out, nationalism, regulatory frameworks, and dysfunctional national institutions are part of these conflicts, as they fail to guarantee the rights of local peoples. Vasquez argues that a “critical gap” has developed between the realities of indigenous peoples and the national and international norms produced to protect them, a gap that grows from a failed and weak democratic system that would otherwise “prevent the use of violence as a way of expressing grievances” (52). Thus the analysis of conflict remains top down and state centered, without addressing the role of international capital or complex local decision making that varies over time and space at the frontiers of extractive economies, which is the focus of Bebbington and Bury’s and Breglia’s volumes. Moreover, very little is said about whether a stronger, more democratic system would prevent the expansion of extractive practices, which, as the Peoples’ Summit experience illustrated, is what threatens the right to a healthy living environment. Is lack of conflict effective democracy?

Difference is pivotal to Vasquez’s analytic of conflict. As she points out, the state’s view of natural resources is irreconcilable with the concept of territory for indigenous peoples, for whom geographic space constitutes part of their identity. However, it is unclear whether in Vasquez’s reading conflict stems from “indigenous difference” or from the state’s reading of this difference as sufficient to bracket indigenous peoples’ claims. This ambivalence is crucial; while it signals the problem at hand, it is implicated in and reproduces the internal colonialism denounced by Cusicanqui. Some of the ambiguity on conflict and difference that haunts this book stems from the author’s research design. Relying mostly on secondary data, the author has little information about the ways in which individuals and collectives reflect upon these conflicts and how their histories, everyday lives, or visions about the future are often generalized and simplified to fit within the category of “local conflicts” rather than used to expand the limits of concepts that are too one-dimensional for the task at hand.

Differences in method and approach notwithstanding, along with Bebbington and Bury and Breglia, Vasquez makes a compelling argument to better “contextualize” conflict (e.g., the stakeholders involved and the history of past disputes). Yet how context is defined varies according to the author. Bebbington and Bury seek to be inclusive, integrating international flows, governing institutions, marginalized collectives—even changes in underground resources—to offer what they call a *regional* political ecology of the underground. Breglia contextualizes through a historical environmental history of place, a rich ethnography of resource landscapes that takes the state and the “frontline” community as its sites of analysis. Bebbington and Bury and Breglia contextualize and describe, but their ability to



derive lessons or abstract solutions is more limited. Vasquez binds her analysis of state effectiveness to the presence or absence of violent conflict events, a much more limited analysis but also the only one that proposes a set of potential directions for changing existing responses to inequality.

## CONCLUSIONS

Days before the 2014 Peoples' Summit began, the high-profile Ecuadorian leader and former vice president of the Shuar Federation of Zamora José Isidro Tendetza Antún was killed. A vocal opponent to the expansion of mining in southern Ecuador, Tendetza was planning to attend the UN Conference to publicly file a demand against the open-pit Mirador copper and gold mine owned by Ecuacorriente, a company originally owned by Canadian investors and later sold to the Chinese conglomerate CCRC-Tongguan Investment. According to the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in Ecuador (CONAIE), the mine will devastate about 450,000 acres of Ecuadorian rain forest. Tendetza's death was a stark reminder of the increasing violence associated with the ongoing expansion of mining and hydrocarbon frontiers across Latin America. As those participating in the Peoples' Summit demonstrated, indigenous peoples' rights to healthy lives and environments have yet to be fully recognized and protected. Communities continue to struggle with the expansion of extractive industries, resist the devastating effects of extraction, and demand new ways of governing extraction that avoid exterminating their lifeways. The struggles over progressive extractivism, whether overtly violent like Tendetza's death or collectively inspiring like the Peoples' Summit, are reminders of the continuing sacrifices of those who live in zones of extraction and of the need to continue making such struggles visible.

As scholars, our goal is to incite ethical responses and to contribute to the cultivation of a politics of obligation that goes beyond amazement at sacrifice and suffering. Bebbington and Bury, Breglia, and Vasquez contribute to this goal. They demonstrate that extractive economies are clearly not a viable model of development for all and that while extraction geographies might change, the practices and uneven relations of power that encourage extraction as a necessary sacrificial economic model remain the same. They show us the paralyzing contradictions and impossibilities of extraction-based development (e.g., sacrificing the lives and environments of some in the name of a better future for others), and how drawing the ethical lines around extraction to build more respectful and life-oriented social contracts demands more than the input of indigenous peoples. And they demonstrate that as long as struggle (in all its forms and moments) continues, there's room for building new relations and for provincializing the hegemony of prevailing political economic models: in continuously questioning the inequalities reproduced via the social contract between state and body politic; supporting the reconfigured resistance and demands of indigenous peoples for greater inclusion and participation as citizens; and in pointing to the need to reconfigure legal systems that bridge the gap between lived realities and idealized international norms.