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**Heritage-Boom: On Culture  
and Nature in the Americas**

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# Heritage-Boom: On Culture and Nature in the Americas (Introduction)

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Arguably every human society engages in practices of memory in order to build identity and belonging. If autobiographical memory reconstructs life events, cultural memory can be understood as the communal effort to retrace the supposed original state or form of a cultural event or cultural object, or in extended terms a natural event or natural object. Such act of restoration is a discursive construct that involves processes of discovery, selection, imagination, and reconstruction. Cultural memory refers to communal conceptions of heritage and history, and thus to more public forms of narrative such as museum narratives, documentary films, national park narratives, published histories in a popular or academic vein among others. Cultural memory also consists in oral histories that members of a community share with each other. Just as individual identity emerges from the narrative shape one gives one's life through recalling it, these historical accounts of a community foster a shared identity among its members. And like the individual's past which changes to fit present circumstances, the community's cultural and natural heritage and history are revised as community moves in time. "How memory and heritage are created, preserved, or changed is always entangled in a network of power relationships" (Raussert et al. 14). The growing internationalization of the circuits of mobility and capital, information and labor, cultural practice and goods leaves individuals tied to "differing and multiple cultural reference groups in a series of multiple positionings" (Raussert and Kunow 10). In an ever more globalized space that suggests borderless multiplicities without unity, cultural differences, competing conceptions of memory and heritage, and conflicts of value seem omnipresent. (*ibid.* 17).

The notion of heritage that alludes to practices

and discourses made by scientific experts emerged around the second half of the nineteenth century in the context of nation building. The nation's attempt at a diachronic and harmonious narrative is at odds with the dynamics of industrial revolution, internal migration, and massive processes of urbanization disrupting the processes of identity formation. Therefore, the discourse of heritage is offered as a way to heal the flaws of modernity. It promises continuity and stability, continuing an invented origin that was lost in the processes of modernization. (Herwitz 18; Smith 17).

Without doubt, heritage is booming all over the world. Within the last years, we have witnessed an impressive qualitative and quantitative expansion of heritage policies. Not only have international heritage organizations like the important UNESCO-World Heritage Center expanded their scope dramatically, but the cultural industry is blossoming with a "heritage lifestyle" marked by nostalgia, vintage, and a "retro" look. Performance and narration of heritage are related to a globally established form, although their appropriation depends on local patterns. In Western European societies, heritage has often been stylized into a depolitized lifestyle factor. In postcolonial contexts, and throughout the Americas, "heritage has also transformed into a battleground for identity politics and for the interpretation of history and its projection into the future" (Kaltmeier 13). Especially in Latin America the general heritage boom and growing cultural industry are intrinsically entangled with questions of coloniality and indigeneity.

According to David Herwitz, this is the main reason why decolonizing societies enter into the heritage game and make their own heritage, although heritage itself is a western device.

To do so is a rehabilitating move, a way of self-assigning a future by taking over the ideology which allows them to ascribe origin and destiny to the past, accretion and transmissibility to their ‘values’. And a central part of the postcolonial dialectic is re-conceptualizing the precolonial past as a heritage, finding a way to claim that past as the origin of one’s future. (Herwitz 21)

The politics and uses of heritage have their pitfalls, since heritage is a discourse and a practice that is not rooted in indigenous policies of the past but introduced by the colonizers, which implies certain logics of representation, categorization, and exhibition. While heritage is based on these logics of representation, categorization, and exhibition, generally made by experts, it is articulated with the affective and emotional side of nostalgic feelings that, in the Americas, are related to “the antagonist patterns of coloniality and indigeneity” (Kaltmeier 14).

Cultural and natural heritage are separate and distinct entities but they also overlap in current heritage projects in the Americas. The Natchez Trace Parkway in the American South and the Mayan tourist train project in Mexico demonstrate that cultural and natural heritage frequently go hand in hand in contemporary ways of creating, preserving, promoting and commodifying heritage. The journal edition at hand wants to sharpen the reader’s awareness of the ambiguous dynamics of current policies and uses of cultural and natural heritage. And it wants to open the reader’s eyes to the equally powerful presence of cultural and natural heritage in the struggles about authorship, historical representation, and the commodification of heritage “as an object or as a reference in the marketing of places – from the city up to the nation” (Kaltmeier and Rufer 2).

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# Language shift, language reclamation: The case of Nahuatl in Tuxpan, Jalisco, Mexico.

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## Abstract

In this article, I describe the importance of sociolinguistic fieldwork, collect testimonies of what people think about Nahuatl, also known as Mexicano, in Tuxpan in southern Jalisco, Mexico, and examine the possible reasons for its substitution. I discuss the significance of one of the dialects of a Mesoamerican language becoming obsolescent. Thanks to the collective memory of the people of Tuxpan, who regardless of their age are aware that Nahuatl was once spoken there, the indigenous language has maintained a symbolic role that allows reclamation projects to take place.

**Keywords:** nahuatl, western nahuatl, language substitution, language loss, language reclamation.

## Introduction

There are several terms used to refer to the situation when a language is no longer spoken or is used in reduced or intimate contexts, including “disappearing language,” “endangered language,” “obsolescent language,” “vanishing language”, and “dormant language.” They all describe, with nuances emphasizing different aspects, the fact that a language has very few or no speakers at all. The situation has been studied by authors like Fishman (1991), Tsunoda (2006), Warner, Luna and Butler (2007), Nettle and Romaine (2000), Sasse (1992), and others.

Among the factors that cause speakers to substitute their language for another are migration to a larger city or a different country, ecological causes such as deforestation and soil erosion that occasionally compel people to leave their communities, invasion by another country, or even the “willingness” of people to leave their mother language behind.

In several of the situations studied by researchers, the idea of language “dispossession” is latent. Hinton points out that there are powerful causes that go beyond the community itself and its apparent “decision” to leave its language behind:

Because the loss of indigenous languages is tied closely to the usurpation of indigenous lands, the destruction of indigenous habitats, and the involuntary incorporation of indigenous peoples into the larger society (generally into the lower-class margins of that society), language death has become part of a human rights struggle... Language choice is part of the right of indigenous peoples to their own land, to autonomy, and to cultural and economic self-determination (Hinton 4).

However, other studies avoid discussing external factors in language extinction or substitution, instead suggesting it is the decision of a linguistic community to cease transmitting the language to the following generation. Speakers commonly do not realize or want to admit that their language is falling into disuse and is in real danger of disappearing. Documenting what the community believes about its language and the majority language will most likely reveal that, although communities who have substituted their native language for another often share similar reasons, there are particularities also. Understanding these nuances provides us with a broader understanding of how a language might go into disuse, about the linguistic ideologies behind such a process, and hopefully,

how language loss can be prevented or even reversed.

Sasse considers that the study of language death should include three sets of data (9). The first one is the external setting (ES), which refers to extra-linguistic factors such as cultural, sociological, ethno-historical, economic, and other processes that create in a certain speech community pressures that force the community to give up its language. The second is the speech behavior (SB), which refers to the regular use of variables, domains of language and style, and attitudes towards variants of language, etc. He states that differences in the external setting will induce differences in the speech behavior. The third set of data is the changes in structure that a language might experience, such as changes in phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. These are the structural consequences (SC) of language death. Sasse emphasizes that the study of language death involves all three areas of research (10), although they are studied by different professional researchers, the first one most likely by historians, anthropologists or sociologists, whereas the third one would be most likely studied by linguists, psycholinguists, etc.

In the case of the information collected from Tuxpan, it is possible to talk about the first set of data, the external setting, and roughly about the second, the speech behavior. It is not possible to describe the structural consequences of language death since the material collected in the twentieth century by Arreola (1934), Ruvalcaba (1935), Valiñas (1982), and myself (Yáñez Rosales 1988-1996) is very limited. However, it is possible to talk about the external setting in a more detailed manner.

Language reclamation and revitalization efforts have also been documented, although probably the only case that can really be referred to as successful revitalization is Hebrew in Israel (Fishman 291). Some authors also include Maaori in New Zealand (Tsunoda 19).[1] In order to distinguish the terms, I must cite a couple of definitions. Hinton poses two extreme possibilities of using “revitalization”:

[It] refers to the development of programs that result in re-establishing a language

which has ceased being the language of communication in the speech community and bringing it back into full use into all ways of life. This is what happened with Hebrew. “Revitalization” can also begin with a less extreme state of loss, such as that encountered in Irish or Navajo which are both still the first language of many children and are used in many homes as the language of communication, though both languages are losing ground. For these speech communities, revitalization would mean turning this decline around. (5)

Hinton includes under the second scenario the efforts that communities with no speakers at all make in order to accomplish very modest goals. Their objective may not be to reach the full revitalization of the language as with Hebrew but to maintain the language in some manner for particular reasons. This type of situation has been more recently called “language reclamation” (Pérez Báez et al. 13-14). The situation described in this article falls under this type of community efforts.

The information presented in the following pages is divided into four sections. First, general information about Tuxpan is provided. Second, I report on the interviews I carried out with three age groups of people in Tuxpan. The first group were born before 1920 and either grew up speaking Nahuatl as their first language or at least listened to it as children in a very close family environment. By the time I started fieldwork in Tuxpan in 1988, they were elders. The second group, born between 1921 and 1940, were in many cases the sons and daughters of the first group, whereas those in the third group are the grandchildren of the first. I also interviewed people who migrated to Tuxpan before 1960, considering that work at the paper mill (see below) started in the nineteen forties, and these immigrants witnessed (or provoked) the diminishing of the Nahuatl language. The main objective of the interviews was to find out how all four groups of people explain the reasons why Nahuatl ceased to be spoken in Tuxpan and the ideologies behind that process. The fieldwork was carried out from 1988 to 1996. In the third section, I report on the reclamation

efforts that are taking place among some young people who want to be able to speak Nahuatl, regardless of the fact that for them it will be a second language. In the fourth section, I discuss the information presented in light of what other researchers have found in similar context.

## 1. Fieldwork in Tuxpan, Jalisco

Tuxpan is located in the southern part of the state of Jalisco. A pre-Hispanic settlement, it was part of a major Nahua region that included southernmost Colima and neighboring towns such as Tamazula and Zapotlán. During the colonial period, it was administratively within New Spain, not within Nueva Galicia, as would be expected due to its location in the western part of Mexico.[2] In 2015, it had 34,535 inhabitants. [3]

Tuxpan has attracted the attention of several researchers. There are reports, articles, travel journals and other types of texts documenting different aspects of its daily life since at least the end of the nineteenth century. Lumholtz (331-348) spent four weeks there and registered some information about the town, its people and some of the social practices he witnessed. Later on, Macías and Rodríguez Gil (1910), De la Cerda Silva (1956), Dahlgren (1962), Schöndube Baumbach (1976) and Lameiras (1990), among others, documented different anthropological, historical and archaeological aspects of Tuxpan.

Regarding linguistic information, in 1580 it was recorded that Nahuatl was one of the languages spoken locally, although the names of two other languages were mentioned in the *Relación Geográfica*: “tiam” and “cochin” (Acuña 386). Nothing is really known about them. As years went by, no other language but Nahuatl was known to be spoken in Tuxpan.

Some of the aforementioned authors commented on or registered some lexical items of the Nahuatl variety spoken in Tuxpan, but the truth is that it was only barely documented in the twentieth century.[4] One of the salient linguistic traits for which Tuxpan Nahuatl is known is that where central Nahuatl exhibits *-tl* or */χ/*, Tuxpan Nahuatl exhibits mostly *-l*. This is a characteristic commonly found in southern Jalisco and Colima Nahuatl.

On a different though related track, there have been articles and graduate theses that documented sociolinguistic aspects of Nahuatl and Spanish and the teaching of Nahuatl. Yáñez Rosales (1999), Yáñez Rosales et al. (2016), Rojas Arias (2004), and Vega Torres (2009) have focused on language displacement, language ideologies, language policy, and autonomous efforts to build a language reclamation agenda developed by self-organized groups of young men and women who, without the support of the State, believe in the importance of reclaiming their grandparents' mother tongue.

## 2. Sociolinguistic fieldwork: documenting Nahuatl substitution

I started fieldwork in 1988, about ten years after Valiñas went to Tuxpan and collected the linguistic data. By that time, the language had very few rememberers (Campbell and Muntzel 181) who could hardly maintain a conversation (Yáñez Rosales, *in press*). I was able to collect mainly fixed phrases and loose vocabulary. I met Balbina González, one of Valiñas' informants. I did not meet Paulina Bautista, the informant who provided Valiñas with examples of greetings (Valiñas, “El náhuatl en Jalisco, Colima y Michoacán” 57-62). When Valiñas and I collected the linguistic data, Nahuatl must have been in level 8b of the EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) proposed by *Ethnologue* (Simons and Fennig),[5] that is, “Nearly extinct. The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.” Simultaneously, I believe that the language was in level 9 of the scale, that is “Dormant. The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency” (Simons and Fennig).

The elders I interviewed remembered phrases in Nahuatl and some vocabulary, but the language had no communicative functions. It was not a language for conversation, or to do errands, buy things at the corner store, or ask for a bride's hand as it had been decades before. Regardless, the elders were eager to speak about life in Tuxpan when they grew up; that is, during the first decades of the twentieth

century. Therefore, I decided to try to reconstruct how Mexicano had been supplanted by Spanish during the twentieth century, according to their perspective. From 1988 to 1996, I interviewed approximately 150 people, attended numerous festivities in Tuxpan, and participated in the feasts they organize. The informants were divided into four groups:

- Generation #1, those born before 1920, who grew up speaking Mexicano as their first language or were in close contact with the language in their family environment;
- Generation #2, born between 1921-1940, that is, the sons and daughters of the first group;[6]
- Generation #3, born between 1941-1960, the granddaughters and grandsons of the first group;
- People who immigrated to Tuxpan before 1960.

After some time interviewing elders in Tuxpan, a very influential external factor in the process of language substitution became apparent: the presence of people alien to Tuxpan who ended up living there since approximately the middle of the 1940s. The *Compañía Industrial de Atenquique, Sociedad Anónima* (C.I.D.A.S.A), a paper mill, was established in 1946 in Atenquique, a small town thirteen kilometers from Tuxpan. People from surrounding states such as Aguascalientes, Colima, Michoacán, and even further, like Durango, were hired to work in several of the production sections of the paper mill. Many of them settled in Tuxpan. Soon “outsiders” were numerous, and from what the informants told me, they harassed the Indigenous people. Moreover, as industrial workers, they earned about ten times more than peasants, a fact that made Tuxpan people appear impoverished (Gabayet 64). [7] The fourth group I interviewed was people who arrived in Tuxpan before 1960 and, in their own particular way, became part of the community.

The way in which Tuxpan generations #1 and #2 explain language substitution has been reported in previous texts;[8] general comments about the opinions collected from the four groups I consulted have been included in the work by Yáñez Rosales et al. However, this is

the first-time responses from all four groups have been collated. In the following paragraphs, I will provide a panorama of what such fieldwork revealed.

There are shared opinions among the first three groups of interviewees about the reasons that caused the substitution of Nahuatl for Spanish in Tuxpan, although there are some nuances. For example, generation #1 and #2 explain that “dying out causes” led to the substitution. Both groups stated that the speakers died or married a person who did not speak Nahuatl, so they ended up not transmitting it to their children. They also mentioned that many people went to live in a different city, which is also interpreted as a cause of the decrease in the number of speakers. A frequent analogy is made between language decline and the fact that the traditional *sabanilla*, a piece of woolen cloth that women wore as a long skirt, could no longer be bought since the person who used to make them in Tuxpan also died. Therefore, it seems that some forces that could have promoted the transmission of the language died, or they reached a terminal point in the cycle of Indigenous culture reproduction, language included.

Both groups also consider internal fractures among the group, but point to each other as responsible for the interruption of the line of language transmission. Generation #1 interviewees claim that the following generation “did not want” or “did not like” to speak/learn/continue the usage of Mexicano, that they were even ashamed of speaking it (“les dio vergüenza”), that whenever someone spoke Mexicano to one of their children, the child would respond “I do not understand,” “Do not talk to me in that *ball* language” (“lengua bola,” this is, “threadless”, “tangled”). “What if you are calling me an ox or pig?” An interviewee told me, referring to herself:

#1. “I did not learn to speak Mexicano because I did not want to. My husband and his entire family spoke Mexicano and I told them: ‘You can say all you want... do whatever you want, but I won’t speak Mexicano’. I didn’t like it.” (Yáñez Rosales, “Uso y desuso del náhuatl” 128)[9]

Another lady, referring to both Nahuatl and Spanish, said:

#2. "Look, it has a lot of little turns, it's confusing. Spanish is more straightforward. My tongue is not used to speaking Mexicano." (Yáñez Rosales, "Uso y desuso del náhuatl" 129)[10]

Alongside this perspective is the feeling that it takes longer to communicate in Mexicano. An old lady told me this about her nephew:

#3. "No', he said, 'because, gosh, my tongue gets tangled up and I cannot pronounce'. And no, he has not wanted (to speak). Neither has the girl [her niece]. She says: 'No, it takes me too long'. All right, no more, then!" (Yáñez Rosales, "Uso y desuso del náhuatl" 122).[11]

From these and other statements made by members of Generation #1, I believe that it is possible to talk about the "spread" or takeover of Mestizo society. The informants from this group identify a conflicting element that made them feel their Indigenous identity was severely threatened by people who migrated to Tuxpan to work in C.I.D.A.S.A. Mexicano speakers were stigmatized in their own hometown by outsiders. Little by little, Tuxpanecs were "thrown" to the outskirts of the town. Mestizo settlers, also called "quixtianos" ("Christians") or "fueranos" ("outsiders") by Tuxpan people, earned enough money to buy properties in the downtown area. Some people also became indebted to the newcomers and were unable to pay back their loans. They ended up leaving their homes. It was common to hear that "the Indians live on the other side of the railroad tracks."

Regarding the testimonies of Generation #2 members, some of them say that the elders should have taught their children to speak the language, that they were not interested in transmitting it, and that that is why it is no longer spoken.

Significantly, Generation #2 targets "the government" as responsible for not promoting Mexicano through the educational system. They say some subjects should have been taught

through Mexicano, in the same way current junior high school students take English, and that the government should have been concerned with the maintenance of Mexicano. "School would have been a choice because sometimes teachers succeed in matters where parents do not", a woman told me.

Several of the Generation #2 interviewees believe there is a strong tie between the language of government and "civilization". A man told me that there are no more Mexicano speakers because Spanish is the language used by the government, and therefore it is the language of civilization. "How then could it have continued being spoken?" "Schooling is very civilized; they would not speak that language at school." "Those who spoke Mexicano did not go to school, that is why they spoke *that*." Another informant said: "There are *superior* words in Spanish. I have already learned Spanish and I can see I speak *better* now." "Modern studies are in Spanish. If I had a son, I would not speak Mexicano to him."

Almost none of the informants of Generation #2 consider the migration of outsiders to Tuxpan an influential force in the replacement of Mexicano. They assert that Mexicano had already been replaced by the time the number of outsiders notably increased. Some respondents reflect ambiguous feelings towards Mexicano, with comments saying the language was a "beautiful thing" and they are sorry they do not speak it anymore, while also making comments that indicate overt rejection. Referring to one of the elder women who used to greet a visitor in Nahuatl, a female informant asserted:

#4 ... "When they are going to elect a government official, they [the organizers of his visit] come looking for an *Indita* ["little female Indian"], but with an interpreter. The government likes *that*, they are amused by *that*. That is why it would have been nice [to continue speaking Mexicano], because people like doña Balbina *start speaking like chicken*, but I do not understand them." [12]

Generation #3 were divided in their opinions, with no clear tendency in what they consider

the main reason for the substitution of Nahuatl. In general, they consider Nahuatl “difficult to learn” and Spanish “easier”. Another reason mentioned by the interviewees was that “times have changed,” “Tuxpan (as a town) spread out,” industries arrived in Tuxpan and the town “became modern.” These comments relate Nahuatl to “the past,” to a time long gone, and it is not only impossible but undesirable to “go back.” One informant told me:

#5. “My paternal grandfather spoke Mexicano. But I was never interested. [Before] there were people who visited him, they heard that he spoke the language. Now, it wouldn’t do any good to know the language, right now only Spanish... People who arrived from other places didn’t influence [the language substitution], people stopped talking [Mexicano] because *they started to wake up*. It is no longer important...”[13]

There is no agreement among members of Generation #3 about the influence that people who migrated to Tuxpan had in the substitution of Nahuatl. The informant above has a positive opinion of them, whereas the following one differs:

#6 “My grandmother spoke [Nahuatl], and her sister too. But my mother did not... The new priests no longer wanted to go ask for the bride’s hand [using Nahuatl]. It was important to maintain it... Outsiders did have an influence in the fact that it is no longer spoken. It was one of the main reasons. They would shout to them [indigenous people]: ‘you bunch of barefoot Indians!’, and they would start hiding from them. In the demonstrations, when they delivered a speech [in Nahuatl], they [the outsiders] would even start to shout and harass them: ‘Do you really think that the people who come from other places are interested in listening to how people here speak?’”[14]

On the other hand, members of Generation #2 and #3 agree that “the government” did nothing to support Mexicano. They say there were no

teachers who could encourage the learning of the language.

All three Tuxpan groups referred to the fact that Mestizo society “spread”, but there are differences in how they say this occurred and the associated consequences. Some people said that Mexicano is a “difficult” language, that they required a “good memory,” needed to “pay attention” in order to learn it, needed to “study” it, whereas other informants said that Mexicano lacks meaningfulness and usefulness. There is a detachment from the language in these statements; it is clear that interviewees are talking about a language that is no longer vital to the community and does not have any communicative function.

I have tried to reconstruct how the process of substitution of Nahuatl took place according to the three Tuxpan groups. Finally, I present the opinions of the people who moved to Tuxpan before 1960, so the narratives refer to the same period.

From the very beginning, this group confirmed what Generation #1 had told me. Their opinions of the Tuxpan people were in fact scornful, classist, and racist. A very common analogy was to refer to the skin color of Tuxpan people: “Indios chococos,” “Indios chocoqueros”. The *chococo* is a dark-skinned fish that used to be sold in Tuxpan and was caught in the Tecoman, Colima area.[15] To refer to a person from Tuxpan as “indio chocoquero” was a common insult. Another reference that outsiders used when talking about people from Tuxpan was that the *indiada*, the “horde” or “gang” of Indians, lived on the other side of the railroad tracks. A synonym of *indiada* was *naturalada*, “the horde of naturals,” “the gang of natives.” One informant told me:

#7 “When I arrived [to live in Tuxpan] in 1953, I still heard people speak in Nahuatl. I know [some of the speakers]. There were very few *gente de razón*,[16] all the women wore *sabanilla* and were barefoot... I heard some of them speak in the street. So many people who came here from other places make fun of them, they laugh at them, and that is why they make them change the language. It would

have been nice [that the Nahuatl language continued being spoken], and then again it wouldn't, because they are *already* used to [speaking Spanish]. There are *already* few persons [who speak Nahuatl], they *already* dress like us..."[17]

The three "already" uttered by the interviewee are suggestive of the linguistic ideologies these people portrayed. She believes that the goal, for the Tuxpan people, must have been to leave behind their Indigenous identity: to speak Spanish, dress in Mestizo clothes, wear shoes, and become uniform in language and clothing. Under such pressure, we can say that the townspeople were dispossessed of important symbols of their Tuxpan identity.

The lack of teaching in Mexicano was also mentioned by the outsider group, although more as a solution to my concern than as something that should have been implemented.

### 3. Nahuatl reclamation in Tuxpan.

In the 1980s, a group of people self-organized people, the *Tlayacanque* ("leaders"), led the first reclamation effort. The group hearkened back to a previous authority, the "Council of Elders." They went to the Secretaría de Educación Pública[18] 14 (S.E.P.) and requested Nahuatl-speaking teachers be sent to Tuxpan so that they could go from school to school teaching the language. They were concerned that Nahuatl was at serious risk of displacement, although by the time this request was formalized, it was only the elders, mainly rememberers, who were keepers of the language.

In 1988, S.E.P. sent a first group of three Nahuatl teachers from La Huasteca region. [19] They started classes at the Music School, located in the northern part of Tuxpan. The following school year, there were six teachers, so the whole elementary school staff was complete. It was the first "Bilingual-bicultural" school in Tuxpan. It was named *Kalmekak*, as the school for the Aztec nobility was called.

However, neither the *Tlayacanque* nor the S.E.P. authorities anticipated that people from Tuxpan would be sensitive to dialectal differences. People noticed that the Nahuatl spoken by the

teachers was different from the "mera lengua mexicana" ("the true Mexican language"), that is, Tuxpan Nahuatl. This knowledge and reaction were completely unexpected. Tuxpan Nahuatl is indeed different from La Huasteca Nahuatl. [20] On the one hand, it revealed knowledge of the Mexicano language that was apparently underground. On the other hand, it revealed language loyalties in a broader sense as well as language purism. Very soon, the original intentions of the project were rejected. The townspeople's verdict was that the teachers did not know the "true" Mexican language, so it was no use sending children to that school if the purpose was to speak Mexicano.

Not only was open rejection exhibited, but also criticism. The teachers would only teach the national anthem to the students, the names of the colors, and a poem that children should recite on Mother's Day. Regardless of the fact that S.E.P. built a new building for the school and local teachers were hired in spite of the fact that they were not Nahuatl speakers, the *Kalmekak* remained incapable of teaching the language to the children. S.E.P. authorities provided teachers with textbooks written completely in Nahuatl, disregarding the fact that for Tuxpan children Nahuatl is a second language. S.E.P. also failed to adequately train the teachers, or to design a program for such a situation.

In 2000, under the label of "Intercultural bilingual education," which was S.E.P.'s new project, the *Acolmiztli* school was founded in the southern part of Tuxpan. It is staffed by Nahuatl-speaking teachers from La Huasteca as well. However, the director has been more successful in the role the school plays within Tuxpan. He has become involved with the town council and other local groups who organize cultural events. The townspeople's resistance to the presence of the teachers has diminished, too. After almost twenty years of work, the teachers have developed some materials for teaching Nahuatl as a second language. The result is a book for first and second grades, the *Noamoch tlen mexika tlajtolí*, published in 2016.[21] The Nahuatl variety used in the book is the one from La Huasteca.

In approximately 2004, a group of young activists, the *Yaoxocoyome Nahuatl*,[22] mainly

bachelor students, started a project with several ideas in mind. Their overall project aims to document Tuxpan culture, which they understand as history, “tradition” and “customs,” food, and, importantly, the Nahuatl language. The students are very much aware of their Nahua ancestry. They have collected items such as pre-Hispanic pottery, traditional garments for women and men, and set up a local museum. The city council lent them a house that is right across the main plaza. At the same time, they have acquired classical Nahuatl books and started struggling to learn the language. In February of 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, they organized a Mother Tongue International Day celebration.

This is probably the most significant language reclamation event to have taken place in Tuxpan in recent years. Although Nahuatl was considered an indicator of deprivation, there is a vivid collective memory that acknowledges a Nahua sense of belonging. It allows and inspires different projects whose goals are to reclaim, and maybe revitalize, the language and culture.

It was mainly this group in the local arena, as part of the *Concejo Indígena de Gobierno* (“Indigenous Government Council”), who supported María de Jesús Patricio Martínez’ recent effort to be registered as a candidate for the 2018 Mexican presidential election. *Marichuy*, a Tuxpan traditional medicine doctor, was unable to gather enough signatures to become a registered candidate.

#### 4. Discussion

What happened in Tuxpan could be the story of many linguistic communities that lost their native language during the twentieth century. Of course, there are particularities. Not all Mexican towns where language substitution has taken place witnessed the arrival of an industry that brought immigration. More often, small towns have experienced high numbers of people leaving.

The way Tuxpan people call outsiders, *quixtianos*, and the way outsiders call Tuxpan people, *naturales*, immediately takes us back to colonial times. It is as if the colonial era had remained static, immutable. It was not the case that the outsiders had never met indigenous

people, and that Tuxpan people had never met Mestizos. Notwithstanding, as if it were their first encounter, the conflict between the two groups was critical and it increased over three or four decades. Then it started to lessen at a very slow pace. Outsiders, after being left out of the numerous celebrations organized by Tuxpan people, decided to acquire images of the same saints so they could participate in their own way. This can be seen on San Sebastian’s day (January 20th), the largest celebration in Tuxpan. At the same time that the three main images kept in townspeople’s homes are taken to mass, other images of San Sebastian, of a smaller size and more similar to the one promoted by the church, are taken to mass too.[23] At the end, all the images go across the town and numerous groups of dancers go to every place where there is an image to acknowledge and legitimize each representation.

It is not easy to prove that the number of outsiders who moved to Tuxpan was high. In order to find out whether what the members of Generation #1 told me was true, I looked up the Municipal Civil Registrar in Tuxpan. I decided to take a two-year sample of every decade starting in 1901-1902; the last years consulted were 1961-1962. The birthplace of the child’s parents is included in the records. The results were conclusive:

**Table 1 Data from the Municipal Civil Registrar in Tuxpan, Jalisco. Children whose parents were from Tuxpan, and children whose parents were from other towns.**

Year	Children born to parents from Tuxpan:	Children born to parents from other towns:
1901	229	87
1902	167	124
Total	396	211
1911	278	14
1912	264	22
Total	542	36
1921	282	41
1922	305	34
Total	587	75
1931	297	61
1932	271	47
Total	568	108
1941	368	15
1942	370	19
Total	738	34
1951	484	201
1952	441	197
Total	925	398
1961	558	334
1962	555	289
Total	1113	623
TOTALS:	4869	1485

As can be observed, there was a tremendous increase in births to parents from other towns in the 1951-1952 period, which corresponds with the years after C.I.D.A.S.A. started operating in 1946. Whereas Tuxpan families maintained a modest but steady growth rate, families who settled in Tuxpan showed an irregular increase pattern from 1901 to 1942, but in the following two decades, the increase went beyond a thousand percent compared with 1941-1942.

I have also consulted censuses from 1930 on for additional data:

**Table 2 Population of Tuxpan, according to the national censuses:**

1930	10,406
1940	10,837
1950	14,727
1960	19,026 [24]

The increase from 1930 to 1940 is less than 8%, whereas from 1940 to 1950 it is almost 39%. Although we do not have reliable numbers of how

many people arrived to live in Tuxpan as a result of the paper mill or cement factory, it is a fact that people who had not been born in the town settled in Tuxpan. They made Tuxpan people feel like strangers in their own ancestral hometown. How and why outsiders were so successful in transmitting their linguistic ideologies of Spanish superiority, Spanish as a language suitable for expressing “civilization”, putting pressure on people to use Mestizo-modern garments, and establishing an analogy with backwardness if one went barefoot or wore traditional garments, is a topic that deserves more discussion.

The townspeople’s contact with Spanish and Spanish speakers had begun long before, and it had not been a smooth contact. José Lameiras (165-167) states that during the years the railroad tracks were set up (1889-1909), and the years of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), people in Tuxpan had experienced the arrival of all types of workers first, and soldiers from both sides later. They all went back and forth across the region demanding housing, food, and women. It was a harsh period for the people of Tuxpan. The agricultural land sharing program conducted by the post-revolutionary government met with the disapproval of the clergy, who believed that the townspeople had no right to request pieces of land that did not belong to them “legitimately”. Regardless of what the Church said, there were Tuxpan men who applied for a plot (Lameiras 172-174). So by the 1940s, when C.I.D.A.S.A. started operating with workers from the surrounding states, Nahuatl was only used in intimate spaces by those born at the beginning of the century. Their children (generation #2) did not listen to much Nahuatl in their close family; they were very detached from the indigenous language.[25] This is the group I call Generation #1. Their attitudes towards Nahuatl and Spanish indicate that the school system had impinged on their identity to the point that they deliberately rejected the possibility of maintaining the language; they viewed it as a symbol of “the past” and “lack of civilization”. One of the prejudices that came up during the fieldwork was the idea that Nahuatl from Tuxpan is an “incomplete” language. An interviewee stated:

#8 “I have been told that the language that was spoken here was not a complete language.”

Dorian, in explaining how Western language ideologies have been constructed, observes that:

In the more usual cases, the group that exercises military or political power over others will establish its own language as the language of governance in its contacts with those others. And when one speech form enjoys a favored position as the language of those who control obvious power positions (as administrators, governors, judicial officers, military officers, religious officials, major landholders, and so forth), it requires no great sagacity, but only common sense, to see that it's likely to be useful to acquire some knowledge of that language (4-5).

She then continues to explain how some European languages have become powerful symbols in the political and economic arena at the expense of regional or minority languages that might have an equally valuable literary or historical tradition.[26] She then cites the work of Joseph:

Because the intrinsic worth of dialects and of their component elements and processes is well-nigh impossible to determine, language is highly susceptible to prestige transfer. Persons who are prestigious for quantifiable reasons, physical or material, are on this account emulated by the rest of the community. These others cannot obtain the physical or material resources which confer the prestige directly (at least they cannot obtain them easily or else no prestige would be associated with them). But prestige is transferred to attributes of the prestigious persons other than those on which their prestige is founded, and these prestigious-by-transfer attributes include things which others in the community may more easily imitate and acquire, if they so choose. Language is one of these (qtd. in Dorian 8).

In the case of Mexico – and this happened not only in Tuxpan – the national school system contributed to giving a very low value to indigenous languages, regarding them as

symbols of backwardness. Moreover, following Joseph's reasoning, C.I.D.A.S.A. workers also contributed to such misconceptions since they projected themselves as successful workers due to their higher salaries and Mestizo identities. They constantly humiliated Tuxpan townspeople. So there was a transfer of prestige from the people to the language that raised the position of Spanish.

The Nahuatl dialect is another topic that deserves further discussion than is possible here. Material documentation of the Tuxpan dialect is scarce and not enough to attempt revitalizing the language or learning Nahuatl as a second language. There is documentation on other varieties of Nahuatl but not on the southern Jalisco dialect.[27] As mentioned, people in Tuxpan reacted against the La Huasteca schoolteachers because they did not speak "the true Mexican language." Not only was it considered different[28] but their Nahuatl also had many Spanish loans, a fact that, as Hill and Hill (442-444) demonstrated, is a strategy that allows the indigenous language to be updated and to maintain its communicative functions.

The teachers have gained some acceptance from Tuxpan parents, even though the dialect they teach in the two intercultural elementary schools is La Huasteca Nahuatl. On the other hand, the *Yaoxocoyome Nahuatl* are learning Central classical Nahuatl. Both tasks represent attainable and legitimate options. They represent valuable and noteworthy efforts. The symbolism such efforts imply is probably the most important achievement. The Nahuatl-speaking teachers provide a link between the terminal speaker generation (Sasse, 1992: 18), those who were born at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first two decades of the twentieth, and the children that have been taught La Huasteca Nahuatl, and the *Yaoxocoyome Nahuatl*, who have studied Central classical Nahuatl. The Nahuatl-speaking teachers have allowed the language to continue to live in Tuxpan. The positive symbolism of this is, in my opinion, undeniable.[29] At this point, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, I believe that the language is not in level 9 of the EGIDS, the "dormant" level, but in the level 9 of the alternative labels, which is "re-awakening"

(Simons and Fennig).

## Conclusions

The extinction of a language is a multifactorial phenomenon. In countries colonized by expansionist nations, entire communities, their speakers, and their languages disappeared. In many cases, this occurred during the very first years or decades of colonization. Epidemics, abusive labor exploitation, the arrival of cattle and the seizure of territories became important allies in colonization. In other cases, being colonized was a process experienced by the community at a slower pace, perhaps due to its isolation from larger cities, or because the surrounding orography or other natural barriers protected the people, for some time, from a closer contact with outsiders.

Nahuatl, the language spoken in the Valley of Mexico in the sixteenth century by the Aztecs and in probably hundreds of small towns (both in present central Mexico and in faraway regions either as a first language, a second language, or as a lingua franca), has survived until the twenty-first century as the language that has the largest number of speakers in Mexico, with 1,725,620 speakers in 2015.[30] Along with Maya, Zapotec, Quechua, Tupí, and Guaraní, Nahuatl is one of the most studied languages of the Americas. In Mexico, the largest collection of colonial texts written in an indigenous language is in Nahuatl. It exhibits much variation, too. According to INALI, there are 30 dialects.[31] Considering this information, one might think that the continuation of the language is guaranteed, an assumption that is debatable.

So, if Nahuatl seems to be in such a healthy and vital state, what has been lost with the disappearance of Tuxpan Nahuatl?

Several researchers[32] have underscored what is lost when a language becomes extinct. The arguments go from the cultural and cognitive possibilities of the human mind to establish ways of knowing, to the impossibility of translating the beauty of poetry or mythology, due to the very fact that every language has its own grammatical, semantic and other resources to name and transmit knowledge. In the case of Tuxpan, what has become extinct is a dialect,

not the entire language.

If we observe the process that took place in Tuxpan, there are factors that seem to be salient. Tuxpan remained somewhat isolated from contact with Spanish speakers during the colonial period since it was part of larger political units and the contact was somewhat indirect and delimited. The strongest contact with the colonial authorities was through the Church and its representatives.

After Mexico's War of Independence (1810-1821), Tuxpan got involved in political and economic events that brought about an aggressive contact with the "national society". The contact became worse by the end of the nineteenth century,[33] and during the twentieth Spanish speakers exerted all kinds of power over the townspeople of Tuxpan. Educational policies as well as the industrialization of southern Jalisco did their part in compelling people to leave their indigenous identity behind and become part of "the nation". They made Tuxpan townspeople think that speaking Nahuatl, dressing in their traditional garments, and being dark skinned were part of a devaluated way of being. Ceasing to speak Nahuatl seemed the easiest way to alleviate the burden. It is clear that in the decades following the Revolution, several communicative functions were already being performed in Spanish. The national school system and the issues related to applying for a plot of land were conducted in Spanish. Therefore, there were new communicative events that from the very start took place in Spanish.

As years went by, the adult generation realized that the loss of the language was in progress. It was in the early eighties that the *Tlayacanque* requested that Nahuatl-speaking teachers be brought to Tuxpan so that the language could be taught. Although this project did not yield the expected results immediately, there was an impulse from a different source that brought about changes in the youngsters' way of thinking: the Zapatista movement that began in Chiapas in 1994. Once the military phase of the uprising concluded,[34] the Zapatistas promoted meetings among different age groups of indigenous persons. One of the most important was the meetings of young men and women. In these meetings, the youth groups wore their

regional or traditional clothing and introduced themselves in their indigenous language. The meetings turned out to be a tremendous motivation for reclaiming the language. There was an interest not only in learning Nahuatl as a second language, but also in researching the language in general and variants in particular. The youngsters are aware that the dialect spoken by the intercultural-bilingual schoolteachers is different from the one the sixteenth-century poetry is written in, and both are different from the one their grandparents spoke. They have discussed the topic and regardless of the differences, they have developed a strategy to reclaim the language and other cultural assets. Their goal is clear: they want their indigenous identity back.

