

Delmy Tania Cruz, Manuel Bayón Jiménez,
and Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo
(eds.)

Bodies, Territories, and Feminisms

Latin American Compilation of Political Practices, Theories,
and Methodologies

Delmy Tania Cruz, Manuel Bayón Jiménez,
and Colectivo Miradas Críticas del
Territorio desde el Feminismo (eds.)

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Bodies, Territories, and Feminisms.
Latin American Compilation of Political Practices, Theories, and
Methodologies

Delmy Tania Cruz, Manuel Bayón Jiménez, and Colectivo Miradas
Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo.

Publisher: Abya Yala and Instituto de Estudios Ecologistas del
Tercer Mundo.

Dedicated to Rosi Goveia, part of the passion who has woven this book, who left us when we were best learning to enjoy ourselves.

In memory of Walda, who, from the ethics of mutual care among women, weaved networks of sisterhood, tenderness and respect for life.

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Prologue

There are social times when what Thomas Kuhn called "normal science" breaks down, and those certainties and promises that it offered become weak, or collapse. They are times of crisis which become fertile if they manage to open themselves up to critical renovation of thoughts and practices. *Bodies, Territories and Feminisms: Latin American Compilation of Political Practices, Theories, and Methodologies* is a book which enters various open debates in contemporary social sciences with the aim of presenting in good order ideas and arguments which add to the wide constellation of efforts deployed to break such "normalcy". To challenge the normalcy of what is imposed on us as stifling reality and, at the same time, as a limit to thought and imagination: that is, a willingness to decompose argumental schemata, rigid disciplinary divisions and conceptual keys that hide and bias more than they discover and illuminate.

Thus read, the volume co-ordinated by Delmy Tania Cruz and Manuel Bayón, from the *Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* (Critical Views of Territory from Feminism) is a relevant and accomplished partial synthesis of a set of learning and renewed knowledge which have matured in the last decade. I propose to highlight three key matters. Firstly, throughout the first part of the volume, the authors wonder about a problem that lies at the heart of contemporary struggles in defense of territories attacked by extractivist capitalism and multiform struggles against all the forms of violence which tear at the social body. How and why does the (re)patriarchalization of territories happen, as the devastating extractive and capitalist activities altering the entire continent's geography today extend along those territories? How is the rigid triangle of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism sustaining the very scaffold of so-called modern life reinforced and expanded?

The five dimensions of what authors call (re)patriarchalization of territories in extractive contexts – political, economic, ecological, cultural, and physical – constitute a fertile analytical tool to connect

what appears as fragmentary and scattered when studied from other perspectives. Thus, the complexity of the view put forward by the authors feeds the debate and makes up an argumental framework which can, simultaneously, enlighten problems with renewed strength and connect issues whose separate approach would blunt the sharpest points of criticism. The contributions in the first part of the compilation are grouped around experiences of dispossession, exploitation, expropriation and violence analyzed in Argentina, Mexico, Guatemala and Ecuador, specific and different, which are woven together in a pattern. The pattern of separations and hierarchicalizations condensed in the voracious capitalist-colonial and patriarchal offensive we both inhabit and resist when, alongside many others, we make an effort to subvert it from the constellation of feminisms we forge.

In the second part of the compilation, entitled "Methodological applications and proposals", the authors lead us to a pertinent chain of reflection – situated in Central America, The Andes and the River Plate – on currently legitimate forms of knowledge production, equally multidimensional. As they present their practical experiences of criticism to the modern separation between reason and emotion, subjects of knowledge and objects of study – a central split in academic production established as legitimate –, they document their procedures in different tasks while scrutinizing what was learnt in their own research work. This section leads me to wonder whether it would be fertile to think of research work comprehensively, not just as a meeting and exchange between subjects of knowledge but also, and perhaps firstly, as reciprocal knowledge and potential alliance between subjects of struggle. To think of research work on the most pivotal contemporary issues as a meeting and exchange between subjects of struggle moves us away from the absurd place of neutrality which certain academic knowledge means to hold. However, it also leads us to take charge of the intention animating the research activity explicitly and rigorously. Reflection on this matter, in my view, contributes to co-production of shared horizons of sense which can learn to become common, while still remaining different. And this is a key issue for the connection and interweaving of the

wide range of situated efforts carried out by females and males against extractivism, exploitation and violence; this is one of the intentions of the volume which, in its third part, "Dialogues", engages in opening to conversation with those with shared concerns despite differing viewpoints.

Therefore, the book is also a challenge to dominant, eminently patriarchal and colonial views and practices which structure academic knowledge. The authors show their willingness to dialogue, their openness to conversation around current issues. They do not wish to be or position themselves as a "rival theory" against similar voices, or a "competing" perspective before other close views; rather, they make an orderly contribution to the debate, with an effort to nourish and widen what is known.

