

JATARISHUN: indigenous peasant uprisings of Ecuador and Good Living¹

Larissa da Silva Araujo*
Ana Tereza Reis da Silva**

This article analyzes the Indigenous Peasant Movements (IPM) of Ecuador as a social force and political actor. By proposing an alternative to the Ecuadorian crisis based on the Sumak Kawsay (Good Living) values, the IPM expand democratic spaces and formulate an extended sense of citizenship. The text focuses on the events of the 2019 national strike in Ecuador, in retrospective dialogue with previous uprisings. It draws on the testimonies of the Kayambi people, collected before and after the strike, in semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic work. Results show that the memory of previous struggles was an essential motivation for the emergence of the uprisings. Besides, unity and solidarity among rural actors and other sectors of Ecuadorian society were the basis for the strike's strength and power. Finally, in dialogue with the Emancipatory Rural Politics, the article contributes to critical approaches to the role of indigenous peasant peoples in struggles for life alternatives.

KEYWORDS: Social movements. Direct action. Indigenous peasant peoples. Good living. Ecuador.

INTRODUCTION

Protests are a constitutive part of the imaginary of politics in Ecuador. Frequently there are demonstrations in the cities, parishes, and countryside territories. In this context, people are used to different forms of direct action as a political strategy (Jameson 2011). Especially in reference to the indigenous peasant movements (IPM), people often say that “if they don't like a president, they have the power to overthrow him”. In nine years, the mobilizations of indigenous peasant communities and other social sectors resulted in the overthrow of three presidents. In this sense, throughout

the 1990s, the IPM gained political leverage and legitimacy as political actors, acting through different strategies and tactics, inside and outside state institutions.

Nevertheless, they did not always have this power. The indigenous and peasant populations started organizing themselves in the way we nowadays know around the 1920s (Becker, 2008). In the following decades, the IPM had an essential role in the disputes over intercultural education and agrarian reform agendas. Due to state repression during the dictatorship and the supposed success of the agrarian reform, which extinguished the servitude system (called *huasipungo*²), the importance of IPM declined after the 1960s. During the 1990s, they regained force through the movements' organizational reform and by unifying regional organizations from the Amazon, the Andes, and the coast.

Some scholars criticize the idea of IPM as a revolutionary or a counter-hegemonic for-

* Institute des Hautes Études Internationales et du Développement (Geneva Graduate Institute).
Chemin Eugène-Rigot, 2, Maison de la Paix, pétale 1, 5th floor, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, 1203, Geneva, Switzerland.
larissa.dasilvaaraujo@graduateinstitute.ch
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8623-7292>

** University of Brasília (UnB). Faculty of Education.
Faculty of Education, Darcy Ribeiro Campus – Asa Norte.
70910-900. Brasília – Distrito Federal – Brazil
anaterzareis@unb.br
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8204-0732>

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² *Huasipungo* or *wasi pungu* (from kichwa *wasi* – house and *pungu* – door) consisted of a servant system in which people worked for a large landowner in exchange for the right to work and live on a small plot of land instead of receiving a salary.

ce, especially considering how economic and political forces would marginalize them and cause their disappearance (Hobsbawn 1995); or considering that their demands and discourse do not necessarily match their practice (Henderson 2017). This criticism is skeptical of the “peasant way” of life as an alternative to the capitalist system (Bernstein 2014). Furthermore, another strand of literature about Ecuador argues that the authoritarian populist government of Rafael Correa (Tilzey 2019) co-opted (De la Torre 2013; León Trujillo 2010) and debilitated (Martínez Novo 2021) the indigenous movement as a social force. However, considering the strike that indigenous peasant communities undertook in Ecuador in 2019, we argue that IPM, with their diversity of rural and urban actors, still count as a counter-hegemonic social force in Ecuador and can propose an alternative to the country’s economy.

In the 1990s, neoliberal politics became the norm in Latin America, and it was not different in Ecuador. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditioned its support for countries in economic crisis to the acceptance of structural adjustments, which were extensively applied in those places at the expense of people’s will. As a result, the inequality gaps opened, and poverty increased (Breda 2011), leading to popular insurrections. In this context, the Ecuadorian indigenous communities appeared as a cohesive social sector, locally, regionally, and nationally organized.

In 2019, the motivation to protest was straightforwardly simple: it was necessary to prevent the increase in living expenses. In addition, the strikers argued that they learned from their ancestors that protesting was a successful strategy to demand their rights. As in previous decades, sustaining life became unbearable due to neoliberal measures of structural adjustments, and protesting was the known form of demanding rights, respect, and dignity.

Indeed, honoring the memory of the 1990s, the IPM adopted a propositional attitude – coherent with their popular leadership in

the country – and presented an alternative economic model. Such a model contained their perspective on a *Sumak Kawsay*³ of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

Considering the *repertoires of contention* (Tilly [1995] 2005) that people have in hand to raise their concerns regarding public and collective issues, we wondered: why, how, and when do people decide to make a blockade and to support a strike? Several authors in the literature on social movements have answered these questions with a range of explanations: grievances, emotions, efficacy, identification, and social embeddedness being the main arguments to carry out social mobilizations (van Stekelenburg *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, regarding the social movements emerging in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, scholars have provided other conceptual tools for their analysis: the increasing importance of culture and identity (Alvarez *et al.* 1998), the fight against neoliberal austerity (Eckstein *et al.*, 2002), the democratic opening and globalization as contradictory forces (Johnston *et al.* 2006). Adding to this literature, we describe the temporalities and materialities of a collective action that the IPM and other social sectors took in October 2019 in Ecuador.

Besides this introduction, the article has two sections and the concluding remarks. In the first section, we describe the IPM political

³ The discussions about *Sumak Kawsay* and its equivalent term in the Bolivian context, *Suma Qamaña*, became visible in Ecuador and Bolivia in the 2000s. Nowadays, the expressions crossed national borders and became references in multiple debates in other countries, with Kichwa, Aymara, Spanish, Portuguese, English, German, and French literature. The origin and possible translations for the expression are a source of debate. Therefore, there is no consensus about the correct translation. Currently, there are several published genealogies of the expression. Hidalgo-Capián *et al.* (2017) argue that *Sumak Kawsay* is an Amazonian social phenomenon promoted by the Kichwa people from Pastaza. David Cortez (2010) refers to *Sumak Kawsay* as an Andean-Amazonian expression. José Inuca Lechón (2017) and Kauffman *et al.* (2014) identified Andean roots for the expression used by Kichwa people from Pichincha and Tungurahua, respectively. Sarah Radcliffe (2015) narrates that her interlocutors in Chimborazo also affirmed they knew the *Sumak Kawsay* expression before the Ecuadorian new constitution approval. Here we adopted the translation “buen vivir” proposed by the Parlamento dos Povos, Coletivos e Organizações Sociais do Equador (Parliament of the Peoples, Colectivos and Social Organizations of Ecuador) in their document “Proposta ao país”. This document is further analyzed in the last session of this article. We also adopt the translation of “buen vivir” commonly used in English as “good living”.

action in the 1990s based on their “16 points manifest” analysis. This manifest is a historical document synthesizing the complexity of IPM and reuniting the political agenda based on “class” and “identity” rights that orient their action. In the second section, we describe the IPM political action during the strike in 2019, based on the strikers’ testimonies, semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic work one of the authors undertook between July 2019 and March 2020. We divide the second section into three subsections, where we discuss what happened before, during, and after the 2019 national strike. Our theoretical analysis is developed throughout the text, following the events’ descriptions. Finally, we present our concluding remarks and revisit some questions this study poses.

YACHAY TINKUY: the mandate for life’s defense and indigenous peoples’ rights

Since their first mobilizations, the peasant organizations or indigenous syndicates already signaled their biocentric agenda. They directed their demands to achieve the conditions of producing and reproducing, materially and spiritually, their lives. Historically crafted, such an agenda played with the contextual grammar available at specific historical moments, signaling their ability to build a “vernacular statecraft” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009) and move into different worlds.