Going back to the question of what was lost with the disappearance of the Tuxpan dialect, I would say that, on the one hand, the right of the people to identify as a Nahua group in its entire sense was lost. In recent years, because being part of an indigenous group is sometimes translated as a benefit (economic resources, right to a scholarship or to be hired in a specific employment), people from Tuxpan have been short-changed (again) because they are not “true Indians” since they do not speak an indigenous language. In this case, they are compared with the Wixarika, a Uto-Aztecán group that has its dwellings in northern Jalisco, who wear beautiful and artistically crafted garments and, although they have fewer speakers, there is no doubt their language is very vital.<sup>[35]</sup> On top of this, considering that a dialect is historically and culturally tailored, the right to be different was lost. Phonemes, prosody, and lexicon were crafted day by day by the speech community, probably for hundreds of years. These and other features make the difference between dialects.

Hinton stated in 1998 that there was already pioneering work in the field of language revitalization. Twenty years later, the work being done is still pioneering, since there are no guidelines to follow if reversing language shift is the goal of the speech community. There are no guidelines because the circumstances in which a language ceased to be spoken differ from community to community, and the reasons for reclaiming or revitalizing the language are

different, too. No matter what linguists do, there must be community involvement. It is the most important reason to bring a language back into use and hopefully revitalize it. As Grenoble and Whaley (x) have stated, the best reason for revitalizing a language is the one the speech community finds suitable.

## Endnotes

[1] However, it must be noted that Maaori has been at risk but not in complete disuse. The “language nest” program started in the mid-1970s, when Maaori speakers were not elders yet: they were fifty and over (Tsunoda 19). I mention the age information because in Tuxpan the “terminal speaker generation” (Sasse 18) was probably born before the end of the nineteenth century, or in the first decades of the twentieth. By the time Valiñas (1979, 1982) and I arrived in Tuxpan, there were very few people who had grown up speaking Nahuatl as their first language.

[2] For more details on the colonial period of the region, see Gerhard (1986; 1993).

[3] See INEGI 2015, “Número de habitantes.”

[4] See Arreola, 1934; Ruvalcaba, 1935; Valiñas 1982

[5] On the basis of Fishman’s 1991 proposal, Lewis and Simons (2010), and Simons and Fennig (2018) have made adjustments to Fishman’s scale. The scale has the following levels of vitality: 0 International; 1 National; 2 Provincial; 3 Wider Communication; 4 Educational; 5 Developing; 6a Vigorous; 6b Threatened; 7 Shifting; 8a Moribund; 8b Nearly Extinct; 9 Dormant; 10 Extinct. (See [www.ethnologue.com/about/language-status](http://www.ethnologue.com/about/language-status)). The authors have included three more levels that allow researchers to provide a more accurate description of the situation of the language. One of the three is particularly useful in this work: “9 Re-awakening. The ethnic community associated with a dormant language is working to establish more uses and more users for the language with the result that new L2 speakers are emerging”. The topic will be developed in Section 3 of this article.

[6] Kinship was an important criterion for inclusion in this group, but year of birth was the strongest criterion.

[7] Gabayet’s work is about the process of industrial development in the south of Jalisco. She studied CIDASA, and the TOLTECA cement factory. Industrial workers, who most frequently had been peasants just like the people from Tuxpan, developed an economic and material standard that left Tuxpan townspeople far behind. Very soon, CIDASA workers’ homes had refrigerators, gas stoves and other appliances, as well as tiled floors, whereas other homes did not. In fact, houses with dirt floor were common in the eighties and nineties.

[8] See Yáñez Rosales 1994; 1999.

[9] Translation of: “Yo no me enseñé [a hablar mexicano] porque no quise. Mi esposo y toda su familia d[e] él

hablaban mexicano y yo les decía, ‘digan todo lo que quieran... háganle como quieran, pero yo no hablo mexicano’, a mí no me gustó.”

[10] Translation of: “Mire, tiene muchas vueltas, es revoltoso. El español es más derecho. La lengua no está acostumbrada a hablar en mexicano...”

[11] Translation of: ‘No, dice, ‘porque, ¡ay! se me enreda la lengua y no puedo pronunciar’ y no, no ha querido [hablar mexicano]. La muchacha tampoco. Dice: ‘no, me entretengo’, ¡ah bueno, ya no pues!

[12] Translation of: “...cuando van a elegir un gobernante, vienen a buscar una indita pero con intérprete, al gobierno le gusta, lo elevan con eso, por eso hubiera sido bonito, porque la gente como doña Balbina se agarran hablando como pollitos pero yo no les entiendo.” The verb *enlevar*, often used in rural Spanish in Mexico, means “to be entertained,” “to be distracted with,” the idea being that while someone is distracted, he or she might get fooled or cheated.

[13] Translation of: “Mi abuelo paterno hablaba mexicano, pero yo nunca tuve el interés... Visitaban a mi abuelo, oían decir que él lo hablaba. Ahora, no serviría de nada saber esa lengua, orita el puro español... La gente que llegó de fuera no tuvo que ver, se dejó de hablar en que [sic] la gente se fue despertando. Ya no es de importancia...”

[14] Translation of: “Mi abuela hablaba y su hermana, pero mi mamá no... Los nuevos curas ya no quisieron ir a pedir la mano de las novias. Era muy importante que se conservara... Sí influyeron [los de fuera] en que se dejara de hablar, fue una de las causas principales, les decían “bola de indios patas rajadas” y se andaban escondiendo. En los mítines, cuando les decían un discurso, incluso empezaban a ofender, a gritar, “Ay, ¿a poco creen que [a] la gente de fuera le interesa oír como habla [la gente de aquí]?”

[15] Reyes Garza (49) states that it is caught in a fresh water lake, Alcuzagüe, in Colima; it is edible. It is also known as chococo prieto, an adjective that reaffirms its dark-colored skin.

[16] This expression is definitely a derogatory term that refers to non-Indigenous people as “superior”. It can be translated as “reasoning people”, “thinking people,” whereas the opposite, in reference to Indigenous people, would be “non-reasoning,” “non-thinking”, which together with *indiada*, *naturalada* (“the naturals,” “the natives”), derived from “manada,” “herd,” “pack,” take us back to colonial times. They all give an idea of what the outsider group thought about the people from Tuxpan. The *sabanilla* is the long wool skirt that Tuxpan women used to wear. It was their traditional garment.

[17] Translation of: “Cuando llegué [a Tuxpan] en 1953, todavía me tocó oír hablar en mexicano. Conozco a la señorita Concha, doña Jesusita Villanueva, había muy poca gente de razón, todas eran de *sabanilla* y descalzas, las indígenas. A una que otra persona me tocó oír hablar en la calle. Tanta gente de fuera que ha venido, les hacen guasa, se ríen de ellas y por eso las hacen que cambien de idioma. Hubiera sido bonito y no, porque ya están

acostumbradas. Las personas ya son pocas, ya visten igual a uno.”

[18] The Mexican Ministry of Public Education.

[19] La Huasteca is a diverse and culturally rich region located in the states of San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, and Hidalgo.

[20] Valiñas (“El náhuatl actual” 61-67), recorded a conversation between Paulina Bautista from Tuxpan and Alfredo Ramírez from Xalitla, Guerrero. He wanted to assess intelligibility between the two dialects. After some initial hesitations from both speakers, the conversation was achieved. The point here is that Tuxpan Nahuatl is not so different from other dialects, although it does exhibit some traits that indicate a subdivision from Western Peripheral Nahuatl, one that indicates a southern Jalisco and Colima Nahuatl dialect. See Lastra 1986, Canger 1988.

[21] This achievement was possible after Agustín Vega Torres’ work on stressing the importance of replacing the traditional translation method of teaching the language. It finally had an impact on the way teachers were working (see Vega Torres 2009).

[22] “Young Nahuatl warriors”.

[23] The image of San Sebastián promoted by the church has short curly hair, whereas the three images kept in people’s houses have long straight hair.

[24]<https://www.uv.mx/apps/censos-conteos/1910/menu1910.html>The population for 1910 and 1920 is included in the “Cantón de Zapotlán”, which was the geographically larger division at the time (See [www.uv.mx/apps/censos-conteos/1910/menu1910.html](https://www.uv.mx/apps/censos-conteos/1910/menu1910.html)). De la Cerda Silva considers that Tuxpan did not have more than 8000 people during the first two decades of the century (21).

[25] This could have been due to the policies of the school system, which in the decade of the twenties and early thirties, following the plan drafted by José Vasconcelos, the first Secretary of Education in the post-revolutionary period, promoted the “incorporation” of the indigenous peoples into the “nation” through a national school system (Heath 87).

[26] Schiffmann (166) refers to a similar case when talking about the language policy decisions in post-independence India, when the government chose to make Hindi the “national language,” and disregarded Urdu, Bengali, and Tamil, although they had a longer literary history.

[27] This seems to be the opposite of the situation described by Warner, Luna and Butler (2007) regarding the Mutsun language of California. The language was well documented at the beginning of the twentieth century; however, there are spelling inconsistencies and the lexicon has been translated from Mutsun to Spanish and from Spanish to English, which makes semantics difficult to control.

[28] Besides lexical differences, Tuxpan people probably noticed an important phonological one: the Nahuatl dialect of Tuxpan has /l/, where other dialects have /tl/ and/or /t/. It corresponds to an important phoneme that can be found at the end of a word (as part of the absolute suffix of nouns), in the middle (at the beginning of the syllable), or at the

beginning of the syllable and the word.

[29] See Hinton 2001 for a discussion about the decisions on what dialect to revitalize. She talks about the possibility of an amalgam of dialects when there are different dialects in contact. This is a possibility. It already happened in western Mexico, as it has been documented elsewhere (Yáñez Rosales and Schmidt-Riese, 2017).

[30] See INEGI 2015, "Hablantes de lengua indígena"

[31] INALI stands for "Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas."

[32] See Hale, 1998; Mithun, 1998; Nettle and Romaine, 2000.

[33] As was quoted above, for the historical facts prior to the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), I am following José Lameira's work (Lameiras 1990).

[34] This took place in the first half of 1994.

[35] The Wixarika language had 52,483 speakers in 2015. See INEGI 2015, "Hablantes de lengua indígena."

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# Culture Heritage and Politics of Reconciliation: Reinventing the Blues in the Narratives of The Delta Blues Museum and the B.B. King Museum

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## Abstract

*“Mississippi Goddam,” a song written and performed by the African American jazz singer and pianist Nina Simone, captures all too well the national imaginary of the state of Mississippi as racist backwater. The song was written in 1964 during one of the most turbulent periods of U.S. history. It was first released on her album *Nina Simone in Concert*, based on recordings of three concerts she gave at Carnegie Hall the same year. The song mirrors Simone’s response to the racial violence in the 1960s, the anger she felt at the murder of African American Medgar Evers in Mississippi, and the 16th street Baptist Church bombing in which four black children got killed. Released as a single, the song became a national anthem during the Civil Rights movement. Today, the state of Mississippi is working hard to improve its image and reputation. It welcomes visitors with the sign ‘Welcome to the Home of America’s Music.’ Formerly known as the Magnolia State, the state of Mississippi now officially boasts its reputation as the home of U.S.-American national music.*

**Keywords:** cultural heritage, Delta Blues Museum, Blues, B.B. King Museum

The name of this tune is Mississippi Goddam  
And I mean every word of it

Alabama's gotten me so upset  
Tennessee made me lose my rest  
And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam

Alabama's gotten me so upset  
Tennessee made me lose my rest  
And everybody knows about Mississippi Goddam

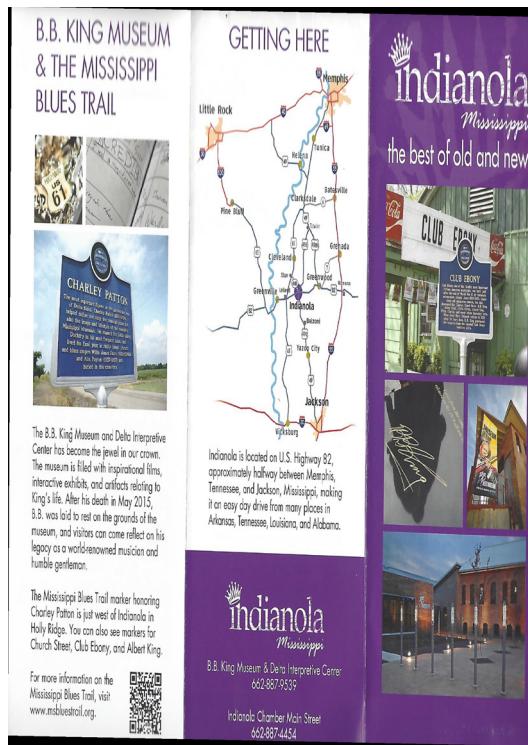
(Nina Simone)

“Mississippi Goddam,” a song written and performed by the African American jazz singer and pianist Nina Simone, captures all too well the national imaginary of the state of Mississippi as racist backwater. The song was written in 1964 during one of the most turbulent periods of U.S. history. It was first released on her album *Nina Simone in Concert*, based on recordings of three concerts she gave at Carnegie Hall the same year. The song mirrors Simone’s response to the racial violence in the 1960s, the anger she felt at the murder of African American Medgar Evers in Mississippi, and the 16th street Baptist Church bombing in which four black children got killed. Released as a single, the song became a national anthem during

the Civil Rights movement. Today, the state of Mississippi is working hard to improve its image and reputation. It welcomes visitors with the sign ‘Welcome to the Home of America’s Music.’ Formerly known as the Magnolia State, the state of Mississippi now officially boasts its reputation as the home of U.S.-American national music.

Paul Simon’s song “Graceland” wistfully anticipated the newly courted imagery. With the lines “the Mississippi Delta is shining like a national guitar” from his song ‘Graceland,’ Paul Simon helped push an alternative imaginary of the Deep South (Graceland, 1986). As legend and history has it, the Mississippi region provided the cradle for an African American musical success story from blues and jazz to rock, soul, and hip hop around the globe. Cleveland, Mississippi is now home to the second Grammy Museum in the U.S., after Los Angeles. The state of Mississippi’s new welcome sign underscores that fact that the local, regional, and national cultural industries have joined forces to promote perhaps the most tropicalized and demonized state in the nation as an attractive tourist site, home of American

cultural heritage and cherished part of the nation. Music museums, blues trails, and new juke joints have recently emerged to celebrate a new renaissance of the blues. Educational programs, cultural heritage foundations, cultural industry, and music festivals join hands to keep the blues legacy of the Mississippi Delta alive.



(official flyer of Indianola tourism)

Beginning in the mid-1990s, official tourist companies began to incorporate blues heritage tours into their marketing strategies for the state of Mississippi. In close collaboration with the Memphis Convention and Visitor's Bureau and the Mississippi Division of Tourism, the initiative America's Blues Alley has emerged to draw national and international tourists to Beale Street and music spots in Mississippi. As King describes it, "Since 2000, local and state organizations have emerged to begin the slow and tedious process of coordinating the state's blues tourism industry" (King 71). The United States Senate's designation of the year 2003 as the "Year of the Blues" provided additional support to promote a new blues culture in the American South, and King calls this year "the latest major blues revival" (3). With Martin Scorsese's documentary series *The Blues* (2003) including the work of seven internationally acclaimed film directors

and the support of a national education program for schools, the blues gained new prominence on public broadcasting. The state of Mississippi founded its own Blues Commission, with the objective to create blues maps and blues trail markers along the highways and major roads, helping "travelers in locating blues-related sites" (King 68).



(copyright Raussert 2017)

The first blues museum opened its doors in 1979. It was founded by the local library director, Sid Graves. In 1999, the Delta Blues Museum was bought by the City of Clarksdale and became a "stand-alone" museum in the former freight depot of the Illinois Central Railroad. The Delta Blues Museum, a small budget museum, emerged from a grassroots interest to commemorate the blues heritage of the Delta. More endeavors by institutions and private citizens have emerged in recent years. Many museums have been added to the musical map of the state of Mississippi, including the Rock 'n' Roll and Blues Heritage Museum in Clarksdale, the Highway 61 Blues Museum (Leland), the River City Blues Museum in Vicksburg, the Greenwood Blues Heritage Museum and Gallery in Greenwood, and the elaborate \$15 million high-tech B.B. King Museum in Indianola, King's hometown. (cf. King 17).

As Sharon Macdonald asserts, "Museum studies has come of age" (1), with Ruth Philippa also finding that "museums have become popular subjects of academic study and critique" (17). Museum studies, though, have paid little attention to museums of popular music. This is all the more surprising, as the flourishing of music museums in recent years shows how

much they have gained cultural, educational, and economic relevance. To put popular music into a museum may, at first glimpse, appear like trapping a songbird in a cage. How to combine textuality, performativity, visual and sonic texts to create a coherent narrative? A central objective of this article is to find out which types of narratives emerge in blues museums. How do they narrate music and how do they account for the music's historical context(s)? Referring to contemporary memory practice, Rosemarie Beier-de Haan mentions that "we can see changes in the ways in which history is staged, and in how societies (nations or smaller collectivities) remember the past" (186). For a state like Mississippi, and a region like the Delta with their loaded history, this seems all the more precarious. History always represents both past and present, and the history of Mississippi "must be understood as being about the present, and as embedded in a continuing cultural practice, as much as about the past" (Beier-de Haan 186). Whereas the study of history is generally dominated by textuality, "museums are shaped by a fundamentally different presentational mode" (Beier-de Haan 191).

This article departs from the premise that multimedia narratives are at the base of exhibits in blues museums, and with a cultural studies approach, looks at blues museums as multimedia narrative sites embedded in heritage and tourist politics. Museums are often devoted to topics and events that appeal to a particular audience. "While open to all, and usually keen to attract a wide section of society, these museums serve communities of interest who share specialist knowledge" (Watson 3). The visitors to the blues museums include scholars of music and cultural studies, nostalgic blues fans, tourists on Highway 61 package tours, global travelers, exotic gazers, and kids who take advantage of educational programs to learn how to play the blues. The range is as rich as the diversity of blues musicians from the Delta. The expectations and the level of acquired knowledge differ from visitor to visitor and, in general, a museum visit turns site into experience, since "the museum is more than a place. It is a network of relationships between objects and people" (Henning 11).

In this context, multimedia narratives serve a

double purpose: they allow for the coexistence of orality, textuality, performativity, and interactivity. In addition, they provide a rich spectrum of different narrative modes to secure a high appeal level to diverse groups of visitors. The multimedia narrative enhances the options and maintains flexibility and mobility as key concepts for contemporary museum culture. Danielle Rice reminds us that "museums are dynamic, complex social institutions that are constantly reinventing themselves in response to self-scrutiny and external stimulus" (79).

In my reading of multimedia narratives in selected blues museums, I will bear in mind that "most effective studies of museums are those that are informed by history and theory and practice" (Philipps 17). As a scholar of African American culture and music, I visited a series of music museums in the Delta in March 2017, have traveled various blues trails, put myself in the shoes of the museum visitors, searched archives, and talked to visitors and staff in the museums. Research results affirmed that blues heritage is closely linked to cultural tourism, which includes both "tangible and intangible elements," from historic sites to sites of worship, folklore, and myth (Soper 96). Blues museums, like all sites of popular music heritage, walk a tightrope between the music as performance, entertainment, cultural heritage, political expression, educational tool, and a cultural industry. King expresses that in most of the museums in Mississippi, the blues is hardly remembered as a political medium of struggle and protest (140). "The social conditions," so he explains, "gave rise to the development of the blues, and the harsh realities experienced by many Mississippi blues musicians, are conspicuously absent" (140). The focus is on entertainment and escapism. Paige A. McGinley, on the other hand, reminds us,

it may seem as though the front-porch-styled stage at Beale on Broadway, like the stages at the well-known chain House of Blues, represents something of a Disneyfication of blues—late capitalist fiction that bears no resemblance to the 'real thing.' But such claim only holds water if we neglect the intensely

intertwined histories of blues performance and the popular theater—histories that throw into question the premise that the ‘real thing’ ever was. Far from descending from authenticity into theatricality, black vernacular blues have moved in tune and in time with theatrical conventions since the moments of their earliest emergence. (4)

While King emphasizes the importance of historical context, McKinley’s comment recalls the close link between the blues, showbiz, and performativity throughout the history of the blues. The truth lies somewhere in between. One may contest that the blues looks back on a long trajectory of interpretations and reinventions. Ralph Ellison defined the blues as catharsis (Raussert 96). Thinkers like Amiri Baraka interpreted the blues as weaponry for resistance and political struggle. Musicians from the Rolling Stones to U2 claimed the blues as foundation of youth and rock culture. B.B. King considered the blues the very soul of America. These are metaphysical, political, and cultural enhancements of the blues beyond its sheer musicality. With respect to blues heritage cultures, it comes as no surprise, as Craik emphasizes, that cultural tourism also involves marketing “cultural sites, events, attractions, and/or experiences” (113). The blues museums in the Delta are no exception.

The history of tourism may have begun with the works of Alan Lomax. When he visited Clarksdale in the early 1940s, he described the town as “the cotton capital of the nation, locus of the biggest cotton plantation in the South” (28). People called the largely African American business area “the bustling ‘New World’” and Clarksdale “the social and amusement center for all the plantation workers from 30 miles around” (28). The current visitor to the state of Mississippi faces a rich map and network of music museums, music sites, and blues trails that fill the former cultural gap between the cities of New Orleans, Louisiana, and Memphis, Tennessee. Whereas New Orleans - the Crescent City and mythic cradle of jazz - has held a high place in American tourism before and after Hurricane Katrina and Memphis lures visitors with sites such as Elvis

Presley’s Graceland and the famous Beale Street, Mississippi had been absent from the musical map of the cultural tourist industry for a long time. However, Mississippi has gained new momentum by being part of the Highway 61 blues trail that has become part of tourist package tours and locations like Clarksdale.

As King has said, “as a subset of a larger international tourism industry, blues tourism encompasses a complex series of often interrelated and multidimensional public- and private-sector organizations, from blues museums to chambers of commerce to local entrepreneurs which attempt to draw tourists to specific areas ... (e.g. Chicago, Memphis, the Mississippi Delta) to experience the culture or heritage of the blues” (3). In King’s analysis, blues tourism has become a pivotal example of cultural tourism. Indeed, “the growth of cultural tourism and the expansion of the heritage industry aim at satisfying a growing longing for the archaic and authentic in times of rapid global changes” (Raussert and Seeliger 43).

In its analytical part, this article selectively explores two intermedia narratives of the blues, by looking at the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi and the B.B. King Museum in Indianola, Mississippi. Both museums form part of “transmedia storytelling,” which is the creation of a narrative through multiple documents belonging to various media (Jenkins 17-19). These story worlds are channeled through narrative progression. Bharat Dave reminds us that “(h)eitage as a heterogeneous terrain is simultaneously framed by and frames the perspectives through which it is viewed. Some vehicles through which heritage are sustained include the preservation of material culture, emulation, preservation through surrogates and copies, documentation, simulation and rituals” (41). The story worlds in the selected music museum also include various sites like exhibit rooms, film sections, music auditoriums, music bar and/or coffee corner and not to forget the museum shop.

The narrative progressions in the selected museums show different ways of guiding the visitor through the exhibition spaces. Both museums share an agenda that writes a new history of the blues as quintessential American

music and creates an image of the South as a unity of land, music, and people. Both draw upon multimedia narration combining acoustic, visual, performative, and interactive material. Still they decisively differ in their narrative progression.

### The Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi



(Photograph The Delta Blues Museum, Clarksdale, Mississippi, copyright Wilfried Raussett 2017)

As William Ferris put it, “If there is a musical navel or crossroads for Mississippi Delta Blues, it must be on the streets of Clarksdale, a city that lies in the heart of the region known for the blues” (143). From his own fieldwork, he gathers that “generations of young black musicians fled surrounding plantations and moved to Clarksdale, where department stores, restaurants, barbershops, and WROX radio station were beacons of hope and excitement” (143). The Delta Blues museum invites the sojourner on an imaginary journey into the blues world of the Delta. The narrative consists of multimedia and non-chronological narration that is the introduction to the many blues trails, markers, and sites that mark the effervescent and ephemeral history of blues. The Delta, with its unpopulated, open, and raw landscape, makes it difficult to provide solid touchstones to remember. Conversely, it provides the ideal setting for myth-making. The blues trail is an invitation to track the roots and routes of blues events, sites, and performers. It accepts the gaps and holes in the blues map and allows multiple gravesites, myths, and storylines to exist side by side. The basic structure of the Delta Blues museum shows the same conceptual approach

to history and memory: it is fundamentally interactive. Through the exhibited props and costumes of performers, the museum becomes a dressing room for the sojourner to slip into their blues’ persona. The exhibition strips the blues of a definitive history. Each tourist becomes a performer in their own right to revisit the Delta’s musical contributions to the world of blues.

The Delta Blues Museum throws the visitor into an open museum space with multiple directions to choose from. As Hillier and Tzortzi point out, in reflecting space politics in museums, “(one) alternative is to design space in such a way that sequences are more localized, and interconnected so as to allow visitors to choose different paths and construct their own pattern of experience” (299). This also aptly describes the open choreography of the exhibits. Not surprisingly, the Delta Blues Museum marks the starting point of the blues trails and tours in the Delta. Its open structure invites the visitor to engage with the history of the blues imaginatively and creatively. The museum in its seemingly arbitrary arrangement of music instruments, paraphernalia, festival posters, photographs, and blues art work provides more simulacra than “the real thing.” The costumes, T-shirts, and props create a theater setting in which visitors can imagine themselves in the clothes of the blues musician or blues festival participant. The visitor’s performative acts are part of the exhibit’s strategy to fill the absence of “the real thing”. Upon entering the exhibit space, the visitor encounters a first textual message that states the unity of music, land, and people in its new imaginary of Mississippi. The opening walk leads the visitor through a sequence of showcases on the left that display musical instruments from Africa; on the right, the visitor is faced with a series of festival posters that display the recent blues festival history in Clarksdale (Sunflower Festival, Juke Joint Festival) in the 21st century. Past and present appear simultaneously to the viewer. Similar to the spatially open structure, the timeline follows no chronological sequence. The viewer’s imagination wanders between African past and American present. With the juxtaposition of ancient African instruments and contemporary festival posters, the museum exhibits tradition

and variation side-by-side (reminiscent of Bantu sense of time that is essentially a place-time). As visitors enter deeper into the exhibit space, they can decide which direction to turn to next. Some photographs, many posters, paraphernalia, and music instruments point towards a male-dominated blues history (female blues musicians are conspicuously absent) and introduce the visitor to renowned blues musicians like Robert Johnson, John Lee Hooker, Charly Patton, and Muddy Waters in abstract fashion. A firm material grounding of the blues occurs in the extended section of the museum that is now home to the remnants of Muddy Waters' cabin. Opposite the cabin, there is a long glass window gallery with a series of portrait busts of blues musicians in the newly extended part of the museum, directing the visitor's gaze outward. Looking out through the window, the viewer faces a Robert Johnson mural in contemporary street-art-style. This view demonstrates that the Delta Blues museum is primarily designed to attract the visitor to the city of Clarksdale, the Delta region, and its related blues trails. Like the Muddy Waters sculpture whose gaze looks out to the urban surroundings, the extended window front marks another substitute of "the real thing." It points to the reinvention of the blues in the streets of Clarksdale. A street art painted Cadillac with Delta motifs and a mural of perhaps the most mythologized Delta blues musician, Robert Johnson, illustrate the new mobility of blues tropes.



(Photograph Looking outside the Delta Blues Museum, copyright Wilfried Raussert 2017)



(Photograph Street Scene in Clarksdale Mississippi, copyright Wilfried Raussert 2017)

Starting at the car, the viewer's gaze drifts to the porch, sign, and walls of the Ground Zero blues club, a site plastered with posters of recent and up-coming blues events. The Ground Zero blues club complements the museum with a performative space for regular local gigs and concerts during the the Juke Joint festival and the Sunflower blues festival. One of the owners of the recently created juke joint is the African American actor Morgan Freeman. The blues club carries a name with heavy symbolical reference: In the context of the new Mississippi Delta music culture it seems to signal that this is the location of a new beginning, showing visitors that they are just at very beginning of their journey into blues history.



(Photograph Ground Zero Blues Club, copyright Wilfried Raussert 2017)

The gift shop at the Delta Blues museum provides a map for the visitors that contains shops, galleries, other museum spaces, gig locations, hotels, and bars in Clarksdale that are intended to intensify the new blues experience. Memorial walls holding the names of local and regional blues performers and site markers throughout Clarksdale provide further information to fill the absence of a lost blues culture. A clear homage to the blues as the backbone of modern and contemporary popular music culture, the new blues in Clarksdale is more geared toward cultural production than cultural heritage. The objective is to culturally and economically create a new blues culture that cherishes its heroes in artistic production like blues painting, sculptures, and blues literature. This creates a new blues imaginary geared to uplift the region from its image of racist backwater and attract new business into Clarksdale and the surrounding region. The deserted Paramount Theatre, with one letter suggestively missing in its program announcement, hints, though, that “authentic blues” still remains a myth. It appears to be a slow process to create a new cultural industry and integrate it into the community at the same time.



(Photograph Paramount Theater, Clarksdale, copyright Wilfried Raussert 2017)

As McGinley points out, “the Delta is filled with sites that multiply the grounds upon which blues tourism stakes its claims of priority. These multiple birthplaces, multiple crossroads, and multiple headstones establish blues’ historical sites as transitive or processual, rather than substantive or positivist” (199). The visitor to the Delta becomes a surrogate: “The irreducible profusion of transitive sites of blues tourism in the Mississippi Delta sets authenticity in motion, constructing it as always mobile and multiple” (199).

Authenticity itself, as David Grazian reminds

us, “is never an objective quality inherent in things, but simply a shared set of beliefs about the nature of things we value in the world” (12). As Grazian explains, “authenticity … is always manufactured: like life itself, it is a grand performance, and while some performances may be more convincing than others, its status as a contrivance hardly changes as a result. … Like other kinds of stereotypes, images of authenticity are idealized representations of reality, and are therefore little more than collectively produced fictions” (11-12).

### The B.B. King Museum in Indianola, Mississippi



(Photograph The B.B. King Museum, Indianola, Mississippi, copyright Wilfried Raussert 2017)

The B.B. King museum, however, is a different story. While the Delta Blues Museum and the Delta blues heritage trails lack a cohesive center, the B.B. King Museum established itself as the arguably most frequented tourist attraction on the Delta. The museum opened its doors in September 2008 and “reflects, in part, the vision of the B.B. King museum Foundation and Board, a heterogeneous group made up of whites and African Americans who wanted to develop a critical tourist designation in a struggling region” (King 17). Economically, the B.B. King Museum project raised \$15 million to install its multimedia, high-tech version of a blues museum. Its narrative concept provides a mix of a chronological and circular narration that aims for unity and cohesion. The museum is the result of an active engagement of B.B. King to commemorate and celebrate the blues as an African American cultural achievement. Throughout his music career, B.B. King artistically and economically supported academic programs

and cultural heritage endeavors to collect and preserve blues material. His collaboration with William Ferris helped build the Blues archive at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. King eventually donated his blues collection, thus providing the base for the largest blues collection in the world today and “an academic home of the blues” (Ferris xi). He also worked together with Ferris during Ferris’ appointment as chairman of the Endowment of the Humanities in the 1990s and helped bridge the scholarly world and the world of music. The B.B. King museum, in part, draws on collections of texts, music, and paraphernalia from King’s own collection. The floating signifiers that characterize much of the exhibition in the Delta Blues Museum find a solid grounding in the life story of B.B. King and the latter’s awareness of the need to preserve one’s oral culture during one’s lifetime.

The museum’s narrative also pays tribute to the well-intentioned but ambiguous overall state policy of reconciliation. While the history of the often state-sanctioned racial divide and racial violence in Mississippi before the Civil Rights movement is absent from the Delta Blues Museum and most trail markers, the B.B. King Museum does integrate pointed references to racial segregation. In B.B. King’s memories, the years of rigid segregation remain alive, like in the “Jim Crow on the Road” section of the exhibit.



(Photograph Jim Crow on the Road, B.B. King Museum, copyright Raussert)

The overall narrative in the museum, though, emphasizes the blues as a national music and aims for a racial reconciliation by emphasizing an essential unity between land, music, and people. The narrative of the B.B. King Museum seeks closure; it does so through the incorporation of

King’s graveside into the terrain and through a circular structure that frames B.B. King’s life story as a success story of the blues. The narrative of the exhibition emerges from the privileged position of the protagonist. It provides historical material such as citations, photographs, and material objects from B.B. King’s guitars to tour bus fragments. In addition, the most recent B.B. King tour bus now serves as a vehicle for contemporary blues tours in the Delta and is parked outside the museum. Whereas the narrative in the Delta Blues Museum needs to compensate for the lack of material available to document the music and life story of Robert Johnson, the B.B. King Museum can select which pieces to show and in which narrative sequence. The B.B. King Museum thus occupies a unique role in the network of blues trails and sites in the Delta region: it represents the ultimate success story of the Delta blues on a global scale.



(Photograph ‘Lucille’ and B.B. King tour bus, copyright Wilfried Raussert 2017)

The B.B. King museum invites the visitor on a circular tour. The first room of the exhibit is a small movie theater that plays a documentary about B.B. King’s return to Indianola, Mississippi, and his personal and musical links to the Delta. After watching the film, the visitor enters a room that travels back in time to B.B. King’s childhood period and the cotton industry in the Delta region. The structural concept is a circular and chronological narrative. The narrative voice - spoken and written - is B.B. King’s. Information boards spread throughout the exhibit rooms contain citations from B.B. King that allow a first-person autobiographical narrative to guide the visitor on his tour. The personal narrative is carefully linked to the history of the land and

the music. B.B. King's musical progression from the Delta through Memphis to Las Vegas and around the globe is embedded in a success story of blues as the musical backbone to the development of rock as global popular music. Each section is self-contained as part of a chronological life narrative. Each section welcomes the viewer with a particular design. If the visitor moves from room 1 to room 2, the optics signal a move from a rural to an urban setting. The visitor encounters a fragmented model of a tour bus which indicates the long years on the road. A replica of an early B.B. King recording studio links the archaic blues world to the music market, recording, and production.

The showcase holding B.B. King's Grammy awards marks a final point of recognition and fame. After leaving the section with two interactive stations that allow viewers to practice their own guitar skills alongside B.B. King, visitors enter a second small movie theater. The final film highlights B.B. King's recognition by the white music world, showing concert gigs with U2 and Eric Clapton. The film stories of the museum present a narrative from local recognition to worldwide fame. They connect B.B. King's global success story with his rural beginnings and create a story of interrelated roots and routes.

One could say that the B.B. King story gives a positive answer to the open questions and uncertainties along the blues trail through the Mississippi Delta. The B.B. King Museum presents a bluesman finally coming home, telling his own story, and presenting his own house of the blues. B.B. King's narration in the opening film is a conscious performance of (re)integration. It links the protagonist with his Mississippi birthplace as well as the Mississippi region with the nation at large. It shows B.B. King as a master of performance in musical and verbal skills. He gives his voice to an oral reenactment of the music's history in the Delta. 'The Thrill is Gone'—a reference to one of King's late blues titles—but the music's history continues to shape cultural, economic, and racial politics. B.B. King always favored a dialogical and relational approach to the white world. The narration in the autobiographical style speaks through B.B. King and his reconciliatory voice is certainly most welcomed by the state policy of

reconciliation.

### Heritage in Local and Global Commodity Culture

As Dallen Timothy and Gyan Nyaupane have argued, "Being inherently about power and control, heritage is often utilized intentionally by governments (and other institutions, addition mine) to achieve some measured ends and to demonstrate their authority over people and places" (44). The blues museums are part of a larger strategic use of music heritage to insert new economic and cultural life into the region and are bound in networks of different social actors. These networks also dictate in differing degrees the narrative and spatial politics within the museums. The tourist industry is a major factor in the process of promotion and conceptual orientation. It is also important to consider that "cultural commodification frequently results in the loss of control over cultural resources as outside agents begin to capitalize on cultural elements that belong to others" (62). Like most contemporary museums, the blues museums in the Delta include museum shops. For sale are CDs and scholarly books, but primarily musical paraphernalia, decorated cups and plates as well as T-shirts and posters picturing blues musicians and festivals. The racial exotic is sold neither in the B.B. King Museum nor the Delta Blues Museum. In tune with the overall conceptualization of the Mississippi blues map and trails, there is a tendency to sell merchandize—objects, texts, images—that reinforce the mystique about the holy trinity of land, music, and people and unresolved mysteries about the life of Robert Johnson and the like. Certainly, Mississippi blues tourism, with its multiple gravesites, also taps into what Philipp Stone describes as "dark tourism" that "may be referred to as the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre" (146).

It is commonly shared knowledge that 'selling ethnicity' and 'selling the exotic' are both frequent economic manifestations as well as powerful marketing strategies. Both phenomena have emerged from a strong multiculturalism and pluralist cultural orientation in discourses within contemporary urban society. Various

discourses intersect when an increasing interest in postcolonial studies, the academic institutionalization of ethnic studies, the ever-expanding tourist industry, as well as consumer interest in ethnic products in terms of food, fashion and culture, meet, collide, and fuse in global economic and cultural exchange. The processes behind ‘selling ethnicity’ are manifold, as are the questions about agency revolving around the processes of commodifying self and other. As black feminist scholar bell hooks argues, “(t)he commodification of otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling” (21). The tourist of blues tours is probably attracted by a mix of nostalgia, curiosity, and yearning for a rural black culture as the other to modern society. “Within commodity culture,” as hooks has it, “ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can live up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture” (21). Although a racial dimension is conspicuously absent from the museum narratives, we can assume that for the majority of visitors on the blues tours, it is a given that the roots of blues lie in black music and experience.

A mix of heritage as invention, a new blues cultural industry, free-floating markers, and mysterious stories multiplied by speculative gravesites describe the Delta blues world as exotic. Foster reminds us that fully domesticating the exotic would limit its potential to create surprising effects, thereby assimilating it “into the humdrum of everyday routines” (21-22). Thus, while the exotic may be used to assimilate and neutralize cultural differences, it also signifies a comprehension of difference and diversity that is inevitably distorted and always uncontrollable. Hence, assimilation is necessarily limited and, as Huggan points out, “as a system, then exoticism functions along predictable lines but with unpredictable content; and its political dimensions are similarly unstable ...” (14). Moreover, it is necessary to take into consideration that political as well as economic changes bring about shifts in agency that influence who, where, when, and how ‘the exotic’ is sold and for what purpose beyond simply gaining profit. In this context, Huggan speaks of a whole “cosmopolitan alterity industry” that relies heavily on selling

not only ethnicity, but “exotic myths” (xiii). While the products of this industry are mainly geared for easy consumption, Huggan points out that the commodification of cultural difference is seldom only one-sided because it also, at least partly, aims to fulfil an educational function. But even though the alterity industry offers a space of agency to Huggan’s “postcolonial exotic,” its target groups are nevertheless “mostly, if not exclusively, [...] the capitalist societies of the West” (68). In the B.B. King Museum and juke joints like Ground Zero in Clarksdale, we encounter sites of multiple agencies involving black and white actors. A common interest is certainly the economic push for the region combined with a sincere appreciation of the blues as cultural expression. It is true that “the simultaneous invocation and erasure of black suffering is as central to blues tourism as it was to the revival, as is a post-civil rights-era desire for racial reunion and reconciliation” (McKinley 185). This tightrope walk is a risky one. McKinley may be right in warning us that “the constant minimizing of the state sponsored history of violence toward its black residents” may ultimately undermine “the goal of racial reconciliation that many in Mississippi seek to achieve” (McGinley 185).