A third key about the compilation as a whole arises, and I again put it forward as a question. Are the young colleagues whose effort has conceived this volume not promoting a research practice which aims to visibilize, connect and explain problems of great significance and multiple subjects of struggle with a view to overcome them? To provide rigorous and general explanations for the most relevant problems has been a concern for so-called scientific knowledge since it got such name in the 17th century. However, such scientific knowledge was immediately attached to the expansion of colonial capitalism and organized in a ferociously patriarchal way. The canonical Marxist theoretical corpus also went to great lengths to acquire that name, as for more than a century it became a rival theory to the so-called positive science, with which it comfortably shared its old patriarchal features. All that knowledge is in crisis today, and for some decades the collapse of any general explanation of the social phenomenon was dictated. However, is "getting to know the reason of something" not an urgent need now? One of the meanings of the word "explain"? And plenty more, if that "something" condenses the reiterated dynamics which threatens and destroys us as a species. Is it not the most fertile thing we can do to become aware of the capitalist (re)patriarchalization of territories and life as a whole, to build arguments to understand what is happening, and to attempt

explanations which can nourish the efforts to subvert and overcome that extreme, if we have the time to research?

Finally, my enthusiasm for the book whose authors have generously invited me to prologue rests on the fresh way in which their work clearly reinstates the discussion on the "being a part" relationship — a part of a tenacious flow of struggle spreading over our territories. To know that we are a part of a life, struggle and reproduction flow with others, as well as to be a part of that flow in the knowing, means to (re)start the walk along an old and contemporary path which feminisms shed light on at present. I am thankful for this effort and I celebrate "being a part" of it: an effort which wishes to become, and is becoming, a torrent.

Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar

Puebla, September 2018

Introduction

Delmy Tania Cruz Hernández and Manuel Bayón Jiménez

"The world was silent." This is how the prologue to *Half of a Yellow Sun*, one of Nigerian author Chimamanda Adiche Ngozi's books, starts. She writes the contemporary story of a part of Africa: Nigeria. The struggle in this nation to achieve an independent republic, Biafra, towards the end of the 1970s, shapes the civil war and the international ghosts which wandered the NON-separation from Nigeria, due to the interest in its raw materials. Thousands of people lost their lives. The phrase "The world was silent" recalls that, back then, there were no great international echoes claiming "Stop now!" against the cruelty of the massacre in Nigeria. It has been over forty years since then, and in the world we are still silent in the face of injustice. There are many current examples in Latin America and the Caribbean: Nicaragua is one of them. These events remind us of the premise highlighted by the feminist thinker Judith Butler (2010), when she wondered what life is, whether some lives are worth more than others. Butler states that the main problem about how we think of the world and how our epistemologies work has a deficit, since our ontology on what constitutes a life is divided by a moral, rather than an ethical, project. Thus, there are lives that we construct in the collective imaginary which deserved to be cried over, and others that do not. The lives of female and male subjects in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean who fight for their territories and are massacred for defending their collective identity appear not to be within our apprehension frameworks of what life is; then, they are simply not important enough and we become deaf to the yell of *¡Ya basta!* ("Stop now!")

This collective project, this book, born of dissident voices from various corners of Latin America, names these female and male subjects invisibilized by History, with a capital letter, the History dictated by the winners, almost all of them men, heterosexual,

white, Western and bourgeois. This project in your hands is dissonance in a world of complicit silences, rupture, naming the unsayable, returning protagonism to those who have always fought for life and their territories to build possible, livable worlds for all the beings inhabiting this planet.

For Indigenous peoples, subaltern communities, peoples in resistance and peripheral collectives, the defense of the territory is *a life process in becoming and with an ancestral memory*, which did not start at the beginning of the 21st century. The visibilization that their struggles have nowadays responds to the gory violence they receive from the capitalist, patriarchal and colonial system which, even in self-named "socialist" regimes (Ecuador and Bolivia), combats communities, peoples and collectives and their common goods, criminalizing the fight for the defense of their rivers, mountains, shared lands, farms, parcels, forests; because it hates the defense of their own existence and their dignified rage.

As Zapatists point out, in reference to Mexico – but applicable to all Latin America – the farm administrator is changed, but not the farm system, which runs on the four wheels of the capitalist system: exploitation, dispossession, criminalization and hate; especially towards ways of living that discomfit, disruptive ways of living and being which clash in the concert of established order to say *¡Ya Basta!* Together with it, as part of that collective clamor, in the margins there is the voice of an echo of unimaginable power incarnated in feminized bodies which say *¡NI UNA MENOS!*, not one woman less!

In the last decade, the defense of territory started to figure in the agendas of academy, international co-operation and civil society organizations as an emerging "topic".¹ We posit that it is a long-standing situation, evidenced and incarnated, for over five centuries, in the subjects from organized peoples in the global

¹ We enclosed *topic* in inverted commas because we recognize that, for Indigenous peoples, disruptive collectives and subaltern communities, the defence of their existence is a process that has existed over the last five centuries.