José Inuca Lechón (2017) also supports this idea in his genealogy of the concepts of interculturality and *Sumak Kawsay* that emerged during the construction of an intercultural education model in the country. Lechón states that, in the face of relations of domination, oppression, and exploitation, indigenous peoples have created practices of *yachay tinkuy*⁴ (practices of

4 Kichwa expression. *Yachay*, a noun [yaçay] that means wisdom, intelligence, judgment, reasoning (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, 2009, p. 157). *Tinkuy*, a noun derived from the verb *tinkina* [tiŋgina] that means attach, unite,

encounter and confrontation of knowledge). He analyzes several historical records produced throughout the 20th century and provides evidence that new meanings have emerged in the historical process of indigenous struggles. The encounters and confrontations of knowledge made new meanings, such as *rikcharimui* (waking up), *rikcharishun* (social awareness), *jatarishun* (rising, indigenous uprising), *kawsaypura* (between cultures or beings, interculturality and plurinationality), *sumak kawsay* (beautiful life) (Inuca Lechón, 2017, p. 160). Thus, even though indigenous communities were structurally marginalized and discriminated against, a daily routine of resistance emerged in the public sphere from time to time with different vocabularies and meanings.

Looking into the “16-point mandate” helps us understand the *yachay tinkuy* at stake for indigenous communities during the 1990s. Here, the document is not a result of the uprising, nor is the uprising itself only a result of the indigenous organization. Instead, both serve as a starting point to understanding how indigenous communities build alternatives at the national level. More specifically, the document highlights the plurality of the IPM agenda at that time. Additionally, it is an approximation of what the uprising meant to the national imagination not only in the 1990s but also nowadays. In the same way, we will not use the uprising in 1990 to explain the indigenous movement at that moment, since it is not the focus of this work. In addition, the uprisings cannot be defined only due to a previous organization of the indigenous movement itself, but rather as a situation that opened the scope of participation for the indigenous communities in the long term and is remembered in the present time.

Several indigenous mobilizations marked the 1990s, with demonstrations, blockades, hunger strikes, and other collective actions happening since 1990 and being repeated in 1994, 1997, and 2000. In each eco-

join and is also used with the meaning of ritual struggle (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, 2009, p. 196).

conomic and political conjunctures, indigenous communities responded with different agendas. The IPM agenda in the uprisings of the 1990s reflected the *yachay tinkuy* of that conjuncture. Such uprisings brought up two main ideas that seem contradictory in the eyes of modern-eurocentric perspectives: they demanded their rights as peasants and their rights as indigenous peoples, interconnecting class, political representation and participation, identity and ethnicity, in a process that Rita Segato (2018) defines as “historical alterities”. In this sense, through their chart of demands, the indigenous peasant communities have shown that peasants do not only demand issues related to agrarian conflicts, as well as indigenous peoples do not only demand issues regarding their ethnicity or identity.

The uprising of 1990 made explicit the encounter and confrontation of ideas between the indigenous communities and the white-mestizo society. First, they deliberately named their political action an uprising (*jatarishun*) in honor and memory of the 1870s indigenous uprising. According to Andrés Guerrero, this decision re-signified the idea of protest to contrast it with syndicate strikes, “inventing a tradition, establishing an indigenous language in the public sphere and signaling the emergence of a ‘new political actor’” (Guerrero 1995, 2). Second, such resignification had the effect of counterposing the mainstream imaginary about their collective action, which was that indigenous peoples “revolted” against *hacendados* (large landowners), in the local context, without necessarily addressing structural economic and political problems in the national level. Third, it also confronted the idea, still present nowadays, that being indigenous was only related to an identity attached to the rural landscape. Even though it is true that the rural population was and still accounts as being largely self-identified as indigenous, occupying the urban space (as residents and in the demonstrations) was a matter of showing how identity is interactive and relational.

The “16-point mandate”, also called the “mandate for life”, can be divided into three groups of demands, intermingling rights of difference and universal rights. Such demands do not appear divided in the document, which means there is not necessarily a hierarchy among them. Instead, the division here serves the purpose of analyzing the document systematically. The first group could be identified with the demands that addressed the problem of recognizing indigenous peoples’ specific needs and their aim to govern themselves and their territories autonomously. This group of claims would mainly impact indigenous communities’ lives. Concretely, it meant that indigenous peoples would like to decide what to do with their lands, educate their population in their language and with methodologies aligned with their knowledge systems, and have public funding for their own political and administrative institutions. The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Conaie) appeared as the legitimate institution to represent, negotiate, and lead agreements with the Ecuadorian state. Conaie would receive the budget for indigenous nationalities and bilingual education directives as well as oversee, control, protect, and develop archeological sites. Furthermore, merchants and artisans connected to Conaie would benefit from a free trade policy. Those requirements are an example of ethnic issues politicization, as indigenous populations would benefit (or at least suffer less) from the recognition of their existence as different peoples, with complex and dynamic identities that did not only fit the “imagined community” of the Ecuadorian society.

The second group could be identified with demands that concerned the indigenous peoples but would impact the whole Ecuadorian society. The rights of “difference” would gain relevance beyond indigenous peoples’ recognition as different from the white-mestizo society. Indeed, it aimed to achieve a more systematic transformation of the state structures. Hence, the indigenous movement demanded

a) to reform the National Constitution's first article, declaring Ecuador a plurinational state; b) the delivery, solution, and legalization of territories for the indigenous nationalities in the form of freed land; c) the regulation and financing of indigenous medicine practice, d) the withdrawal of decrees that created parallel governmental institutions at the provincial and municipal level, run by single parties and used as electoral companies that "traffic with the consciousness of our indigenous communities" and e) the realization and completion of primary basic infrastructure work in indigenous communities. Even though the last demand addressed the concrete needs of indigenous communities for basic infrastructure, we position it here in the second group for two reasons: first, it implicitly placed Conaie as an intermediary between indigenous communities and the state, and; second, it also addressed the material needs of indigenous populations as a matter of resource redistribution. In other words, recognizing the difference here means not differentiating them from the rest of the Ecuadorian society; it means approximating them to other social sectors that do not lack the rights that materialize through basic infrastructure. The indigenous movement furthered the politicization of ethnic claims through those proposals, challenging even the already known politics of recognition within the neoliberal frame. They proposed a new form of citizenship, anchored in concrete rights, affecting the very constitution of the homogenized and monolithic meaning of national identity and the nation-state.

The third group was related to universal demands that extended social and economic rights to all Ecuadorians, reaffirming that the roots of oppression and domination of different sectors of the Ecuadorian society needed to be addressed comprehensively. It is true that the coloniality of power⁵ (Quijano 2005)

⁵ Coloniality of power refers to the racialization process of several populations intending to exploit their labor. This process constitutes capitalism, the idea of race being one axis of the capitalist matrix. It started with America's co-

affected indigenous peoples in particular ways; however, the experience of poverty and exploitation was not a particularity of indigenous communities since afro-descendants, peasants, workers, and other subaltern social groups also suffered from the elite corporatism and corruption. Hence, the indigenous movement demanded the state to a) solve water problems, considering the distribution of water for irrigation, consumption, and the design of non-contamination policies; b) withdraw the payment obligation for rustic properties⁶ and forgive debts contracted with development agencies and banks; c) freeze the prices of industrialized staple products, for a minimum of two years, and to fix a fair price for peasant and subsistence economy production, through marketing autonomy, and d) respect child rights and reject the call for children to vote on the elections. These demands are evidence that indigenous communities' struggles were not only addressing the symbolic importance of having their difference recognized but also the importance of addressing material conditions to guarantee life dignity for the whole Ecuadorian population.

In this sense, the struggle for social and economic rights did not disappear from the picture, nor did ethnic and identity demands take precedence over considered class demands. In reality they were all crafted together as part of the same proposal. Several studies assert that the demand for rights as indigenous peoples did not necessarily mean the abandonment of historical demands regarding land ownership, agrarian reform, and other economic rights. As we could see with their mandate, demands regarding the non-payment of rural land taxes and freezing the prices for staple food were side by side with budgetary demands for the

lonization in the 15th century but endured in postcolonial periods, once it is constitutive also of modernity. Coloniality and modernity are both parts of the capitalist modern nation-states formation.