The concept of music museums in Mississippi tends to follow a complex set of politics. The museums are sites of heritage, nostalgia, educational centers, and sites of worship. Backed by museum awards and financial investment, they embody a long-due recognition of African American cultural achievement in the Mississippi Delta. The Delta Blues Museum, despite low budget, has gained national recognition by winning numerous awards in recent years. In 2009, the museum’s website “was awarded a ‘gold’ certification in the Corporate Design, small budget, multimedia category, by the Southeastern Museums Conference. As the current director Shelly Ritter proudly shares, in 2013 the museum “was honored by the Institute of Museum and Library services with a National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation’s highest honor for museums.” In November 2014, Michelle Obama presented the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award (NAHYP) to Delta Blues

Museum and the Delta Blues Museum Band in a White House ceremony ("Acceptance"). The B.B. King Museum and The Delta Interpretative Center received a further economic boost with a grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission in the years 2011 and 2012 (Mississippi Arts Commission). These awards underscore that the blues museums in the Delta are not only past-oriented but decisively future-bound. The multimedia narrative designs provide story worlds that integrate the blues museums into a larger network of local and global music tourism. But beyond that, the museums are projections into the future on the level of educational training for younger generations and as generative sites for a growing entertainment and cultural industry intent on reinventing the blues one more time. The multimedia narratives draw on diversity, and at the same time, they open doors to think, paint, write, and perform the blues anew. After all, the blues, since its beginnings, has always been performative in both its musical and its political dimension.

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## **Author's biography**

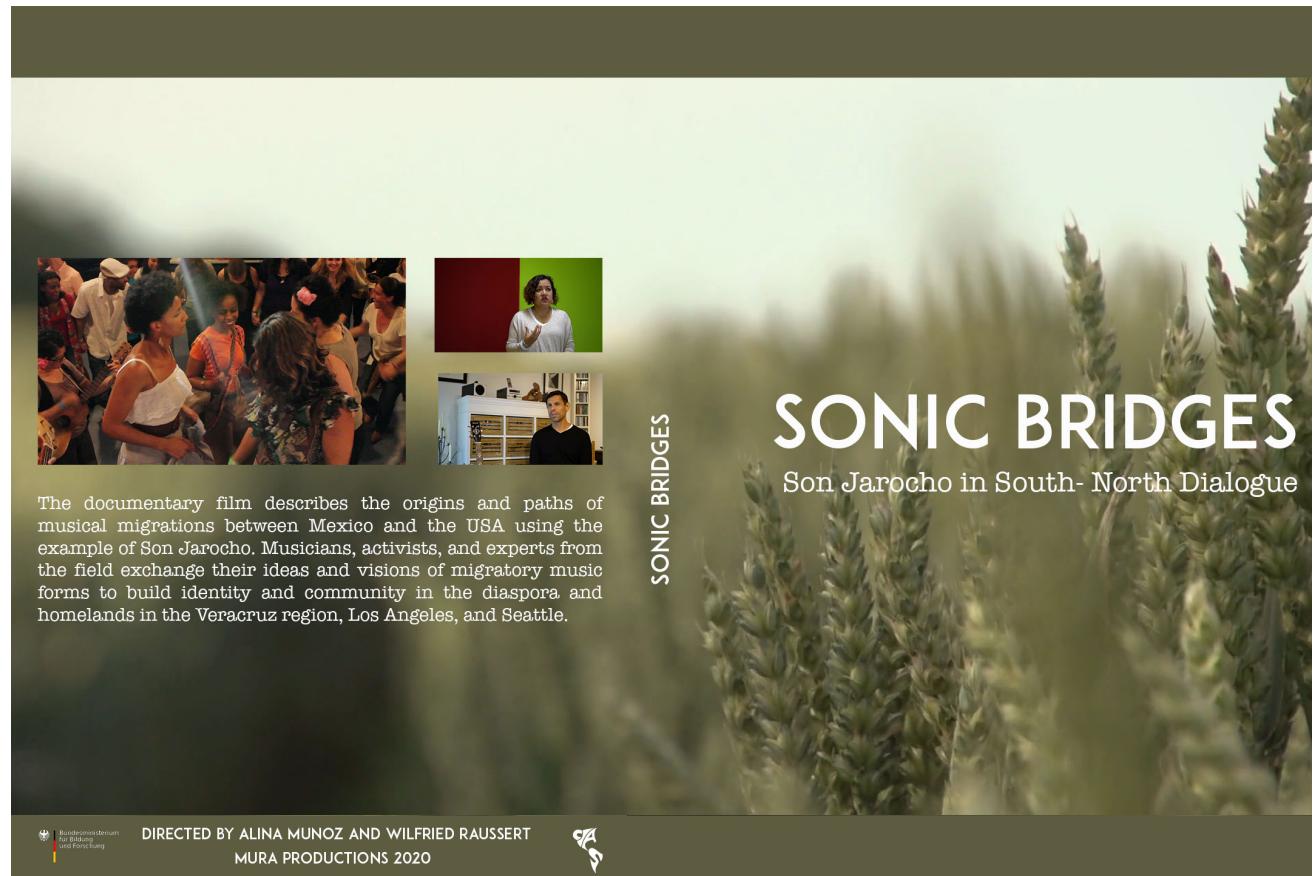
Professor Wilfried Raussert is Chair Of North American and Inter-American Studies at Bielefeld University, Chair of the Federal Ministry of Research and Education Project Entangled Americas (2013-19) and Executive Director of the International Association of Inter-American Studies. His research interests include African American literature and transcultural mobility in African American music.

## Documentary “Sonic Bridges: Son Jarocho in South-North Dialogue”

DIRECTED BY

WILFRIED RAUSSERT (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY, GERMANY)

ALINA MUÑOZ KNUDSEN (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY, GERMANY)



Visit: <https://vimeo.com/385814794/bdba3b9737>

The documentary film describes the origins and paths of musical migrations between Mexico and the USA using the example of Son Jarocho. Musicians, activists, and experts from the field exchange their ideas and visions of migratory music forms to build identity and community in the diaspora and homelands in the Veracruz region, Los Angeles, and Seattle.

# Voices of the Mississippi Blues

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WILLIAM FERRIS (UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL, UNITED STATES)



Highway 61, 1967

My career as a folklorist has focused on African American oral tradition with a special interest in music and the blues. This work is inspired by my childhood on our family farm in Warren County, Mississippi. Our family was the only white family on the farm. As a young child, Mary Gordon took me each first Sunday to Rose Hill Church, a black church on the farm, where I learned to sing the spirituals and heard powerful sermons delivered by Reverend Isaac Thomas.



Rose Hill Church, Warren County, MS, 1975.

As I grew older, I realized that there were no hymnals in the church and that when the families were gone, the music would disappear. With that in mind, I recorded, photographed, and filmed the church services and interviewed the families who worshipped at Rose Hill Church.



Rose Hill Church Congregation, Warren County, MS, 1975.

I also recorded local blues singers like Lovey Williams, who lived nearby in Morning Star, Mississippi. Williams accompanied himself of the guitar and sang blues in a powerful, deep voice. His wife and children accompanied him when he sang gospel music.



Lovey Williams, Morning Star, Mississippi, 1965.

While an undergraduate student at Davidson College from 1960-64, I discovered the Library of Congress recordings of John and Alan Lomax. Many of these recordings were made in Mississippi, and they inspired me to continue my own work.

At Davidson, the Civil Rights Movement increasingly inspired and defined my world, and I worked with other students to desegregate the college. I increasingly saw my recordings as a political act through which I gave a voice to people whose lives were invisible.

The work did not go without notice at the college. Students threw pepper on the pillow of my bed, and exploded firecrackers in my dormitory room to frighten me. They also sent my parents an anonymous post card that read “You will be proud to know your son is dating a N....” These acts reinforced my determination to record and share the music and stories of people with whom I worked in Mississippi.

My love for music led me to the University of Pennsylvania’s Folklore doctoral program in the fall of 1966. When I met my advisor Kenneth Goldstein, I brought of box of my recordings

and photographs, placed them on his desk, and asked, “Dr. Goldstein, can I do this work as part of my study?” He smiled and replied, “That, My Boy, will be your dissertation!”

It was the happiest day of my life. Kenneth Goldstein endorsed my deepest love and assured that my work would be blessed by the academy. In short, I could do what I loved and be paid for it. My parents and their friends in Mississippi were sure the interviews I had done with blues musicians, prison inmates, and quiltmakers would never lead to a paying job.

As a graduate student, my field work led me to the Mississippi Delta, where I discovered James “Son Ford” Thomas in the Black Dog section of Leland in 1967. I knocked on Mr. Thomas’s door, and his wife Christine asked me what I wanted. I told her I was looking for James Thomas, and she replied, “He doesn’t live here.”

I turned to leave, and she asked, “What do you want him for?”

I replied, “I am writing a book on the blues, and I want to put him in the book.”

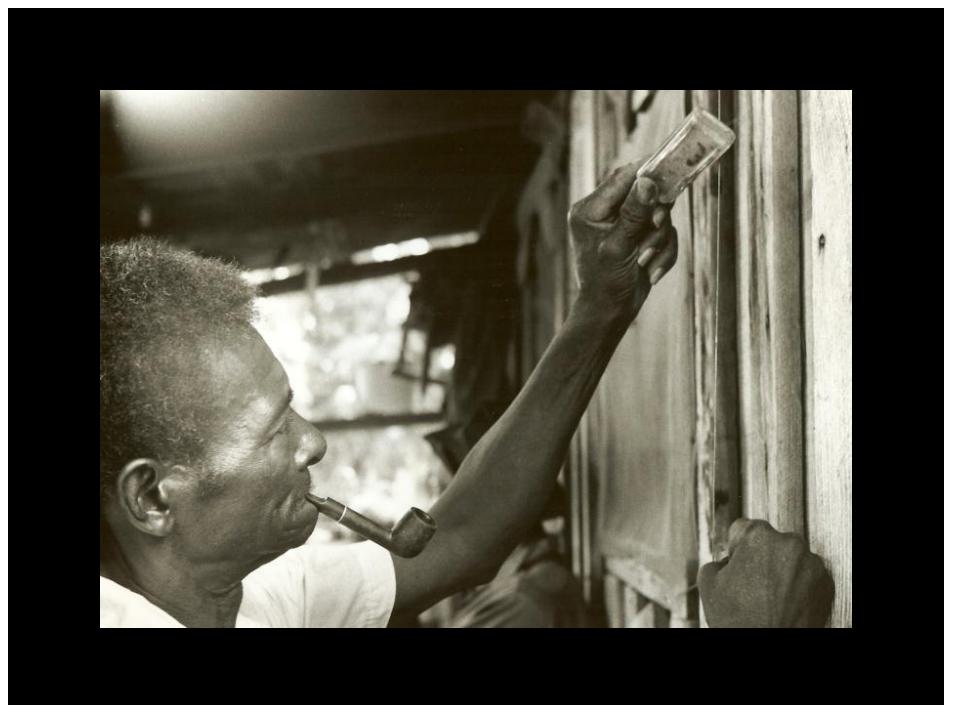
She answered, “He will be back in twenty minutes. You can sit on the porch and wait for him.”

That conversation marked the beginning of a friendship that would last over the next 26 years, until Mr. Thomas’s death on June 26, 1993. James Thomas visited and performed for my students at Jackson State University, at Yale University, and at the University of Mississippi, and he spoke and performed at venues that included the Smithsonian Folklife Festival (1974) and the Modern Language Association (1980).

Christine Thomas’s greeting reminded me of the danger black families faced in dealing with the white world. My acceptance into her home was a special privilege that led to my discovery of James Thomas’s “blues family,” a family who were bound together by their shared love of the blues. They gathered each Saturday night in the back room of Shelby Brown’s home in Kent’s Alley for a blues house party, where James Thomas played his guitar and sang with Gussie Tobe (vocal) and “Little Son” Jefferson (harmonica), and Shelby Brown sold corn liquor and sandwiches to his guests.

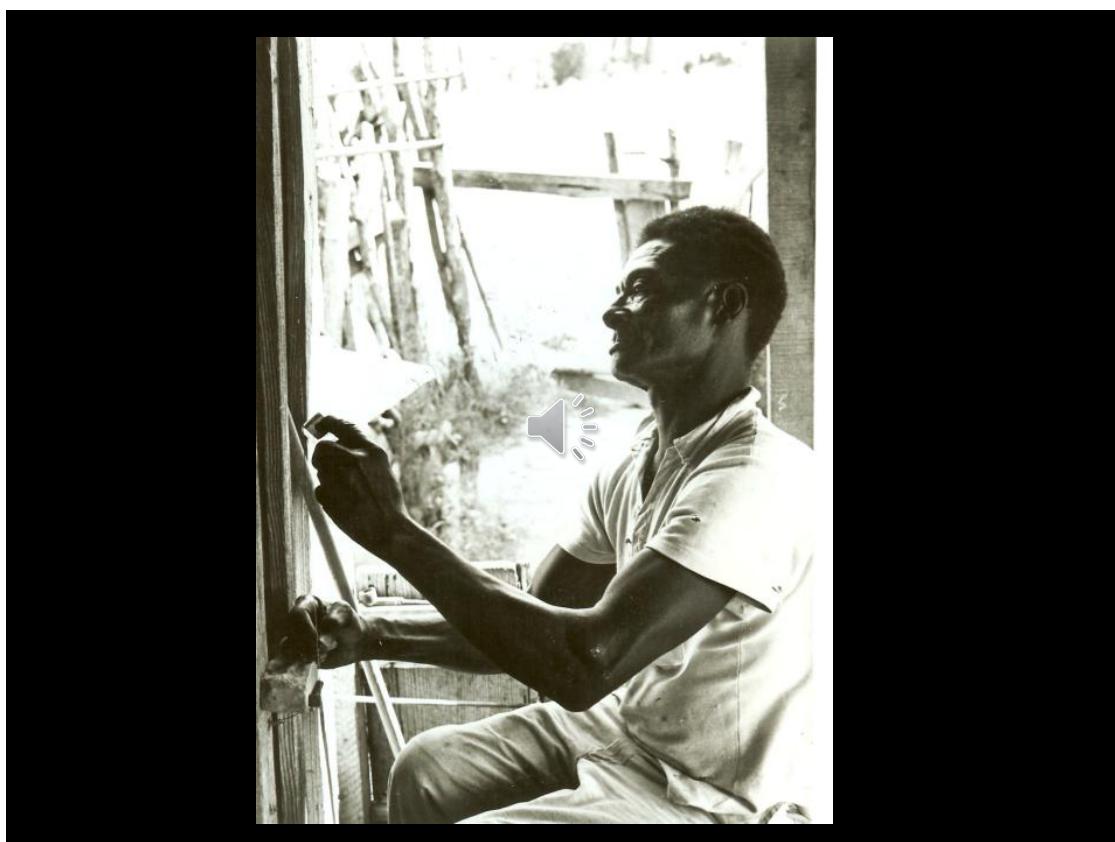
I recorded, photographed, and filmed these parties as guests danced, sang, and enjoyed the evening. The house party was the epicenter of my blues experience in Leland. James Thomas taught me that the blues are a “deep study” and to perform and understand the music requires many years of training. He became my teacher, and I continue to learn from him each time I listen to our taped conversations.

I also explored the roots of blues with Louis Dotson who played the one-strand-on-the-wall. Dotson stretched a broom wire along his porch wall, and as he plucked the wire, he changed the instrument’s pitch by sliding a bottle up and down the wire. The one-strand is an important link between African one-strand instruments and the bottle-neck guitar style of open tuning used by artists like Elmore James. Virtually every blues musician—including B.B. King—played on a one-strand as a child because the instrument was free and easily accessible.

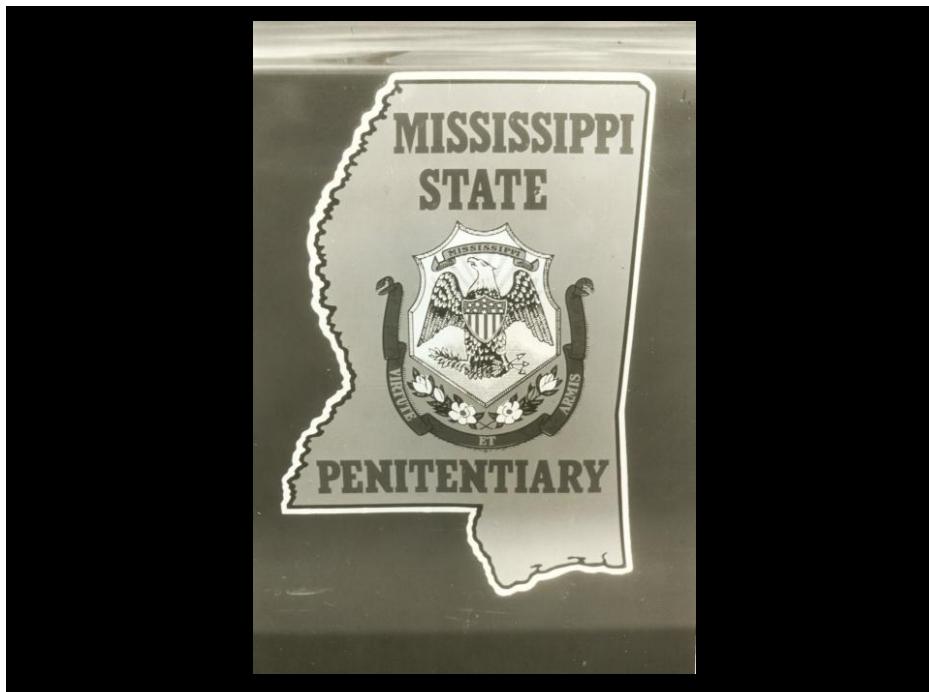


Louis Dotson, Lorman, MS, 1968.

Dotson also performed bottle blowing using a bottle partially filled with water. The haunting sound of his bottle blowing is similar to Ba-Benzélé pygmy yodeling in the Central African rain forests. It also is an important connection to African American jug bands.



Louis Dotson, Lorman, MS, 1968.

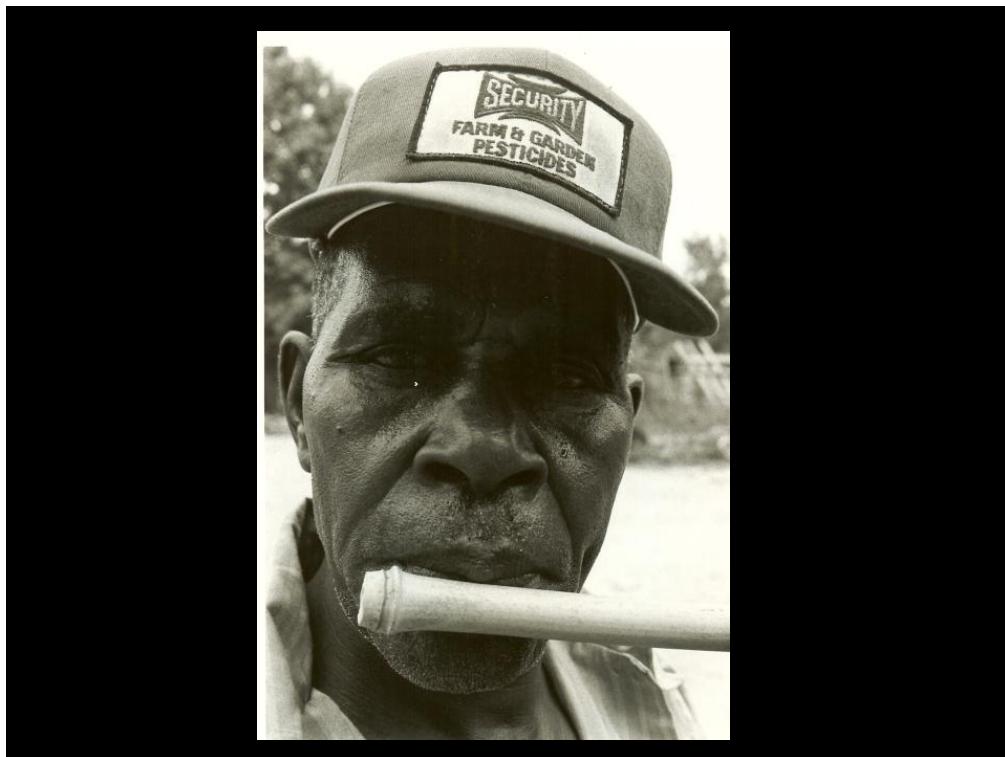


Parchman Penitentiary, Parchman, MS, 1968.

At Davidson, I had listened to the recordings of prison work chants that John and Alan Lomax made at Parchman Penitentiary in 1933 and wondered whether they might still be sung. They were, and in 1968, and later in 1974, I recorded and filmed work chants in Camp B, Parchman's satellite in Lambert, Mississippi. Sergeant Webb, the warden in Camp B remembered the Lomaxes and told me about how they recorded work chants during their visits.



Parchman Penitentiary, Camp B, Lambert, MS, 1968.

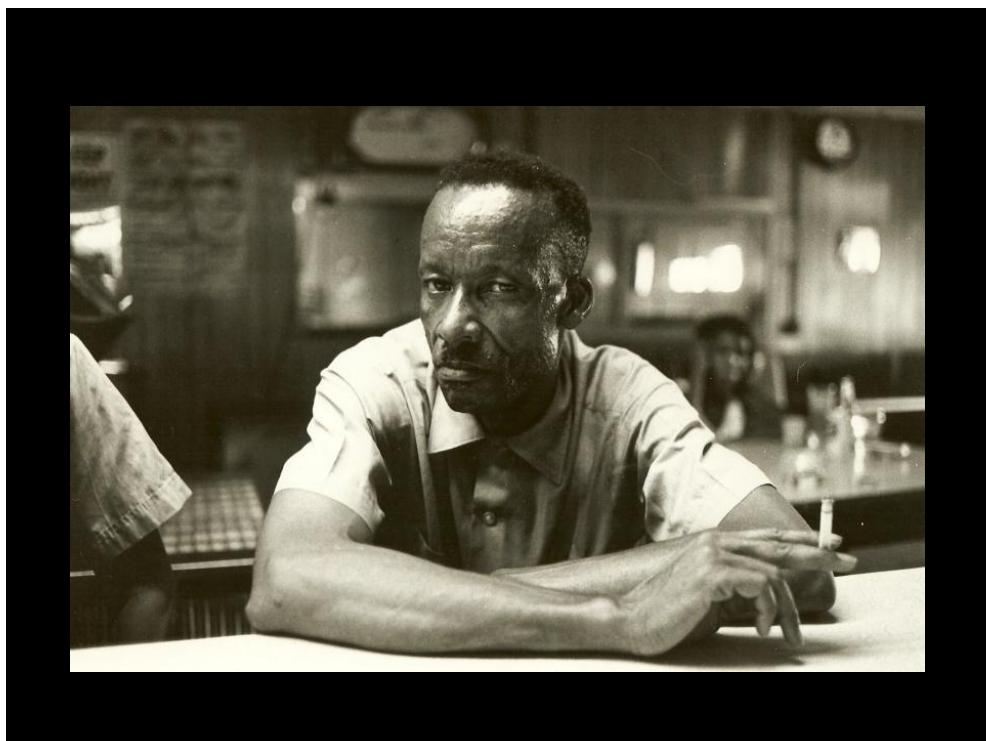


Otha Turner, Gravel Springs, MS, 1971.

In 1970, I visited Gravel Springs, Mississippi, and recorded fife and drum music performed by Otha Turner and Napoleon Strickland at a community picnic. Their music is considered a foundational sound for blues, and festivals like the Delta Blues Festival often open with fife and drum music. Today, Otha Turner's granddaughter Sharde Thomas and her Rising Star Fife and Drum Band perform the music in this country and overseas.

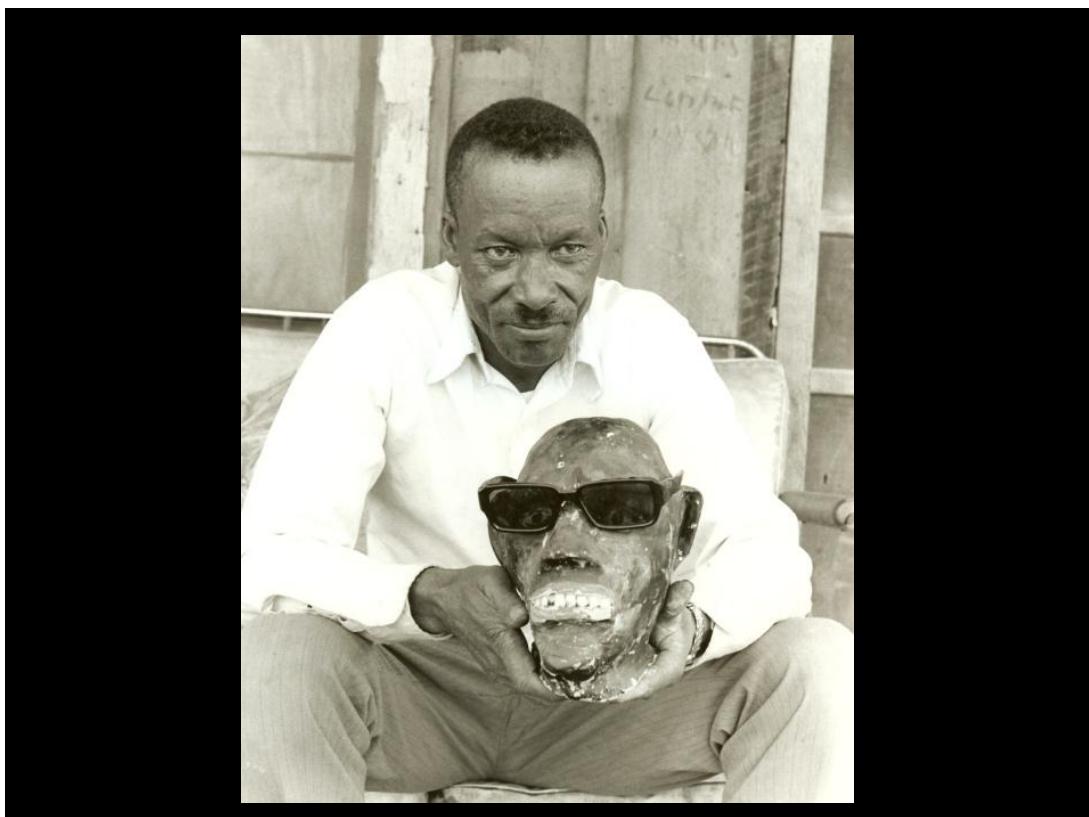


Napoleon Strickland (fife), Gravel Springs, MS, 1971.



James Thomas, Leland, MS, 1974.

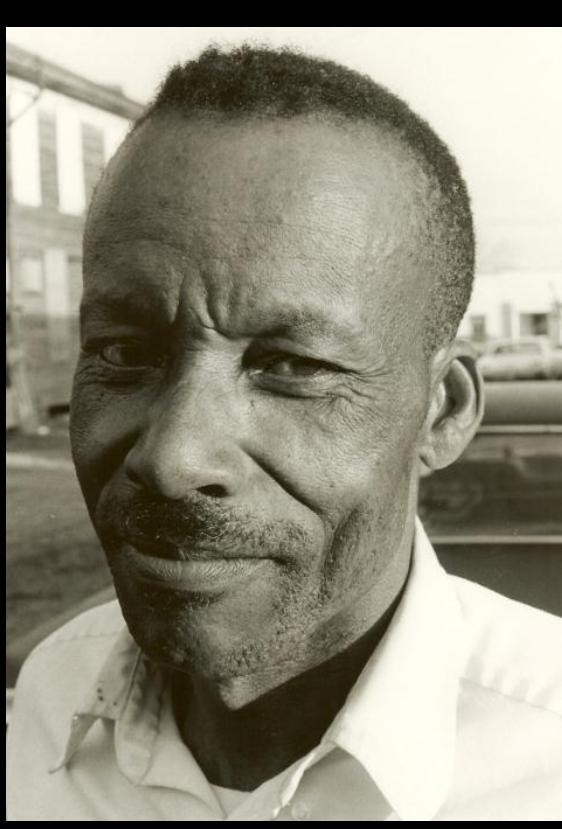
From 1972-79, I taught at as a joint appointment in the Afro-American and American Studies Programs at Yale University. Each year, James Thomas visited my classes and performed for my students. Mr. Thomas also demonstrated his clay sculpture by molding clay faces, skulls, and birds for Yale students.



James Thomas, Leland, MS, 1973.



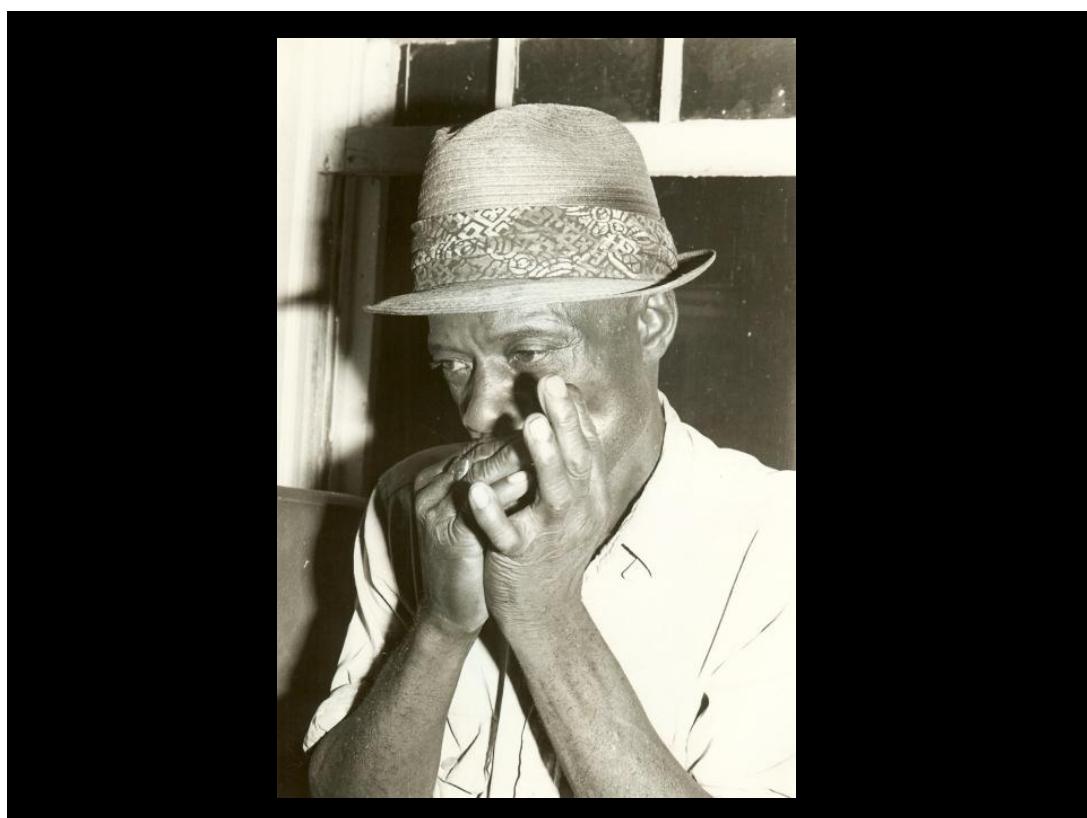
Shelby “Poppa Jazz” Brown, Leland, MS, 1974.



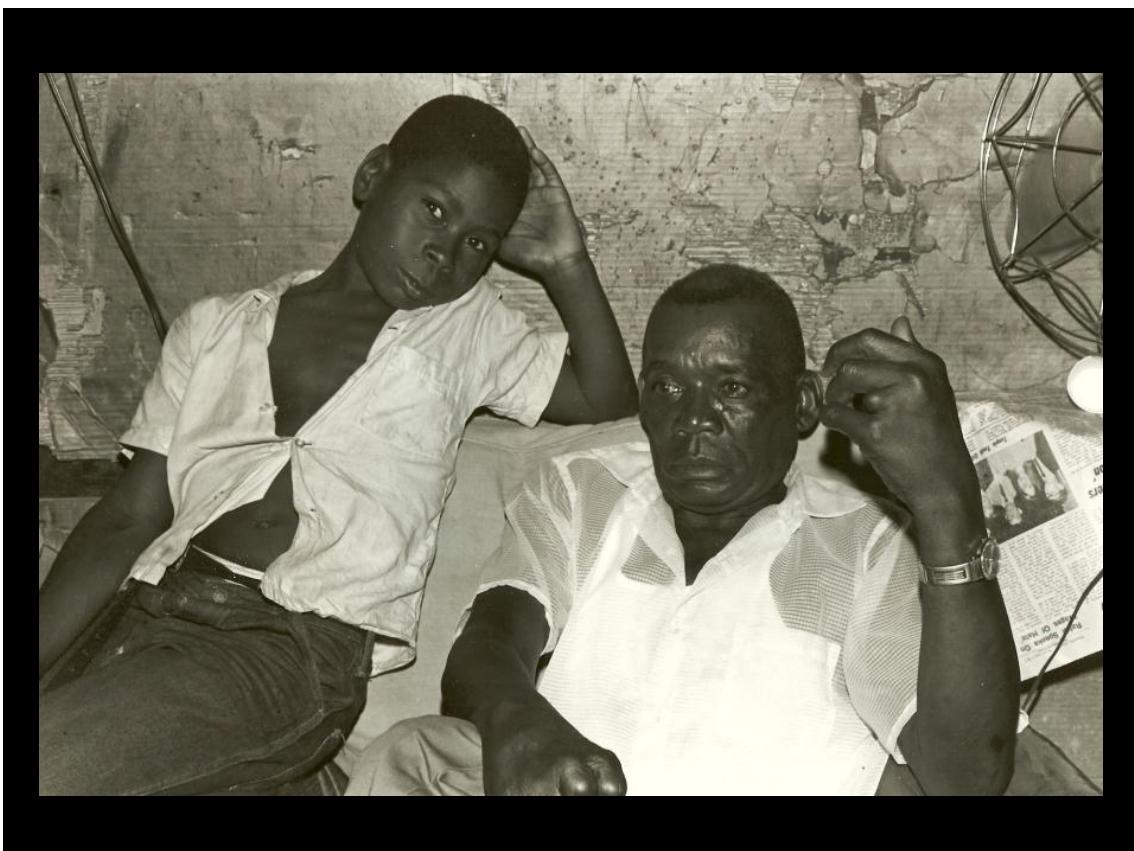
James Thomas, Leland, MS, 1974.



James Thomas, Leland, MS, 1968.



"Little Son" Jefferson, Leland, MS, 1968.



Johnny Brown and Shelby "Poppa Jazz" Brown, Leland, MS, 1968.



James Thomas, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1976.



James Thomas, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1976.

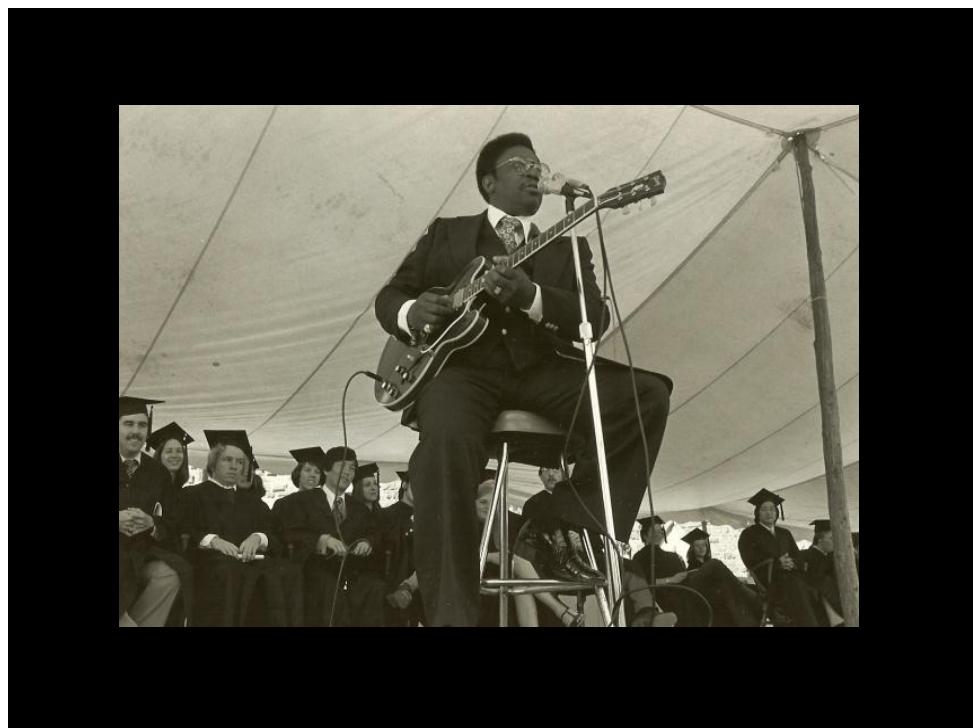


James Thomas, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1976.

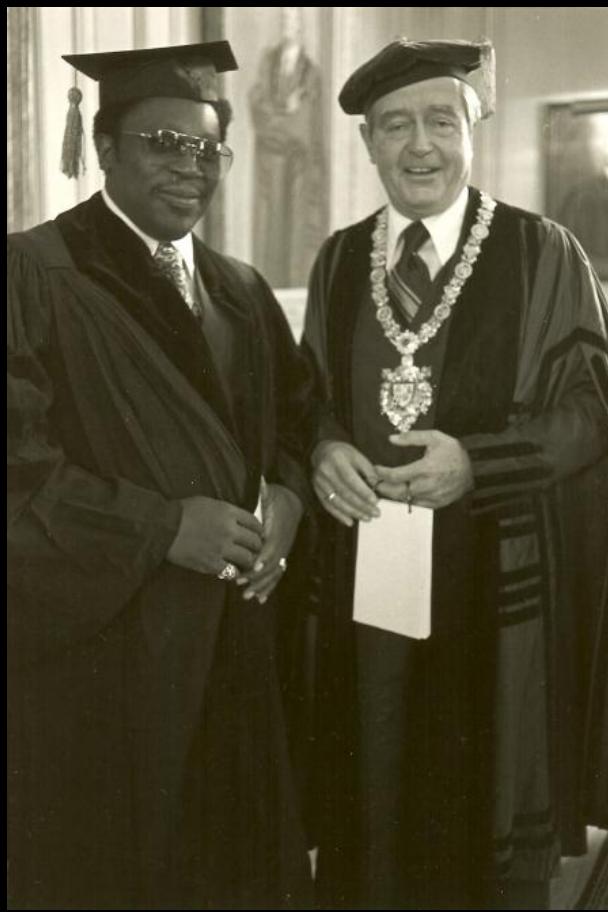


B.B. King, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1974.

