
Introduction: Contesting Control: Indigenous Strategies towards Territorial Governance in Lowland South America

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After centuries of conflict and political struggles over land and resources across Lowland South America, recent decades have shown an expansion of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to determine their own futures and manage their territories (Monterroso et al., 2017; Palacios Llaque and Sarmiento Barletti, 2021). This shift is the result of decades of the deployment of strategies undertaken by Indigenous Peoples and their allies to overcome histories of displacement, marginalisation and exploitation by settler societies. These processes of dispossession and resistance have been driven by different actors laying different claims on Indigenous territories in a contradictory process that involves the expansion of the extractive frontier in the region – ranging from hydrocarbon extraction to agroindustrial development – and of initiatives to conserve the biodiversity of the region, including various kinds of protected areas and carbon projects (Álvarez, 2012; Larsen, 2015). Conflicts have been noted to arise over the management and use of the area's natural resources and how nature and the environment are constructed, but also over the imposition of different forms of governance over the region (Merino Acuña, 2015). The relative success of Indigenous strategies in these contexts has long been of academic concern, highlighting the work of Indigenous organisations and social networks (e.g. Jackson and Warren, 2005; Yashar, 2005).

However, less attention has been placed on the different ways in which Indigenous communities and their representative organisations engage the legal frameworks for territorial governance, rights recognition and tenure regimes, often through mixed and at times seemingly contradictory strategies of conflict and collaboration, and of the manner in which these strategies interact with Indigenous cosmologies, preferred forms of social relations and notions of living well. This focus is important to avoid presenting the government as a monolithic entity – considering that its different agencies tend to have different agendas in relation to Indigenous Peoples and that environmental governance is multi-level – as well as generalising the different strategies deployed by communities and their organisations in their engagements with government actors.

Based on long-term fieldwork with Indigenous communities, the four articles in this special section give insight into the different actions and impacts of the region's national governments on their Indigenous citizens. The articles engage with the different ways in which Indigenous Peoples conceptualise these relations and attempt to counteract historical forms of domination and control through different, changing and at times seemingly contradictory strategies within a continuum of resistance and collaboration. The articles reflect the fact that just as the government and its agencies are not monolithic, so too do Indigenous groups and organisations show internal heterogeneity in their responses to governments and their agencies. Drawing together case studies from Ecuador, Peru and Brazil, the articles reflect the diversity of Indigenous Peoples' strategies while drawing out commonalities in their

approaches. A key theme is the manner in which Indigenous responses draw on and respond to particular historical, social and political circumstances to produce a myriad of hybrid forms that reflect their preoccupations and those of the state and wider national societies as well as international actors including NGOs and donor institutions.

For some contemporary Indigenous Peoples, their cosmovisions have found increased visibility and power within particular regimes and political spheres. This can be seen in Oikonomakis's descriptions of how, emboldened by Ecuador's integration of Indigenous notions of *buen vivir* into the national constitution, members of Sarayaku, an Amazonian Kichwa community, are going further in using their own terms and cosmovisions to underpin their resistance to extractivism in a manner Oikonomakis terms 'reciprocal translation'.

A similar focus on Indigenous Peoples representations of their environment, specifically within the black water lagoons on the contested border between Ecuador and Peru, stands at the centre of Krøijer's article. By exploring a number of recent moments in this region's history when Siekopai people have acted to claim their ancestral lands in the face of resistance from the state, she emphasises the narratives and understandings of these people. Pushing back against the understandings of such land claims as processes of subjectivation to outside perspectives and expectations, she emphasises the manner in which Siekopai people maintain a key emphasis on the constant potential for transformation of the forest and their lived world.

An emphasis on different approaches for working with outsiders is also found in Cimbaluk's contribution. Focused on Kaingang people in Southern Brazil, the author examines their involvement in soybean agriculture, an industry that Indigenous Peoples are usually portrayed as strongly against. Building on a detailed historical analysis of Kaingang interactions with outsiders, Cimbaluk argues that this decision can be understood as a strategy for maintaining autonomy in the face of outside domination of the region and as a means of continuing to benefit from the potential of outsiders even in the face of Indigenous understandings and realities of the predatory nature of non-Indigenous groups.

Finally, Sarmiento Barletti and Rolando focus on the apparently successful introduction of co-management regimes for protected areas in the Peruvian Amazon. Through a comparison of two communal reserves, they examine the trade-offs that such agreements have brought for Indigenous communities. Specifically, they consider how the 'technical' worldview that underpins such environmental schemes implicitly undermines Indigenous contributions to their management and thus the idea of equality on which they founded. Such regimes can also draw distinctions and unequal relations between different groups in an area and lead to further inequalities.

Despite all four articles' attention to the continued inequalities within national and local contexts, all five authors do more than conceive of political and governance processes as processes of subjectivation by which Indigenous Peoples come to adopt a new representation of external reality or 'environmentality'. Instead, they reflect how Indigenous societies and their representative organizations draw on their own notions of the environment, sociality and social forms to structure their relations with different government and outside actors, as they seek to gain some measure of control and to protect those aspects of their individual and communal lives that remain most important to them.

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Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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