⁶ Rustic property: the rustic building is a term in Ecuadorian law which refers to properties located outside urban or suburban areas intended for agriculture, mining, fishing, forestry, or ecological preservation.

execution of bilingual education programs and demands for the amendment of the National Constitution to transform the country into a plurinational state. Indeed, León Galarza (2009) sustains that the agenda of difference – that would comprise demands of multiculturalism and plurinationality – was not in contradiction with universalist demands regarding redistribution and belonging to the “imagined community” of a nation – that included demands of equity for all the poor, black and indigenous or white-mestizo Ecuadorians.

This expansion of the meanings of citizenship, participation, democracy, and right to the difference that the “mandate for life” evokes can also be interpreted as a political-epistemic stance. Such posture faces what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2018) called “epistemic and values crisis” of the “physical and mental geography of our Abya Ayala continent” (p. 93, our translation). Effectively, it is necessary to remember that, throughout modern-colonial domination, liberal values became a hegemonic language. This hegemonic language served as a foundation for building the nation-state and an abstract idea of national identity at the expense of epistemicides, ecocides, and genocides of indigenous and Afrodiasporic bodies. In the past, as in the present, in our processes of intern and internalized colonialism, the liberal and neoliberal values function as “magic words” that cover up what they are supposed to reveal and “fascinate us, and, often, placate our protests” (p. 95).

Therefore, what is at stake in the *yachay tinkuy* is not only the invention of a new grammar of popular political action. The definition of new semantics of the words and the imaginaries they evoke is also at stake. Precisely for this reason, although the “mandate for life” agenda seems contradictory from a Eurocentric perspective, we interpret this extension of social and economic rights to all Ecuadorians due to the re-inscription of indigenous memories and epistemes in the political spaces in dispute. In line with Cusicanqui (2018, p. 97),

we understand that indigenous memories and epistemes function as “metaphorical tools” capable of raising alternative life projects that confront progressive ideals of economy and development. They conform, in effect, semantic strategies to circumvent the “magic words” that underlie liberal democracies, or rather, to re-signify them. In summary, precisely because they create a new language to “rebuild from below forms of social coexistence,” they embody other ways of doing and thinking about a society where everyone can fit in (p. 101).

It is not by chance that the plural character of the agenda proposed in the “mandate for life” generated the feeling that the indigenous movement was a new actor. The accounts about the uprisings that started in 1990 and followed along the decade describe the surprised Ecuadorians when indigenous populations took over the cities and demanded negotiations with the state. We defend that such surprise was due not only to the physical presence of indigenous peoples in the streets but also to the encounter and confrontation of their ideas with the white-mestizo society conceptualizations. Therefore, the intertwining of several demands, which addressed concrete problems from daily life and presented utopic ideas for restructuring the nation-state, provoked strangeness in public opinion. Their demands could not be solely ascribed to class demands, typically solved within private contracts between landowners and workers. Indeed, they could not be attributed only to citizenship claim, in the liberal sense since they were neither proposing independence from the Ecuadorian state nor the inclusion of their difference in the state project. Instead, they presented both universal and particular rights altogether, with plurinationality at the forefront of their alternative proposal for the state.

However, is it enough to consider the indigenous movement a new social actor because the white-mestizo society was surprised by their collective action? Is it enough to attribute their agendas and political leadership

to the fact that they are supposedly no longer indigenous peasants? The logic that follows such an argument is convincing: indigenous populations, more and more present as urban residents in the city centers, would become a cosmopolitan social sector, leaving behind their rurality and peasant “way of life”. Because of that, their indigeneity would transform: the discriminatory context of the urban settings would require a shift towards defending their identity vis-a-vis the process of acculturation and miscegenation. Hence, the indigenous population would emerge as a new social actor, with a new agenda focused on “identity issues”. Ethnicity and not class would be the primary driver for social insurrection and political activity. Nevertheless, as the simple analysis of the “mandate for life” shows, the complexity of their collective action, with a plural agenda, indicates another logic of politicizing popular demands.

In this sense, the analysis of the indigenous movement as a new actor is more telling of the racializing and colonizing dominant mentality about indigenous populations than about them. Although the mentioned factors – increasing indigenous peoples’ urbanization, indigeneity reconceptualization, and intense political participation – were valid at the beginning of the 1990s, overlooking the conjunctural complexity follows an evolutionary, binary, and teleological way of thinking. Until recently, rights have been analyzed in academia as a process that advances in “waves” (Vazak 1977). A population achieves their first wave of civil and political rights, followed by economic and social rights and, finally, minority (or identity) rights. Hence, once one population has civil rights, the next step is to struggle to “gain” political rights and so on. Following this scheme, the natural course of indigenous peoples’ mobilizations would be to demand formal education (in Spanish) to be considered citizens, then demand electoral rights, then fight for agrarian reforms to improve workers’ rights and social condition, and finally demand

the recognition of their “cultures”. As we have seen, the IPM challenged this scheme.

Furthermore, considering something new requires a comparison with something considered old. In this case, Conaie is viewed as a new actor in a logic of comparison with its predecessors, meaning the Federation of Ecuadorean Indians (FEI). Since Conaie brought up to the public sphere ethnic issues with a vocabulary of minority rights, while FEI did not dispose of such terminology in their conjuncture of struggle, the latter is considered not to be an ethnic movement. Hence, both organizations, Conaie and FEI, are compared within the same conceptual framework from a teleological perspective. Finally, mirroring a framework that opposes redistribution and recognition, the analysis of the indigenous movement as being only focused on identity rights reproduces a binary perspective, which cannot imagine redistribution and recognition intertwined. Accordingly, the indigenous movement of the beginning of the 1990s could not be a movement for recognizing the autonomy and sovereignty of indigenous peoples *and, at the same time*, a sign of the continuous struggle against exploitation.

We can say that the IPM have shuffled the hegemonic political arena and the analytical framework used to understand them. For this very reason, it is necessary to broaden the interpretative key about the meanings and ruptures that these popular uprisings and their agenda produced. In this sense, we follow relevant studies on the educational character of peasant, indigenous, and Afro-diasporic movements in Brazil (Munduruku, 2012; Gomes, 2017). Accordingly, we understand that through their protagonism and their agenda of expanded rights, the IPM have re-educated the Ecuadorean society. They corroborate to fostering a critical understanding of the colonial past and present and draw attention to the country’s cultural and ethnic diversity. Such actions require advancing social justice policies intrinsically articulated to the rights of

difference. Moreover, the IPM also raise the recognition of indigenous peasant communities' historical and epistemic agentiality.

Furthermore, the memory of the elders and the spiritual relationship with the ancestors are fundamental elements of the life harmonization contained in the idea of *Sumak Kawsay*. Harmonizing life means creating or reestablishing conditions for survival and coexistence among all coexisting beings. In this sense, in the Kayambi Philosophy, to look forward is also to look back. Therefore, the 2019 national strike will be analyzed considering its constitutive temporalities and materialities, an extraordinary collective action strategy with past learnings, present routine, and intention of an alternative future.

MINGAS OF RESISTANCE: the quotidian construction of the national strike in 2019

The National Strike in 2019 started on October 2nd in the transport sector. On October 3rd, the indigenous organizations joined the strike, and it lasted until October 14th, when the government finally decided to sit down at a negotiation table. Like other uprisings, people went to the streets and remained in blockades on the main countryside roads. Meanwhile, other strikers marched to Quito, the capital, and demonstrated in the city center. The mainstream media constantly wrote against strikers, spreading the narrative that they were causing substantial economic losses to the country. Repression was intense; security forces (police and army) killed eleven people and injured several hundred. The negotiation table was broadcasted live on television, internet channels, and social media platforms so people could observe if their leaders clung to the strike's main objective and would not betray popular will. The government had to step back, and strikers successfully derogated decree 883, which would withdraw state subsidies for gasoline and diesel.