B.B. King also visited my classes at Yale and performed in the School of Music's Sprague Hall. I helped arrange an honorary Doctorate of Music that King received in 1977 from Yale President Kingman Brewster. King and his guitar Lucille delivered the Baccalaureate address to the senior class at Yale the day before he received his doctorate.



B.B. King, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1974.



B.B. King and Kingman Brewster, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1974.

King believed deeply that blues should be taught as a part of American music, and in 1987 he gave his music library of 7,000 records to the University of Mississippi to help create the school's Blues Archive ([https://olemiss.edu/depts/general\\_library/archives/blues/](https://olemiss.edu/depts/general_library/archives/blues/)). The work of the archive is significantly enhanced by Living Blues (<http://www.livingblues.com/>) which is published by the University's Center for Study of Southern Culture (<https://southernstudies.olemiss.edu/>).



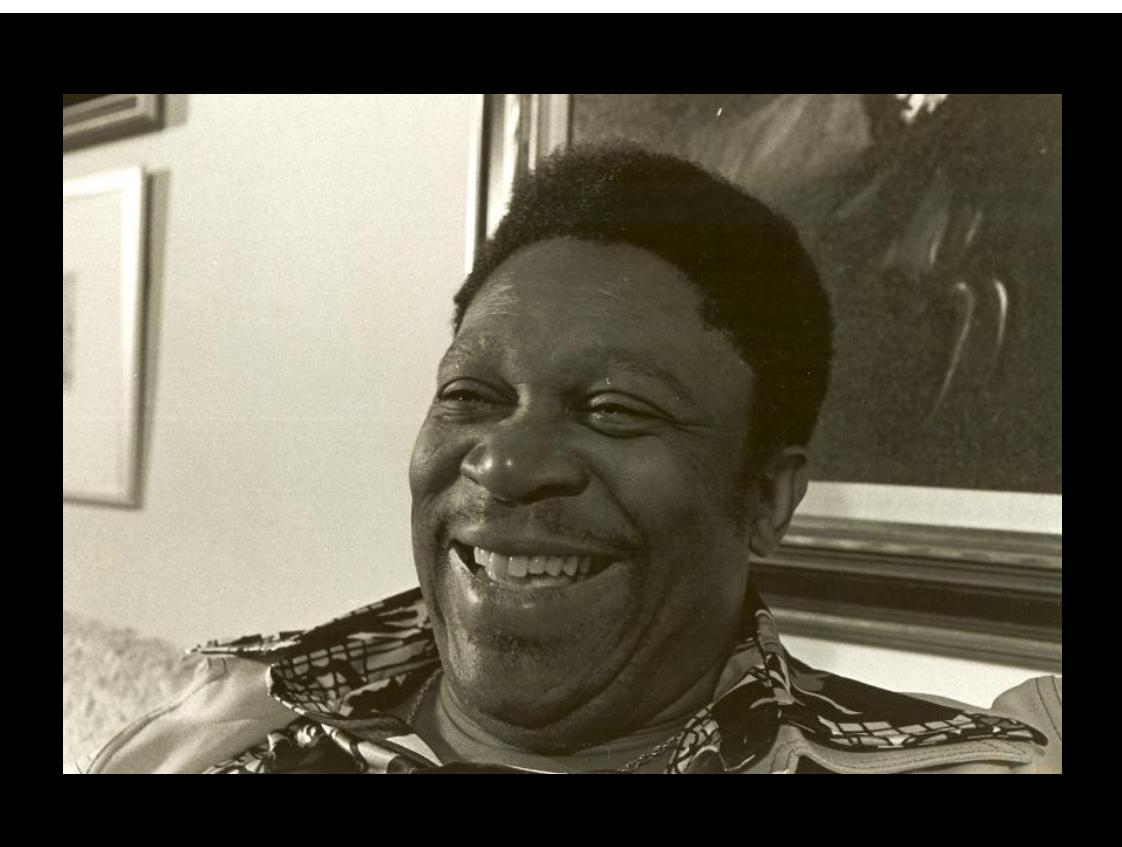
B.B. King, New York, NY, 1974.



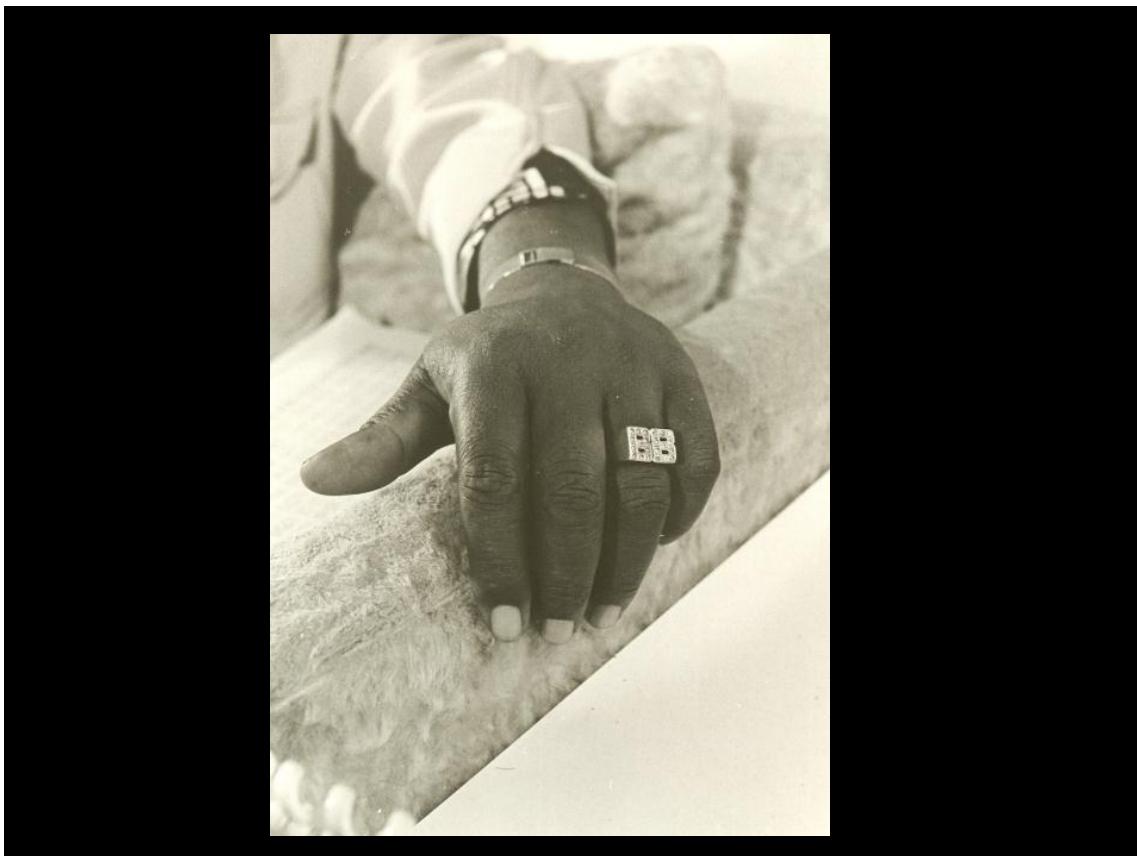
B.B. King, New York, NY, 1974.



B.B. King, New York, NY, 1974.



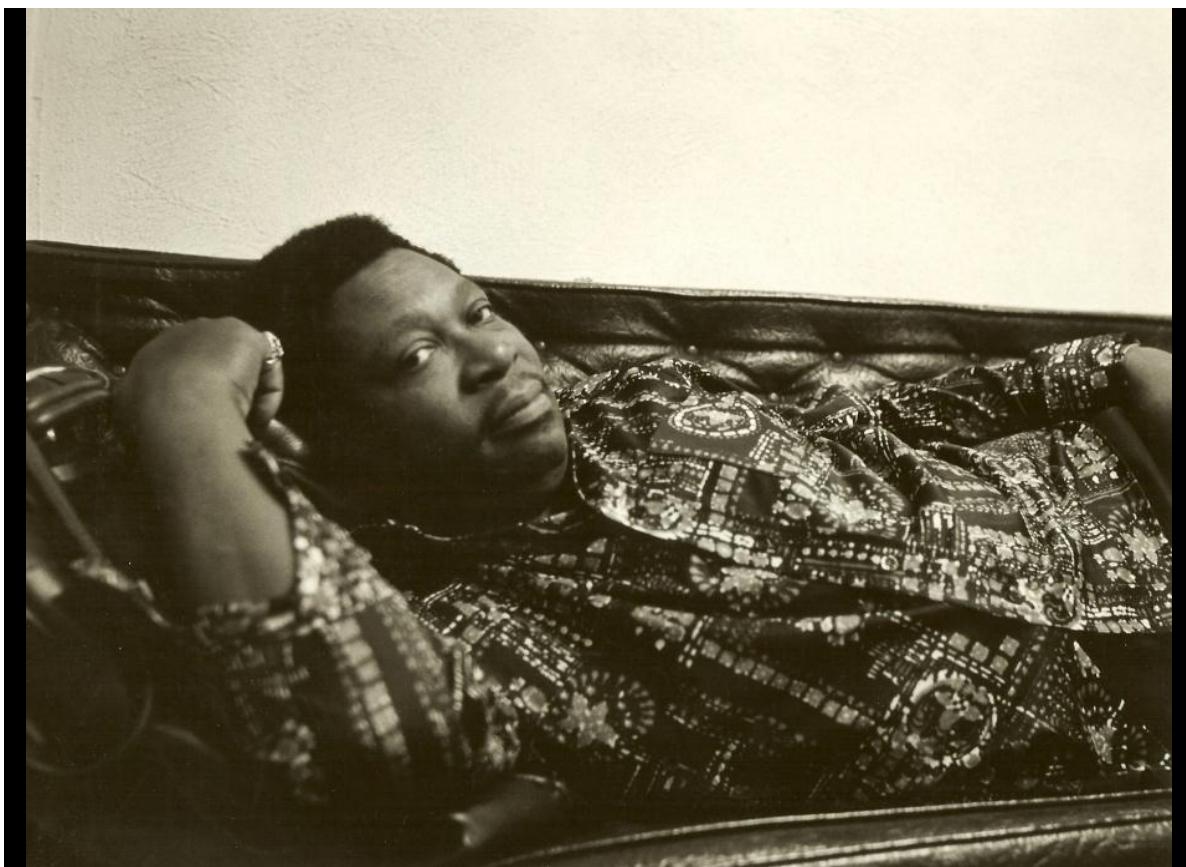
B.B. King, New York, NY, 1974.



B.B. King, New York, NY, 1974.



B.B. King, Lucifer's Club, Boston, MA, 1976.



B.B. King, Lucifer's Club, Boston, MA, 1976.



B.B. King, Lucifer's Club, Boston, MA, 1976.



Moon Lake, MS, 1968.

Since I did my field work in the Mississippi Delta in the late sixties, Mississippi has significantly deepened its blues resources. Today, over 200 blues markers identify historic blues locations in the state (<https://www.mississippimarkers.com/blues-trail.html>). Clarksdale's Delta Blues Museum (<https://www.deltabluesmuseum.org/>), Indianola's B.B. King Museum (<https://bbkingmuseum.org/>), Cleveland's Grammy Museum Mississippi (<https://www.grammymuseumms.org/>) and Dockery's Dockery Farms (<http://dockeryfarms.org/>) welcome visitors from around the nation and overseas who travel in growing numbers to learn about the blues.

Today, blues is recognized as America's most important music. Its influence on other music forms like country music, gospel, rock and roll, jazz, as well as on classical music is profound. It has also inspired literary forms like poetry, short stories, and novels, as well as painting. The flourishing, diverse impact of blues on our nation and its culture is clear.

Many of the voices whom I recorded, photographed, and filmed throughout my career as a folklorist are featured in Voices of Mississippi (<http://www.dust-digital.com/ferris/>). The box set received two Grammy Awards, a recognition that assures that the artists whom it features will always be remembered with respect and honor.

### **Author's Biography**

William R. Ferris is Joel R. Williamson Eminent Professor of History, Emeritus at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an adjunct professor in the Curriculum in Folklore. He is associate director of the Center for the Study of the American South, and is widely recognized as a leader in Southern studies, African-American music and folklore. He is the former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Prior to his role at NEH, Ferris served as the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, where he was a faculty

# Patrimonio colonial y refeudalización. Giros hacia la derecha en la cultura política en América Latina.

OLAF KALTMEIER (UNIVERSIDAD DE BIELEFELD, ALEMANIA)

## Resumen

*Con la elección de multi-millionarios como presidentes en Chile y Argentina y con la llegada al poder político de representantes de la ultra-derecha en Colombia, Brasil y Paraguay, notamos una ruptura y un profundo giro hacia la derecha en la cultura política en América Latina. Después de la apertura del campo político hacia sectores subalternos desde los segmentos indígenas, afro-americanos y obreros, así como una más alta representación femenina en los parlamentos, actualmente estamos presenciando el regreso del hombre blanco de clase alta al campo político. Este resurgimiento del hombre blanco se da en una coyuntura global que se caracteriza por un grado de polarización de la estructura social que es único en la historia humana. El movimiento crítico del capitalismo Occupy Wall Street tiene el mérito de haber puesto en la mira al 1% de las personas más ricas del mundo.*

**Palabras clave:** América Latina, patrimonio colonial, refeudalización

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Este resurgimiento del hombre blanco se da en una coyuntura global que se caracteriza por un grado de polarización de la estructura social que es único en la historia humana. El movimiento crítico del capitalismo *Occupy Wall Street* tiene el mérito de haber puesto en la mira al 1% de las personas más ricas del mundo. La organización no gubernamental Oxfam resaltó estas enormes desigualdades sociales a nivel global en su informe de enero de 2017 *An Economy for the 99%*, introduciendo esta problemática en un amplio debate político. Desde el 2015, el 1% más rico del mundo acumula más riqueza que todo el resto de la población mundial en

conjunto. Esto, explicado de manera gráfica, quiere decir, por ejemplo, que ocho hombres (el género también juega un rol importante aquí) poseen una riqueza equivalente a 3,6 millardos de personas, o, en otros términos, su riqueza equivale a la riqueza total de la mitad de la población mundial. Especialmente en las últimas dos décadas el número de multimillonarios se ha incrementado significativamente, sobre todo en América Latina. De esta manera, se genera una nueva aristocracia monetaria que en términos sociológicos tiene más características de un estamento feudal que de una clase social. Principalmente el efecto de la herencia garantiza que no ocurra un descenso social desde este estamento. Además, se perciben cambios normativos hacia una erosión del sistema meritocrático y el surgimiento de extremas formas de distinción social, que tienen sus repercusiones espaciales en notables formas de auto-segregación de la nueva aristocracia del 1%. Dichos procesos pueden ser entendidos como un marcado proceso de refeudalización.  
[1]

En sus dimensiones estético-culturales, este proceso de refeudalización va de la mano con un horizonte de expectativas retrospectivo. En

este sentido, la refeudalización de las formas y estructuras sociales se relaciona directamente con las corrientes actuales de la nostalgia[2] y la retrotopía[3], las mismas que son particularmente notorias en Latinoamérica en la masiva valoración del patrimonio cultural heredado de la colonia, fenómeno que he analizado bajo el concepto de “retro-colonialidad”[4]. Con objeto de crear un mercado y una cultura de consumo en torno a la colonialidad, lo colonial debe ser separado de los significados negativos que carga, a saber, violencia, explotación y racismo. Se trata de un vaciamiento de contenido del concepto ‘colonialidad’ en el contexto de las modas retro postmodernas que facilita la comodificación de lo colonial, especialmente en el sector del turismo, y que tiene efectos en el campo de la política de identidad.

Esto no quiere decir que el patrimonio cultural esté necesariamente relacionado con el proceso de refeudalización y con el giro hacia la derecha en la cultura política de América Latina. Sin embargo, tampoco está desarticulado de estas tendencias. El patrimonio siempre estará vinculado a la pregunta básica sobre qué es necesario preservar y conservar y qué se puede olvidar y dejar caer en ruina. Más allá de la dimensión preservacionista, se trata de una cuestión de supremacía importancia para las políticas de identidad, especialmente en sociedades poscoloniales que han experimentado diversas coyunturas de colonización.

## **Patrimonio colonial**

La mayoría de los sitios que posee el título de patrimonio cultural en América Latina otorgado por la Unesco está ubicado en áreas urbanas y está constituido por monumentos o conjuntos coloniales. Este estrecho vínculo entre patrimonio y colonialidad no es nuevo ni arbitrario. Con el ejemplo de la ciudad de Quito, Ernesto Capello (61-84) ha demostrado cómo la idea de la preservación material de lo colonial está ligada al hispanismo del siglo XIX. En los años veinte del siglo XX, intelectuales hispanófilos tales como José Gabriel Navarro y Cristobál de Gangotena y Jijón combinaron la idea de la preservación de los artefactos coloniales con la defensa ideológica de la supremacía blanca

y la defensa de los efectos civilizadores de la colonización española, ampliando la narración de la “leyenda blanca”. Con el 400º aniversario de la fundación hispánica de Quito en 1934, la imaginación de dicha ciudad como la urbe más castellana en las Américas llegó a su máxima extensión. A partir de este momento existe una marcada línea de continuidad que lleva a las prácticas patrimoniales del siglo XX. Ese arraigo de un imaginario urbano patrimonialista-hispanista explica las dinámicas locales que culminaron en la declaración del centro histórico de Quito como patrimonio mundial por la Unesco en 1978.

Incluso en un contexto de políticas interculturales y frente a las movilizaciones indígenas – especialmente en la coyuntura de las protestas contra los 500 años de colonización en América Latina en 1992 – organismos internacionales tales como ICOMOS o la Unesco siguen recurriendo a un discurso acrítico de lo colonial. La UNESCO argumentaba en su informe de 1991 con respecto a la declaración del centro de Lima como sitio del patrimonio mundial: “the historic nucleos of the town recalls Lima at the peak of development of the Spanish kingdom of Peru,” mientras que ICOMOS revela en su informe de 1991: “The historic center of Lima bears excellent witness to the architecture and urban development of a Spanish colonial town of great political, economic and cultural importance in Latin America” (citado en Kaltmeier, “Colonialidad” 151)

El eurocentrismo de estas clasificaciones es evidente: en ellas, Lima es vista como una extensión colonial de Europa, hecho por el cual se le otorga el estatus de patrimonio mundial. Los aportes de los indígenas y de los esclavos africanos quedan así invisibilizados. En dichos documentos tampoco se llega a una problematización del proceso de colonización. En el estilo del discurso observamos la actitud de estas instituciones, que son consideradas como la autoridad absoluta para definir cuál artefacto tiene el valor para ser conservado. Se trata de un inventario de la colonialidad, que la eleva además a un estatus de patrimonio mundial. La perspectiva geopolítica particular del colonizador europeo es universalizada en estos discursos, e incluso premiada con el título

de patrimonio cultural de la humanidad. Con el traslado de la colonialidad a la esfera de „lo cultural” y al *city-marketing*, se recorta de ésta la trascendencia de la violencia inherente a ella. En este sentido, una articulación del patrimonio cultural con el procedo de refeudalización se manifiesta en espacios urbanos en América Latina en dos tendencias: la auto-segregación en ciudadelas y la gentrificación de los centros históricos.

### Castillos en la ciudad

Con el giro refeudal ocurre un retorno de los muros y de las fortalezas a diversas escalas espaciales. La lógica de autosegregación por el muro, que se manifiesta en las fronteras con el proyecto de ampliar la construcción del muro fronterizo entre EE.UU. y México, o la autosegregación de la llamada “fortaleza Europa” contra los refugiados del Sur global. Esta misma lógica se manifiesta en unidades espaciales más pequeñas, tales como los espacios urbanos. En Lima, la capital de Perú, un muro de 10 kilómetros y 3 metros de alto con alambres de púas separa el distrito pudiente de Surco de las barriadas pobres de San Juan. Por miedo a los ladrones y al robo, los habitantes del distrito de Surco construyeron el llamado “muro de la vergüenza” con objeto de demarcar el territorio social (Boano y Desmaison).

Dada la continuidad de la colonialidad, no es sorpresivo que tal clase de muros se construyan en una ciudad como Lima. En la época colonial, Lima era la capital del Virreinato del Perú, y era considerada entonces como “la ciudad de los reyes”, un nombre que conserva hasta la actualidad. En las décadas sucesivas, el imaginario social y espacial de la ciudad se vio caracterizado por la división entre los hijos de españoles (los patricios) y los indígenas (los plebeyos), una idea que todavía persiste como una nostalgia colonial (Kaltmeier, “Colonialidad” 154; Nugent 45). La urbanista Maaria Seppänen describe la alta segregación étnica social de la manera siguiente: “los plebeyos, se supone, tienen que permanecer en el sitio donde les corresponde,” tienen que “(re)conocer su lugar en el espacio y la jerarquía social” y “comportarse apropiadamente” (115). Si los colonizados no

corresponden a este imaginario, tal como es el caso de los vendedores ambulantes en el centro histórico, se convierten en objetos a los cuales se dirigen el miedo, la violencia y el odio racial.

Este es sólo un ejemplo, aunque muy llamativo, de lo continua tendencia a la separación de la clase alta en las zonas urbanas, la misma que, a la vez, privatiza el espacio público, las calles y los pasajes. En su análisis de las tendencias contemporáneas de refeudalización, Sighard Neckel afirma que la dicotomización de la estructura social es un aspecto clave. La distancia social entre las élites cosmócratas y los excluidos, denominados también por el sociólogo urbano Loic Wacquant como “urban outcasts”, crece en términos sociales y económicos. Esta distancia en el espacio social también tiene sus repercusiones en el espacio físico jerarquizado – para usar un término empleado por Bourdieu. Por un lado, notamos una segregación forzada con el crecimiento de barriadas, favelas, barrios marginales; mientras que por otro, vemos nuevas formas de auto-segregación de las élites, tales como los condominios o la arquitectura *bunker*. El urbanista Peter Marcuse usó el término “citadel” (ciudadel) para caracterizar esta auto-segregación de la élite, aludiendo a las formas urbanas de defensa en tiempos feudales europeos (247).

Una primera expresión de esta forma de *citadel* se encuentra en los complejos residenciales y comunidades cerradas y con control de ingreso. Mientras esta clase de recintos residenciales ya se construían en los Estados Unidos de la década de 1970, en Latinoamérica comenzaron a masificarse especialmente durante la década de 1990. Un reporte de la Naciones Unidas estableció en 2009 lo siguiente: “Ciudades latinoamericanas y del Caribe, tales como Buenos Aires, Ciudad de México, La Habana, Kingston, Lima, Nassau, Puerto Príncipe, São Paulo y Santiago han observado un crecimiento dramático respecto a la construcción de comunidades habitacionales cerradas. Sólo en Buenos Aires, se han construido más de 450 barrios cerrados para poco menos de medio millón de personas durante la década de 1990” (citado en Irázabal 33).

Para la población, vivir en los barrios cerrados significa, por un lado, una medida de protección

contra el crimen. Por otro lado, la motivación es también la demarcación y separación socio-espacial de las clases y segmentos sociales considerados “inferiores.” En este sentido, el sociólogo urbano Peter Marcuse define la *citadel* refeudal como un “área espacialmente concentrada en la cual miembros de un grupo particular, definido por su posición de superioridad, en poder, riqueza, o estatus, en relación con estos vecindarios, se congregan con objeto de proteger y fortalecer dicha posición” (247).

En el caso de Brasil, los sociólogos urbanistas han dicho que las comunidades cerradas de este tipo operan bajo el principio de fortificaciones coloniales: “hacer imposible la entrada a los indeseables; esconder la existencia de riqueza estratégica y facilitar la vigilancia del enemigo” (Dunker). En este sentido, las comunidades residenciales cerradas en Brasil no son sólo un lugar de preferencia habitacional, sino más bien la expresión de un estilo de vida basado en la segregación y la producción de mundos separados. El principio básico de las comunidades de puertas cerradas es, precisamente, evitar los espacios públicos frecuentados por grupos sociales diferentes. A través de esta forma de aislamiento, estos forman estructuras similares a islas, en las cuales prevalece la homogeneidad social y la vida pública está restringida (Estrada Mejía y Guerrón Montero).

Pero esta tendencia a la refeudalización no sólo se ve reflejada en estructuras espaciales como las comunidades cerradas, los muros de separación y la seguridad privada. En su forma externa, las comunidades cerradas toman incluso elementos feudales-coloniales. Por ejemplo, Raquel Clement y Gil Grant resumen sus investigaciones respecto a las comunidades de este tipo en la isla Barbados, del Caribe, del modo siguiente: “El confinamiento en Barbados refleja un proceso de desarrollo que resulta cómplice en la transformación de las formas urbanas tradicionales en un diseño urbano globalizado neo-colonial” (45). Del mismo modo, en las comunidades cerradas de la ciudad mexicana de Guadalajara, denominadas cotos, Ulises Zarazúa ha encontrado un frecuente uso de motivos y estéticas que hacen referencia a la

herencia colono-feudal ibérica (271).

Uno de los aspectos centrales en desarrollo de esta clase de proyectos urbanos es la técnica tomada de la empresa perteneciente a Disney Imagineering, encargada de hacer parques temáticos. Dicha técnica logra crear una narrativa temática (tema), asociar esta con imágenes icónicas (imagen) e implementarlas de manera física (ingeniería)[5]. Esta técnica se puede ver también en algunos proyectos de construcción en ciudades latinoamericanas, tales como centros comerciales. El San Luis Shopping Center, inaugurado en 2008 en el Valle de los Chillos de Quito, Ecuador, resulta de particular interés en este sentido (Kaltmeier, “Urban Landscapes”), pues la construcción completa fue diseñada tomando como modelo la narrativa rural-colonial de la Hacienda. En consecuencia, el jurado del Design and International Development Award 2008, del International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), estableció lo siguiente:

Arquitectónicamente, el centro comercial mantiene las fachadas de las haciendas andinas, con sus muros, altos techos, acero forjado, y un sinnúmero de detalles que pertenecen al periodo de la Colonia española. Pretendía ser el primer proyecto en América del Sur que fusiona negocio histórico y estilo de vida. Doscientos años atrás, el Valle de los Chillos era el corazón del auge del área de bellas haciendas... Actualmente, esta parte de la historia es vista por la comunidad como el corazón del valle: San Luis Shopping. (citado en Kaltmeier, “Urban Landscapes” 95-96)

Otro ejemplo importante en lo que se refiere a la tematización de carácter colonial en megaproyectos de construcción es la edificación de la Ciudad Cayalá, a las afueras de Ciudad de Guatemala. La construcción comenzó en 1982, después de la fundación del Grupo Cayalá. Luego de construir muchos centros residenciales cerrados privados interconectados unos con otros, del 2003 en adelante comenzó a desarrollarse el proyecto de crear una ciudad “autosuficiente”, integral, a saber, la Ciudad Cayalá. El corazón de este nuevo centro urbano fue la construcción, en 2011, de un

centro comercial, edificios de departamentos y oficinas. Además, el proyecto cuenta con centros de atención médica y numerosos lugares destinados a la recreación. Incluso, el proyecto no ha olvidado la iglesia colonial a gran escala. El proyecto en su totalidad cubre un área de 352 hectáreas, espacio mayor al que ocupa el Central Park de Nueva York. Este centro residencial, con departamentos desde 260 mil dólares, está diseñado para apuntar a las clases altas. En la última fase de su construcción, se han creado departamentos de lujo para el 10% más rico. El conjunto entero está planeado y diseñado a partir de un modelo y estilo colonial, con muros de estuco blanco, pórticos, etc., y, evidentemente, apunta a una profunda nostalgia retro-colonial. Las citas a lo colonial son claras, toda vez que la imagen que se muestra del proyecto, tanto en su sitio de internet como en su página de Facebook, están presentados de un modo retro-colonial, aunque evitando cualquier mención directa a la Colonia. Sin embargo, de modo nostálgico, el orden del pasado histórico es evocado, dominando y modelando cierta arquitectura: "La Iglesia Santa María Reina de la Familia tiene como objetivo alcanzar la máxima belleza constructiva y re establecer el orden de un lenguaje arquitectónico ahora perdido, pero que fue utilizado a lo largo de la historia siguiendo una tradición milenaria en el Arte de la Arquitectura." (Ciudad Cayalá)

### **Imagen 1: Iglesia Santa María Reina de la Familia en Ciudad Cayalá, Guatemala**



BELLEZA Y LENGUAJE

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La elección de una narrativa colonial para el theming no es una mera coincidencia, sino que se basa en la aceptación de dicho tema y en el público al cual éste puede apuntar. En Ecuador, el contexto político-cultural está determinado por el reconocimiento multicultural desde mediados de la década de 1990, el cual en principio se definió como pluriétnico para luego, incluso, declararse plurinacional en el 2006. Un cambio en la apreciación de los pueblos indígenas junto a una reflexión en torno al relato fundacional de la nación tuvo como consecuencia una crisis de identidad en las clases altas, crisis para la cual el uso nostálgico de lo feudo-colonial resultó exitoso en términos de marketing, combinando elementos tan ansiados como la seguridad, la autenticidad y la distinción social[6].

### **Imagen 2: Modelo del San Luis Shopping Center, Quito**



Foto: Olaf Kaltmeier

### **Gentrificación y patrimonialización**

Las tendencias a la refeudalización en el espacio urbano no se limitan a la autosegregación, sino que también existen prácticas refeudalizadoras que activamente intentan apoderarse de los espacios públicos. Al describir los procesos de apropiación de áreas centrales de las ciudades con 'gentrificación', los urbanistas han escogido conscientemente un concepto que alude a lo feudal. El término deriva de *gentry*, una clase social histórica inglesa entre baja y media nobleza. Gentrificación describe procesos de transformación urbana en los que

la población original de un área deteriorada y pauperizada es progresivamente desplazada por otra de un mayor nivel adquisitivo de clase media-alta. En Europa, artistas, bohemios y sectores alternativos son considerados como *first stage gentrifiers*; ya que a partir de su intervención en áreas históricas deterioradas, estos sectores ganan en atractividad y acaparan mayor atención, lo cual se refleja en las rentas inmobiliarias. Esta dinámica facilita la especulación y por lo general deriva en la expulsión de los sectores subalternos.

En contraste, el *first-stage-gentrifier* en América Latina no es prioritariamente la bohemia ni recientemente los inversionistas del capital extranjero, sino las instituciones estatales, incluyendo los gobiernos municipales, que cooperan con los agentes del campo del patrimonio. El historiador Eduardo Kingman afirma en su análisis de los efectos sociales de la gentrificación por patrimonio:

Se desarrollan campañas dirigidas al control del centro así como a generar una cultura del patrimonio (concebida como equivalente de cultura ciudadana); se diseñan planes de sostenibilidad social y de reactivación cultural, se asumen acciones contra sectores considerados peligrosos como las trabajadoras sexuales, los mendigos, los vendedores ambulantes, los vigilantes de autos, charlatanes y artistas populares. (28)

En este paisaje están permitidos principalmente los individuos de clase media-alta y los turistas que participan en el circuito de consumo. Es una vida urbana rápida de placer a corto plazo, mientras que las dimensiones sociales de intercambio informal y de encuentro –características de los espacios públicos– quedan en peligro de extinción. De tal manera, la modernización por patrimonio destruye los lazos sociales indispensables para la construcción de urbanidad. Con Jürgen Habermas podemos hablar de un proceso forzado de la “refeudalization of the public” por la presión de intereses económicos y políticos[7] articulados con proyectos urbanos de modernización por patrimonio.

De esta manera, en ciudades con centros históricos coloniales tales como Quito o Lima el uso del patrimonio en las estrategias urbanas fue la clave para iniciar un proceso de recuperación o “reconquista” –para usar un concepto común de la literatura contemporánea– del centro histórico, el cual desde los años sesenta había sido apropiado por migrantes rurales-indígenas. El centro histórico de la capital ecuatoriana, Quito, fue el primer conjunto urbano en ser declarado “Patrimonio de la Humanidad” por la UNESCO, en 1978. Después de los daños provocados por el terremoto de 1987, se inició un proceso masivo de recuperación del centro, que desde una perspectiva monumentalista se concentró en la rehabilitación de edificios destacados, sobre todo las iglesias y conventos.

Con respecto al turismo, el municipio desarrolló la visión de atraer al turismo extranjero, especialmente de alto poder adquisitivo. En el folleto “Invierta en Quito,” el Municipio de Quito escribe:

En términos generales, y dado el potencial del renovado Centro Histórico de Quito, se puede apreciar un importante nicho de mercado para las modalidades turísticas de lujo y primera categoría en esta localidad que recibe más del 70% de los turistas que llegan a la capital. (MDMQ 30)

Esta clientela corresponde en el marco de análisis de la refeudalización a la élite cosmócrata constituida por los ganadores del capitalismo neoliberal. El municipio como *first-stage gentrifier* –asesorado por grupos de expertos del Banco Inter-American de Desarrollo (BID) y de USAID– crea a través de sus políticas urbanas condiciones favorables para la inversión del gran capital en el centro histórico y, como co-financista, corre el mayor riesgo en la primera etapa de la restauración.

En este contexto, los quiteños nostálgicos también se suman a la ola de gentrificación, tal como lo observa Modesto Ponce Maldonado en su novela *El palacio del diablo*:

Casas de las clases altas de ayer, que salieron hace cincuenta años a vivir en el norte que se urbanizaba y crecía,

volvieron a ser ocupadas por nostálgicos y noveleros para dar brillo a la casi cinco veces centenaria ciudad, para conquistar en esa forma al turismo que contribuirá a redimir futuros y zurcir las roturas del saco de producto nacional bruto. (280)

Este proceso de gentrificación está acompañado por una verdadera administración de la población y la biopolítica urbana, expulsando y controlando los sectores “peligrosos”, tales como los vendedores ambulantes. Por medio de coerción directa, negociaciones y la coerción estructural de las rentas inmobiliarias, los sectores subalternos son desplazados. En 1974 el centro histórico tenía 90.000 habitantes. En el 2001, el número de habitantes se había reducido a 51.000. Asimismo, las condiciones de vida de la población subalterna restante no mejoraron. En un estudio del BID, Pedro Jaramillo pone de relieve que todavía el 84,4 % de la población total del centro histórico vive bajo la línea de pobreza. Resume el autor: “a pesar de la inversión, los residentes están experimentando un pequeño mejoramiento social” (34) Y advierte: “Si no hay mejoras respecto a la condición de pobreza de los residentes será difícil lograr sustentabilidad en este proceso” (Jaramillo 34).

Sin embargo, para los organismos del patrimonio el caso de Quito es considerado como *best-practice*, ya que la reubicación se realizó por la vía de negociaciones y el menor uso posible de violencia represiva. Pero el municipio no se limitó a la recuperación de espacios insulares del patrimonio monumental únicamente en sitios emblemáticos tales como la plaza San Francisco o la plaza de la independencia. Mas bien, notamos una dinámica de expansión de la modernización por patrimonio.

Un caso importante de esta dinámica fue la recuperación de la calle La Ronda en el 2006, anteriormente considerada un lugar de delincuencia y prostitución (Kaltmeier, “En búsqueda” 187-190) La calle era todavía una “no-go-area” en los años noventa, tanto para turistas como para la propia clase media alta quiteña, dado que estaba ocupada por trabajadoras sexuales y delincuentes. Hoy en día es un área turística restaurada, en cuyo espacio con banderas, centros culturales, y servicios

de vigilancia privada se llevan a cabo eventos culturales y se vende comida típica. En la calle La Ronda hay muchos afiches instalados por el municipio, que indican una historia con alto capital cultural –La Ronda como calle de la Bohemia– pero no existe un solo letrero que recuerde su historia como prostíbulo. De esta manera se fabrica en Quito un paisaje retrocolonial que se asemeja a un “parque temático,” que narra una historia restringida y en definitiva ahistórica del patrimonio colonial a partir de la escenificación de un conjunto arquitectónico. Al negar el aporte de las culturas populares y al silenciar a la polifonía de voces dentro de la ciudad, este proyecto tiene la paradoja de querer rescatar la cultura deshaciéndose de ella. Al finalizar el periodo del alcalde Paco Moncayo, gran parte de la zona monumental había sido recuperada y La Ronda se había convertido en “la frontera sur” del centro, en donde se produce el mayor control, conformado por 6 policías nacionales y 10 guardias de seguridad privados en 320 m de calle, las 24 horas del día” (Martínez 103). Este modo de control del espacio es de particular importancia, pues demuestra cómo las formas de control vigentes en los centros comerciales penetran al espacio público. De esta manera, se crean nuevas fronteras reales y simbólicas dentro de los espacios urbanos que antes eran públicos. Cinco años después, la calle La Ronda ya está patrimonializada y “la frontera sur” avanzó con la recuperación y peatonalización de la calle 24 de mayo, anteriormente considerada un área de delincuencia, y con la transformación del terminal terrestre de Cumandá en un centro recreativo con museos, salas de cine, piscinas, canchas de fútbol y salas de gimnasia. El proceso de gentrificación por patrimonio se ve claramente resumido en este grafito en las laderas del Panecillo frente al nuevo centro Qmandá en 2014. Lo que muestra la imagen es como después de las excavadoras llegan los turistas internacionales que no tienen ninguna relación con el lugar, mientras la población local huye como un perro.

### Imagen 3 Grafito frente al Centro Qmandá en las faldas del Panecillo.



Foto: Olaf Kaltmeier 2014.

#### Consumo refeudal: lujo, prestigio, distinción

Los vínculos entre patrimonio y refeudalización no sólo se manifiestan en los espacios urbanos. También la fabricación de identidades neoaristócratas que buscan distinción social frente a la mayoría de los “plebeyos” recurre a los bienes patrimoniales. Mientras esto se revela históricamente durante la *Gilded Age* (“Edad dorada”) de los Estados Unidos, también es aplicable para la actual construcción de identidad por consumo (Bauman, *Vida de consumo*; Kaltmeier “Invidious Comparison”). El consumo ostentoso es un aspecto central del comportamiento de la clase ociosa identificado por Veblen tomando el ejemplo de los neoaristócratas del *Gilded Age*, y este vuelve a ser especialmente importante en la actualidad. No sólo es posible observar una polarización extrema de la estructura social, sino que se puede ver igualmente una polarización en términos del consumo. Mientras que la mayoría excluida debe limitarse a un “gusto de necesidad” (Bourdieu), el consumo de lujo está en auge entre el 10% más rico.