South and their struggles, who place their bodies at the center, risking their lives and their chances of existence.

This book is praise for those struggles that preceded ours, a questioning as militants, activists and committed thinkers, a constant open question that demands *what about you?*

We offer this article compilation with a double affiliation to committed academia and margin militancy and activism, as actors, subjects and partners in fights for territory defense, since in our view they mark conditions of possibility and existence in community contexts.

No doubt it was the peoples in resistance who showed us the way, but it was and still is women who evidence the art of organizing hope; still, women of all ages, times and geographies who defend territories are invisibilized, erased and silenced. Even when it is them who reproduce resistance life itself; when their bodies are the first military objectives for dispossession; when they are carers for coming generations; when they must do, in addition to a multiple shift, double militancy (outwards and inside their communities).

The articles in this book take up the call for epistemic justice; we speak on no one's behalf, but with them all, since to us speaking is a mirror to keep rethinking (ourselves) in the struggle for life and dignity in all the Abya Yala territories.

For us, a starting point to try and dialogue with struggles and resistances across our countries is *the body-territory, the body as a territory, the territory as a social body*. We find in feminisms from the South words that orient us and invite us to rename female subjects, whose leaderships are today in the spotlight. Through their voices and looking at the categories [bodies, territories], we want to listen, understand, learn and visibilize resistance practices, movements that carry out new strategies, stopping, and ways of appearing/disappearing in the face of territory dispossession.

Collective creation process in this book

This book in your hands is a compilation with no fixed reading sequence: it can be approached in random order. It is a set of

suggestions to place a deep, different look on topics which have experienced a strong surge in interest in the last few years: extractivism, women's struggles, territorial dispossession, resistances, feminicides, territory defense, bodies, feminisms. The diverse bodies who have worked on this book formed the Clasco Workgroup "Cuerpos, Territorios y Feminismos" (Bodies, Territories and Feminisms) and, in it, an excuse to gather together and share knowledge, fight experiences and feelings against patriarchy, and structural racism in the system.

Distances in our continent made us get together by region: Central America, Andes and Southern Cone. Thus, we gathered at conferences, activities, journeys and debates which led us to collective reflections. Many of the articles portray this sharing. Once written, the articles circulated around the regions, adding sides to the formulated reflections, in a collective co-editing process among the entire workgroup. This process finished in October 2018.

Thus, this is a book that aims to leave behind individual standards for knowledge production; while still stating that the article authors are responsible for any imprecisions they might contain. In turn, we acknowledge that these are contributions born from interaction with other collectives, organizations and people who have enriched them.

A first approach to contents

The book is divided into three sections for easier browsing. The first section focuses on the concepts projected on the title: bodies, territories and feminisms, according to different theoretical perspectives which relate them to case studies in the Andes, Central America and the Southern Cone. The eight articles in this section delve into a great variety of topics. First, dispossession that multiplies against women when extractive activities appear, reconfiguration of popular struggles in the last decade, or reasons why women and their bodies are at the center of the fight for the defense of life. A recurring question about transformations and continuities between neoliberal and neo-developmental States is identified along all these articles. The second section explains

corporal-territorial processes, gathering terrible cases of violence against women, through massacre or slow death processes, and forms of resistance that arise to face them. In this section, there is special interest in relations between different theoretical perspectives: intersectionalities between the categories of body and territory, or proposals such as body geopolitics in the face of coloniality or (re)patriarchalization of territories.

The second section is essential to replicate contents and knowledge for the dispute, since it focuses on work methodologies for the interrelation of bodies, territories and feminisms. Drama, cartography, emotions, participative research-action, popular education or feminist writing lead us to situate ways of approaching work and reflection on resistance processes. These are articles written in the mirror of different regions: methodologies for rural work in Uruguay and Central America, counter-mapping experiences in Ecuador and Mexico, emotions from research in Guatemala or Theater of the Female Oppressed in Uruguay. These are experiences narrated in the first person, a way of doing in the world, which in the interaction produced by the process of elaboration of this book found multiple resonances.

The third section is dialogues around issues still unformulated, which we are still thinking and inquiring, which contain as many questions as statements, and which are produced in the discussion among different bodies that share a questioning of generalized axioms. Thus, we find feminist questionings to Mother Earth naturalization in the Andes, life and organization stories from Guatemala, decolonial dialogues about patriarchal violence, conversations between feminists and ecologists on the concept of reproduction, as well as reflections from consciousness-raising developed in Uruguay. This is a section where writing styles are less attached to essay prose, where choppy dialogues, self-narration and doubts arise, to end the book on paths open to reflection in order to follow the political action of resistance.

The bonuses are the Prologue, by Raquel Gutiérrez, written from the affection of exchange. Our thanks to both of them for sharing so much learning and so many experiences with those who fight to transform bodies and territories from feminisms.