In Cayambe, the strike started on the morning of October 3rd. Cayambe is a canton in the Pichincha province, north of the Ecuadorian Andes. Around one hundred and ninety thousand indigenous peoples live in this canton, in one hundred and eighty rural indigenous communities, and in the city of Cayambe. The indigenous territories have territorial autonomy and are part of a complex governance net that is led (not exclusively) by the Kayambi People Confederation (KPC). In this section, we will focus on the events in the KPC territory as an alternative to the already developed urban-centric analysis and narratives about the 2019 national strike.

Back to our history: that day, the KPC held an assembly in which the communities in the territory agreed to adhere to the transport sector strike. Following this decision, other second-grade indigenous organizations,⁷ *Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimuri* (Confederation of the Kichwa Peoples Nationalities from Ecuador - Ecuarunari) and Conaie, also mobilized other people at the local level, and blockades popped up at several of the main roads in the Andean and Amazonian regions. In Cayambe, strikers resisted in more than thirty different places. On October 7th, strikers from Cayambe marched on foot to Quito, meeting with indigenous peoples from all over Ecuador, intensifying the pressure on Lenin More-

⁷ In Ecuador, the indigenous communities organize, in general, on a structure from the local to the national level. At the local level, there are the so-called "base" organizations, like *comunas* or associations, which are the primary unit of organization; additionally, there are the "second-degree organizations", which assemble the former organizations around a theme or a territorial belonging, such as páramos committees, water councils, communities unions; and the People's Confederations and Federations, which are the legal subjects that gather all the *comunas* and second-degree organizations based on ethnic and territorial belonging. At the regional level, in the Andean area, there is Ecuarunari, previously mentioned, which gathers the peoples. Moreover, there are different indigenous organizations at the national level, with Conaie being the one with the most prominent expression and adherence. Despite the indigenous movement being structured around entities of different sizes and that work on various scales, it does not mean "base" organizations are less important or that Conaie or Ecuarunari have the last word in terms of indigenous politics. On the contrary, this structure reflects a capillary and decentralized form of decision making and political action, in which local, regional and national organizations are interdependent.

no, the president at that point. Lenin Moreno fled to Guayaquil and transferred the government headquarters to this coastal city. In Quito, people supported the strikers, with urban neighborhoods also joining the strike. Urban residents showed solidarity with the strikers' camping center by donating food and blankets and creating a first aid brigade to attend to injured people until the strike's end.

Assuming that resistance is a daily routine act when people intend to show their discontent with hegemonic rules (Scott 1985), what follows is a summarized account of the routine that constituted the national strike in 2019. The resistance routine described here was that of direct-action practices that occurred in Cayambe and Quito. We base this description on the strikers' testimonies, Cayambe inhabitants who either stayed in this canton or marched and stayed in Quito.

The interpretation of the uprising here does not aim to present it as a final event, even though extraordinary. Instead, the uprising is considered an event in continuity with quotidian resistance and life-alternative elaborations. Indeed, there is also routine in this event: it is an extraordinary, critical and conjunctural event, but that also has ordinary materialities and temporalities. For instance, waiting for news from the *comuneros*⁸ in Quito seemed to take forever, as strikers account. Furthermore, it was necessary to feed the people on the roads, making the blockades. These and other examples illustrate that, more than grievance, taking part in an extraordinary event of resistance requires political will, an organizing institution, and routine actions that support it.

Life Conditions Before the Strike and Livelihood Praxis

Upon her arrival to do fieldwork in Cayambe in 2018, one of the authors participa-

⁸ Local term in reference to people who inhabit *comunas*, the legal name for communities.

ted in several communitarian assemblies where *comuneros* presented their ideas and experiences about their living conditions. Nowadays, it is widely known that Ecuadorean indigenous politics, specifically in the Andean region, constitutes a capillarized and decentralized form of communitarian politics. However, in those assemblies, the author observed a not so prominent feature of communitarian politics: more than a process of collective decision-making, it also meant a routine practice of thinking about their lives, with discussions about local food production to national economic politics, such as the impact of the state structural adjustment measures. This praxis of livelihood is also constitutive of communitarian politics and looking into the process of thinking-practicing of life alternatives is worth further attention.

At the beginning of 2019, the government of Lenin Moreno announced that the country was in an economic crisis due to increasing fiscal deficit. As Ecuador is a dollarized country, balancing fiscal problems with monetary policy interventions is impossible. Hence, tax policies and public expenditure are the primary sources of stabilizing the so-called national economy. In the face of the alleged fiscal deficit, which summoned 4 billion dollars by the end of 2018, Lenin Moreno decided to take a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), conditioned to applying structural adjustment policies.

In Cayambe, *comuneros* debated the government agreement with the IMF in the KPC assemblies since March 2019, as Agustín Cachipuendo recounts, the Kayambi Confederation president at that moment. The IMF interference in the country was also part of the assemblies' agendas, along with other discussions about the local economy, such as the flower royalties' conflicts between small farmers and breeder companies, for instance. Strikers recount that everybody thought the government was going too far with its economic measures, and something would happen. When the executive government unilaterally

decided to withdraw fossil fuels subsidies, rumors about the strike became a reality. Although people heard of the strike through different channels (the local radio, the community Facebook group, word-of-mouth after the KPC assembly), there was a consensus that the strike would happen simply because they “*just knew it*”. “*We were just waiting for our head, the Kayambi people* [referring to the Confederation], *to call the uprising*”, explained Jorge.⁹ In other words, people had been thinking and talking about the upcoming injustice and consequent strike for a while; taking action was a matter of time.

Besides thinking about this subject in ordinary spaces of public discussion, people talked about it within the households, in dinner conversations. While sitting down at the table and commenting on how they would transport their products to the fair the following weekend, José and Rosa shared their concerns about the possible increase in the price of gasoline and diesel. Indeed, they felt the executive government was acting at people’s expense. They were both aware that the government took the IMF loan, and as in previous years, it privileged forgiving banks’ debts and generating an inflationary process that people would have to bear. Thinking about national economic issues and the actions they would have to undertake to solve their immediate economic problems was an ordinary process, such as eating together. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to examine the multiple dimensions of the connection between life struggles and everyday existential production of life, it is relevant to draw attention to the political and pedagogical potency of these entanglements. Beyond the debates about the politicization of food and eating (Menasche et al., 2020), these interweaving point to what we initially understand as a *pedagogy of commensality and everyday life*. In other words, a family’s sel-

f(hetero)educational process of eating is intricate with collective mobilizations. This works as the threads of a web that connects and feeds a broader network of struggle – something that seems to us a powerful analytical perspective but that still needs to be furthered.

Although the news about the upcoming strike had been widely disseminated, another critical feature mentioned by strikers for starting the blockades was the unilateral governmental action: “*we were not taken into consideration*”, “*he acted without consulting us*”, “*we deserve respect because we are peoples and nationalities, so he needed to consult us*”, they said. Along with a concern about economics, there were also demands for recognition. They claimed distinction as peoples and nationalities with political and legal capacity to interfere in state decisions. Furthermore, they claimed to be recognized as indigenous peoples with Ecuadorian citizenship. Because Ecuador is a plurinational state, indigenous peoples and nationalities have the right to demand previous, informed, and consent consultation before decisions that interfere in their territories. Hence, *comuneros* shared two sentiments: they felt the government action would have an economic impact on their lives, and they also felt discriminated against and marginalized by state decisions.

The dissatisfaction it brought to indigenous peoples has a historical component. They remember suffering discrimination and marginalization since colonial times and even mention it as a feature that constitutes the indigenous identity. Being indigenous in a modern/colonial¹⁰ society has meant living in a subaltern position vis-a-vis the mestizo/white subjects. In this sense, all aspects that could

¹⁰ Modern/colonial here refers to the concept of modernity/coloniality developed by authors of the decolonial perspective and not in relation only to the period of colonization of Ecuador. In this sense, the modern/colonial society refers to the racial construction of contemporary Ecuadorian society. This racialization is deeply rooted in the colonial past, with its practices, epistemologies, and institutions. We suggest Aníbal Quijano’s *oeuvre* for further reference.