La importancia del consumo para la diferenciación social no puede subestimarse en la actualidad. Ya en el periodo inmediatamente anterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la sociedad de consumo comenzó a crecer en Europa Occidental y en Estados Unidos. En los escritos apologéticos se hacía énfasis en el carácter masivo del consumo, pero en años

recientes pueden encontrarse procesos de distinción en esa sociedad de consumo. A este respecto, el sociólogo Zygmunt Bauman afirma:

Los lugares ganados o asignados sobre el eje de excelencia / ineptitud de rendimiento consumista se convierten en el principal factor de estratificación y en el criterio fundamental de inclusión y exclusión, a la vez que marcan la distribución de la estima o el estigma social, así como la cuota de atención pública. (*Vida de consumo* 77-78)

El consumo en la sociedad global postmoderna se transforma así no sólo en una práctica racional de satisfacción de necesidades, sino en la *conditio sine qua non* de la vida social. La identidad no es ya solamente determinada por la pertenencia, sino que se produce a través de un permanente proceso de consumo. De cualquier manera, este proceso de “autofabricación de identidad” (*Vida de consumo* 87) es altamente frágil. Para aquellos que no tienen acceso al consumo, no sólo se ven impedidos de una formación identitaria, sino que se vuelven también superfluos como individuos para la sociedad de consumo (*Vida de consumo* 96). En este sentido, la formación de identidad a través del consumo no es un factor de autorealización, sino un imperativo social que es indispensable para tener un lugar en la sociedad. Para los híper-ricos, el consumo representa la

posibilidad de expresar su estatus en el estado global de la aristocracia monetaria a través de la ostentación, especialmente a través de estilos de vida exclusivos asociados a la posesión de bienes remarcando distinciones neofeudales.

Una mirada a la historia del consumo en América Latina deja claro que luego del periodo colonial, hacia inicios del siglo XIX, el gusto de las élites apuntaba hacia Europa. Principalmente Francia, con su centro cultural, a saber, París, se transformó en el foco indiscutido del consumo de lujo para Latinoamérica. Ni siquiera el surgimiento político y económico de Estados Unidos pudo arrebatarle dicha posición cultural central a Francia. En el transcurso del forzado proceso de globalización de mediados del siglo XX, el consumo de lujo en Latinoamérica también se volvió más cosmopolita.

Al igual que en Europa, en América Latina también hubo un auge de la moda y del diseño exclusivos, entre otras clases de artículos de lujo. Algunas ciudades de América Latina se han transformado en centros de consumo de lujo. Ahí se encuentran las marcas más lujosas y de alta gama de la industria de la moda, entre relojería, joyería y perfumería (Costa da Silva). El 10% más rico apuesta por el “neo-individualismo,” en el cual el consumo de artículos de lujo pasa a ser parte del estilo de vida. Gilles Lipovetsky, un filósofo que asesora a marcas de lujo, recomienda a las marcas la restauración de la distinción aristocrática (Zitzmann).

En este contexto, los sociólogos Luc Boltanski y Armand Esquerre (“Economic Life of Things”) han señalado recientemente que existe una nueva economía relacionada con estilos de consumo distintivo, por ejemplo la pasión por colecciónar bienes de lujo, tales como relojes, autos clásicos y objetos de arte. Otra clase de pasatiempos selectos, como poseer yates, pertenecen igualmente a esta clase de distinciones normativas toda vez que resultan actividades de ocio tan costosas que son imposibles de pagar para la inmensa mayoría de las personas.

Una consideración teórica más profunda de este segmento de la economía aún no se ha realizado de manera exhaustiva. Recientemente, sin embargo, Boltanski y Esquerre tienen el mérito de haber realizado las

primeras reflexiones conceptuales en torno a esta “economía del enriquecimiento,” la misma que incluye el auge del sector de los artículos de lujo, el patrimonio, el arte y la cultura. La economía del enriquecimiento se diferencia de la producción industrial en que, en la primera, “la valorización de un objeto estará basada en una historia, usualmente fundada en su pasado, y presenta la perspectiva que el precio de ese objeto enriquecido por esta narrativa es una buena posibilidad para que el valor se incremente con el tiempo” (Boltanski y Esquerre, “Enrichment” 69).

Boltanski y Esquerre ubican el origen histórico de esta forma de valor en la construcción sistemática de colecciones durante las primeras décadas del siglo XIX en Europa Occidental, aunque también se encuentran antecedentes en los llamados gabinetes de curiosidades del siglo XVII. Siguiendo el argumento del tiempo, en el cual el pasado se vuelve cada vez más importante en la determinación del presente y del futuro, los autores encuentran el origen del auge de estas narrativas de enriquecimiento especialmente en el “efecto patrimonial,” el cual crea nuevas “marcas patrimoniales” y, en su fiebre de nostalgia, deviene en una quasi “manía patrimonial” (“Enrichment” 34). El mayor mérito del concepto de la economía del enriquecimiento radica, principalmente, en su anclaje político-económico materialista. Boltanski y Esquerre están menos interesados en las dinámicas socio-culturales de la “retrotopía”<sup>[8]</sup> que en la importancia de las narrativas del patrimonio para una teoría del valor. En este sentido, ellos extienden la versión de Marx de la forma de valor normal de la producción industrial masiva, al agregar la ya mencionada forma de colección, una tendencia en la cual la narrativa de enriquecimiento está basada en nuevas marcas de referencia, como estilos de vida de celebridades y, en último término en la “forma de activos”, como una inversión con expectativas de futuras ganancias (“Enrichment” 69-70).

Desde una perspectiva postcolonial, debe señalarse ahora que el concepto de colección está directamente relacionado con la cuestión del patrimonio colonial. La pregunta respecto a qué patrimonio es considerado como tal y por ende vale la pena ser conservado, y cuál puede

ser desecharo y olvidado, es evidentemente una pregunta política (Kaltmeier, "On the Advantage and Disadvantage of Heritage" 15). En América Latina y el Caribe está claro que la mayor parte del patrimonio reconocido por la UNESCO es de origen colonial. A este respecto, al igual que con el proceso de gentrificación de los centros coloniales de las ciudades, la narrativa cultural colonial resulta en el enriquecimiento de los objetos y lugares en cuestión, especialmente en los inmuebles, los cuales son apropiados por las clases altas. Lo mismo ocurre con artefactos y objetos de arte colonial.

Más allá de estas consideraciones teóricas respecto al valor, que contribuyen a una mayor concentración de la riqueza en el 10% ya mencionado, se debe enfatizar la dimensión político-cultural del auge del patrimonio colonial. Las narrativas coloniales, fomentadas por las instancias internacionales de patrimonio, otorgan valor a un objeto cargándolo de autenticidad y singularidad, lo que, al mismo tiempo, crea una distinción adicional de las culturas basadas en la exclusividad y en fantasías de superioridad histórico-colonial. En este contexto, cuando en la década de 1990 en América Latina los derechos de los pueblos indígenas se reconocen por primera vez desde el inicio de la colonia, la revaloración retro-colonial del imaginario colonial y el estatus asociado a la población blanca-mestiza de las clases medias y altas tuvo un impacto social considerable. El refinamiento de estas narrativas retro-coloniales en torno a determinados objetos deviene en un enriquecimiento que aumenta la brecha social entre el 1% más rico y el 99% restante, a la vez que crea una estructura narrativa para la formación y consolidación de una identidad cultural y una clase retro-colonial.

### **Patrimonio segmentado**

Mientras que en los países de Europa occidental el patrimonio se ha transformado en un factor de estilo de vida despolitizado, el patrimonio en contextos postcoloniales se ha convertido en un campo de batalla sobre la interpretación de la historia y su proyección en el futuro. Este es según David Herwitz el principal motivo por el cual las sociedades en procesos

de descolonización –Herwitz analiza sobre todo el caso de Sudáfrica– entran en el juego del patrimonio y crean su propio patrimonio nacional, aunque el patrimonio en sí mismo sea un dispositivo occidental.

Hacerlo es un movimiento de rehabilitación, una forma de autoasignar un futuro al asumir la ideología que les permite atribuir origen y destino al pasado, la acumulación y la transmisibilidad a sus "valores". Y una parte central de la dialéctica poscolonial es reconceptualizar el pasado precolonial como una herencia, y encontrar una manera de reclamar ese pasado como el origen del futuro de uno. (Herwitz 21)

Este uso del patrimonio tiene sus escollos, ya que el patrimonio es un discurso y una práctica que no está arraigada en la política indígena del pasado sino que es introducida por los colonizadores, lo que implica ciertas lógicas de representación, categorización y exhibición. Si bien el patrimonio se basa en dichas lógicas, generalmente conceptualizadas por expertos, se articula con el lado afectivo y emocional de los sentimientos nostálgicos que en las Américas están relacionados sobre todo a los patrones antagonistas de colonialidad e indigenidad. (Kaltmeier, "On the Advantage and Disadvantage of Heritage") Por lo tanto, la nostalgia no es un simple bostezo de ayer, sino que sirve como un medio para enfrentar un futuro incierto.

Dado este antagonismo entre lo indígena y lo colonial en el campo del patrimonio, y tomando en cuenta las politización de la cuestión indígena a partir de la década de los noventa, se explica el gran atractivo de lo colonial para la recuperación de identidades blancas y elitistas. La retro-colonialidad y el feudalismo post-rural están, como lo demuestran los ejemplos ya mencionados de Ecuador y Guatemala, íntimamente relacionados con las clases altas, principalmente entre los terratenientes, la burocracia estatal de la década de 1970 y, desde la década de 1990, el emergente sector financiero.

De cualquier manera, la retro-colonización no se debe sólo a las dinámicas de identidad

en Latinoamérica. Más bien, estas dinámicas se combinan con los debates globales respecto a la herencia colonial y su expresión cultural-industrial en la forma de turismo patrimonial. En este sentido, las construcciones locales de identidad retro-colonial son favorecidas y reconocidas por las agencias transnacionales del campo del patrimonio cultural. Este último aspecto resulta de gran importancia, ya que la construcción de identidad a partir de la retro-colonialidad no corresponde solamente a una mirada nostálgica al pasado por parte de la élite criolla, sino que se alinea con los procesos recientes de globalización cultural. La identidad nostálgica logra un reconocimiento cosmopolita por parte de las instituciones de patrimonio cultural y de los turistas internacionales, quienes buscan con ansias el pasado y la autenticidad. Entonces, estas no son identidades que miren el futuro desde el pasado, sino que combinan la invención de la nostalgia con la industria cultural y la posmodernidad global.

Históricamente, el patrimonio cultural ha sido desde el siglo XIX un poderoso dispositivo de la imaginación de la nación. Tal como Herwitz argumenta, también es aplicado en contextos postcoloniales para crear la nueva imagen de naciones poscoloniales independientes. Sin embargo, parece que la función del patrimonio en la actualidad cambió no sólo con respecto de su mercantilización global sino también con respecto a la dinámica de fabricación de identidad. En el contexto de una sociedad altamente segregada, en la cual desaparecen los espacios públicos donde diversas partes de la sociedad puedan interactuar, también el patrimonio es sujeto a segmentarse. En lugar de ser un dispositivo de integración social, el patrimonio se convierte así en un instrumento de segregación. En este sentido, resulta relevante analizar qué políticas patrimoniales serán aplicadas por los nuevos gobiernos del giro hacia la derecha. Es muy probable que la visibilidad del patrimonio indígena se vea reducida, a la par que el patrimonio colonial blanco adquiera aún más visibilidad. Sin embargo, también se observan tendencias hacia un completo descuido del patrimonio nacional, tal como lo demostró el incendio del Museo Nacional de Brasil en el 2018, en el cual se quemó la

memoria histórica nacional de 200 años a causa de las políticas de austeridad impuestas por el gobierno de derecha de Michel Temer.

## Notas

- [1] Ver Neckel 2017; Tanner 2015; Kaltmeier 2018.
- [2] Ver Boym 2001.
- [3] Ver Bauman 2017.
- [4] Ver Kaltmeier 2011 y Kaltmeier 2015<sup>a</sup>.
- [5] Ver Gottdiener 1995 y Gottdiener 2001.
- [6] Ver Kaltmeier 2011.
- [7] Ver Habermas 1962.
- [8] Ver Bauman 2017.

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# The Nature of the Brazilian Flag: An Environmental Turn under Military Rule (1964-1985)

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## Abstract

*Nature in Brazil has been the subject of debates, competing representations and historical ruptures. This article argues that the period of the military regime (1964-1985) was that of a shift in the delimitation between culture and nature, which became clear by means of media, artistic, intellectual and political representations. During the 1970s, in particular, the “nature” envisaged by the military regime, a hostile nature which the nation must conquer in order to exploit resources, gave way to a fragile nature. In diverse sectors of society, environmental protection came to be seen as necessary to preserve national identity and sovereignty. The debate about the future of the Amazon proved crucial in this transformation. This article analyzes the reasons for this change and gives some illustrations of it. It begins with a perspective of the different visions of nature that existed prior to the arrival of the military in power. Then, it explains how the developmentalist ideology of the military regime, based on an anthropocentric idea of nature, was challenged in the context of the rise of environmentalist discourse in the 1970s. Subsequently, it analyzes the transversal character that ecological thought managed to adopt in Brazilian society during these years. And finally, it explores the diversification of the environmental movement in the context of the transition towards democracy and its aftermaths.*

**Keywords:** political ecology, Brazil, military regime, environmental history, patriotism, nature/culture, Amazon (Amazonia), environmentalism, socio-environmentalism

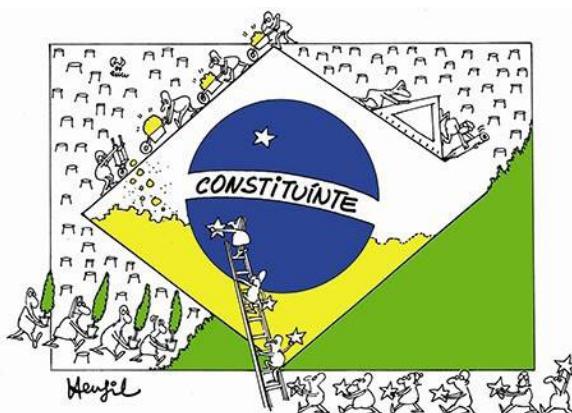


Although this is not written in any official text, it is a common belief among Brazilians that their national flag symbolizes the country's allegedly grandiose natural conditions: the central blue sphere for the star-spangled, cloudless sky and the balmy tropical climate, nested in a yellow rhombus evoking gold and, more generally, wealthy natural resources, against a background as green as the country's endless forests. In

the above picture, threatening white factory chimneys stain the blue sky with dark smoke. The bulk of the gold making up the yellow rhombus has been taken away by an excavator that stocked the nuggets into the wagons of a merchandise train. The green of the forest has almost entirely given place to a bare landscape, punctuated by trunks of chopped trees. On the square's left margin, some cactuses and animal skeletons evoke a landscape dried out by deforestation, while on the lower right corner a bulldozer is felling the last remaining parcel of woods. A little Uncle Sam is wrapping the outlined edge of the rhombus as he would do to pack up an old carpet, symbolizing the liquidation of Brazil's natural heritage for the benefit of foreign markets and imperialist interests.

This picture is a famous cartoon drawn in the 1970s, the core decade of Brazil's military regime (1964-1985), by Henfil (1944-1988), one of the country's most renowned and talented cartoonists, and through his work also a genuine resister of the dictatorship's infamous

political order. In caricatures that were mainly published in the alternative, liberal and satirical press, he criticized censorship, torture, social repression and the environmental destruction provoked by the regime's industrial and farming policies. There was nothing exceptional in this constellation: the ecological dimension was an integral part of the critique of authoritarian rule in many opposition circles. But the above cartoon is particularly interesting for the deep symbolic meaning it carries. In amalgamating tropical nature with Brazil's flag, Henfil underlines the function of the former as a source of nationhood and suggests that the destruction of this nature would mean the end of Brazil as a self-standing nation. This centrality of the natural heritage is, indeed, deeply carved in Brazil's patriotic imaginary, as appears in the national hymn, written by Joaquim Osório Duque Estrada. Officially adopted in 1922, the latter bristles with eulogies to the country's "splendid cradle", "deep sky light", illuminating sun or "showiest land". Significantly, the hymn not only claims the beauty but also the superiority of these environmental conditions, suggesting that nature is what makes Brazil unique ("Than the showiest land / Thy smiling, pretty prairies have more flowers / Our groves have more life / Our life in thy bosom more loves").



This theme has its origin in the so-called "Edenic motif", the colonial vision of Brazil as a terra farta, a "lavish land" (Pádua 73). Since virtually the arrival of the Portuguese, the positioning of humans towards nature or the sertão, in its most general sense, that is to say, a word roughly equivalent to the English "wilderness", the wild or uncivilized space, has played a driving role in the

formation of Brazilian society [1]. It first served the hierarchy of colonial relations, when in the sixteenth century the whites used the physical proximity between the natives' habitat and the forest as an argument for their inhumanity, thus justifying their reduction into slavery. The culture/nature relation also expressed itself later in the attempts to define modern Brazilian identity, as it appeared ambiguously in the work of Euclides da Cunha *Os Sertões* (1902), who saw in the natural conditions of the sertão's inhabitants both a degrading yoke and a source of national authenticity. The sertão was central in long-term projects of state centralization, in particular through the plan of establishing the capital of the country in the middle of its central plains, which unfolded from the 19th century until the construction of Brasília in 1956. [2]

While the relation to nature can be read as a marker of identity in Brazilian history, it is important to stress that this marker is not static. Nature in Brazil has been the subject of debates, competing representations and historical ruptures. As I argue in this text, the period of the military regime was precisely that of a shift in the delimitation between culture and nature, and this shift became clear by means of media, artistic, intellectual and political representations. During the 1970s, in particular, the "nature" envisaged by the military regime, a hostile nature which the nation must conquer in order to exploit resources, gave way to a fragile nature. In diverse sectors of society, environmental protection came to be seen as necessary to preserve national identity and sovereignty. The debate about the future of the Amazon proved crucial in this transformation.

In the following sections, I analyze the reasons for this change and give some illustrations of it. I begin with a perspective of the different visions of nature that existed prior to the arrival of the military in power. Then, I explain how the developmentalist ideology of the military regime, based on an anthropocentric idea of nature, was challenged in the context of the rise of environmentalist discourse in the 1970s. Subsequently, I analyze the transversal character that ecological thought managed to adopt in Brazilian society during these years. And finally, I explore the diversification of the environmental movement in the context of the

transition towards democracy and its aftermaths.

### I – The “possible natures” in Brazilian culture (Ostos)

Nature has been a fundamental element in the history of (elite-driven) Brazilian nation building, but its place in the collective imaginary was not at any time consensual, be it in political discourses or in literary and artistic production. There have been two major competing interpretations of the relationship between humanity and nature: on the one side, a “civilizationist”, expansionist interpretation, and on the other side a conservationist interpretation. The civilizationist viewpoint, largely inspired by a colonial spirit, has defined the construction of the Brazilian nation as a process of overcoming wild and “backward” elements: Brazil must therefore liberate itself from environmental obstacles, civilize the populations subjected to nature’s dominion, and transform the forest into agrarian lands to ensure national prosperity. In terms of geographical dynamism, this view tends to equate the construction of Brazil with a process of shifting the population from the coastline inwards, and durably colonizing wild territories. This idea of a Brazil built in opposition to natural forces has inspired the cult of the Bandeirantes, colonists from São Paulo who, in the seventeenth century, opened routes northwards through the interior forests, capturing Indians on their way. Constructed a posteriori into pioneers of the nation by various twentieth-century intellectuals and political leaders, the Bandeirantes are still the object of vivid memorial tributes, notably through street names and monuments in São Paulo and other important cities. [3] The colonial and expansionist take on nature was also decisive in massive state-supported operations of hinterland conquest. A notable example of these was the “Marcha para o Oeste” (March to the West), a campaign encouraging agricultural colonization in the central states of Goias and Mato Grosso, under the rule of the dictator Getúlio Vargas in the 1940s. [4]

In opposition to this anthropocentric version, there exists a conservationist, or romantic, interpretation of nature’s place in Brazilian society. According to this historical tradition, the

distinctiveness of tropical nature is foundational for Brazilian identity and unites the different races that make up the nation. Protecting this natural heritage is therefore a national imperative, while environmental destruction is an absurd process that must be overcome to build an independent and prosperous Brazil. This idea finds its rational basis in physiocratic writings of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, which fused conservationist discourses with the economic benefits of a more autonomous or even independent Brazil. Thus did “founding father” José Bonifácio, the main architect of Brazil’s independence in 1822, relentlessly warn against the disappearance of “our precious forests victims of fire and the destructive axe”, which could reduce “our beautiful land of Brazil (...) to the condition of empty plains and the arid deserts of Libya” (qtd. in Pádua, “Tropical Forests” 162). He believed in the organic links between tropical vegetation, rains and the soil stability indispensable to Brazilian agriculture, and wrote in particular:

se a agricultura se fizer com os braços livres dos pequenos proprietários, ... se conservarão, como herança sagrada para a nossa posteridade, as antigas matas virgens que pela sua vastidão e frondosidade caracterizam o nosso belo país (qtd. in Pádua, “A Profecia Dos Desertos Da Líbia” 133).

The link between free, small-scale farming and environmental conservation was also a major theme among nineteenth-century abolitionists, who denounced slavery as a system favoring forest devastation and soil depletion. The mulatto writer André Rebouças called in 1876 for the creation of national parks, while six years earlier the politician Joaquim Nabuco wrote in his influential book and abolitionist plea *A escravidão*:

Quem nasceu neste belo país do Brasil não pode ser insensível à ação salutar da natureza. Só as almas endurecidas pelo cálculo podem nunca ter vibrado sob a impressão de tão grandes realces (Nabuco 66)

This conservationist Brazil was also that of the politician Alberto Torres, considered a precursor of modern Brazilian democracy. One of the fundamental principles of the constitution project, which he made public in 1891, was “the defense of the soil and natural resources of the country” (qtd. in Dean 244). In parallel to these initiatives, romantic novelists and poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as Gonçalves Dias, Bernardo Guimarães, and José de Alencar propagated an idealized vision of nature, often presented as the essence of Brazil’s identity. [5]

Obviously the two rival conceptions of nature described above have not been the only forms of relating to the non-human environment in Brazilian history, although they have been the dominant ones. Anthropologists such as Philippe Descola (2005) and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2015) have shown that many of the indigenous peoples living on Brazilian territory do not conceive the universe according to a binary division between humans and non-humans. Afro-Brazilian syncretic cults such as Candomblé also believe in a mystic connection to water, fire, air and earth, which radically differs from the vision of nature developed by Brazilian writers and politicians who were mostly white members of the socio-economic elites (Santos & Gonçalves). In contrast, although the civilizationist and conservationist points of view described above imply a different attitude towards the right of humans to exploit nature, they both belong to a Christian conception of the world as divided between nature and culture. They even came to be synthesized in the ambiguous logic of Afonso Celso. In 1900, this influential writer invented a peculiarly Brazilian form of patriotism, which he christened “Ufanism”, a term derived from a Castilian adjective designating self-satisfaction (1900). While Ufanismo, in Celso’s vision, related to the exultation of national sentiments and the celebration of the fatherland, it is interesting to note that he presented tropical nature as one of the main sources of national pride. For him, the first three reasons for this pride were the country’s territorial size, the beauty of its landscapes and the wealth of its natural resources. The logic of Celso can thus give rise to two interpretations, two “possible natures”, both anchored in the

thinking of the Brazilian elites. [6] The idea of an abundant tropical nature as the foundation of national wealth can encourage the intensive exploitation of environmental resources as well as a reflex of preservation.

The paradox generated by Ufanist thought reached its climax during the so-called “developmentalist” period of consolidation of the state’s productive structures, which began in the 1930s with Getúlio Vargas and continued until the time of the military regime. The natural scientists of organizations such as the Museu Nacional, the Jardim Botânico and the Sociedade Geográfica in Rio de Janeiro, and later those of the Fundação Brasileira para Conservação da Natureza (FBCN), managed to interfere in the affairs of the developmentalist state (Franco and Drummond 2009). They advocated the protection of nature as a national value. The “Forest Code” of 1934 was born in this context, which saw conservation legislation emerging in fields as diverse as irrigation, protection of flora and fauna, and hunting and fishing regulation (Drummond 135). Between 1934 and 1965, sixteen national parks were created. At the same time, the industrial and colonizing logic took precedence in government policies and presidential speeches, despite a few exceptions such as that of President Eurico Dutra who, in 1948, warned against the desertification of Brazil through deforestation (Dutra). In particular, the presidential mandate of Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961) marked the victory of a predatory and civilizationist vision, with the occupation of Brazil’s central plateau, the construction of Brasilia and the launching of major highway programs in the Amazon, which the president portrayed as victories over nature. In his memoirs, Kubitschek shared his pride at having accomplished the “conquest of the Hinterland” and of having been able to “introduce progress into regions never explored by the civilized man” (Kubitschek 80, 157).

## II- Faced with ecological crisis, the developmentalist ideology became ridiculed

Far from breaking with the tradition perpetuated by democratic presidents such as Kubitschek, the vision of nature conveyed by political

authorities after the military putsch of 1964 was in line with the expansionist logic of conquest, especially of forested areas. From 1966, this logic gave shape to Operação Amazônia, a set of legislative measures, major infrastructure projects and propaganda campaigns aimed at organizing the colonization of the Amazon. The officers who headed the Superintendencia de Desenvolvimento da Amazônia (SUDAM), an all-powerful administrative agency responsible for overseeing the region's modernization, spoke of a "great developmentalist crusade" (SUDAM 69-70, 134). Press broadcasts used warlike metaphors to call for deforestation. Publishing a double-page photograph of a chainsaw felling trees in a plentiful forest landscape, the popular magazine Manchete proclaimed on November 30, 1968: "Amazônia. Aqui o homem vence a natureza".

This aggressive approach to the relationship with nature was coupled with an unbounded belief in the profusion and potential of its resources. The military's anthropocentric ufanism blossomed through propaganda articulated in the early 1970s along with the construction of the Transamazonian, a highway of nearly five thousand kilometers crossing the Amazon region from east to west (Acker and de Oliveira 306). According to the military President Emílio Médici, this highway must lead the "men without land" from the drought-ridden and impoverished northeast of Brazil to the "land without men" of the northwest (the Amazon) (qtd. in Acker and de Oliveira 307). In this occasion the governor of the State of Amazonas, Artur Reis, one of the inspirers of Operação Amazônia, wrote:

A Amazônia é hoje a preocupação maior do Brasil, empenhados, seu povo e seu governo, na conquista definitiva e na integração da região ao complexo de civilização com que contribuímos para a grande Aventura do homem nos seus objetivos de triunfo sobre a natureza e sua potencialidade terrena (Reis 9).

The naive view of the abundance of land and environmental reserves that appears in Reis' words went hand in hand with the firm belief of the regime's leaders in unrestricted economic

growth. Delfim Netto, finance minister and main designer of the regime's economic policy, had an almost mystical relation to the growth of GDP, as shown by these words pronounced in 1972:

O desenvolvimento econômico e social é definitivo, e não um acidente. E chegou para ficar. Não se identifica nenhum fator impeditivo do desenvolvimento da economia brasileira. Nada poderá retardar o crescimento econômico do Brasil, a não ser os próprios brasileiros (qtd. in Macarini 33-34).

This excessive optimism soon had to face the growing awareness of the depletion of natural resources, which became visible at the global level with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972. The Brazilian military regime was internationally criticized for its obstructionist attitude during the summit (da Costa Ferreira and Tavolaro 2008). In the following years, its policy of colonization of the Amazon would fall into disgrace, especially within the scientific community, which saw tropical deforestation as a major threat to the world's biodiversity. It must be said that the illusion of an endlessly available Amazonian forest with unlimited resources also sank at the national and local levels. The idea that the Amazon was a land without men for men without land lost its credibility in the face multiplying land conflicts. In addition, the first figures concerning deforestation and the first surveys of soil depletion due to colonization policies, led in particular by Brazilian scientific organizations such as Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia (INPA) and the Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisas Agropecuárias (EMBRAPA), were published in the 1970s, causing alarmed reactions in the country (Falesi; Acker, Volkswagen in the Amazon 118).

It is in this context that the so-called "alternative" press began to mock the regime's blind ufanism. The satirical political weekly Pasquim shocked the Catholic bourgeoisie with a drawing by its cartoonist Nani, who, to criticize the pollution caused by the Transamazonian highway, represented Adam and Eve urinating in the Amazon river (Torres). Movimento

ironically associated the region's large-scale agricultural development projects with obsolete feudalism from colonial times, and *Opinião* devoted an article to the problems of pollution and deforestation in almost all of its weekly issues. The magazine was particularly alarmed at the risk of the rainforest disappearing. These publications had a significant audience, equaling or largely overtaking major pro-regime magazines such as *Veja* or *Manchete*. *Opinião* reached sometimes more than 30,000 copies in a single day, while *Movimento* usually sold around 50,000 for one issue and *Pasquim* had an impressive average diffusion of 250,000 (Rodrigues da Silva and Souza Brito 7; Gaspari 223; Oficina Informa). This dramatic tone also underpinned the militant newspaper *Varadouro* in Rio Branco, a city in the extreme West of the Amazon. *Varadouro*, which alerted Brazilians every week to the destruction of the tropical forest, earned a nationwide reputation in the late 1970s (*Resistir é preciso*).

But it is cinema, especially, that ridiculed the regime's propaganda of Amazon conquest through cruel parodies. Road-movies shot on the Transamazonian highway displayed polluted landscapes or deforestation and depicted characters deceived by the regime's promises of abundance. These movies implicitly pointed to a community of destiny between nature and the poor populations of the interior, both simultaneously suffering from the violence provoked by industrialization and farming modernization policies. *Iracema*, shot in 1973 by Jorge Bodanzky and Orlando Senna, depicts the plunge into social misery of a young prostitute from a rural village in the Amazon amid the decline of the forest. Along her travels on the highway, *Iracema* is a victim of contempt and the attempts of those in the deforestation economy to exploit and abuse her, such as the central figure of *Tião Grão Brasil*, a truck driver from Rio Grande do Sul. *Tião*, who first seeks to make a fortune in the timber trade, then in cattle ranching, seems to be the voice of the military regime in the movie. Obsessed by the goal of getting rich quickly, he likens the Amazon to the Eldorado of Brazil and *Iracema* to an "Indian". All along, he peddles a grotesque nationalist discourse that finds its source in the myth of unlimited nature and calls

for intensive environmental exploitation.

The same mixture of ridicule and tragedy can be found in the comedy *Bye Bye Brasil* by Carlos Diegues, released in 1979. It depicts a group of marginalized figures in a small traveling circus who turn away from the drought-ridden Nordeste (Brazil's Northeastern region) to reach the Amazonian "green paradise" so much praised by the military regime's propaganda. Their visit to a polluted beach, inserted in a cityscape bordered by smoking factories, convinces the small troupe to take the Transamazonian highway in search of the authentic Brazil, which they believe they will meet in the "pristine" forest. However, all they cross in their journey are bulldozers, burning landscapes, forest ashes, dying animals and disoriented indigenous populations. The movie mocks the regime's propaganda, which portrayed the exploitation of the Amazon as a promise of better days for the Brazilian nation. What *Bye Bye Brasil* - which bears its title well - shows the spectators is rather the dereliction of the nation, and especially of its natural interior, implicitly assimilated by the movie's protagonists to Brazil's soul.

Behind the irony of *Iracema* and *Bye Bye Brasil* lay the emergence of a concern spreading among different sectors of Brazilian society in the face of dwindling resources. This concern readily adopted a catastrophic tone, as in the twenty-seventh congress of the Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência (SBPC), which took place in Belo Horizonte in 1975 and was widely reported in the national press (Acker, Volkswagen in the Amazon 117). During this rally, which brought together thousands of Brazilian and foreign scholars, dozens of speakers from the academic world attacked the destructive policies regarding fauna and flora associated with Operação Amazônia. The title of the congress, *Por quê?* ("Why?"), expressed the dismay of the scientific community in the face of the ecological crisis, and the congress poster, illustrated with a dying bird, was an implicit reference to *Silent Spring*, an internationally successful book by the marine biologist Rachel Carson, published in 1962. Considered a founding manifesto of international ecological thought, the book denounced the slaughter of birds through the widespread use of pesticides

in agriculture.

Scientists' concern about environmental degradation reflected a shift in the perception of nature, especially (but not only) among the Brazilian middle class. The "nature-storehouse" to be conquered and exploited gave way to a fear that, in the name of progress, the country's natural heritage and, through it, the essence of Brazilian collective identity, could disappear. A reader's letter published on September 28, 1977, by the *Jornal do Brasil*, a major newspaper in Rio de Janeiro, testified to this growing trend:

É com grande tristeza e pesar que me dirijo ao *Jornal do Brasil* para juntar minha voz a milhares de outras, tão brasileiras como a minha preocupação em relação aos problemas nacionais ... na conservação do nosso patrimônio ... . Sinto-me mal cada vez que ouço conselhos no sentido de transformar a Amazônia num imenso pasto natura ... Meu Deus, quando será que o uso do bom senso e da razão voltará a imperar? E infelizmente o que os tem e os usa, a despeito de quaisquer pressões, é logo acusado de querer deter essa febre de progresso que tanto nos atormenta' (Fagerlande)

As we see in this text, the convergence between nature and nation became a major discursive theme in the criticism of environmental destruction and deforestation. It is therefore not surprising that this criticism focused on projects conducted in partnership between the authoritarian State and large multinational companies, such as the giant fazenda of the Volkswagen Group (VW), which practiced cattle breeding in the eastern Amazon state of Para. [6] The US shipping magnate Daniel K. Ludwig, who reigned over an empire of 1.6 million hectares by the Amazon river where he aimed to produce cellulose, was also regularly the object of environmental criticism. Another of these big groups provoking the wrath of nationalists and environmentalists was the Italian company Liquigas, which owned a ranch of 786,000 hectares (the size of a country like Holland) in the Southern Amazonian state of Mato Grosso, the 'Liquifarm'. All of these projects benefitted

from public credits amounting to tens of millions of dollars.

A photograph by a NASA satellite of a 10,000-hectare fire supposedly caused by VW in the Amazon generated an immense media scandal that gave rise in 1976 to thundering statements in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies and Senate. The parliamentarians who intervened then understood the fight against the destruction of nature as a patriotic struggle. Paulo Brossard, leader of the opposition in the Senate, was clear on this issue during a parliamentary speech:

Parece-me, Senhor Presidente, um crime contra a nacionalidade o que esta sendo cometido, e não podemos assistir indiferentes a que tais coisas aconteçam, que tais atos sejam praticados com prejuízos incalculáveis para a comunhão nacional (Brossard 211-22).

The Brossard quotation is just one example of many similar statements by Brazilian parliamentarians who, around 1975-1976, regularly attacked slash-and-burn farming by big firms. One of the peculiarities of these parliamentary interventions in favor of the forest was that they came from across the political spectrum. The politicians who spoke in defense of the "meio ambiente" often came from the left wing of the only authorized opposition party, the Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (MDB). The self-claimed social-ecologist senator Evandro Carreira, and the senator Benjamin Farah, a supporter of the left-wing former president João Goulart overthrown by the 1964 coup, were the spearheads of parliamentary environmentalism. But it was also possible to find environmentally inclined politicians in the parliamentary groups of the Aliança Renovadora Nacional (ARENA), the party basis of the military government. A congressman of this party, the carioca Emílio Nino Ribeira shook the Chamber of Deputies on August 10, 1976, by directly questioning the CEO of VW in these terms: "Afina! Sr. Wolfgang Sauer, o que veio o senhor fazer no Brasil? Produzir automóveis ou tocar fogo no mato?" (*Diário do Congresso Nacional*). Environmentalist thought penetrated the political domain but did not hug

traditional political lines, not even the lines resulting from the coup of 1964. Although it can certainly not be described as a mass movement, this thought quickly managed to become transversal.

### **III- A new cultural paradigm? The successful emergence of transversal environmental thinking**

The idea of nature as something to be protected was a transversal paradigm shift permeating many diverse sectors of Brazilian politics and culture. The ecological concern found echoes in associative activism and parliamentary politics, as well as in cinema, the visual arts and the media. The popular figure of Roberto Burle Marx, great defender of biodiversity, was emblematic of this expressive plurality. Landscape architect and painter, he promoted in his art the idea of a fusion between nature and the nation, especially through the systematic use of native plants in the gardens and parks he designed for most of the main Brazilian metropoles. By generalizing the transposition of tropical vegetation in the city, Burle Marx wanted to bring his compatriots closer to "their" natural environment. He aimed to create an authentically Brazilian urban landscape. [8] In the 1970s, his passion for environmental themes brought him closer to scientists involved in the fight against pollution, such as the chemist Jose Lutzenberger, who published in 1976 *Fim do Futuro*, the first explicitly ecologist manifesto in Brazil. While denouncing the deforestation operations carried out by large industrial groups in the Amazon, Burle Marx also allied with activist environmentalist organizations, such as the Ação Democrática Feminina Gaúcha (ADFG) in Rio Grande do Sul. Finally, Burle Marx took a position in parliamentary debates thanks to politicians of the MDB who invited him, in 1976, to speak against deforestation in the Senate (Acker, Volkswagen in the Amazon 139–47).

The transversal dimension symbolized by Burle Marx also existed at the social level, since the movement for a balanced relationship with nature mainly expanded through micro-initiatives which, depending on the local context, could mobilize different social classes. Pioneering activism emerged in 1971 in the

Southern metropole of Porto Alegre with the creation of the Associação Gaúcha de Proteção ao Ambiente Natural (AGAPAN), built by educated young people from the upper middle class. One of its members, the student Carlos Dayrell, made it into the headlines on February 25, 1975, by climbing a hundred-year-old tree to protest against its removal, planned as part of a construction project. This image, which went around Brazil, became a national symbol of the fight for environmental preservation (Pereira 117). In other big cities, the militants of this cause were often part of bohemian milieus that intertwined with the art and culture sectors. The Movimento Arte e Pensamento Ecológico (MAPE), founded in 1973 by the painter Walter Garcia, embodied such a trend. Based in São Paulo, the group made itself famous through regular happenings and exhibitions seeking to merge art and political ecology together (Viola 9-11).

Unlike perhaps the ecology movements that emerged at the same time in Europe, Brazilian environmental thinking also took root in some working-class areas. By 1976, the Amazonian rubber-taper leader Chico Mendes, alongside his fellow trade unionists of the state of Acre, developed the technique of the empates, which consisted of forming a human chain around trees or forest plots to prevent bulldozers clearing them (Martins 24). These actions were motivated by both a fear of dwindling natural resources and a fight for their just distribution. Beyond their political significance, the empates also illustrated the creativity of the Brazilian movement against deforestation, committed to developing an aesthetic of proximity between human beings and natural heritage. This proximity was also central to the actions of Carlos Dayrell in Porto Alegre, as well as in the artistic expressions of Burle Marx and the MAPE.

While the seringueiros were rural workers, ecological concerns also intermingled with social activism in urban contexts, in particular in Cubatão. This city on the outskirts of São Paulo was located in the heart of one of the world's most polluted regions, nicknamed at the time the "valley of death". The exceptionally high rate of toxic contamination in Cubatão's air and water, due to two decades of uncontrolled

industrialization, gravely affected the health of its inhabitants, especially in terms of infant mortality, birth malformation and cancer. From the end of the 1970s, the working families who populated the city organized themselves into a commission to fight against pollution and its consequences. On this occasion, they formed alliances with environmentalists and scientists of the SBPC (Hochstetler and Keck 189–204).

Besides transcending social classes depending on local circumstances and activist opportunities, Brazilian environmental thought also penetrated different kinds of political cultures. As in Europe, it of course achieved a certain breakthrough in Marxist circles, not only in rubber-tapper unionism but also among personalities from the Communist Party, such as Augusto Carneiro (Carneiro 2003). However, environmentalism also attracted more unexpected groups, like the ADFG. This association of housewives from the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie of Porto Alegre was founded in 1964 in the context of an anti-communist mobilization wave that served as a social base for the coup d'état. Its founding members claimed to have distanced themselves ideologically from the military regime on the occasion of their rapprochement with AGAPAN and their adherence to José Lutzenberger's theses against industrial pollution. In the early 1970s, the ADFG started to define itself as an "ecologist", and then even an "ecofeminist" group, to the point of organizing in 1975 the first national congress for the protection of nature, gathering more than five hundred participants from all over Brazil. By 1983, the ADFG formed the Brazilian section of the international environmental NGO Friends of the Earth (Acker, Volkswagen in the Amazon 137–41).

Finally, the wave of sympathy for the protection of nature was transversal because it not only flourished in society but also gained ground within the state apparatus and even the entrepreneurial world. In 1973, to respond to critics who accused him of dishonoring Brazil by opposing the adoption of international standards for pollution control during the Stockholm Conference, Médici conceded the creation of the Secretaria do Meio Ambiente (SEMA), one of the first governmental posts for environmental

protection in the world (Hochstetler and Keck 27). At its head, he named a historic figure of Brazilian conservationism, the natural scientist Paulo Nogueira Neto, who had been one of the founders of the FBCN in 1958. At the same time, the Instituto Brasileiro de Desenvolvimento Florestal (IBDF), a body in charge of developing economic activity in forest regions, became more and more sympathetic to the fight against deforestation. Its executives began to push for a moratorium on agrarian colonization and the construction of highways in the Amazon (Berutti 6). Against their own government's opinion, they defended the implementation of economic sanctions (as Brazilian conservation law foresaw) against large companies practicing illegal deforestation. Even SUDAM, responsible for driving the colonization of the Amazon, felt compelled to integrate environmental protection measures into the development programs it supported (Acker, Volkswagen in the Amazon 149).

Alongside the state, even large companies had to adapt, in their communication, the codes of the new language of nature protection. VW began to actively communicate about the reforestation programs it had started in its Amazonian ranch. Some brands even attempted to appropriate the discourse of activist environmentalism to sell their products on television, as evidenced by this critical analysis published in November 1975 in the monthly magazine Movimento:

Se você gosta de árvores, cuidado. Tenha cautela, a defesa do meio ambiente está-se tornando coisa escorregadia. É preciso reconhecer que ela ganhou tanto em popularidade que já faz parte sistemática da vida do telespectador brasileiro. A ponto de um detergente bio-degradável fazer sua propaganda na televisão com imagens de rios cristalinos, cascatas espumantes, e com a frase: 'Defenda o meio-ambiente, mesmo que para isso você tenha que subir em árvores', numa referência ao episódio ocorrido em Porto Alegre (De Souza 11).

This example corresponds to an early form of what is now called "Green Washing", which demonstrates how the idea of nature as something to be protected, a nature that is the

common good of Brazil, had taken root even among consumers. It also raises a question: How could this conservationist representation of nature settle in the Brazilian cultural landscape in only a few years, in spite of the anthropocentric and expansionist vision actively propagated by the ruling military regime?

Of course, Brazil was porous to an international context mobilizing around concerns with a global ecological crisis. The report of the Club of Rome pointing to the “limits of growth” in 1972, the Stockholm Conference, the Earth Day event mobilizing twenty million people in the United States in 1970, the literary success of many books alerting the public to environmental catastrophes, the creation of institutions, parties and associations of environmental protection around the world testify to an ecological “turn” that took place in the 1970s. At the same time, there was already a historically rooted intellectual tradition in Brazil, which saw the protection of nature as a national value, corresponding to the conservationist or romantic vision mentioned earlier. In the 1970s, this tradition was revitalized, modernized and amplified, despite government propaganda relayed by the conservative media, which called for environmental destruction, particularly in the framework of Operação Amazônia. The crucial reason for this revitalization was that, paradoxically, the period of the military regime constituted a favorable political opportunity for environmentalism.

In a context of authoritarian rule and political repression, materialized through censorship and the torture of “subversive” opponents, environmental criticism had the advantage of constituting a quite implicit form of subversion. It was an ambiguous and relatively “safe” perspective from which to criticize the regime’s policies because the military saw environmentalist thought as harmless. In effect, environmental thinking in Brazil throughout the 1970s was highly subversive because it implied deep criticism that challenged the entire political and economic model of military rule. Activist struggles against the chemical industry in Porto Alegre or campaigns against the concessions made to multinationals companies in the Amazon questioned the

model of “dependent development”, which had already been denounced since the late 1960s by Marxist academic literature. Critics of highway construction and mining projects attacked the authoritarian and bureaucratic decision-making process that accompanied this economic model. Alerts against deforestation were systematically coupled with the condemnation of land concentration, the proletarianization of rural workers and the persecution of indigenous people.

However, the military had great difficulty in identifying the ins and outs of this ecological thought because its intellectual foundations were totally absent from their theoretical training. A report written by the military police about the association AGAPAN in 1975 testifies to this ignorance. Worried about the activist agitation of this Southern Brazilian NGO but unable to grasp the reason for their protest, the text described them as a “group of Jewish disrupters”, probably because the AGAPAN office was located in the Jewish quarter of Bomfim in Porto Alegre (Niebauer 35). Most of the time, the military regime saw environmentalists as nothing more than ingenuous nature lovers and did not care much about their activities and even less about the political messages they conveyed. Because it remained widely untouched by censorship and repression, environmental thinking could spread throughout society, especially in the context of a globally recognized ecological crisis, as an alternative model of national identification to that of the regime.

It should be added that the “moment” of the distensão, initiated in 1974 by President Ernesto Geisel to promote a partial and progressive liberalization of institutions and an easing of political control, constituted an opportunity to turn this environmental criticism into political thought. The period of distensão opened a possible return to a plural political landscape. Therefore, the time was favorable for a general repositioning of the country’s politicians as well as for maneuvers from part of the opposition to accelerate the democratic transition. This created a context of large political alliances (often circumstantial and around specific causes) and a great ideological porosity within the big “democratic opposition” camp, including between the political and

associative spheres. The poor ideological platform of the MDB, a party sheltering virtually all kinds of political traditions from Marxism to moderate conservatism, left room for emerging ideas such as political ecology. Many MDB (and sometimes also ARENA) members were actually in search of new political ideas with which to identify themselves so as to find a future political space after the polarization between authoritarianism and democracy ended. Such a political framework produced opportunities even for marginal ideas to gain surprisingly wide support, including among high-ranking politicians.

At the same time, distensão inspired both hope and uncertainty, due to the pressure from the military regime's hardliners and the occasional signs of authoritarianism still sent by those in power. For example, the municipal elections of 1976 raised the fear of a setback in the process of distensão as the regime made sure to limit the opposition's freedom of speech with the help of the intelligence service (Alves 230–31). Political ecology was not a bad concept to struggle with in this threatening context, given the inoffensive image of environmentalists in the eyes of the military leadership.

In the mid- to late 1970s, many influential politicians joined campaigns against the building of an airport in São Paulo, the extension of the Brazilian nuclear park, and the distribution of timber concessions to private groups in the Amazon (Hochstetler and Keck 75-83, 157-60). These environmentalist struggles were weaker in militant intensity than, for example, antinuclear mobilization occurring in certain Western European countries in the same period. But they often earned similar media and political success, precisely because of the support of well-known personalities coming from all corners of the political landscape.

#### **IV- The transition to democracy, from patriotic environmentalism to “socio-environmentalism”**

The historical distance should lead to a paradoxical ecological appraisal of the era of the military regime. Although many ecologists see it as a dark period for nature, the years from 1964 to

1984 produced quite progressive environmental legislation in international comparison. It is possible to mention the creation of new regulations for air and water pollution under the leadership of SEMA, the environmental conversion of the IBDF, which has since been combined into a powerful environmental protection agency - the Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis (IBAMA) - or the consolidation of a forest code with strict standards, which environmental associations fought fiercely to preserve between 2012 and 2013, and again in 2016 (Acker, “Nature, nation et histoire”). The era of the military regime was also a period of intense mobilization, which made it possible to defeat large industrial projects or to launch extensive operations of environmental sanitation, such as happened during the 1980s in Cubatão (Hochstetler and Keck 199-203). All this was possible not thanks to the military but despite them, one could say in echo of a famous samba by Chico Buarque, written against the dictatorship (Apesar de você). The ruling regime embraced a colonizing discourse vis-à-vis the natural environment and never took the initiative in terms of environmental policy; it rather responded to the emerging demands of Brazilian society and international pressures. Yet environmentalist thinking took advantage of a particular political context, as well as of a “Brazilianization” of the discourse about the ecological crisis. Instead of echoing European and North American environmental slogans, especially about climate change, environmental criticism in Brazil focused mainly on the protection of the Amazon, which symbolized the defense of national heritage and the country's tropical identity.

This centrality of the Amazon in environmental discourse is directly connected with the context of the military regime. On the one hand, the regime itself chose to make the region the focus of its policies and development propaganda. Operação Amazônia and its programs of forced modernization unwillingly gave the Amazon priority in the environmental agenda by provoking previously unseen waves of deforestation and land conflicts in the region. On the other hand, the (even among environmentalists) deeply anchored perception of the rainforest as the

home of uncountable natural treasures made this policy the symbol of the regime's perceived "entreguismo", that is, its propensity to sell off the nation's wealth to foreign interests. Calls for environmental protection could reach the widest public by dressing themselves in nationalist clothes, especially since the decline of the regime's popularity coincided with brutal falls in GDP, revealing Brazil's high vulnerability towards global market variations. In comparison to its federal government predecessors, the dictatorship had a foreign-friendly economic policy, which favored multinational companies with fiscal incentives, the easing of profit remittances and a lax distribution of mining concessions. These "presents" to international capitalism became perceived as responsible for Brazil's weak resistance to the global oil shock of 1973 and to the major debt crisis that hit the country by the late 1970s, followed by socially painful restructuring programs (Acker, Volkswagen in the Amazon 188-9).

When a vast movement for the return to democracy started to challenge the military regime in the 1980s, Henfil published a new drawing of the Brazilian flag (fig. 2), inspired by the previous one (fig. 2), in support of the election of a constitutional assembly (Henfil 87). In the picture, the flag's green background is being refilled by women and men acting together to replant forest trees. This time it is human beings rather than a bulldozer carrying gold nuggets in wheelbarrows, bringing this gold back where it belongs: to the nation's common heritage, symbolized by the flag's rhombus becoming yellow again. People are also encrusting the stars back in the "deep sky light" (the flag's blue, central circle) and carefully redrawing the rhombus' outline. While the previous drawing equaled nature's destruction with the decline of Brazil as a nation, the new drawing represents the nation's reconstruction as a collective task tightly intertwined with the recovering of biodiversity, landscapes and environmental wealth. It conveys an idea of Brazil as a "splendid" but fragile "cradle", whose destiny is deeply linked to the survival of nature. After the fall of the military regime, this idea made its way into the foundations of the new republic, when the Brazilian constitution of 1988

became one of the first in the world to include a chapter dedicated to the preservation of the environment.

Just two months after the day the constitution was adopted, the Amazonian rubber-taper Chico Mendes was assassinated by rural landlords. A symbol of the conjunction between environmental protection and the fight for social justice, Mendes became thereafter the first global ecological martyr, and for the Brazilian left a national hero (Keck). His political beatification marks an important change in Brazilian political ecology. The narrative of green patriotism and defense of the national heritage moved from the center to the margins of environmental discourse which, after the process of democratization, became increasingly obsessed with the problem of social inequalities. The military regime's politics of "conservative modernization" of the agrarian sector, combining technological progress with land concentration to build up a monoculture export economy, had strongly aggravated inequalities in the country (Minc 66; Harnecker 24). It produced systemic misery by rarifying land and diminishing the demand for a rural workforce, pushing millions of landless rural workers to migrate to urban areas, where they gathered in peripheral districts lacking basic infrastructure, widely known as favelas. Against the background of this social emergency, the political landscape of the new-born Brazilian democracy was characterized by a powerful return of the left and the rise of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), a party which had emerged out of workers' strikes in the late 1970s and was highly porous to social movements. The PT also gained a new political ally, the Partido Verde (PV), founded in 1986 by figures of the far-left armed resistance to the military regime, to be the electoral expression of socially concerned environmentalism. The PV rapidly achieved decent polling performances, comparable in some Brazilian states to the electoral results of Western European Green Parties, and reached a 20% peak at national level in the 2010 presidential election. [9] But its growth within governing institutions went along with a slow (and by now fully completed) drift towards political opportunism, away from its ideological substance, and ultimately into oblivion.

The social turn of the environmental movement by the time of democratization is convincingly depicted by Hochstetler and Keck in *Greening Brazil*, which also see it as the result of a dense collaboration between environmental organizations and other kinds of social activism (109-115). Such collaboration could ferment and grow in particular during the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which, besides being a major event in global environmental diplomacy, constituted a previously unseen forum for civil society and NGOs. Rio 92 revealed to the world not only the vitality of Brazil's associative environmentalism, but also its large repertoire of mobilization, which, besides rainforest protection, increasingly included other concerns such as air quality, soil sustainability, rivers and especially the fight against large-scale dams, as well as marine and coastal pollution. Rio 92 also brought attention to socially vulnerable populations that were highly exposed to environmental risk, and to the importance of environmental justice for building more inclusive forms of citizenship. Over the 1990s and 2000s, two major grassroots networks that had themselves emerged towards the end of the military regime would play a pivotal role in the articulation of the environmental justice discourse in Brazil: the Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens (MAB), representing rural communities affected by the building of large dams, and the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), fruit of the occupations of unproductive land estates by landless farmers (Wright and Wolford; Vainer).

The MST became Brazil's biggest rural mass-movement, performing not only protest and squatting actions all over the country but also creating schools, popular universities, farming cooperatives and agrarian research programs. Initially defending family agriculture without carrying a conscious environmental discourse, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it has increasingly reinvented itself as a major promoter of sustainable and organic farming (Barcellos). This communication strategy grounded in environmentally sound everyday practices recalls the discourse of Brazilian indigenous organizations, which, like many other native American groups, gained international support for their cause in the 1990s

thanks to their successful self-representation as guardians of global natural heritage (Acker et al. 8). Since early 2019, both the MST and indigenous leaders have stood at the frontline of the socio-environmentalist resistance to the federal government of Jair Bolsonaro. The mandate of this president, who openly supports violations against (constitutionally protected) conservationist legislation as well as criminal attacks against indigenous land, environmental activists and civil servants, is the biggest political challenge posed to Brazilian environmentalism since the end of the military dictatorship (Acker, "Où va le Brésil?").

## Endnotes

[1] Lima 1999, Franco and Drummond 2008, Murari 2009.

[2] See Vidal 2002.

[3] See for example the use of the « Bandeirante » memory in the political propaganda of President Juscelino Kubitschek (Vidal 2002, 296).

[4] See Garfield 2001.

[5] See Cândido 1981, and Murari 2009.

[6] See Ostos

[7] For this and the following, see Acker 2017)

[8] See Fraser 2000 and Gonçalves 1997.

[9] By then the party had distanced itself from the left and was no longer competing in coalitions with the PT.

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# La construcción social de un espacio ‘prístino’: paisajes predominantes e interacciones funcionales en el sistema socio-ambiental Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo (1881-1987)[1]

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## Resumen

*Los espacios dedicados a la conservación son una construcción social e histórica. Esta aseveración, que desde los enfoques constructivistas presentes en la historiografía y las ciencias sociales podría parecer una obviedad, merece empero detallarse y especificarse. Al mismo tiempo, invita a dimensionar y comprender las formas específicas, construidas a partir de la interacción entre los más variados actores humanos y no humanos, que en diversos contextos espacio-temporales han tenido aquellos espacios que hoy son representados, sin más, como espacios atemporales y ahistóricos, conservados por las más variadas razones en su forma “prística”.*

**Palabras clave:** parques nacionales, construcción social, conservación, naturaleza

## Introducción

Los espacios dedicados a la conservación son una construcción social e histórica. Esta aseveración, que desde los enfoques constructivistas presentes en la historiografía y las ciencias sociales podría parecer una obviedad, merece empero detallarse y especificarse. Al mismo tiempo, invita a dimensionar y comprender las formas específicas, construidas a partir de la interacción entre los más variados actores humanos y no humanos, que en diversos contextos espacio-temporales han tenido aquellos espacios que hoy son representados, sin más, como espacios atemporales y ahistóricos, conservados por las más variadas razones en su forma “prística”.

La presencia en los parques nacionales, áreas protegidas y otros espacios de conservación, de actividades productivas y extractivas, así como de desarrollos infraestructurales y habitacionales de la más variada índole y con un impacto igualmente diferenciado en los

ecosistemas, parece dejar claro que dichos espacios de conservación son complejos, humanizados y, por lo tanto, históricos. Este carácter antrópico de los espacios de conservación se expresa asimismo, y de manera inversa a lo anteriormente expuesto, mediante la eliminación intencional de dichos elementos antrópicos para la creación misma de los parques y áreas protegidas como pretendidos espacios prístinos[2] ajenos a la presencia humana y por lo tanto, como se mencionó, ahistóricos y atemporales. Esto, como lo ha señalado con sagacidad el historiador ambiental William Cronon, es propio de un concepto errado de naturaleza, donde esta se concibe como algo que se encuentra y debe encontrarse fuera de la esfera de la actividad humana, lo que obvia, por un lado, que el ser humano no sólo es un ser social sino una especie más, y por otro, que virtualmente toda la “naturaleza” posee algún grado de humanización, incluso la que se suele considerar prística, por lo que aquellos espacios que otrora eran considerados

sin más como naturales, deben ser ahora concebidos como construcciones sociales (Cronon 7-28),[3] espacios sionaturales[4] (Latour, *We have never been modern* 7) que son, sin más, "artefactos humanos" (Miller 18). [5] Dimensionar los componentes sociales de la naturaleza y los naturales de la sociedad atendiendo a la complejidad intrínseca de la formación y evolución de estos paisajes o sistemas socio-tecnico-ambientales,[6] conociendo a la naturaleza a través del trabajo humano a ella agregado, se puede considerar como el norte general que persigue la historia ambiental reciente, abandonando de manera creciente la dicotomía –y frecuentemente la dialéctica–sociedad-naturaleza.

Así, esta nueva perspectiva constructivista de la historia ambiental, parte de la premisa de que virtualmente todo el espacio planetario se encuentra humanizado en distintos grados y con distintas características, unas más visibles que otras.[7] No existe, por lo tanto, y como ya se mencionó, una naturaleza prístina, pues aun habiendo espacios naturales sin huellas humanas profundas ni transformaciones ecosistémicas radicales, virtualmente todo el "mundo natural" ha sido objeto de algún tipo de apropiación humana, ya fuese en el plano material o en el simbólico. No existe, en suma, una naturaleza sino una gran cantidad de sionaturalezas que son, sin más, "artefactos humanos." Incluso algunos autores hablan de "producción de naturaleza," como un proceso dual de transformación material y supresión cultural, como lo ha interpretado Ashley Carse (233) para el caso del canal de Panamá.

Otros trabajos como el de Paula Saari,[8] que estudia a profundidad el caso canadiense, han dado cuenta de cómo ciertos elementos de los parques eran explícitamente diseñados para la mercantilización de dichos tecno-ambientes, algo que, para el caso costarricense apenas empieza a explorarse desde una perspectiva crítica.[9]

Cabe destacar que en la historiografía ambiental latinoamericana reciente, se han publicado una serie de investigaciones que desde distintas perspectivas han dado cuenta, como aquí se procurará hacer, de las transformaciones materiales y simbólicas que

históricamente han tenido lugar en aquellos espacios otrora considerados sin historia, como los son los espacios de conservación. Tal es el caso de los trabajos de Emily Wakild (2011), Federico Freitas (2014) y Claudia Leal (2015).

Dentro de las posibilidades analíticas para estudiar estos espacios humanizados se encuentra la perspectiva desde los estudios CTS (Ciencia, Tecnología y Sociedad), que recientemente ha confluido e interactuado con la historia ambiental, dando cuenta del carácter socialmente construido de los sistemas tecno-ambientales.[10] Sin ahondar aquí en los orígenes y evolución de los estudios CTS, diremos que este tipo de estudios y sus enfoques buscan, simultáneamente, explicar la sociedad a través de la materialidad expresada en los objetos tecnocientíficos y explicar la creación y/o existencia de dichos objetos como creaciones humanas y sociales, siendo la actividad tecnocientífica el objeto de estudio central de este tipo de análisis (Latour y Woolgar 13-38; Latour Aramis 1-50). Desde esta perspectiva, entonces, todos los elementos constitutivos de la actividad científica son construcciones sociales, pues no solamente están determinados por y generan impacto en la sociedad, sino que esta se encuentra "inscrita" en sus selecciones, procesos, conocimientos, sistemas de validación y recompensas, ritos, artefactos y controversias (Latour y Woolgar 63-66; Latour Aramis vii-x). Uno de los principios básicos de esta perspectiva es el de simetría general, que consiste en abstenerse de utilizar explicaciones que se basen en dualismos que se toman como algo dado e indiscutible, dualismos como verdadero o falso, o el de mayor importancia para el caso que nos ocupa y que se constituye en un puente fundamental entre los estudios CTS y la historia ambiental: naturaleza-sociedad (Latour, *We have never been modern* 7). Si la naturaleza es un artefacto humano que "contiene" a la sociedad que la construye, un espacio conservado como los parques nacionales puede concebirse como un complejo y cambiante sistema socio-tecnico-ambiental de conservación, en el que confluyen componentes técnicos, organizativos, científicos y político-legislativos (Carse, "Nature as infrastructure" 546). La red socio-técnica que resulta de

la interacción de estos componentes y las características que adquiere dicha interacción, van a conformar lo que aquí hemos denominado paisajes específicos, que tienen entonces tanto de natural como de social.

El paisaje, en general, se considerará aquí como una construcción social e histórica, como un espacio híbrido de interacción entre actores humanos, artefactos técnicos y la naturaleza. Esta idea de paisaje se acerca a las definiciones de autores como Richard White (“From Wilderness to Hybrid Landscapes” 557-564), para quien los paisajes híbridos son una suerte de síntesis entre cultura y naturaleza. De esta manera, los paisajes específicos analizados aquí son formas de interacción específica entre elementos naturales y humanos. Tal condición le otorga un cariz específico —que además es histórico y cambiante— a cada uno de ellos.

De esta manera, entre 1881 y 1987, y a partir de estas premisas analíticas en la investigación de la que el presente artículo forma parte, se identificaron cinco paisajes históricos (agrario, extractivo, habitacional, infraestructural y conservacionista) que fueron característicos en el espacio geográfico que en la actualidad ocupa el icónico Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo (en adelante PNBC), ubicado en Costa Rica.

Si bien dicha investigación se centró en el análisis detallado de la configuración de dichos paisajes sionaturales y el papel de cada uno de ellos en el cariz que adquirió, en distintos momentos históricos, el sistema socio-ambiental que hoy conforma el PNBC; el presente estudio se enfocó en aquellos que tuvieron un carácter predominante en la construcción de dicho sistema socio-ambiental, como lo fueron el infraestructural y el conservacionista.

Para efectos del presente trabajo, el paisaje infraestructural estaría compuesto por los indicios, vestigios o presencia de elementos socio-técnicos destinados a dar soporte y sostenimiento a las actividades humanas más diversas.

El paisaje conservacionista, por su parte, se conceptualizó como aquel generado por las políticas de conservación del Estado costarricense orientadas a delimitar y definir las relaciones humano-ambientales con el fin de optimizar la generación y el sostenimiento de

una clase de servicios ambientales cambiantes en el tiempo. Así, de los cinco tipos de paisaje analizados, el infraestructural y conservacionista fueron predominantes durante el periodo estudiado. Por lo tanto, este artículo tiene como objetivo central analizar ambos paisajes de manera profunda.

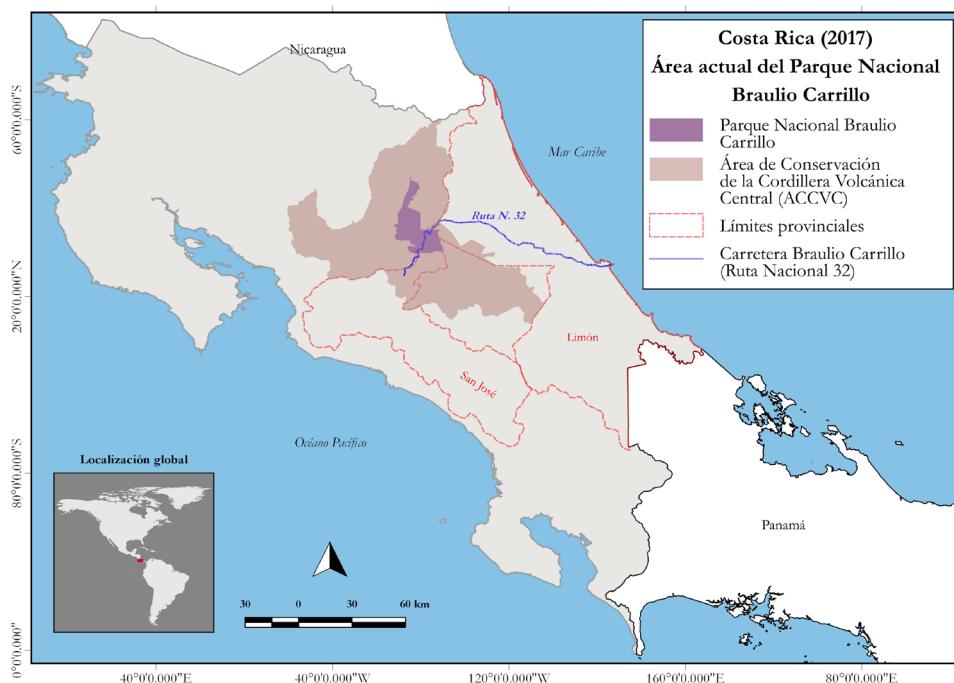
### **El Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo**

La selección de uno de los parques nacionales icónicos para el conservacionismo estatal costarricense, el PNBC, se debe a que este se ha constituido en un insigne representante de la imagen verde del país. A pesar de esto, poco se sabe sobre su historia —quizás por la invisibilización generada por dicha imagen icónica, que supone que dicho espacio de conservación carece de historia. La existencia o no de actividades productivas y extractivas, desarrollos infraestructurales, asentamientos humanos y otras formas de humanización del paisaje, así como su evolución temporal, son virtualmente desconocidas o a lo sumo notas al pie en espacios construidos y representados, sin más, como nichos de biodiversidad inalterados y reservorios de los servicios ambientales más diversos.

Con el fin de caracterizar este espacio, se puede señalar que el PNBC está ubicado en la Cordillera Volcánica Central de Costa Rica, al noreste del Valle Central, e incluye el Volcán Barva, el Cacho Negro y el Bajo de la Honduras, abarcando un área de 47.586 hectáreas pertenecientes al Área de Conservación de la Cordillera Volcánica Central (ACCVC) (ver Mapa 1).

En lo referente a la delimitación temporal, se puede argumentar que durante el periodo inicial de esta investigación fue cuando se gestaron los procesos modernos e intensivos de apropiación del espacio y la construcción de los paisajes específicos mencionados líneas atrás. En este sentido, no se desconoce que las primeras transformaciones socio-ambientales que se podrían clasificar como modernas, se gestaron especialmente entre las décadas de 1830 y 1840. Estas se relacionan con los primeros intentos de construir un camino estable hacia la región del Caribe costarricense y por

**Mapa 1. Costa Rica (2017): Área actual del Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo.**



Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de datos obtenidos en Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (ITCR).

extensión al mercado mundial. Destacan, en estos intentos, los llevados adelante durante la segunda administración presidencial de Braulio Carrillo Colina (Obregón 107-109, 159-164). De ahí el actual nombre que posee el parque, así como el nombre del poblado y del camino que se analizarán como elementos centrales del tecno-ambiente aquí estudiado.

Hechas estas salvedades, establecemos que el año de inicio de la investigación se ha situado en 1881, cuando se completó el último tramo del ferrocarril hacia la costa Caribe costarricense a través de la denominada Línea Vieja, entre la Junta, en el Valle del Reventazón y Carrillo, en el Río Sucio, en donde se construyó un camino carretero que permitió completar, para 1882, la Vía Mixta desde San José, en el centro del país, hasta la provincia de Limón (Hall 65). Lo anterior es relevante dado que el proceso intensivo de construcción de vías de comunicación hacia la costa del Caribe —que era principalmente para la comercialización externa— dio lugar a uno de los paisajes específicos considerados aquí como uno de los predominantes y de mayor impacto en este espacio de conservación: el paisaje infraestructural.

El año de conclusión de este análisis se sitúa en

el momento de estabilización y consolidación del sistema socio-tecnico-ambiental o tecnoambiente. [11] Es decir, cuando este adquirió la fisonomía que ostenta en la actualidad, en la que predomina, aunque con rasgos y características distintas, el paisaje conservacionista, sin que ello implique necesariamente la desaparición de otros ambientes socionaturales. Esta etapa de estabilización y consolidación de un paisaje conservacionista no coincide con la fecha de creación del PNBC, dado que la constitución político-administrativa no necesariamente implicó la conformación “definitiva” del área de conservación en cuestión. Por lo tanto, se ha fijado el final de este análisis en 1987, fecha en la que se inaugura la Ruta Nacional 32 —Carretera Braulio Carrillo—, esto a pesar de que el PNBC fue declarado mediante Decreto Ejecutivo 8357 (Poder Ejecutivo de Costa Rica) el 5 de abril de 1978, mismo año en que se inició la construcción de la carretera que fue finalmente inaugurada en 1987.

Lo hasta aquí expuesto no parece dejar dudas sobre las amplias posibilidades que ofrece la perspectiva constructivista en historia ambiental para acceder a una mayor comprensión, en su complejidad, de los espacios conservados

como lugares socialmente construidos y por tanto históricos. Con esto no se quiere restar agencia a los ecosistemas como elementos que restringen o facilitan la actividad material humana. Mas bien, se parte de la premisa de que es la interacción siempre tensionada entre los humanos, sus estructuras meta-individuales y el medio biofísico natural, la que configura diversos tipos de paisajes, también cambiantes en el tiempo. De hecho, los propios ecosistemas del parque sufrieron transformaciones relacionadas con el clima, los cambios geomorfológicos y otros elementos del entorno, y no solo a partir de la actividad humana, como sucede en otros parques nacionales tales como el Corcovado, en el Pacífico Sur costarricense. En este parque, estudios recientes han demostrado que muchas de las transformaciones de la vegetación se encuentran vinculadas con el gradiente ecológico que genera variaciones en la altitud. Esta condición, junto con el aislamiento y otras características tales como la antigüedad de los basamentos geológicos, han favorecido la presencia de endemismos (Morera et al. 359-360).

A partir de las premisas analíticas recién expuestas, los siguientes apartados se van a dedicar al análisis agudo de los paisajes predominantes dentro del área histórica del PNBC.

### **Rieles, asfalto y bosques: la construcción socio-histórica del paisaje infraestructural en el sistema socio-tecnológico Braulio Carrillo**

Tal como se señaló líneas arriba, el paisaje infraestructural lo componen aquellos vestigios históricos que evidencian la presencia de elementos sociotécnicos que fueron destinados en algún momento para el soporte y sostenimiento de las actividades humanas presentes dentro de la actual área de conservación en estudio. En este sentido, se amplía el concepto de infraestructura para distanciarse de las restrictivas definiciones tradicionales que la sitúan como algo eminentemente artificial en relación con el “paisaje natural”. Lo anterior obedece a que el reciente desarrollo de una perspectiva constructivista en historia ambiental

y su cercanía con el paradigma de los Estudios Sociales de la Ciencia y la Tecnología (CTS) han planteado —y aquí se adopta— la irreductibilidad de la naturaleza a un mundo no humano que se encuentra “allá afuera”. Esto quiere decir que el presente estudio considera que la política y los valores humanos se inscriben en el paisaje, tanto como en el acero y hormigón. Por lo tanto, si se parte del criterio de que todos los ambientes del mundo han sido modificados a través del trabajo humano, y es este último el que difumina la división entre naturaleza y tecnología, la naturaleza también puede ser infraestructura dependiendo de los fines que se le otorguen (Carse, “Nature as infrastructure” 40).

Como lo ha analizado con profundidad Ashley Carse[12] en uno de los trabajos más relevantes desde esta perspectiva constructivista, la infraestructura puede comprender tanto las vías férreas, caminos, edificios, exclusas y tantos otros artefactos, como los bosques de la cuenca del río Chagres, vitales en el sostenimiento del sistema socio-técnico del Canal de Panamá, dada su influencia en la generación de lluvias y el consecuente abastecimiento hídrico requerido por el canal. El paisaje forestal, en este caso, adquirió nuevas funciones infraestructurales (almacenamiento y regulación de agua).

En un trabajo más reciente, Carse (“Like a work of nature”) ha dado cuenta no solamente de la función infraestructural de los bosques en el Lago Gatún, sino también —en coincidencia con el caso expuesto— del carácter socialmente construido del paisaje canalero, oculto bajo el manto de la imagen prístina e inmaculada del bosque tropical. Incluso, este autor da cuenta de cómo algunos agudos observadores, especialmente los científicos que exploraron la región en los años cercanos a la apertura del canal, dieron cuenta de las profundas transformaciones socioambientales que subyacían tras lo que parecía ser un bosque “virgen,” al encontrar vestigios materiales de las formas de ocupación del espacio que antecedieron a la creación del lago y su entorno.

Para el caso de la presente investigación, el bosque tropical húmedo y muy húmedo que conforma el PNBC pudo haber adquirido funciones infraestructurales análogas como la de suministro y regulación de agua para distintas

poblaciones y actividades productivas y/o como parte central de la infraestructura turística de los parques como sistemas socio-ambientales (Goebel, “Posibilidades de ‘confluencia’” 79). Con base en este tipo de funciones, es que se les considera infraestructura.

Paradójicamente, cuando se hace referencia al paisaje infraestructural en el PNBC, las vías de comunicación —consideradas para este caso como los elementos centrales de este paisaje— en vez de tornarse disfuncionales al creciente énfasis conservacionista que iba adquiriendo el sistema socio-ambiental del Braulio Carrillo, se convirtieron, finalmente, en parte integral y en el propio sustento para la construcción sociohistórica del PNBC como espacio “prístino” e “inmaculado”, y como ícono indiscutible de la Costa Rica “verde”.

Para explicar lo anterior, se debe señalar que entre finales del siglo XIX y la primera mitad del XX la construcción y mantenimiento de un camino estable que comunicara al Valle Central con el pueblo de Carrillo —que se ubicaba en el área actual del parque y estaba dotado de casas, hoteles, una aduana, entre otros elementos—, fue tanto un anhelo como un imperativo para los gobernantes y pobladores de la zona. Los principales argumentos esgrimidos para el desarrollo de esta vía de comunicación, denominada “vía mixta,” se relacionaban con el visible potencial productivo de la zona, así como su carácter estratégico de comunicación con el Atlántico/Caribe como vía de acceso a los principales mercados europeos y estadounidenses, los cuales fueron medulares en el propio desarrollo de asentamientos humanos y actividades económicas (ver Mapa 2).

Cabe destacar, igualmente, que el paisaje infraestructural es, sin más, el paisaje predominante junto con el conservacionista a lo largo de todo el período de estudio. Así, entre finales del siglo XIX y la primera mitad del XX, se observa un claro predominio de la infraestructura vial y de comunicaciones. La construcción, mantenimiento y ampliación de caminos con sus puentes, tanto carreteros como ferroviarios, que buscaban salvar la gran cantidad de ríos y quebradas por los que inevitablemente debía atravesarse para comunicar al Valle Central,

tanto con el Caribe, como con el mercado internacional, fue constante en la era del “progreso” liberal. De hecho, el principal objetivo de todas estas iniciativas era la modernización infraestructural como vía de inserción al mercado mundial articulado, sin duda una de las puntas de lanza del desarrollo primario exportador en América Latina.

No cabe duda de que, en este período, el camino de Carrillo y la vía férrea al Caribe que iniciaba en Río Sucio (Carrillo) se constituyó en la base del paisaje infraestructural de este tecnoambiente con existencia de puentes para el tránsito de carretas, caballos y mulas, entre otras estructuras, que transformaron profundamente los ecosistemas dominados por los bosques tropical húmedo, húmedo premontano y montano, típicos de esta región. Su camino empedrado y la infraestructura ferroviaria que daba continuación a la ruta hasta Limón eran, sin duda, los elementos concretos de mayor presencia de este paisaje infraestructural.

Cabe destacar que la inauguración del viaje por ferrocarril al Atlántico/Caribe costarricense tuvo lugar el 7 de mayo de 1882 (Argüello 1-3). En la icónica fotografía de la inauguración de la ruta caribeña, se observa no solamente la máquina y los vagones, sino también escombros, tierra recién removida e incluso rieles desperdigados por el terreno, lo que no parece dejar dudas del carácter improvisado de una inauguración que se había atrasado más de lo debido, pues la idea original era que coincidiese con el aniversario del ascenso al poder del presidente Tomás Guardia tras el golpe militar del 27 de abril de 1870 (ver Fotografía 1).

A partir de un enfoque claramente ingenieril y progresista, estas estructuras tenían como objetivo fundamental resistir las particularidades biofísicas del bosque tropical, por lo que fueron diseñadas y construidas mayoritariamente con acero, hierro, concreto y otros materiales de alta resistencia.[13] Debían ser, en suma, un ícono del dominio del ser humano sobre una naturaleza que conspiraba contra el desarrollo material de las sociedades y se “resistía” a este.