⁹ Except for the already known political leaders, we use fictional names because naming people explicitly could mean a threat to them, considering the ongoing criminalization of social movements in Ecuador.

be associated with being “índio”,¹¹ such as speaking native languages, wearing traditional clothes, and especially working the land and living in rural areas, have had negative representations and repercussions on indigenous peoples’ lives. However, they have also been struggling to dismantle the symbolic subjectification and material oppression and exploitation that follows the negative representations of indigenous peoples. This struggle, as mentioned previously, has started in colonial times and has continued along the 20th and 21st centuries. Being reminded of what it means to be indigenous, in the negative sense of belonging to a marginalized group, also triggers the memory of past struggles. For instance, following the statements that the government acted without consulting the people, strikers mentioned they used to be treated like “índios”. However, for a long time, they have not allowed it anymore. Since the uprisings of past centuries, their ancestors had fought to change this condition, and now they have conquered the respect that all citizens deserve.

Even though not being the focus of this article, the sensitive topic of discrimination demands additional reflections. The otherization¹² of indigenous peoples by colonial domination has been widely analyzed under the key of “ethnic discrimination”. Yet, we emphasize that such discrimination has clear racist outlines. Racism is intrinsic to the indigenous peoples’ experiences not only because they were treated as things and their cultures disqualified as barbaric (Paredes, 2018), but also

¹¹ Índio (Indian) is the word historically used to refer to an indigenous person. As a colonial concept, it is charged with various derogatory meanings: that of an illiterate (in Spanish education), a traditional person that works the land, lives in a rural area, the servant of a landlord (being it a private entity or the state), etc. Being recognized as indigenous, not as índio, is still a fight for indigenous peoples.

¹² Otherization is a recurring term in the historiography of slavery and critical studies on the phenomenon of racism and its effects on the experience of colonized peoples - particularly the kidnapped African peoples. The term refers to the colonial discursive construction of the other as inferior, dehumanized difference. The invention of the “black” and “índio” as inferior colonial others is intrinsically related to the creation of the white European as the Other (imperial) colonizer, superior.

because in various periods of colonial history on the continent, this population was, along with the African peoples, subjected to slave labor regimes (Schwarcz and Santos, 2018). However, although it is acknowledged that “Amerindians were the first to be enslaved, works showing the consequences (and continuation) of their slavery still receive little attention” (Milanez et al., 2019, p. 2166). This “little attention” devoted to indigenous slavery often has the effect of disregarding racism as a constitutive element of the hegemonic imaginary about this population, especially about the place it occupies or should occupy in the imagined societies of nation-states. Our emphasis aims to avoid this omission - something recurrent in studies that analyze violence and violations against indigenous peoples in Latin America. Indeed, we also reinforce that racism structures modern-colonial power relations (Quijano, 2005a) and is strongly present (although unspoken) in the discrimination felt and portrayed in the testimonies reported here.

Thus, the memory of the 1990s emerges in the narratives as an essential inspirational source for struggle in present times. Indeed, such memory appears as a tool to give positive visibility to indigenous peoples’ contributions to nation-building. Furthermore, it contributes to combating epistemic racism and promoting cognitive justice. *Comuneros* talk about the 1990s memory alluding both to the years of IMF interference in the country as well as in relation to the struggles “fathers and grandfathers” (*padres y abuelos*) carried on in the past. Although such association can be considered as a reference to previous generations of several decades, the strikers mainly remember the “June uprisings” and the “uprisings of the 1990s”. Statements indicating another motivation for fighting against decree 883 follow this reference: the need to honor the previous struggles and impede further backlash. When questioned about their motives for striking now, Mateus, a young communicator, reflected: “*how couldn’t we? There is no need for so-*

meone to call us for the fight; our abuelos did it when they felt necessary, so did we". Juan further complexifies the memory of the past: "a true agrarian reform never happened in this country, so we need to keep fighting to achieve the ever-present goals for our emancipation". Again, class consciousness emerges connected to ethnic claims and the memory of a challenging past unfolding in the present.

Life conditions before the strike had been deteriorating. Nevertheless, the unilateral governmental act that would increase the living costs for the poorer fueled the overall sense of dissatisfaction with the economic crisis. In fact, the memories of the 1990s (memories of the neoliberalism implementation and ancestors' struggles) channeled indigenous peoples' discontent, leading them to strike.

Jatarishun: the day-to-day of the Indigenous peasant Uprising in 2019

Striking for nine days required a lot of work, energy, time, material, and organization from the strikers. While mainstream media portrayed the strike as a co-opted movement of leftists financed by Nicolás Maduro, strikers mobilized their networks to maintain the blockades and demonstrations autonomously. The news essentially documented how the strike impacted the overall economy and daily life of non-strikers. Ultimately, the more significant the impact on elites' business, the faster the government agrees to negotiate with strikers. However, what are the effects on strikers' lives, and how do they mobilize their networks to deal with them? We consider that observing the strikes' quotidian makes explicit what is at stake for people when they go to the streets and gives lessons on how resistance and alternatives are created in this part of the world.

Indigenous peasant communities mobilized similar *repertoires of contention* from previous uprisings. Tilly states that the repertoire

helps describe what happens by identifying a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice. Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda; they emerge from struggle. [...] people in a given place and time know how to carry out a limited number of alternative collective-action routines, adapting each one to the immediate circumstances and the reactions of antagonists, authorities, allies, observers, objects of their action, and other persons somehow involved in the struggle (1995 [2005], 42).

In the case of the indigenous peasant communities, direct action tactics consisted of realizing blockades on several national, provincial, and community roads and pathways, cutting transportation between cities and the country, organizing demonstrations in the city centers, and participating in round tables with the government, be it with its legislative or executive members. Such tactics required that people gathered funds, labor, and time to realize them. Strikers affirmed they had mobilized these resources quickly and unexpectedly since they spontaneously went to the blockades and marches, without previous planning. Luis explained he marched to Quito on October 7th only with the clothes he was wearing, with no food or water provisions, and without knowing where he would stay overnight. However, inhabitants of Quito's peripheral neighborhoods provided them with food and water and helped organize a camp before strikers coming from the countryside arrived in the city center. Thus, the "people" of Quito established solidarity with the indigenous communities from the beginning of the strike through these mundane acts of feeding and sheltering. Although the strike was an extraordinary situation, participants and supporters mobilized ordinary daily life practices. In this sense, the repertoire of contention did not change from previous uprisings: once the strike started, people not only used the already known tactics of direct action but also implemented ordinary practices that would serve as a material basis for sustaining the strike.

In Cayambe, the blockades consisted of cut trees, rocks, tires that would be burnt in the evenings, and people. *Comuneros* from the Pijal community reported they mobilized the whole community: around one thousand inhabitants blocked roads near their territory or marched to Quito on foot. Not all communities mobilized their members, letting people choose if they would go to the blockades or not. However, Pijal's example shows the dimension of the strike's mobilization. Participants in the blockades had different social and economic roles, and they needed to adapt their living conditions to fulfill their daily obligations. Besides creating the blockades, it was necessary to organize rotating monitoring groups, distribute food to strikers, and keep up with their regular duties, such as taking care of family, handling work, and transporting themselves. Flower plantation workers were an extreme case: they took night shifts on the blockades and would go to work in the flower plantations in the mornings to guarantee they would not be fired. Negotiations between family members would occur within households, so one person would go to the blockade while the other would stay behind with older members. However, not going to the blockades did not mean necessarily refusing to strike. Those who remained in the houses would gather in community houses to cook together and send water and food provisions to the blockades. Indeed, there were several cases when the entire family would go to the blockades, including women and children. Autonomous producers had to decide how to deal with their daily production and participation in the strike. Some had to abandon their fields for a couple of days, or in the case of dairy producers, like Valeria, they had to wake up even earlier, around 3 am, to work; moreover, due to the blockades, they had to transport their milk production to the processing centers on foot, walking miles to deliver their product. Striking and attending to other aspects of daily life represented an effort of coordination, collaboration, and solidari-

ty that affected people's routines and means of subsistence. Thus, the strike not only impacted the so-called national economy or the elites' business. Keeping their jobs, realizing care work, maintaining their small business, and the production for subsistence were also at stake for strikers. However, the governmental act impact would long affect their living costs and bearing the short-term losses of striking was worth it.

When people marched to Quito, they expected demonstrations would last only one day and did not prepare to stay longer than a week in the city. Thousands of people from other parts of the country gathered in private universities, such as Universidad Salesiana (Salesian University), Universidad Católica (Catholic University), Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (Simón Bolívar Andean University), and in Quito's Casa de la Cultura (Cultural Center). Those places, especially Casa de la Cultura, were considered "peace zones", where medicine and other health sciences students formed health brigades to receive people injured in the protests. Eventually, it also became the main shelter for strikers, where urban residents delivered food, medicine, water, clothes, mattresses, and blankets. Therefore, solidarity between Quito's inhabitants and strikers constituted a critical feature of this uprising. Without such support, it would be materially difficult for them to demonstrate day after day in Quito. Such logistics coordination and organization depended on indigenous communities' know-how from previous uprisings and their daily lives. Work communitarian *mingas*¹³ are common in indigenous communities' everyday lives, requiring the same logistics. For instance, during *Inti Raymi* ceremonies (sun festival), *comuneros* organize activities for several days. They collaborate and coordinate resources, labor, and time for feeding and

¹³ From kichwa Minka. Noun [minka, minga], communal work (Ministerio de Educación Ecuador, 2008, p. 99). In the Andean context, mingas are community work to carry out public and private projects as well as agricultural activities such as sowing and harvesting.

entertaining hundreds of people. On a smaller scale, social life in rural settings consists of neighbors' and relatives' gatherings for organizing such festivities or smaller ceremonies like birthdays, baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Hence, knowing how to proceed during strike was already known to most strikers.

Although indigenous peasant movements applied already known direct action tactics, they expanded their repertoire of contention with innovations characteristic of the conjuncture. Two main innovations differentiate this uprising from previous ones: direct communication through social media and the movements' unification around one single demand - derogating decree 883. Communicating directly with strikers in Quito via WhatsApp and live streaming their activities through Facebook produced a more dynamic and autonomously articulated movement. Mullo López *et al.* (2021) denominate this phenomenon "connective action", referring to an action of social movements in virtual networks that "decolonizes the dominant opinion of hegemonic media and generates discursive solidarity that reinforces collective action" (p. 1, our translation). For instance, spreading live images and videos of police repression on private accounts and alternative media profiles was crucial for gathering popular support for the movement. Quito's indigenous and non-indigenous residents took the streets in so-called "cazerolazos" because they saw indigenous peasant communities being massacred. An alliance between mestizo/white people and indigenous peasant communities emerged spontaneously. Because of it, indigenous leaders could represent the former in negotiations with the government. Hence, they spoke not only on behalf of peoples and nationalities but also of the Ecuadorian people in general.

Indeed, such representation was also possible because at a certain point during the strike, the assemblies in Casa de la Cultura decided the strike had only one objective: reverting an economic measure. The demand for derogating

decree 883 took precedence over the claims to overthrow Lenin Moreno. They reflected upon the consequences of pressing to impeach Lenin Moreno: "*we remove the president, and the vice president remains, or another politician takes power and implements the same economic measures*", explained Mariana; "*no, no, we understood things would only get normal with the end of the decree, not by taking the president out. They are all puppets in IMF hands*". Thus, the innovations are paradoxically complementary. On the one hand, more capillarization and popular participation in the strike emerged from the social media simultaneous communication, independent of leaders' agitation and organization. On the other hand, from the praxis of direct action, the movement decided to unite around *one* claim. Therefore, despite the pluralization of political subjects with divergent political interests, there was unification around one economic demand.

In this case, plurality and unity do not seem contradictory. During the 2019 national strike, indigenous peoples showed it is possible to converge two aspects of resistance; that is, it can be capillary and decentralized while also being unified. In critical agrarian studies, scholars analyze resistance according to two paradigms: moral economy and class conflict. In the first case, following James Scott's (1976a) first publication, peasants would oppose and resist hegemonic rules led by a sense of unfairness and injustice related to the processes that would alter their lives. Resistance would consist of material and symbolic daily actions intending to fight hegemonic rules, such as character defamation, gossip, machinery destruction, and quiet individual boycotts to landlords or contractors. Even though Scott (1985) further complexified his analysis in "Weapons of the Weak" and included class struggle as a resistance motivation feature, the main remaining message is that peasant resistance happens on an everyday basis. Thus, although peasants do not gather in political parties or other guiding, organizing, or leading

institution, this should not imply they do not resist agrarian transformations.

In the second perspective, according to Marxist-Leninist approaches, class struggles would motivate peasants to resist agrarian changes. Such analysis draws on the observation that, in many instances, capitalism development would generate the emergence of new social classes at the expense of peasant exploitation. In this sense, the “natural” historical process would be the disappearance of the peasantry once capitalism development is considered an inevitable consequence of historical evolution - be it in the form of liberal capitalism or state capitalism. In this perspective, class conflicts would produce resistance, whereas resistance would require class consciousness and organization to affect reality successfully.

Indigenous peasant communities’ resistance against neoliberal transnational institutions in the Global South is a challenge to both perspectives since they do not act in only one way or another. It is more appropriate to think of them as movements that mobilize syncretic tactics, often forging new strategies of struggle that do not fit the already mentioned analytical models. It would be more accurate to say that these popular movements almost always offer potent elements for critically renovating these models both theoretically and methodologically.

Indigenous peoples built their resistance along two axes of political action: the first axis consisted of relying on their already existing architecture of organization and coordination. In his analysis of previous uprisings in 2006, Colloredo-Mansfeld signaled this first axis, affirming that “in the reality of the uprisings, organizational know-how and political consciousness are widely distributed” (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 2009, 179). The second axis consisted of a resistance routine that drew on the already known daily life practices and incorporated some innovations. Indeed, another politicization level briefly mentioned here is worth further examination: the politicization

at the household level, since the activities carried out in this space contributed to the continuation of life processes during the strike.

In this sense, resistance was constituted of routine, organization, and *more*. It did not seem dependent only on leadership, nor was it faceless, just as it was not only individual acts of rebellion. It was purposed, coordinated, and capillary. Hence, we consider that both played an important role – the long-lasting power of the strike depended on a) daily acts intending to oppose hegemonic rules as well as b) indigenous peasant movements’ internal organization. Additionally, more than just opposing hegemonic rules, the IPM also proposed an alternative to the country’s economics.

The Popular Parliament and an Alternative to the Country’s Economy

Late night on October 13th, leaders from different indigenous peasant organizations (Conaie, Ecuarunari, Peoples’ Confederations, and the Cotopaxi Peasant Movement) finally gathered in Quito to negotiate the end of the strike with government representatives. Lenin Moreno said he would attend the meeting, but he appeared for merely a few minutes to sign the agreement letter stating he would withdraw decree 883. In Cayambe blockades, the night shift strikers watched the negotiation on their phones’ screens.

Gathered around a few screens, all attention was turned to what was said at the roundtable. Anxiety and tiredness could be seen in people’s eyes. As all other nights, the cold wind was annoying, especially for those with hands exposed while holding their cellphones to the public. In the peace zones in Quito, people were exhausted and discussed giving up the strike. Repression had been excruciating on October 9th and 10th, with the police and army attacking even the Casa de la Cultura. Videos of first aid brigades running and begging for the police to stop, considering they were

just helping injured people, circulated on social media and shocked those accompanying the strike unfolding. Despite being tired of the strike routine, they decided to keep up with resistance through other tactics, perhaps leaving Quito and reinforcing countryside blockades. Inside universities and Casa de la Cultura, people watched the meeting on different channels, expecting the strike to end soon. Eyes on the negotiation, *comuneros* also expected to have their demand fulfilled. It was a matter of not only watching their representatives debate what would happen to the strike in the following hours, but also of observing whether their leaders would betray them.