Otros elementos que dan cuenta de lo anterior están relacionados con la administración estatal de dicha vía de comunicación y la promoción –regulada– del tránsito de personas

**Fotografía 1.** Inauguración del ferrocarril al Atlántico/Caribe por la “vía mixta” (1882)

Fuente: ANCR, Material de Sergio Barquero, suministrado por la profesora Felicia Camacho.

y mercaderías. En noviembre de 1882, por ejemplo, el gobierno de Próspero Fernández “con la mira de facilitar el tráfico en la Carretera Nacional a Río Sucio, y con la de dar seguridad tanto al comercio como a los pasajeros que por ella transitan”, decretó el Reglamento de tránsito por la Carretera Nacional a Río Sucio.[14]

En 1883 el gobierno firmaba con la Empresa de Transportes y Malas de San José, representada por Francisco Echeverría, un contrato para el establecimiento de una línea de diligencias y coches para el transporte de pasajeros y un servicio de carros “al estilo moderno” tirados por mulas y caballos para el transporte de carga. Lo anterior como una vía para substituir el transporte de carros tirados por bueyes, por considerarlo inadecuado para el elevado tráfico comercial que se esperaba transitara por la nueva vía de comunicación.[15]

La innegable importancia de la Carretera Nacional a Río Sucio no implicaba que no se desarrollaran otras obras de infraestructura vial de carácter estratégico, tanto para el Estado como para los actores sociales y económicos más diversos. Estas obras eran, al igual que la “vía mixta” de la que hemos dado cuenta, componentes indiscutibles del paisaje infraestructural que aquí se analiza. Nos referimos a las diversas iniciativas de ampliación del propio camino de Carrillo, así como al desarrollo de otras vías de comunicación

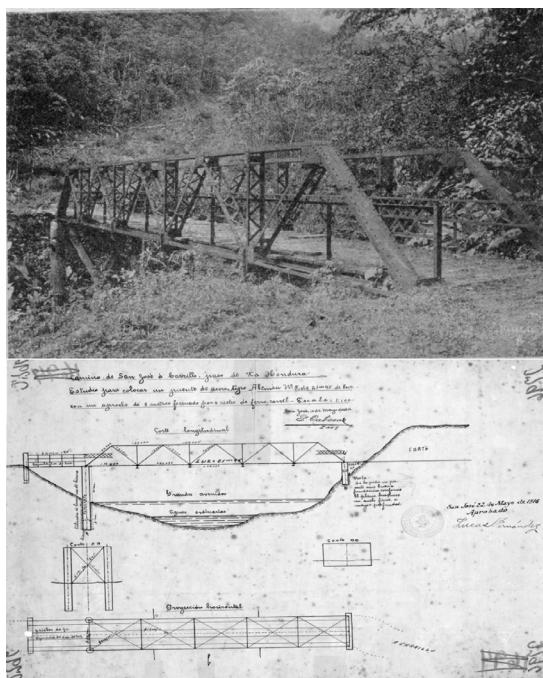
orientadas a conectar al Valle Central con los novedosos proyectos de colonización dirigida que promovían los gobiernos liberales costarricenses.

Entre estas iniciativas destacan la construcción de caminos entre La Palma y Carrillo y entre este último y Guápiles,[16] el camino entre Toro Amarillo y Carrillo,[17] la apertura de una vereda para comunicar a la colonia de El Salvador[18] y la reparación del camino entre San José y Carrillo-Santa Clara,[19] sólo para mencionar algunas destacables.

Uno de los proyectos de mayor envergadura en lo que respecta a la infraestructura de caminos en el área que nos ocupa es el camino al Río Patria por la vía del Zurquí, construido en 1924.[20] Se trataba, en esencia, de una intrincada carretera que retomaba el camino de Carrillo, bordeaba los cerros Zurquí y Primer María y llegaba hasta el río Patria, con el fin de comunicar a los ya mencionados proyectos de colonización dirigida.

La infraestructura vial no era, como se puede observar, un simple componente más del sistema tecno-ambiental en estudio, sino que, dada su centralidad y peso histórico, se considera que en buena medida definía y delimitaba al mismo en estrecha tensión con el medio biofísico natural.

**Fotografía 2.** Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo: Fotografía y plano (1916) del puente de acero tipo alemán N° 5, localizado sobre el río La Honduras. Este puente se edificó como un insigne representante del “progreso liberal” y tuvo como objetivo fundamental resistir las características del bosque tropical, por lo que fue diseñado y construido mayoritariamente con materiales de alta resistencia. Representó así un ícono del dominio del ser humano sobre una naturaleza que conspiraba contra el desarrollo material de las sociedades y se “resistía” a este.



Fuente: ANCR, Fotografía, N° 7140, 371-400, años 1914-1953 y ANCR, Mapas y Planos, N° 002796, sin fecha.

**Fotografía 3.** Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo (1989): Puente “27 de abril”. El desarrollo infraestructural relacionado con el camino de Carrillo fue notorio y sus puentes sirvieron para el tránsito de carretas, caballos y mulas. Este icónico puente ferroviario (del cual perduran restos en la actualidad), transformó profundamente los ecosistemas dominados por los bosques tropical húmedo, húmedo premontano y montano, característicos de esta región del país.



Fuente: Fotografía del archivo personal de Sergio Barquero. La imagen fue facilitada por Felicia Camacho.

**Fotografía 4.** Construcción de Carretera a Guápiles (1978): La Carretera Braulio Carrillo (Ruta 32) fue impulsada por la necesidad de establecer una nueva ruta para el creciente tránsito de vehículos automotores hacia el Caribe costarricense.



Fuente: ANCR, Fotografía, N° 5533, año 1978.

Este énfasis ingenieril y la concepción de la naturaleza como obstáculo del progreso fue cambiando, empero, después de la segunda mitad del siglo XX, cuando toma fuerza la infraestructura ecológica, sin que la vial pierda su protagonismo. Así, en el contexto de la guerra fría y el conservacionismo con fines estratégicos, el Banco Mundial exigió la creación de un parque nacional dotado de una amplia zona de protección forestal como requisito para otorgar los fondos para construir la Ruta Nacional 32 —la actual carretera Braulio Carrillo— (ver Mapa 1). La institución financiera determinó que el área boscosa que el gobierno propuso para la creación del PNBC era insuficiente.[21] El Estado, a partir de esta consideración y ante la visible necesidad de establecer una nueva ruta para el creciente tránsito de vehículos automotores hacia el Caribe que substituyera o complementara la vía a Limón por Turrialba, procedió a realizar una serie de expropiaciones de tierras a través del Instituto de Tierras y Colonización (ITCO)[22] y a repoblarlas, tanto con especies nativas como exóticas. De esta manera, y al igual que lo sucedido en otras latitudes como en los Apalaches en Estados Unidos,[23] parte de los bosques del PNBC fueron literalmente construidos, mientras que aquellos donde la presencia humana y las consecuentes transformaciones

socioambientales de ella derivada eran innegables, fueron simbólicamente diseñados como “prístinos”, a pesar de ser claramente “artefactos humanos”. De esta manera, los bosques pasaron de ser un obstáculo al desarrollo del paisaje infraestructural a ser parte de dicho paisaje, dado que la infraestructura ecológica terminó auxiliando y a la vez limitando a la infraestructura vial, convirtiéndose finalmente ambos en paisajes dominantes.

Las consecuencias en la fisionomía del sistema socio-ambiental aquí analizado no fueron exiguas. Pasó de ser un tecno-ambiente de paisajes múltiples —habitacional, agrario, extractivo, infraestructural y conservacionista, con predominio del infraestructural—, a un tecno-ambiente con presencia únicamente de dos paisajes fuertemente interrelacionados e interdependientes. A partir de este predominio de los paisajes infraestructural y conservacionista y sus interrelaciones, es que se construye la imagen de un paisaje prístico, atemporal y ahistórico, donde la carretera Braulio Carrillo se constituye en el único elemento antrópico incorporado a partir de la invisibilización de los procesos históricos de transformación del paisaje y la propia construcción social del parque como artefacto humano.

En este nuevo enfoque conservacionista-infraestructural que adquiere el PNBC y que termina por definir la fisionomía actual de este tecno-ambiente, los bosques dejan de ser un obstáculo y se convierten tanto en el elemento simbólico central de la imagen prística del PNBC, como en la base infraestructural de la reconfiguración de Carrillo como un sistema tecno-ambiental de conservación y transporte. Empero, si bien hasta aquí se han adelantado ya algunos de los elementos centrales en la construcción de un paisaje conservacionista a partir de su creciente relación y sus interacciones con el paisaje infraestructural, resulta necesario detallar aún más la compleja dinámica inherente a la construcción socio-histórica del primero.

### **El paisaje dominante: la construcción social del PNBC como espacio de conservación e ícono de la “imagen verde” costarricense**

Tal como se señaló al principio de esta

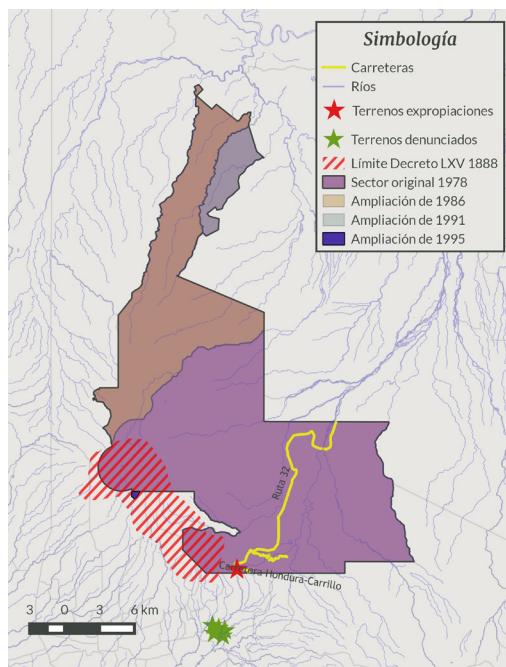
investigación, el paisaje conservacionista corresponde al paisaje específico generado por las políticas de conservación del Estado costarricense. Las mismas son entendidas como aquellas orientadas a delimitar y definir las relaciones humano-ambientales con el fin de optimizar la generación y el sostenimiento de una clase de servicios ambientales cambiantes en el tiempo. Este paisaje tiene que ver, entonces, con la reconstrucción histórica de las zonas que se fueron “protegiendo” hasta conformar la fisonomía y composición territorial actual del PNBC, distinguiendo así cuáles fueron los fines perseguidos por las políticas y estrategias conservacionistas del Estado costarricense. Así, los elementos centrales que guían el análisis de este tipo de paisaje conservacionista son aquellos que se relacionan con el proceso de conversión del mismo en el predominante hasta la actualidad. En este sentido, se puede señalar que la fisonomía que adquirió el área del PNBC en distintos momentos históricos, culminó finalmente con el predominio de un medio ambiente conservado en el que subyacen, sin embargo, rasgos materiales y significados simbólicos específicos pertenecientes a los otros tipos de paisajes históricamente presentes.

De esta forma, las ideas conservacionistas alrededor del PNBC, se puede rastrear al menos desde 1888, cuando el laureado naturalista suizo Henri Pittier advirtió sobre la necesidad de declarar inalienables y bajo la administración del Estado algunas áreas boscosas de la región.[24] Imbuido por lo que se ha denominado un “conservacionismo utilitario” (Goebel, “Construcción social” 43-44), donde, más que relaciones ecosistémicas, la relación automática establecida entre la tala de árboles y la disminución de las lluvias y consecuentemente del caudal de ríos y fuentes de agua —con consecuencias sociales y económicas notorias— era el norte indiscutible del conservacionismo decimonónico, Pittier daba inicio a la construcción sociohistórica de un paisaje conservacionista en lo que hoy es el PNBC.

Se puede decir que el paisaje conservacionista tiene fecha de nacimiento, ya que tras las denuncias de Pittier se emitió el Decreto de Ley N° 65 del 30 de julio de 1888, en el que se

declaró inalienable una zona de terreno de dos kilómetros de ancho en la zona de cerro Zurquí (Congreso de la República). Cabe señalar que entre finales del siglo XIX y la primera mitad del XX el paisaje conservacionista era notoriamente marginal (ver la región destacada con líneas rojas contenida en el Mapa 2). A fin de cuentas, el objetivo primario de proteger de manera selectiva los bosques situados en las márgenes de los ríos y fuentes de agua consistía en garantizar el suministro de servicios ambientales básicos para las poblaciones del Valle Central, especialmente el agua. Sin embargo, la ampliación del espacio de conservación que daría origen a lo que en 1978 se inauguraría formalmente como el PNBC, data de la década de 1960 (ver las distintas fases históricas de ampliación del PNBC destacadas en el Mapa 2).

### **Mapa 2. Localización de los terrenos denunciados y expropiados dentro del Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo y zonas aleadañas (1881-1995).**



Fuentes: Elaboración propia a partir de documentos del ANCR.[25]

El objetivo de dicha ampliación era obtener los fondos del Banco Mundial para construir la anhelada carretera al Atlántico/Caribe. Es así como tienen lugar numerosas expropiaciones con el fin de adicionarlas al área propuesta originalmente por el gobierno y considerada

insuficiente por esta institución financiera. De esta manera, se considera que la inauguración oficial del PNBC en 1978, más que un punto de partida parece un punto de llegada; una suerte de consolidación e institucionalización de lo existente como un paisaje "prístico" que nunca fue tal cosa. Las ampliaciones estimularon una política de expropiaciones que continuó tras la inauguración del PNBC y que se pudo advertir en las diversas fuentes analizadas para esta investigación.[26] Cabe destacar que la consolidación de dicho espacio y su relación con la carretera en construcción no siempre fue sencilla y funcional, ya que el propio Banco Mundial solicitó un estudio ecológico para saber si la construcción de la carretera afectaría la ecología de la región.[27] En 1978, un grupo constituido por Rodolfo Quirós Guardia, ex ministro de Agricultura y Ganadería durante la administración 1974-1978, el presidente de la Asociación para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (ASCONA) y otras autoridades y técnicos visitaron la zona del Bajo de la Honduras, determinando que para una mejor conservación se debía cambiar la categoría de reserva forestal por la de un parque nacional, coincidiendo, sin embargo, en que la construcción de la carretera debía continuar. Ese mismo año, funcionarios de la Dirección General Forestal (DGF) y la Dirección de Parques Nacionales efectuaron otra inspección a los trabajos de la carretera en el Bajo La Honduras, emitiendo un pronunciamiento contundente sobre la viabilidad ecológica de la obra. En este, se señalaban que "la carretera no podía detenerse por cuanto el daño producido se recuperará en pocos años, siempre que se haga efectiva la vigilancia y el manejo del parque nacional ya establecido" ("Presidencia"). Se advirtió, además, que la carretera y el establecimiento del parque nacional más bien "facilitarían la vigilancia e impedirán la ocupación de tierras y la destrucción del bosque de la zona, acción que ya estaba en camino, no sólo en el Bajo La Honduras, sino en la zona de Guápiles, donde ya existen fincas escrituradas [y con el establecimiento del PNBC] todas estas fincas desaparecerán" ("Presidencia").

Las acciones, análisis y pronunciamientos de estos actores sociales y políticos señalaban la existencia de una clara interacción

funcional entre el paisaje infraestructural y el conservacionista, pues la naturaleza ya no sería más un obstáculo, sino que, por el contrario, contribuiría a la construcción de la carretera. Esta auxiliaría a la conservación del bosque a construir, al eliminar a las otras formas de paisaje preexistentes desde larga data. La carretera se constituyó, de esta manera, en un elemento antrópico que contribuyó a construir la imagen prístina del PNBC, lo que se evidencia en las declaraciones del grupo en cuestión, al señalar que "la afectación ecológica no será significativa y la carretera hará posible que todos los costarricenses conozcan y disfruten con la observación de un lugar de gran belleza por sus bosques y de un gran valor científico" ("Presidencia").

Los pronunciamientos de los distintos funcionarios para declarar ecológicamente viable la carretera, refleja, con claridad, una visión reduccionista y biocéntrica del medio biofísico natural, basada en el denominado culto decimonónico de la vida silvestre (Martínez 16-20), donde la naturaleza debía permanecer inmaculada e intocable. Lo paradójico que se desprende del discurso conservacionista de los actores mencionados es que dicha conservación se impulsaría por la introducción de la carretera que alteraría profundamente los ecosistemas. No se tomaban en cuenta —como no se hace hoy en día— indicadores biofísicos de (in) sustentabilidad, ni la masiva apropiación primaria de la producción primaria neta de biomasa que supuso la carretera. Tampoco era considerado, por otra parte, el bajo impacto ecológico que suponían las pequeñas y aún medianas explotaciones agrícolas presentes en la zona por los escasos insumos de energía y materiales externos al agroecosistema que requerían para su producción. El bosque, de esta manera, más que un ecosistema era representado como una suma de árboles, por lo que los impactos ambientales de las profundas transformaciones generadas por la nueva vía de comunicación claramente serían subvalorados.

Es así como, independientemente de sus consecuencias ecológicas, desde la perspectiva de los actores que crearon el PNBC, este representó la construcción exitosa de un sistema tecno-ambiental de conservación con

predominio de los paisajes infraestructural y conservacionista, donde el parque y la carretera mantenían una relación simbiótica en la que los bosques se constituían en parte de la infraestructura vial, turística y científica, mientras que la carretera era parte integral del sistema de conservación, aunque su presencia fuera invisibilizada y su impacto simbólicamente disminuido en aras de construir la imagen prístina del parque.

Los derrumbes frecuentes que han tenido lugar en los últimos años en esta carretera nacional y que son evidenciados a través de diversos medios de comunicación, han visibilizado la relación carretera-parque, donde la naturaleza, que dio origen a la carretera, parece constituirse de nuevo como un obstáculo. Esta última afirmación se debe a la imposibilidad de ampliar la carretera o realizar obras de infraestructura que alteren ostensiblemente los ecosistemas en la zona del parque, que, sin embargo, fue la que permitió la propia construcción de la vía de comunicación. Lo anterior parece dar cuenta de que la disfuncionalidad "real" entre el paisaje conservacionista y el infraestructural es creciente, como lo fue en el esplendor de Carrillo, aquel poblado ya perdido en el bosque y en el tiempo y al cual estos investigadores han acudido deseosos de datar sus huellas históricas.

## Conclusiones

En esta investigación se analizaron las características, interacciones y la evolución de los paisajes históricos predominantes presentes en el espacio de conservación que en la actualidad ocupa el Parque Nacional Braulio Carrillo en Costa Rica entre 1881 y 1987. Mediante la reconstrucción histórica de los paisajes infraestructural y conservacionista, es posible situar las lógicas históricas de los sitios de conservación como sistemas socioambientales. El estudio partió de la consideración de que los parques nacionales, áreas protegidas y otros sitios de conservación, deben ser observados como sistemas sociales complejos, humanizados y por lo tanto históricos. Esta perspectiva permite alejarse de la concepción clásica que les confiere un

carácter prístico, deshumanizado y, por lo tanto, ahistórico y atemporal. Su dimensión antrópica obliga, además, a explorar las características del trabajo humano a través del estudio de las tecnologías, es decir, los instrumentos, recursos técnicos y procedimientos empleados en las transformaciones de dichos espacios.

En lo que respecta al paisaje infraestructural, tenemos que, entre finales del siglo XIX y la primera mitad del XX predominó la infraestructura vial y de comunicaciones. La construcción, mantenimiento y ampliación de caminos con sus puentes, tanto carreteros como ferroviarios, que buscaban salvar la gran cantidad de ríos y quebradas por las que inevitablemente debían atravesarse para comunicar al Valle Central, tanto con el Caribe, como con el mercado internacional, fue constante en la era del “progreso” liberal. Todo ello ocurría en el espacio actual del parque, que luego sería re-diseñado simbólicamente como un espacio ajeno a la presencia humana, y, por lo tanto, carente de historia.

Desde un enfoque claramente ingenieril y progresista, estas estructuras tenían como objetivo fundamental resistir las particularidades biofísicas del bosque tropical, por lo que fueron diseñados y construidos mayoritariamente con acero, hierro, concreto y otros materiales de alta resistencia. Se constituyeron, finalmente, en un ícono del dominio del ser humano sobre una naturaleza que conspiraba contra el desarrollo material de las sociedades y se “resistía” a este.

Este énfasis ingenieril y la concepción de la naturaleza como obstáculo del progreso fue cambiando, empero, después de la segunda mitad del siglo XX, cuando toma fuerza la infraestructura ecológica, sin que la vial pierda su protagonismo. Así, en el contexto de la guerra fría y el conservacionismo con fines estratégicos, el Banco Mundial exigió la creación de un parque nacional dotado de una amplia zona de protección forestal como requisito para otorgar los fondos para construir la Ruta Nacional 32 —la actual carretera Braulio Carrillo— La institución financiera determinó que el área boscosa que el gobierno propuso para la creación del PNBC era insuficiente, por lo que el Estado, siguiendo sus directrices, procedió a realizar una serie de expropiaciones de tierras a través

del Instituto de Tierras y Colonización (ITCO) y a repoblarlas, tanto con especies nativas como exóticas. De esta manera, parte de los bosques del PNBC fueron literalmente construidos, mientras que, aquellos donde la presencia humana y las consecuentes transformaciones socioambientales de ella derivada eran innegables, fueron simbólicamente diseñados como “prístinos”, a pesar de ser claramente “artefactos humanos”. Los bosques pasaron, de esta manera, de ser un obstáculo al desarrollo del paisaje infraestructural a ser parte de dicho paisaje, dado que la infraestructura ecológica terminó auxiliando y a la vez limitando a la infraestructura vial, convirtiéndose finalmente ambos en paisajes dominantes.

Lo anterior nos conduce indefectiblemente al otro paisaje predominante en el sistema socio-ambiental del PNBC: el conservacionista. Vale recordar que para los efectos del presente estudio este corresponde al paisaje específico generado por las políticas de conservación del Estado costarricense, que hunden sus raíces en los preceptos del conservacionismo y la silvicultura científica en boga en el epílogo decimonónico[28]. Estas políticas son entendidas como aquellas orientadas a delimitar y definir las relaciones humano-ambientales con el fin de optimizar la generación y el sostenimiento de una clase de servicios ambientales cambiantes en el tiempo.

De esta manera, y tras un inicio marginal y más normativo que práctico, este paisaje se tornó predominante a partir del creciente y ya mencionado peso de la infraestructura ecológica —lo que hoy es propiamente el PNBC— como elemento funcional y de auxilio al anhelado desarrollo de la infraestructura vial adecuada que comunicara de manera efectiva y estable al Valle Central con el Atlántico/Caribe y, por extensión con el mercado mundial.

Pare ello, tuvieron lugar procesos simultáneos de afianzamiento de los espacios históricos de conservación construidos de manera paulatina en el tecno-ambiente en cuestión, y de ampliación territorial y presunta siembra de árboles en espacios otrora dedicados a actividades productivas y extractivas diversas.

Esto nos deja claro que el PNBC es, en sí mismo una construcción social, un artefacto

humano. El paisaje conservacionista se convierte en predominante, en suma, a partir de las múltiples transformaciones materiales, culturales, políticas y desde luego socioambientales a las que se ha buscado acceder en el presente estudio, y su invisibilización —o supresión cultural en palabras de Carse— institucionalizada bajo el manto de la imagen prístina y el carácter ahistórico y atemporal asignados al PNBC en su construcción simbólica.

De esta manera, el estudio deja claro que la inauguración oficial del PNBC en 1978, más que un punto de partida parece un punto de llegada; una suerte de consolidación e institucionalización de lo existente como un paisaje inmaculado que, finalmente nunca fue tal cosa en términos “reales”.

Las consecuencias en la fisionomía del sistema socioambiental aquí analizado, no fueron exigüas. Este pasó de ser un tecno-ambiente de paisajes múltiples —con presencia de los paisajes habitacional, agrario, extractivo, infraestructural, conservacionista con predominio del infraestructural— a un tecno-ambiente con presencia únicamente de dos paisajes fuertemente interrelacionados e interdependientes: el conservacionista y el infraestructural.

Las consecuencias socio-ambientales de la construcción social de la imagen prística del parque, indefectiblemente asociada a la “imagen verde” de Costa Rica como un todo, van a trascender por mucho el espacio geográfico de los parques nacionales que, como el aquí estudiado, le brindan sustento.

Sólo a manera de ejemplo vale recordar que, para acceder a los mercados mundiales de recursos, todas las actividades extractivas y productivas desarrolladas en las más diversas y en ocasiones distantes zonas del país debían literalmente atravesar por un paisaje aparentemente contrapuesto a dicha lógica, pero que en realidad era, y es, parte integral de ella: el paisaje conservacionista.

En efecto, de la misma manera en que otrora las maderas de exportación, el caucho y los minerales extraídos de otras regiones atravesaban por carretera y ferrocarril no pocas de las áreas “protegidas” por la legislación

conservacionista decimonónica, en la actualidad furgones y contenedores transitan rampantes por el PNBC, indiscutible ícono del “éxito conservacionista” y de la “imagen verde” de Costa Rica, cargados de los “frutos insustentables” de la explotación intensiva del medio biofísico generada en todo el país, cuya invisibilización se ha construido históricamente precisamente a través de dicha “imagen verde”. Esto nos confirma que, a partir de nuestro marco interpretativo, el PNBC, aunque cambiante históricamente en sus articulaciones específicas, más que un parque ha sido históricamente y es en la actualidad, un sistema socioambiental, en el que el interés económico, la explotación extractiva, la nacionalización de la naturaleza, la conservación selectiva, la infraestructura (conservacionista, vial y de otra índole) se han constituido en componentes funcionales de esta *socionaturaleza* específica, componentes que solo pueden ser observados en su conjunto y complejidad si se abandona la perspectiva que privilegia la concepción de una diferencia ontológica entre naturaleza y sociedad.

## Notas

[1] Este artículo es resultado del proyecto de investigación mucho más amplio titulado B5071 “La construcción social de los espacios de conservación: hacia una historia ambiental en perspectiva comparada de los Parques Nacionales Braulio Carrillo (1881-1987) y Corcovado (1914-1982) en Costa Rica”, llevado a cabo en el Centro de Investigaciones Históricas de América Central (CIHAC) de la Universidad de Costa Rica, y patrocinado por la Vicerrectoría de Investigación de esta Universidad. Extendemos un agradecimiento a los asistentes de investigación Sofía Cortés Sequeira y Ricardo Pérez Navarro, por su valiosa colaboración con la búsqueda, recopilación y sistematización de las fuentes primarias contenidas en esta investigación.

[2] Tal es el caso de los bosques de los Apalaches en Estados Unidos, que, como lo analiza con detalle Sara Gregg (2010) son verdaderas creaciones humanas, en las que se eliminó un tipo de paisaje (rural, campesino y disperso) para crear un paisaje forestal federal en el contexto de las políticas del New Deal estadounidense.

[3] Uno de los trabajos pioneros en esta perspectiva constructivista y antrópica de la historia ambiental y que se constituyó en un definitivo parteaguas en la epistemología de los estudios históricos del ambiente, particularmente en el mundo anglosajón, es el memorable artículo de William Cronon (1996).

[4] Este término fue acuñado por Bruno Latour, uno de los

más insignes impulsores de los estudios CTS (Ciencia, Tecnología y Sociedad).

[5] Uno de los trabajos de síntesis en el que se desarrolla con claridad esta perspectiva interpretativa es el valioso trabajo de Shawn William Miller (2007), quien a partir de estas premisas re-interpreta la historia ambiental de América Latina.

[6] Uno de los autores más claros en esta lógica de construcción de ambientes socionaturales es Richard White (1995), que analiza la "construcción" del Río Columbia como un sistema energético, con elementos humanos (represas, pesquerías, plantas nucleares etc.) y naturales (el río y los ecosistemas a él asociados). Para conceptualizar dicho sistema, White desarrolla el concepto de máquina orgánica, una metáfora del sistema socionatural cuya evolución analiza.

[7] Ver Cronon 1996 y Carse 2016.

[8] En este valioso trabajo, la autora hace un exhaustivo recuento de la producción historiográfica reciente sobre la historia de los parques nacionales desde la perspectiva constructivista que aquí exponemos, especialmente para los casos de Canadá, los Estados Unidos y Suiza.

[9] Ver Goebel 2013.

[10] Ver Pritchard 2011, Jørgensen et al. 2013 y Carse 2012.

[11] Ver Pritchard 2011, Carse 2012 y White 1995.

[12] Ver Carse 2012.

[13] Son numerosos los planos existentes en el Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica (en adelante ANCR) que dan cuenta no sólo de la construcción de puentes y otros elementos infraestructurales, sino también de las características constructivas y las formas en que se procuraba sortear los obstáculos que los rasgos biofísicos interponían al desarrollo de caminos y vías de comunicación en el espacio ocupado hoy por el PNBC. Ver ANCR, Mapas y Planos, N° 002796, sin fecha; ANCR, Mapas y Planos, N° 13592, año 1925; ANCR, Fotografía, N° 7140, 371-400, años 1914-1953.

[14] Reglamento de tránsito por la Carretera Nacional a Río Sucio. Material de Sergio Barquero, suministrado por la profesora Felicia Camacho.

[15] Contrato con la Empresa de Transportes y Malas de San José. Material de Sergio Barquero, suministrado por la profesora Felicia Camacho.

[16] ANCR, Hacienda, N° 13116, año 1895.

[17] ANCR, Juzgado Primero Civil de San José, N° 10375, año 1904.

[18] ANCR, Fomento, N° 006103, años 1912-1914.

[19] ANCR, Congreso, N° 17311, año 1935.

[20] ANCR, Mapas y Planos, N 009860, año 1924; ANCR, Mapas y Planos, N° 009861, año 1924; ANCR, Mapas y Planos, N° 010221, año 1924.

[21] ANCR, Presidencia, N° 1446, año 1978.

[22] ANCR, Mapas y planos, N° 21727, 1965.

[23] Ver Gregg 2010.

[24] Ver Pittier 1888.

[25] Los documentos utilizados fueron: ANCR, Juzgado Contencioso Administrativo, N° 004186, año 1873; ANCR, Juzgado Contencioso Administrativo, N° 004155, año 1876; ANCR, Juzgado Contencioso Administrativo, N° 005653, año 1895; ANCR, Juzgado de lo Contencioso Administrativo de San José, año 1900; Mapas y planos, N° 21727, 1965; ANCR, Mapas y Planos, N° 014154, año 1888.

[26] Véase, por ejemplo, ANCR, Mapas y planos, N° 21727, 1965.

[27] ANCR, Presidencia, N° 1446, año 1978.

[28] Ver Martínez Alier 2004, Hays 1999 y Scott 1998.

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# National Parks of the southern Meta/Colombia in Post-acuerdo – A conflict- and actor-oriented analysis of the public debate

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## Abstract

*This article is based on a more detailed study which examines the role of three national parks and their associated buffer zones in the southern Meta region of Colombia during a period that involves attempts at peace consolidation. A conflict- and actor-oriented analysis of the public debate on the role of national parks in southern Meta in the post-acuerdo offers an insight into multilateral areas of conflict. It shows that the current national park territories do not provide all-encompassing answers to the complex social and historically-constructed real spatial interdependencies in the region. That is why in many places the national parks become “paper parks.” In the context of global phenomena, this work underlines the diverging views and demands on environmental protected areas in post-FARC zones at different scales and levels. This site-specific consideration, which is based on an analysis of a nationwide debate, thereby contributes to further critical interpretations of global and Western-influenced environmental protection instruments. The knowledge about the symbolic power of national parks at the international level also demonstrates the opportunities offered by the national park concept. The following considerations of the various roles of the national park in post-acuerdo times in post-FARC regions provide a valuable basis for further in-depth studies on the resolution of socio-ecological conflicts between environmental protection and local populations in Meta, Colombia and around the world.*

**Keywords:** National Park, territories, post-conflict, post-acuerdo, peace consolidation, Colombia, environmental protection, ecological conflicts, post-FARC

## Introduction: The Role of National Parks in Post-acuerdo

In times of old and new conflicts and increasing right-wing populism, human rights, and the environment are jeopardized in many locations in the Americas. In northern South America, Colombian ecosystems and rural populations are suffering from the pressures of extractivism, colonialization, and new territorial dynamics caused by the peace agreement between FARC-EP and the former government of President Santos. While the Colombian peace agreement remains, in many places, peace on paper only, national parks in post-FARC zones are likewise no more than “paper parks” (Leal 8).

In the public debate about Colombia’s ecosystems, the discourses of the global environmental crisis and the farmer/agricultural crisis are intertwined in the broader context of the dynamics of globalization (Betancourt 15

ff). In times of the so called post-acuerdo [1], the post-FARC zones - in many cases, places of rich biodiversity - are dealing with the clash between social and ecological rights, differing economic, regional and national interests, power claims, the establishment of state sovereignty, and the problematic of resolving historical land conflicts. How can Colombia’s social and ecological peace be implemented in times of post-acuerdo? A post-FARC zone in the heart of Colombia - in the south of the state of Meta - is the subject of multiple discussions. In this former FARC-EP epicenter, three connected national parks and their buffer zones should protect a biogeographic region designated as unique. However, currently the parks *Cordillera de los Picachos*, *Sierra de La Macarena*, and *Tinigua* are threatened by deforestation waves. The dilemma within national parks between human rights and environmental protections becomes apparent with the existence of complex dynamics

of colonialization of a constantly victimized part of the Colombian population, in informal as well as formal economies, and the pressure on peace consolidation to reach the periphery with basic public services. The establishment of an environmental management in harmony with the agreements for a lasting and stable social peace poses a challenge for the responsible environmental protection authorities.

The current situation and the future of the parks and their inhabitants or ‘illegal occupiers’ are discussed publicly. The role of national parks in post-FARC zones is problematized here. Various interest groups - actors - appear in the debate at regional, national, and international levels. [2] The shortcomings in environmental protection in post-acuerdo times illuminate deficits and potentials of the territorial environmental protection concept. Based on the public debate, the controversial national park concept should be assessed here in terms of its functionality in a temporally and spatially complex region in the context of multilateral conflict fields.

The critical site-specific study of the role of the regional environmental protection zones follows other debates and critical studies about the global territorial environmental protection instrument.

## 1. State Territories: National Parks

The subjects of investigation are national parks – a western environmental protection concept. According to Gissibl et al., the territorial concept of national parks is to be understood as a form of land use (3). The national park is a form of land use that involves the protection of ecosystems considered to be valuable and/or unique. In contrast to other forms of land use, territorial environmental protection is about the desire to not use the territory (Gissibl et al. 4). The ecological and aesthetic quality assurance of natural phenomena and ecosystems is first of all consumed in a socio-cultural human sense, i.e. with science, education, recovery and tourism (EUROPARC 21).

The western concept of in situ environmental protection and the idea of “pristine” nature – of *wilderness* – are not congruent with the social and ecological reality of many biodiverse regions in

different countries. In *Civilizing Nature*, Gissibl et al. describe the national park as an imperialistic concept. The appropriation of nature implicit within the concept also includes the paternalism and disempowerment of the local population. It is no secret that the establishment of national parks in many biodiverse countries is usually carried out by top-down practices of state authorities and their scientific advisors (Gissibl et al. 6). Socio-ecological conflicts caused by expropriations and the violations of human rights are the consequences of these practices.

The global popularity of national parks can be attributed to their political message rather than to their protective functions: Arisen from, and inspired by, the concept of the modern democratic nation, the national park concept transports western values and norms as well as the idea of civilized, cultivated, and territorialized control (Gissibl et al. 2). In this respect, the term *national park* becomes a label for international diplomacy and state modernity.

## 2. Colombia: Territories and Environmental Protection in Post-acuerdo

A “territorial kaleidoscope” and “a total of fragmented spaces” [3] is how Montañez-Gómez (13) and Heidrun Zinecker (8) characterize the megadiverse Colombian state. The high ethnic diversity in the country holds cultural wealth but also a high conflict potential (Bejarano Vargas). The lack of possibilities for political participation, historical distributional injustice [4], resulting poverty, and a weak state are reasons for the Colombian armed conflict that followed the *Violencia*. Violent expulsions on a massive scale make Colombia, after Syria, the country with the highest number of internally displaced persons in the world and a place of territorial fragmentation (Norwegian Refugee Council).

In the Colombian nation-state, territories with special usage management overlap. These territories with differing constitutional regulations are often located in peripheral regions with high biodiversity. While ethnic collective territories are established on a large scale, however, the high concentration of land is hardly counteracted. The smallholders are those who suffer the consequences of this. In comparison to ethnic

collective territories, the number of territorial entities of Peasant Reserves (ZRC) is low. Informal land ownership and informal economies are the consequence of the situation in which Colombian peasants find themselves in.

### 3. Post-acuerdo

The post-FARC zones are at the center of the peacebuilding efforts. The 2016 theoretically concluded ‘peace’ has not yet arrived in many post-FARC zones. According to Fritsch (14), there is a huge gap between the promises of development plans and court rulings and reality. The Foundation for Peace and Reconciliation (Pares) sees new sources of conflict in the power vacuums that have arisen in post-FARC zones. Various actors such as FARC dissident groups, ELN, and criminal groups (BACRIM) claim the structures left behind by the FARC.

Besides the absence of social peace, biodiversity ecosystems are also increasingly becoming targets of new territorial dynamics. The main deforestation drivers which threaten Colombia’s valuable ecosystems are activities such as illegal mining, extractivist industries, the expansion of industrial agriculture, and the cultivation of illegal crops (e.g. coca cultivation) (Valencia Agudelo et al. 36). [5]

Various state planning and control instruments aim to solve the historic conflicts between environmental protection and rural social needs. The *Ordenamiento Territorial* –a collective land management– aims to contribute to social and ecological peace, taking into account different cultural areas (Ruiz Soto). The integral land reform (RRI) aims to counteract the unfair distribution of land ownership, while the *Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos de Uso Ilícito* (PNIS) and the *Planes integrals comunitarios y municipales de sustitución y desarrollo alternativo* (PISDA), at the regional level, aim to promote the voluntary substitution of illegal crops and sustainable economic alternatives (Presidencia de la República, “Efecto paz”), However, environmental prioritization and zoning plans to protect valuable ecosystems provoke new socio-ecological conflicts in regions that have remained stateless for years (Valencia Agudelo et al. 257).

### 4. Environmental Protection in Colombia

In Colombia’s case, the socio-ecological conflict is a historical one. International pressure has always been considerably high on this mega-diverse country, which accounts for ten percent of global biodiversity (CBD).

The legal term *national park* has been entrenched in Colombian law since 1959. The Colombian Constitution of 1991 defines national parks merely as territories of ethnic groups, as “untranscribable, inalienable, and not attachable”. [6] In 1997, the Colombian Court ruled that the removal of areas from the national park system was unconstitutional (Corte Constitucional, Sentencia C-649). Meanwhile 59 protected areas exist in Colombia, including 43 national parks with a total national area of 142,682 km<sup>2</sup> (land and sea) (Parques Nacionales Naturales, “Sistema de Parques Nacionales”). Further protected areas are planned.

The founding of the Ministry of the Environment in 1993 divided the state’s responsibility for environmental protection and economic development into different ministries. This political reorganization caused, on the one hand, the independence of environmental protection from economic development; on the other hand, it diminished the influence of environmental protection in development issues (Rojas 168). Since 2011, the autonomously administered *Unidad Administrativa Especial Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia* (UAESPNN) – today called *Parques Nacionales Naturales* (PNN) – has been subordinate to the Ministry of the Environment.

### 5. Post-FARC and biodiverse: The southern Meta

Located in Colombia’s geographical center and sharing a border in the North with Bogotá D.C., the Colombian state Meta is home to the Macarena region, which was one of the FARC’s most important bases and is now one of the post-acuerdo prioritized regions. This is where the ecosystems of the Andes, Orinoco, and Amazon meet, making the region a unique strategic biogeographical location. The region’s natural resources are coveted for economic activities

such as the expansion of palm, oil extraction, mining, informal economic activities, or for the cultivation of illegal crops (e.g. coca).

For the protection of these unique ecosystems, the national park *Cordillera de los Picachos* was founded in 1977 and the national parks *Sierra de la Macarena* and *Tinigua* in 1989. The *Área de Manejo Especial La Macarena* (AMEM) was established in 1989 with the aim of regulating land use in this ecologically sensitive region, in the national parks as well as in their buffer zones (GIZ). The territorial order aims to guarantee the preservation of ecosystems and improve the living conditions of local residents. [7]

However, the protected areas' terms of land use do not stop the "spontaneous, disorderly colonization" of the zone (GIZ). [8] Meta is regarded as a state of colonization, which since the Violencia in the 40s and 50s has been a place of refuge for internally displaced persons (González 203). The peasants, farm workers, and settlers (*colonos*) there, who settled in the currently protected area before and after its designation as a protected area, are counted among the poorest populations of the country (Lastra Romero 56). The regional society is diverse and consists of (landless, informally, or formally occupying land) farmers/peasants, indigenous people, informal workers, former FARC fighters, FARC dissidents, and members of various BACRIM.