The U.N. Ecuador and Ecuadorian Episcopal Conference representatives participated as supporters and observers of the negotiation process. Several adult men and one woman from indigenous organizations had conversations with state bureaucrats, mainly men. At 9.45 p.m., a U.N. Ecuador representative announced the government accepted to derogate decree 883. However, negotiations between state representatives and indigenous leaders would continue that night. The strike was over, but justice matters were still to be discussed. More than one thousand people got injured during the strike, and the state offered little or no attention to their health. Eleven people were assassinated during the protests, and the government masked its responsibility for such deaths with narratives of “accident”. Several leaders were being prosecuted for what the government calls “acts of terrorism”. To solve these problems, *comuneros* had to find and provide solutions within the scope of communitarian politics.

One alternative was the proposition of “transitional justice” within the scope of indigenous justice. Because peoples and nationalities have jurisdiction over their territories, they extended the application of indigenous justice to the cases related to the strike. During the strike, indigenous justice took the form of making hostage police officers. After

the strike, it manifested in assemblies that recognized injured and assassinated people as “heroes of the strike”. In this sense, since the state did not act to compensate the families of people murdered or those physically injured on strike, communities took responsibility for reparation policies. In the assemblies, besides publicly recognizing participants’ roles, *comuneros* gathered monetary contributions from each community and distributed them among those needing medical treatment. Furthermore, assembly participants had the chance to talk about the strike, sharing their testimonies and stories, generating a cathartic moment of collective mental healing, and reinforcing the memories of this uprising. Indigenous justice worked on revealing the truth, creating memory, and providing reparation as an alternative to state injustice.

Moreover, after the strike, indigenous organizations invited other social organizations to form a Parliament of Peoples, Collectives, and Social Organizations of Ecuador (hereafter referred to as the Popular Parliament), gathering representatives of social movements that had participated in the strike. This alternative to the National Assembly had the objective of imagining a new future for the country. Reflecting the widespread dissatisfaction with liberal institutions, this Parliament was constituted of voluntary people who wanted to contribute to drafting alternative proposals for Ecuador. During conversations before and after the strike, people often affirmed that Congress members received a big salary to do nothing. The same was said about the president and other state officials and former presidents. Thus, state institutions were discredited in public opinion. The Popular Parliament would fill the representational gap of such institutions. A plurality of social agents participated in this Parliament, working to create consensus, channeling convergences and divergences between different political projects.

Resembling the propositional attitude of the 1990s, the indigenous peasant movement

presented to the Presidency Secretary a document called “Proposal to the country”. In the document, they proposed a “plurinational economic model oriented towards *Sumak Kawsay* (Good Living)” (our translation). Such a model would provide the “social, institutional and productive conditions to generate welfare for all in conditions of social justice, equity, redistribution and respect for the rights of nature, collective rights, and human rights” (our translation). Therefore, besides being against the economic measures the government had imposed on the people to meet the IMF conditionalities, the IPM went beyond and proposed an alternative for changing the economic model. Accordingly, a plurinational vision of the economy implied understanding the economic system in its complexity – in which other economic institutions also play an important role: reciprocity and complementarity coexist with market institutions. Indeed, such a vision regards relationality as a principle that guides life sustainability. Hence, a transition from the capitalistic vision, oriented to economic growth, to another form of relationality is necessary. In this transition, society, nature, and production are related and should work to mitigate the effects of climate change and biodiversity losses. Again, their proposals went beyond the ethnic question; they interweaved what could be considered a progressive agenda with the indigenous cosmovision.

Besides stating new principles for an alternative economic model, they proposed concrete changes in the national economic system with public policy proposals. First, they opposed the privatization of companies that provide public services and labor flexibilization. Second, they addressed the role of communitarian and peasant economies as fundamental to reactivating the national economy and generating employment. Third, they proposed an integral transformation of public finance by creating a plurinational financial system. Moreover, they tackled the importance of social security universalization, especially for rural workers. Fi-

nally, they shed light on possible ways out of extractivism with changes in the national energetic matrix. Hence, fiscal, monetary, tributary, credit, sectorial, and social policies were designed according to this proposal. It was a complex document that provided diagnosis and prescriptions for an economic crisis that needed to be addressed with several transformations in various economic, political and social sectors. Once again, the IPM related redistribution to recognition, showing the intersectionality between identity and class politics.

Months after the national strike, the covid-19 pandemic hit Ecuador severely. One year later, the indigenous movement supported a Patchakutik¹⁴ candidate in the presidential elections. Both situations altered the scenario for indigenous peasant peoples’ political action. In response to both the pandemic and the election of a right-wing candidate, the Popular Parliament released another document, “Minga por la Vida” (Minga for life), that expands the alternative for the country’s economy, addresses the challenges of recomposing society post-pandemic and urges the new government not to implement a neoliberal agenda in the country. Neither the pandemic nor the elections are analyzed in this article but should also be considered to better understand indigenous communities’ conjunctural action.

We propose here a decolonial interpretation of these alternative projects that have been wrought in indigenous resistance and that encompass an ideal of good living for the whole Ecuadorian society. Quijano (2014c) reminds us that in Latin America, republics were never founded with the participation of the dominated. That was so because mestizo elites identified with the interests of whites (Europeans and Americans). Such identification made it impossible to include indigenous and African peoples in their national project and to consti-

¹⁴ The Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Patchakutik (Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement) is a political movement representing the interests of the indigenous movement led by Conaie. It is currently the legal entity contesting the elections in Ecuador, representing the party-political agenda of indigenous movements.

tute a continental identity free from the colonial burden. On the contrary, the construction of nation-states represented the continuity of coloniality of power under new institutional bases. As a result, a paradoxical situation in Latin America was configured, combining independent states with colonial societies.

Nevertheless, we share with Quijano the understanding that this foundational violence did not eclipse the creative power of “re-origination of the world” intrinsic to colonized peoples. Thanks to this creative power, indigenous and Afro-diasporic peoples have been able to resist the undermining of their living territories without succumbing to the progressive and developmental projects of modern-colonial capitalism. For Quijano, the resistance movements of colonized peoples represent the “return of the future,” that is, a re-originating protagonism that, instead of constituting the idealistic utopianism of a future to come, conforms to a historical present that is already here:

[...] another horizon of historical meaning emerges, it is already beginning, it is already here; because it is not just discourse, it is not just assemblies, they are organizing their communities, [...] they are organizing another form of political authority in the world that will have to compete and conflict with the state (Quijano, 2009b, p. 2).

Similarly, Segato analyzes such protagonism as a “contemporary resurgence” of obliterated subjects (indigenous, quilombola people, traditional communities). It is a movement that combines “revitalized archaic ways of living and historical projects from the present, rooted in such lives and inspired by them. Historical lines and sectioned memories are restored, revived, and gain continuity” (Segato, 2021b, p. 75). We understand that the projects of good living of Ecuadorian indigenous peasant communities constitute potent examples of “re-origination of the world”, “return of the future”, and “contemporary resurgence.” In this sense, such projects evoke Dussel’s (2016) idea of “transmodernity”. “Transmodernity”

designates political-epistemic practices invested with pluriversality as alternatives that resist the monocultural civilization project. These terms, which allow us to expand the transgressive meanings of indigenous peoples’ struggles and agendas, substantiate the idea of decolonial turn as a strategy of:

[...] recovery of the abandoned tracks towards a different history, a work in the gaps and fractures of the existing social reality, of the remains of a general shipwreck of peoples who barely survived the continuous material and symbolic massacre throughout five hundred years of coloniality, left and right. [...] The decolonial turn speaks of this hope and this path through the cracks of what has survived under the unjust rule of overseas colonizers and republican governments (Segato, 2021b, p. 73).

In effect, to make present the projects for the nation that the indigenous peasant communities of Ecuador and Latin America have collectively imagined and co-created functions here as a linguistic resource. Such linguistic resource confronts the epistemic racism (the colonialities of power/being/ knowing) of hegemonic imaginaries that continue to discredit those peoples’ historical and political agency. Thus, making “good living” projects present allows us to affirm them as possible utopias that exist and are already happening. They are, in this sense, life projects resisting the neo-extractivism of the developmental and progressive economic logic; they conform to a civilizing path based on care and reciprocity relations between cultures and nature. For this very reason, they are capable of fostering communities that are more than human. Finally, when we make them present, we confer positive visibility to these life projects, reaffirming their social, political, and economic viability since they already happen in the reality of indigenous and peasant communities, generating social, territorial, ecological, and epistemic justice for all humans and non-humans (the rivers, the forests, the animals, the enchanted beings).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Listening carefully to the voices of *comuneros* who participated in the 2019 national strike was the starting point of this text. They stated on several occasions the importance of previous uprisings to motivate their political action. Inspired and pressured by the memory of their ancestors' struggles, indigenous peasant communities engaged in a national strike to counter the economic measures the government imposed without prior and ample consultation with the country's social forces. Remembering what happened in the 1990s uprisings provided avenues for understanding how indigenous peoples weaved class and ethnic demands, amplifying political arenas of popular participation and proposing an expanded meaning of citizenship. Indeed, their political action made explicit the encounter and confrontation of ideas of their time: thinking about and acting against the neoliberal imaginary.

Other authors such as Becker (2008), Becker and Tuttilo (2009), and Inuca Lechón (2017) have already stated that ethnic issues were present in the past demands of indigenous peoples in Ecuador while they acted and demanded rights within the scope of what is considered class struggles. What is new in the uprisings of the 1990s is that their voices were audible enough to disturb the status quo. Previously incapable of hearing, white-mestizo society and nation-state institutions became too concerned and surprised to ignore them. Indeed, IPM uprisings surprised them because they did not have the epistemic tools for understanding indigenous peoples' demands. A long process of encounter and confrontation of ideas has continued since the 1990s. As a result, indigenous cosmovisions entered the constitutional documents in two moments: in 1998, when the country was considered an intercultural nation, and in 2008, when Ecuador constitutionally became a plurinational country. We defend a continuity between those processes. We connected the 2019 national

strike and the 1990s mobilizations through the indigenous peasant communities' praxis. Additionally, we intended to nuance indigenous peoples' struggles, showing they were not only focused on ethnic matters, being less easily co-opted by governments that provide hints of inclusion into the system.

Therefore, the 1990s uprisings represented a continuity of past indigenous communities' struggles, commonly called peasant struggles. We also recover the connection between indigenous peoples and peasants and denominate them indigenous peasant communities to indicate the continuity, more than the rupture, of the indigenous movement with its' peasant roots. Such connection does not mean indigenous peoples have one essence but indicates their plurality. Several authors have argued they were a "new" or the "most important political actor" at the beginning of the 20th century (Guerrero 1995, Lucero 2007). However, we understand that historical memory plays a vital role in social actors' self-definition as political subjects. Acting as historical alterities, instead of political identities, those who participated in the 1990s uprisings were a "prelude to a constant presence, which during the decade of the nineties and beyond would have multiple unfoldments, marked out by the heterogeneous segments that compose it" (Cervone 2012).

Indeed, paying attention to what happened in the strike routine also provided clues to the forms of resistance that indigenous peasant communities undertake nowadays. Furthermore, describing not only the long-term connections to previous uprisings but also what happened before, during, and after the strike meant adopting a methodological and epistemological perspective: that of encountering political subjects in their praxis of livelihood. Such praxis emerges not only in everyday life or in the heads of IPM leaders but depends on a complex structure that channels, articulates, and coordinates popular participation. In this sense, rethinking conceptual tools to understand social movements and resistan-

ce in the Global South can be enriched by encountering other perspectives - not only class or identity, neither autonomous and based on daily life nor dependent on organization and coordination. It can be *all of that and beyond*. Resistance reflects historical alterities of subjects acting in history, weaving conjunctures, memory, and quotidian in their political lives. Indigenous peasant communities are subjects of their time.

Finally, it is essential to point out that while we make connections between the 2019 national strike and the 1990 uprisings, this does not mean that the IPM or the authors consider the 21st century's first decade irrelevant. On the contrary, several authors have given attention to the 2010s and analyzed the IPM relevance considering their supposed failures. However, we suggest that it is necessary to look closely at the movement of that era. For instance, we think it is relevant to understand how IPM concepts (plurinationality, interculturalidad, *Sumak Kawsay*) were discussed in the Constitutional Assembly and how they evolved in the following years, considering the *yachak tinkuy* of this period in its complexities. Indeed, we suggest further historical research on their participation in the government of Rafael Correa and how they related to other social sectors of Ecuadorian society. Finally, we invite other scholars to consider the arguments presented here in light of other alternative political projects and theories, especially those of autonomists and anarchists, to contribute to the debate and complexify the analysis of indigenous peasant communities' structures of agency, as well as to learn with their other forms of politics.

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JATARISHUN: revoltas indígenas camponesas do Equador e Bem Viver

*Larissa da Silva Araujo
Ana Tereza Reis da Silva*

JATARISHUN: révoltes paysannes indigènes d'Équateur et de Bien Vivre

*Larissa Da Silva Araujo
Ana Tereza Reis da Silva*

Este artigo analisa os Movimentos Indígenas Camponeses (MICs) do Equador como força social e ator político. Ao propor uma alternativa à crise equatoriana baseada nos valores do *sumak kawsay* (bem viver), os MICs ampliam espaços democráticos e formulam uma aceção expandida de cidadania. Focalizam-se os acontecimentos da greve nacional de 2019 no Equador, em diálogo retrospectivo com mobilizações anteriores. O artigo se baseia nos testemunhos do povo Kayambi, coletados antes e depois da greve, em entrevistas semiestruturadas e trabalho etnográfico. Os dados evidenciam que a memória de lutas anteriores foi uma motivação essencial para a emergência das manifestações. Ademais, a unidade e a solidariedade entre atores rurais e outros setores da sociedade equatoriana foram a base do poder e da força da greve. Em diálogo com o campo das “Políticas rurais emancipadoras”, aportam-se contribuições às abordagens críticas sobre o papel dos povos indígenas camponeses nas lutas por alternativas de vida.

Cet article analyse les mouvements paysans autochtones (MIC) de l'Équateur en tant que force sociale et acteur politique. En proposant une alternative à la crise équatorienne fondée sur les valeurs du *Sumak Kawsay* (Bien Vivre), les MIC élargissent les espaces démocratiques et formulent un sens élargi de la citoyenneté. L'analyse se concentre sur les événements de la grève nationale de 2019 en Équateur, en dialogue rétrospectif avec les mobilisations précédentes. L'article s'appuie sur des témoignages du peuple Kayambi, recueillis avant et après la grève, lors d'entretiens semi-structurés et des travaux ethnographiques. Les données montrent que le souvenir des luttes précédentes a été une motivation essentielle pour l'émergence des manifestations. En outre, l'unité et la solidarité entre les acteurs ruraux et les autres secteurs de la société équatorienne ont été à la base de la puissance et de la force de la grève. En dialogue avec le champ de la “politique rurale émancipatrice”, l'article apporte des contributions aux approches critiques sur le rôle des peuples paysans indigènes dans les luttes pour des moyens de subsistance alternatifs.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Movimentos sociais. Ação direta. Povos indígenas camponeses. Bem viver. Equador.

MOTS-CLÉS: Mouvements sociaux. Action directe. Peuples paysans indigènes. Bien vivre. Équateur.

Larissa Da Silva Araujo – PhD candidate in Anthropology and Sociology at the Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland. She works on issues related to systemic alternatives, indigenous and peasant movements, women's movements, and agroecology. Member of the Collective GRITO, Switzerland. Her most recent publications are: “Prácticas cotidianas agroecológicas hacia el Sumak Kawsay/Buen Vivir en el territorio del Pueblo Kayambi - Cayambe, Ecuador” (2021); “¿Convivencia en armonía? La lucha de las chakareras contra de la violencia de género” (2021).

Ana Tereza Reis da Silva – Associate Professor 3 at the Faculty of Education, University of Brasilia (UnB), working in the Graduate Program in Education (PPGE) and in the Master in Sustainability with Traditional Peoples and Territories (MESPT), both at UnB. Leader of the Research Group Education, Knowledge and Decolonialities (GPDES/CNPq). Her most recent publications are: “A diversidade cultural como potencia pedagógica: do encontro à educação intercultural” (2021); “Trajetórias Formativas de Musicistas Negros no Pós-Abolição (1890-1930)”, (2022, forthcoming).