In 1964, the region's historical social isolation favored the FARC's rise in power whereby a parallel state was established with territorial land use terms that deviated from those of the state. The remaining inadequate state presence in the current times of post-acuerdo and the emerging lack of basic services, territorial power struggles and political and economic pressure from external actors are currently feeding both new and old conflicts in the post-FARC zones. Environmental destruction and crime as well as a constant flaring up of territorial power struggles are in many places consequences of the power vacuum created by the demobilization of the FARC.

The lack of a state and the voluntary and forced dynamics of migration due to the high concentration of land are reasons for the general informality of land ownership. This informality of

land ownership is also directed against state-established zones such as national parks, where human activities of land use are constitutionally prohibited or strongly limited. The discontent surrounding curtailed territorial rights leads to social mobilization in some places. This results in territorial conflicts between population and environmental authorities.

The precarious human rights situation and the endangered ecosystems are at the center of the debate surrounding this region of national strategic interest.

## **6. Parques sin gente**

In my investigation on the role of national parks in post-acuerdo in southern Meta/Colombia, I identify three areas of conflict which can be seen in connection with the AMEM – the regional environmental management:

1. Area of conflict: *Parques sin gente* (parks without people)
  - a. Dynamics of settlement
  - b. Informal economic activities
2. Area of conflict: state-controlled economic development
3. Area of conflict: situation of human rights and basic care

These areas of conflict can by no means be sharply separated from each other. However, due to the scope of limitations, this article focuses exclusively on the first field of conflict: *Parques sin gente*.

The lack of acceptance or ignorance of local environmental zoning demonstrates the conflict regarding the environmental boundaries in the south of Meta: uncontrolled agricultural activities, which lead to the expansion of the agricultural border, contradict the norms of the land-use guidelines in zones with specific environmental protection management. Alongside the dynamics of settlement, access to land for informal, illegal economies, such as coca cultivation, plays a central role in this area of conflict. The area of conflict *Parques sin gente* is therefore divided into two sub-areas of conflict: dynamics of settlement and informal economic activities. This distinction is important for examining

territorial interdependencies with organized crime and security policy interests separately from phenomena of general colonisation. In fact, there is no clear separation between these two sub-areas of conflict. The differentiation serves mainly for the representation and examination of a complex area of interest and conflicts.

The peace treaty, which is to resolve historic conflicts, describes approaches to solving the socio-ecological conflicts regarding the protected areas. The debate on resolving these conflicts relates mainly to point 1 – the agreement for an integral rural reform (RRI) and, in particular, the closure of the agricultural border and the protection of protected areas (1.1.10.), as well as point 4 – the agreement on illegal drugs and coca cultivation, particularly in protected areas (Alto Comisionado para la Paz 10, 98).

The uncontrolled colonization, with its degrading environmental consequences in the South of Meta, is a subject of considerable public debate. This thus triggers a fundamental debate which questions the legitimacy of exclusive territorial environmental protection: parks with people vs. parks without people.

## 7. The Dynamics of Settlement

In March 2018, the IDEAM reported an alarming increase in deforestation in the *Tinigua* national park. The palpable increase in deforestation can be explained by slash-and-burn techniques for agricultural activities, land ownership, and the establishment of an informal infrastructure. These colonization activities are connected and driven by the high concentration of land ownership and the lack of alternatives for peasant communities. Besides the peasants' hope for land ownership and a better life, the deforestation in and around the national park territories is exacerbated by an informal land market involving FARC dissidents, financial donors, and non-place-based speculators. [9]

As mentioned before, there is a socio-ecological conflict between national park administration and the population, due to the discrepancy between legal environmental protection figures and real conditions of settlement. The ecological monetary as well as ideological value of the region is defended

by environmentalists, environmental protection organizations, PNN and, at the regional level, by CAR CORMACARENA. Limited access to land and the human rights situation also play a role in the debate. Among other things, the debate asks the question of who was first – the settlers or protected areas? In the south of Meta, as in other regions in Colombia, settlers and farmers settled in the areas of today's national park before the declaration of nature conservation zones (Borda León). However, according to the Colombian government, the vast majority of the park population moved into the environmental protection territories later, within the framework of numerous and uncontrolled settlement processes (Pardo Rueda 4). In 2017, the national parks *Sierra de la Macarena* and *Tinigua* were two of 38 'occupied' territories of the SPNN. The historically low state presence and consequent lack of integrity of the state's environmental authorities are held responsible for the vulnerability of protected areas against illegal agricultural and industrial activities (*Ibid.*).

To solve these multiple territorial conflicts between the rural population and state environmental protection, the peace treaty specifies the following crucial points in this regard:

(1) The RRI aims to ensure that social, economic, and political integration and recognition of peripheral populations are guaranteed, poverty is combated, and sustainable development supported, and equality and civil rights are promoted. Therefore, the *Zona de Reserva Campesina* (ZRC) is to be recognized and supported as agricultural initiatives (Alto Comisionado para la Paz 11).

(2) The regulation of land ownership and access to land should prioritize compensation for victims of displacement. The *Unidad de Restitución de Tierras* (URT) is charged with restoring the original land to victims of displacement.

(3) The closure of the agricultural border and the protection of protected areas should be ensured, taking into account balanced alternatives for the inhabitants of the region (*ibid.* 20). In this context, a *zonificación ambiental*, *programas de reasentamientos* and the

*recuperación comunitaria de bosques y medio ambiente* are mentioned as possible solutions to the problem of human settlements in protected areas (*ibid.* 20).

In the attempt to establish a democratic environmental protection policy, farmers' organizations, state national park administrations, and international NGOs discuss the territorial conflicts of land use in protected areas at national level (ANZORC et al). However, the dialogue at the *Mesa de Concertación Nacional* (MCN) did not always lead to a solution to the territorial conflicts between peasants and PNN. In 2017, both parties faced each other with two contradictory decrees and environmental protection perspectives in the *Comisión de Seguimiento, Impulso y Verificación a la Implementación -- CSIVI*.

In the public debate, multiple oppositional interests emerge, including those of the peasant communities, companies, speculators, FARC dissidents, BACRIM, NGOs, and state regional and national environmental protection entities, as well as interests of the United States. The different territorial interests of the respective groups and their claims to power over the territories are in the foreground of the debate. The legality behind the various claims to power is questioned.

The peasant communities of southern Meta have a high level of social mobilization and resistance. They demand the realization of the transformation of the post-FARC zones as announced in the *Acuerdo Final* (The Environmental Justice Atlas). On a national scale, the peasant communities demand participatory solutions for the socio-ecological conflicts in protected areas. They demand the implementation of *Parques con campesinos desde un enfoque intercultural*, which reduces territorial tensions and establishes a broad participatory environmental protections; a reorientation of the national parks and a subsequent withdrawal of national park land that already shows a high level of human invention; as well as the establishment of ZRCs and their territorial compatibility with buffer zones of the parks (Jerez). Moreover, the peasantry of the region demands the abolition of new sanctions against "illegal activities" by the state (ANZORC).

Above all, the generally rigid bilateral solution approach of the environmental protection authorities in post-acuerdo is criticized, because it represents only two possibilities for the park population: either the collaboration of restoring the ecosystems or the relocation of the population groups to land outside protected areas (Monsalve).

As mentioned above, the peasantry is by no means exclusively responsible for the transformation of the ecological valuable region. According to various sources, extensive regional land grabbing is carried out by external stakeholders with high capital - speculators, such as businessmen, cattle ranchers, drug dealers or politicians (García). As these power brokers operate in an informal background, they do not actively participate in the public debate, but are nevertheless important actors in the national park territories. The prospect of financial gain or the absence of legal economic equivalent alternatives drives informal activities of non-place-based and place-based actors and thus rejects regional environmental guidelines.

While the present FARC party is committed to peasants' rights, the former FARC guerrillas are held responsible for damaging the ecosystems in which they resided but also for an environmentally friendly territorial management (Carrizosa Umaña). However, in present times FARC dissidents are held responsible for disregarding the guidelines within the national park territories. Thus, an informal land market is reported, which Botero interprets as a "proceso de recolonización armada en La Macarena" (Calle). In this way, the FARC dissidents still have considerable influence on the population, whilst their presence weakens the state's influence and thus the state's land use management. The interests of FARC dissidents and BACRIM are linked to the recovery of territorial control. It can be suggested that this territorial interest is also linked to securing financial sources such as coca cultivation.

Three international NGOs are also taking part in the discussion. Together with the European Union, the FAO is supporting the peace building process and the dissolution of territorial conflicts in protected areas in post-acuerdo (Parques Nacionales Naturales,

Gobernanza). The FAO provides technical support to peasants' delegations in the MCN in order to counteract asymmetric relations in dialogue with state institutions (Lastra Romero 6). In the final agreement between FAO and *Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reserva Campesina* (ANZORC), these two allies declare the ideal of untouched nature to be harmful and plead for inclusive environmental protection: "Contra esta idea se puede decir que conservar y producir no son dos procesos distintos sino complementarios" (Betancourt Santiago et al. 2). Alongside the FAO, and together with the *Fundación Mario Santo Domingo* and PNN, the WWF and WCS form an alliance for environmental and biodiversity protection. The aim of the alliance is the establishment and the extension of Colombia's present protected areas. The biological value and important ecosystem services are associated with social interest by the WWF [10]. The WCS underlines the importance of realistic and site-specific management plans in response to the current specific situation of the protected territories (WCS Colombia).

In post-acuerdo, the state's environmental protection functionaries mainly represent the guarantee of nature conservation. The environmental protection functionaries defend the national park territories with the general social argumentation of "conservación de los recursos de vida" (PNN, *Acuerdo de voluntades*). The value of nature for society and economy goes beyond the social local benefit (Chavarro Vásquez et al. 35). The functionaries also argue that the ecosystems as well as the environmental functionaries became victims of the conflict and are therefore entitled to reparation (PNN, *Retos del Postacuerdo*). Nevertheless, PNN also acknowledges a social responsibility in addition to its ecological responsibility in post-acuerdo. In order to start or revive the work with the communities in the protected areas, the "restauración" is an instrument that can be used to intervene in the territories. According to PNN, environmental protection should be achieved through dialogue, for example carried out by local, regional, and national MCNs (*ibid.*). Regarding a policy of social participation in protected areas, the PNN's concept of "parques

con la gente" is subject to strict guidelines (PNN, *Apoyo presupuestario*). Mainly "modelos culturales de profunda relación con la naturaleza practicados por pueblos indígenas, comunidades afrocolombianas y algunas comunidades locales campesinas" are considered important allies for park management (MinAmbiente).

The environmental protection entities demonstrate a clear rejection of the demands of the farming communities. The possibility of recategorizing the protected areas or even withdrawing land from the national park territories for the purpose of returning land to farmers and *Colonos* seems non-negotiable for PNN, as it is unconstitutional (Verdad Abierta, "Tensión por posesión de tierras"). Instead, PNN argues that common regional recognition of the protected areas and their borders should be enforced through "educación ambiental," precision and the visualization of borders ("Piden acompañamiento militar"). The model of parks with people - parks inhabited by farmers - is not considered sustainable. The necessary establishment of state utility services, such as infrastructure, health care, etc., would have an additional negative effect on biodiversity and ecosystems. According to the PNN environmentalists, however, the protected areas should not become the "banco de tierras" of a new agricultural reform in times of post-acuerdo (Verdad Abierta, "Tensión por posesión de tierras"). For this reason, from an environmental protection standpoint, the only conceivable solution for inhabited or "occupied" parks is the relocation of residents to bordering areas outside of the national parks' boundaries. In order to combat illegal activities in the national park territories, the regional population has been controlled with the support of the police authorities since April 2018.

## 8. Informal economic Activities

"Los municipios que durante décadas han tenido presencia de las Farc [...] son territorios donde la mayor parte de su actividad económica es movida por rentas ilegales, donde los actores armados son quienes regulan y administran el mercado." (Ávila)

In southern Meta – the Macarena Region – parallel power structures go hand in hand with informal parallel economic structures, which

have still not been abolished up to the present post-acuerdo. The state's environmental protection and national security policies are therefore limited.

Pares claims that the increasing violence observed in Meta's southern post-FARC zones can be explained by a criminal takeover by various groups (Conflicto, paz y postconflicto - Pares). In addition to agricultural activities that contravene the rules of regional land use management, coca cultivation and illegal mining inside the protected areas are special cases of informal activities. They are directly linked to organized crime and the transnational problem of drug trafficking. The phenomenon of the cultivation of illegal crops in the biodiverse region combines environmental protection interests with national and international security policy. Yet the fight against the cultivation of illegal crops is a sensitive one and presents a major challenge in the Macarena region in post-acuerdo times.

Firstly, the cultivation of illegal crops is a prominent problem: The peace treaty deals with the issue of drugs at a national level and security policy at the international level, as well as at a social and ecological level. The ecological problem of coca cultivation is described in point "4.1.4. Implementación del Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos de Uso Ilícito en Parques Nacionales Naturales – PNN" (Alto Comisionado para la Paz 115). It states that in order to guarantee the effective control, restoration and protection of the affected areas in the parks, agreements between the parties of conflict should be reached through direct dialogue with the population and without restricting the "bienestar" and "buen vivir" of the communities. Coca cultivation in the protected areas should therefore in theory be combated by "erradicación manual," dialogue, resettlement of the park residents, and new economic alternatives, rather than by the much criticized eradication of illegal crop cultivation by aerial herbicide spraying.

The reality however is somewhat different. In September 2017, the former President Santos declared that the method of forced coca destruction is necessary to achieve coca-free national parks. From the perspective of the farming communities however, this approach

continues to be an affront to the population of the post-FARC region. As all economic activities in the national park system are forbidden, the park residents can hope for neither substitution nor for a compensatory resettlement to lands outside the protected area due to both the lack of land available and the lack of budget of the responsible institutions (Sánchez). Furthermore, parallel power structures pose a problem to the establishment of government programs in the region: Government programs, such as PNIS, make the population cooperating with state regulations once again targets of new and old illegal actors and current regional territorial powers (Vélez and Duque). Thus, in the post-FARC zones, individual social leaders, who stand up for environmental rights or the rights of the peasants, are murdered time and again (Verdad Abierta, "¡No más muertes!"). Riots and the demand for a guarantee of security follow as a consequence (ibid.).

In order to find a sustainable solution to the problem of informal economic activities and lack of security and to safeguard human rights, the population suffering from these problems calls for realistic economic alternatives within the territories and for a new regional environmental protection management based on the concept of "Parques con campesinos."

In the current public debate, FARC dissidents are often singled out as the reason for the unstable security situation and the rise in coca cultivation (McDermott 20). According to Veléz and Duque, the southern Meta FARC dissident group's intention is to organize into a southern block to regain control over the territory and the population as a new-old power and thereby prevent the destruction of the coca fields. This ambition of the FARC dissidents to regain territorial power in southern Meta and thus maintain the established drug routes complicates the consolidation of peace between state and population. The territorial power struggles delay and complicate not only the development of economic alternatives, but also the implementation of an organized regional environmental management policy.

The task of the police authorities, the military, and the special anti-drug unit is not only to take legal actions against prohibited activities,

criminal groups, and the destruction of coca fields, but also to guarantee the safety of threatened social leaders and environmental officials. The Ministry of Defense set itself the ambitious goal of freeing the Colombian national parks from coca cultivation. That is why the regional police authorities often continue to rely on “erradicación manual forzosa” to fight the cultivation of illegal crops within the protected areas, for example in the national park *Sierra de la Macarena*. This form of crop eradication is to be used as a complementary measure to voluntary substitution, resulting in the achievement of ambitious targets. In 2017, 100,000 hectares of coca fields were destroyed, while 2018 saw the destruction of 65,000 cocoa fields (23,000 under the PNIS and 40,000 through forced destruction) (Presidencia de la República, “Meta de erradicación forzada”). The fight against organized crime and drug trafficking is prioritized above the safeguarding of human rights for the rural population which were negotiated within the peace treaty (EFE).

The prioritization of the war against drugs rather than the safeguarding of human rights can be explained by the considerable international pressure surrounding the former: The pressure at the national level for the fight against coca is intensified by international pressure led by the USA (Majub Avendaño 13). According to Käufer, President Trump criticized the former Colombian president Santo’s course of reconciliation, which has led to another sharp rise in the country’s cocaine exports. In post-acuerdo, the banned crop eradication strategy of aerial herbicide spraying, the frequent re-seeding and a boomerang effect of the PNIS are held responsible for the increase of coca cultivation. This increase of coca in post-acuerdo is the reason for Trump’s call for a return to a hard anti-cocaine course by more drastic military means (Käufer). Consequently, the new Plan Quinquenal 2018-2023 between the USA and Colombia adopts another coca eradication pact, in which the Colombian Ministry of Defense gives the national police authorities an annual coca eradication target of 70,000 hectares (Redacción Judicial).

The state’s environmental protection actors see coca cultivation as a threat to Colombia’s

biological diversity: “Estamos dando una batalla contra la ilegalidad,” said PNN Director Julia Miranda Londoño in early 2018 (Jiménez Morales). Security is not only a problem for local populations. PNN officials throughout the country are directly threatened by illegal groups which make it difficult for PNN to regain access to the national parks, including *Sierra de La Macarena*, *Cordillera de Los Picachos*, and *Tinigua* (Correa). In order to safeguard state environmental protection authorities and to better monitor and control prohibited activities in national park territories, PNN/the Environmental Protection Ministry cooperates with police forces and the Military/Defense Ministry (*ibid.*). However, the necessary cooperation between environmental authorities, the Public Prosecutor’s Office and the Ministry of Defense are described as insufficient (Rojas Hernández). The Ministry of Defense and the Public Prosecutor’s Office are accused of doing little to hold those responsible for environmental destruction in the various national parks (*ibid.*).

## **9. National Parks in Post-acuerdo in southern Meta**

The tensions revealed from the public debate and the areas of conflict demonstrate that the southern AMEM region, and thus the national parks *Tinigua*, *Sierra de la Macarena*, and *Cordillera de los Picachos* are not only confronted with the classic ecological need for the protection of ecosystems in post-acuerdo. In other words, as the only regionally established state authority, the responsible environmental functionaries are confronted with the needs of a multi-layered population, the development of statehood, economic perspectives, and political participation. Throughout and across these debates, the national parks are perceived as state spaces which aim to fulfill various roles in relation to these differing and often conflicting needs. Therefore, it is more accurate to speak of role requirements for environmental protection zones.

In the public negotiation to overcome the historical territorial conflicts, a “politicization of the environment” and thus the political and partisan nature of the national park territories

can be extracted. It thereby becomes clear that in the debate, the state environmental protection authorities position themselves differently to the various interest groups and parties of conflict. The environmental protection zones are therefore by no means to be understood as impartial spaces. In the power struggles of the dynamic territories in southern Meta, the environmental protection administration is described as the only local government authority that claims supremacy in the territories. The Colombian *Nature State* is supported and financed by international protection organizations and states. The existence of the Colombian environmental institutions and the national park system is closely linked to the international image of the megadiverse state. In other words, the state's environmental efforts and national parks have a global modernist symbolic power. In times of post-acuerdo, the environmental efforts reach their limits on regional and local level. With the implementation of the land use directives in Meta's national parks, PNN and CORMACARENA defend first and foremost the ecological rights on national and regional level. At the MCN, PNN forms the opposition to the demands of the peasants in the debate on fundamental environmental policy principles regarding *Parques con gente*. As the national park administration authority, PNN becomes a player itself in the regional territorial land use conflicts, instead of being an impartial mediator (Agronegocios e Industria de Alimentos). The environmental protection concept "national park" itself, as well as the associated AMEM, are to be understood as being both political in nature and as a state-organized form of land use. In the context of the state's efforts to exert renewed influence in the post-FARC zone, the national park complex in southern Meta can be understood as a reactivated form of relationship by the state. The state institutions limited territorial influence however reduces the environmental protection authorities' options for action on a regional and local level and thus the ecological protective function of the protected areas.

In addition to the obvious interest in environmental protection within nationally strategically important ecosystems, the

international and highly political fight against drugs also plays a role in the three national parks that are examined here. The liberation of the national parks from coca cultivation is closely linked to international anti-drug policies –especially under pressure on the part of the USA– and the ecological role of the national parks. With the alliance between military and environmental protection in the context of international interests however, the state is once again targeting a part of the peasant population who has been repeatedly criminalized and displaced.

The precarious regional security situation in southern Meta is caused by the population's mistrust of the state, the existence of BACRIM and FARC dissidents and territorial power struggles. There are three regional (environmental) authorities: (1) One on the part of the "place-based-actors," who seek to fill old FARC structures with threats and armed force and who possess allocative regional resources enabling them to promise the populations land and economic prospects; (2) One weak and paralyzed "place-based" environmental authority (CORMACARENA and PNN) which does not provide all-encompassing territorial solutions for regional conflicts and which is partially denied access to the territories (i.e. has few allocative resources); and (3) one state "non-place-based" player (PNN, MinAmbiente and the Colombian state) which possesses authoritative resources but has disappointed the regional population in the past through an exclusionary top-down environmental protection strategy whilst repeatedly failing to keep promises, which therefore does not find broad political backing in regional society. This complex situation paralyzes the establishment of the sovereignty of state environmental protection in the post-FARC region.

It becomes clear that the *ecological* aspect of the territorial relationship type is closely connected with other relationship types within the territories. National parks therefore cannot do justice to the complex reality of the territories in their basic ecological concept. The national parks in Meta are confronted with a considerable social and economic regional crisis of the peasantry. AMEM and the national parks cannot

solve the fundamental historical conflict regarding rights and access to land in their restricted ecological role. The territorial environmental protection instruments are in fact the reason for the place-based actors' limited scope of action. It is precisely the lack of economic prospects caused by the land use restrictions that provide a breeding ground for informal economies with illegal interdependencies which cause uncontrolled deforestation and the pollution of rivers and soils within the protected ecosystems. The state environmental institutions are not in a position to, for example, guarantee the cocaleros economic perspectives and security and thus free them from the sphere of influence of, and dependence on, drug gangs. Instead, PNN is conducting a "fight against illegality" and thus also a fight against the rural population and potential strategic allies themselves (Jiménez Morales). [11]

Although biased, the AMEM paradoxically becomes an active space of negotiation for environmental protection and positive prospects for a better life in post-acuerdo. The national parks in the post-FARC zones are also assigned a social role. In its function as the provider of environmental protection and as an actor negotiating between environmental protection and social needs, PNN is therefore interpreted as state service provider (Agronegocios e Industria de Alimentos). However, due to ecological goals, international anti-drug policy interests, the lack of complementary projects, resources, and implementation of the peace agreement, the social role requirements for the protected areas cannot be fulfilled in a satisfactory manner. While it is true that the environmental protection authorities are attempting to do justice to Colombia's social diversity through the selected integration of some park inhabitants, a large part of the population nevertheless remains excluded (Ojeda 358). This suggests a division of the regional population, which is split between AMEM allies and opponents of the state's land use restrictions with regards to environmental protection.

At a regional level, the national parks are "paper parks" in many places (Leal 8). They are thus currently exerting more influence at the national level than at regional and local levels. However,

it is interesting that in the public debate, the national parks in southern Meta are becoming an instrument for the state's exercise of power guided by the media through environmental and security policy agendas. Consequently, and in the context of claims of power, the environmental protection instrument *national park* in southern Meta can be interpreted as a strategic spatial image consciously produced by the state.

## Conclusion

The public debate reflects the varying roles that the three national parks *Cordillera de los Picachos*, *Tinigua*, and *Sierra de la Macarena* are expected to play in post-acuerdo. It is clear that the current environmental management plays a controversial role in the debate on peacebuilding in the southern Meta region. Interest and spatial images diverge on different scales and levels. On the national level, national parks lend prestige to the Colombian *Nature State* with regard to the global environmental crisis. The international importance and thus influence of the national parks mean that these parks themselves become an instrument of political power.

This analysis demonstrates that the regional national park administration in southern Meta must not only meet demands to fulfill the traditional ecological function of the national parks but must also make a contribution to overcome historical conflicts in the region (PNN, *Retos del Postacuerdo*). Ambivalent role requirements, such as the participatory, economic role of regional environmental management, collide with an ecological protective function and restrictive use of national park territories and their buffer zones. The regional environmental protection authorities are both co-founders of these conflicts and yet also lack the necessary resources to provide sufficient economic and social solutions for ongoing regional land conflicts. In addition, the national park administration holds an oppositional view to the majority of place-based actors. Due to their partisan nature, the national park territories studied in this paper cannot be interpreted as national peace parks.

Without social peace, there can be no ecological peace. A future for national parks

can only be guaranteed if the local population can benefit from these parks (Germán Andrade qtd. in Rojas Hernández). The link in post-acuerdo between various social, cultural, political, economic relationships and interests, and the environmental protection territories requires an appropriate response from the Colombian *Nature State*. Environmental authorities already seem to have understood that the multidimensional territorial chaos of the post-FARC zones cannot be solved from a unilateral ecological perspective. The existence of the national parks in southern Meta offers the possibility of finding sustainable solutions for an ongoing conflict between the population and territorial environmental protection concepts. However, the task of balancing social and ecological needs in the region goes far beyond the competence and authority of the current Colombian environmental protection institutions. The multidimensional pacification of the former FARC territories and the establishment of a new state order requires close cooperation between national environmental authorities, CAR, the Ministries of Agriculture, Infrastructure, Justice and Defense, the Agencia Nacional de Licencias Ambientales (ANLA), and, last but not least, the population.

The territorial conflicts in Meta illustrate the complications of the *national park* as a territorial environmental protection instrument and demonstrate the need to consider environmental protection within the context of the consequences of the global economic system. Taking these ‘glocal’ entanglements into account would help inspire new and more successful future alternatives to the top-down and heavily conflicted implementation of national park management which has been witnessed so far. These alternatives should ideally involve areas free of extractivism, in which social and ecological needs are balanced by the use of regional traditional economies under site-specific and autonomous conditions. This involves the imperative to learn from environmental history and misguided global interpretations of the relationship between man and nature which, according to Radkau (18), demonstrates that “(t)he balance between man and the environment that has developed over many generations is

disturbed by external influences: by invasions and by the loss of autonomy.” [12]

### **Endnotes**

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[1] For the reason of a not yet real existing peace in Colombia, the term *post-acuerdo* is used instead of *post-conflict*. See, for example, Jiménez Patiño 2016.

[2] The study of the role of national parks in the southern Meta is based on the analysis of the public debate in the post-acuerdo phase between 2016 and the end of the Santos government in mid-2018. See my complete study: Die Rolle von Nationalparks im Post-acuerdo im südlichen Meta/Kolumbien - Eine konflikt- und akteursorientierte Analyse der öffentlichen Debatte. Bielefeld University, 2019.

[3] My translation, original text: „Der kolumbianische Staat stellt eine Summe „fragmentierter“ Räume dar, die durch parallele Strukturen zwischen lokalen oder segmentären Gewalten gekennzeichnet sind.“

[4] According to World Bank data, Colombia's GINI coefficient is 50.8 in 2016 and 58.7 in 2000.

[5] The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has listed Colombia in its Red List of Endangered Ecosystems since 2014, as almost half of the ecosystems studied have been classified as endangered by human activity.

[6] My translation, original text: Constitución Política de Colombia (1991), Artículo 72. See, <http://www.constitucioncolombia.com/titulo-2/capitulo-2/articulo-72>.

[7] See IDEAM 2018.

[8] My translation, original text: „Seit 50 Jahren leidet das Gebiet unter spontaner, ungeordneter Kolonialisierung und ist zudem Sitz illegaler bewaffneter Gruppen wie der FARC, Paramilitärs und Banden von Rauschgifthändlern.“

[9] See IDEAM 2018.

[10] See WWF 2018.

[11] My translation, original text: “Estamos dando una batalla contra la ilegalidad,” enfatizó la funcionaria, quien, no obstante, reconoció que esos actores ilegales han amenazado a los guardabosques de los 17 parques, como lo denunció el fin de semana el ministro de Ambiente, Luis Gilberto Murillo.”

[12] My translation.

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both ecological and social terms, and has been shaped by a complex social-ecological history and related conflicts. Against this backdrop, the intention of her work is to investigate solutions to find a balance between ecological and social peace.

## **Author's biography**

Yvonne Laudien graduated from Bielefeld University with a BA in Linguistics and Romanic Cultures as well as an MA in InterAmerican Studies. Because of journalistic activities, her fields of interest include critical perspectives on global social phenomena in general and "the fourth state" in particular. The motivation for her research focus on Colombia is two-fold: First, the increasing climate crisis and biodiversity-loss are urgent global problems, which have to be solved. Second, along with her own local experience, Colombia is a diverse country, in

# Las aguas termales de la cuenca Chapala-Santiago: un patrimonio natural en peligro

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## Resumen

*En el Estado de Jalisco hay numerosos sitios donde las aguas termales son aprovechadas para usos lúdicos, turísticos, terapéuticos y curativos, ya que desde tiempos inmemoriales han sido reconocidos sus beneficios localmente por sus propiedades y composición química. Desgraciadamente, como la mayoría de los cuerpos de agua superficial, los manantiales de aguas termales están sujetos también a procesos de deterioro, como efecto de las descargas contaminantes y de su aprovechamiento para producir electricidad a partir de los fluidos geotérmicos. De aquí la intención de caracterizar los diversos usos, prácticas y costumbres de los grupos sociales, asociados a la gestión de un patrimonio natural e histórico. Se pretende ofrecer un panorama actual de las condiciones de este tipo de manantiales, su ubicación y los usos populares que se les han dado, específicamente en el área de la cuenca Chapala-Santiago.*

**Palabras clave:** patrimonio natural, aguas termales, preservación y conservación, salud-enfermedad, usos populares

## Introducción

Los recursos hidrológicos constituyen una parte primordial del patrimonio natural de la humanidad. Bajo cualesquiera de sus formas, ya sea como aguas superficiales o subterráneas; como mares, ríos, lagos, arroyos, manantiales o mantos acuíferos, conforman y dan vida a nuestros ecosistemas y a múltiples actividades humanas. Los manantiales provienen de corrientes subterráneas que afloran a la superficie a altas temperaturas, debido al calentamiento que se produce en las áreas volcánicas activas en diferentes partes del mundo. México cuenta con recursos geotérmicos abundantes y ampliamente distribuidos en el territorio. Se han identificado más de 3,200 sitios termales, distribuidos en 29 de las 32 entidades federativas del país (Arellano Gómez 18).

Las características excepcionales de las aguas termales fueron conocidas desde tiempos remotos y se les asignaban propiedades sagradas y mágicas. Por su composición química y propiedades mineromedicinales, los beneficios de estas aguas fueron aprovechados

por los antiguos griegos, romanos y árabes, así como por las poblaciones prehispánicas en el continente americano, mismas que fueron utilizadas para usos lúdicos, terapéuticos, curativos y rituales desde tiempos inmemoriales. Fue así como las aguas termales, que son parte de un patrimonio natural, se incorporaron al patrimonio cultural de estos pueblos (Carvalho y Navarro 37), en tanto que constituyen “conjuntos naturales culturalmente seleccionados” y socialmente considerados como elementos “dignos de conservación independientemente de su interés utilitario” (Prats 63).

El uso directo de los recursos geotérmicos superficiales en México se estima tiene más de mil años antes de la conquista española. Algunos asentamientos de la parte central del país se desarrollaron a partir de la cercanía con estos sitios termales, como lo demuestra la difusión del nombre Atotonilco en varios pueblos del centro de México. El significado de Atotonilco se deriva de atl: agua, totonili: caliente, co: lugar; es decir “lugar de agua caliente” en náhuatl. Las aguas termales eran utilizadas para cocinar y colocar recipientes en manantiales de agua hirviendo, en

emanaciones de vapor o enterrados en suelos calientes; costumbre que sigue siendo un uso tradicional en zonas termales de México. El uso de temazcales para baños rituales o terapéuticos permanece como una tradición del baño termal efectuado en pequeñas estructuras dómicas de piedra volcánica y mortero.

Actualmente, los recursos geotérmicos de México se han aprovechado también en usos indirectos para la generación de electricidad<sup>2</sup>, y para diversos usos directos como balnearios termales, calefacción de oficinas, invernaderos, secado de frutas y verduras, germinado de bulbos, producción acelerada de flores, criadero de hongos comestibles (Arellano et al. 107).

Los manantiales de aguas termales son un patrimonio natural muy particular, que no abunda en el planeta. Estos afloramientos se localizan específicamente en zonas de gran actividad tectónica y volcánica que datan de hace millones de años. El territorio mexicano se encuentra justo en la franja tectónica que forma parte del Cinturón de Fuego del Pacífico, misma que recorre toda la costa del Océano Pacífico del continente americano. En el centro de México se localiza el Eje Neovolcánico, en cuyo territorio se ubican varios volcanes que han registrado actividad recientemente, entre ellos el Ceboruco, el Volcán de Colima y el Paricutín, lo que explica la concentración de manantiales de aguas termales que confluyen alrededor de la cuenca Lerma-Chapala-Santiago.

La cuenca del río Lerma-Chapala-Santiago y sus afluentes cuentan con multitud de afloramientos de aguas termales a lo largo de la cadena montañosa de la sierra Madre Occidental, tales como Ixtapan de la Sal, en el Estado de México, Los Azufres en Michoacán, Abasolo y Comanjilla en Guanajuato, Atotonilco en Jalisco, otros más alrededor del Bosque de la Primavera y de la ribera del lago de Chapala, así como hacia los Altos de Jalisco, cerca del río Verde, y El Grullo, contiguo al Volcán de Colima, por mencionar algunos.

Desgraciadamente, como la mayoría de los cuerpos de agua superficial, los manantiales de aguas termales también están sujetos a procesos de contaminación y deterioro, sin que se tenga mayor cuidado o supervisión por parte de las autoridades competentes. El hecho

es que estamos acostumbrados a percibir los manantiales de aguas termales como parte de un paisaje vernáculo que ofrece la naturaleza y que puede ser explotado para beneficio público, sin considerar la necesidad de conservar sus fuentes de origen ni los servicios ambientales que prestan a sus ecosistemas. Su valoración ha estado en función directa del tipo de explotación económica, por lo general con carácter turístico, más que como parte de un patrimonio natural y cultural. Por lo mismo, no siempre se cuida su preservación y queda sujeto a un deterioro paulatino por contaminación o por el agotamiento de sus fuentes.

De aquí la intención de realizar un estudio exploratorio sobre las condiciones en que se encuentran los manantiales de aguas termales en Jalisco. El presente trabajo pretende caracterizar los diversos usos, prácticas y costumbres de los grupos humanos, asociados a la gestión y preservación de un patrimonio natural e histórico a partir de un recorrido exploratorio en una selección de sitios comprendidos en dicha área. Dicho estudio se enmarca dentro de una investigación más amplia en torno a las políticas de gestión, abasto y saneamiento del agua en la cuenca Chapala-Santiago en el espacio territorial del estado de Jalisco.

### Zonas térmicas en México

México está caracterizado por una gran actividad tectónica y volcánica desde hace varias decenas de millones de años hasta el presente, que han dejado su huella ya sea como sistemas volcánicos y sistemas hidrotermales, tanto fósiles como activos, siendo una gran fuente de riqueza de recursos minerales y geotérmicos. La presencia de estos recursos se extiende por todo el país, pero es especialmente abundante en la región central del país (Arellano Gómez et al. 110). En el siguiente mapa se observan los manantiales termales muestreados por la Comisión Federal de Electricidad.

**Figura 1:** Campos en explotación, evaluados y manifestaciones termales



Fuente: Arellano Gómez, Situación panorámica de la Geotermia en México

La cuenca Lerma-Chapala, que se encuentra en el Eje Neovolcánico en el centro de México, se caracteriza por su actividad volcánica y forma parte del Cinturón de Fuego del Pacífico, formando una isla entre dos grandes regiones biogeográficas mundiales, como se puede apreciar en las figuras 1 y 2.

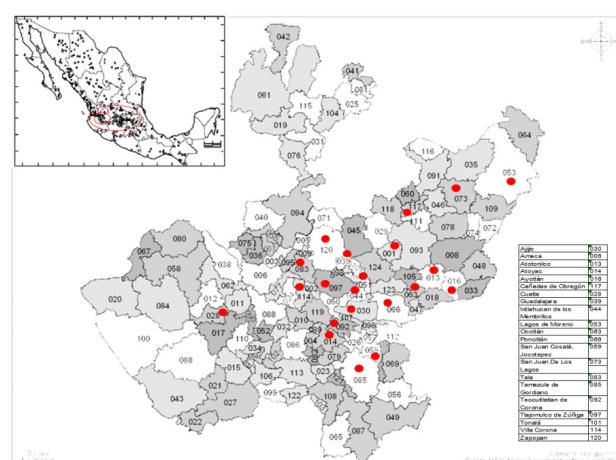
La Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE) ha establecido más de dos mil manifestaciones termales en México, señalando que solo algunas generan energía eléctrica comercialmente, la mayoría de los puntos localizados son utilizados como balnearios aún desde tiempos precolombinos. Como se mencionó, la mayor parte de los balnearios se localizan en la región central del país, en el área transmexicana, donde se encuentran ubicados la gran mayoría de los volcanes mexicanos que han presentado actividad reciente: Ceboruco, Popocatépetl, Volcán de Colima, Pico de Orizaba, Paricutín, Jorullo, Xitle, así como otros más hacia el sureste de México como son: Bárcena, Tres Vírgenes, El Chichonal y El Tacaná (Arellano Gómez et al. 111).

De acuerdo a los estudios de Quijano-León (citado en Gutiérrez-Negrín 2) se calcula que los balnearios y *spas*, instalados en 160 sitios ubicados en 19 estados de la república, utilizan recursos geotérmicos del orden de 156 megawatts térmicos (MWt) con un volumen promedio total de unos 3.2 m<sup>3</sup> por segundo (m<sup>3</sup> /s), equivalente a unas 11,600 toneladas

métricas por hora (t/h) de agua caliente. Se aprovecha una energía total de 3,600 terajoules (TJ) por año. Aunque la temperatura superficial promedio de los manantiales empleados para este uso varía entre 32° y 77 °C, la temperatura media nacional se estima en 40 °C.

Jalisco se encuentra en la zona centro del país y forma parte de la región hidrológica de la cuenca Lerma-Chapala-Santiago. El lago de Chapala está clasificado como una fosa tectónica, donde se ubican muchos balnearios de aguas termales debido a los manantiales que afloran en la zona. De igual manera, se puede apreciar en el mapa siguiente la presencia de otros balnearios termales en varios de los municipios que conforman el estado de Jalisco, tanto de uso privado como público en áreas construidas exprofeso para su gestión comercial, o en áreas naturales aprovechadas por las comunidades para uso doméstico local y turismo regional. La mayoría de esos balnearios y *spas* han sido y son operados bajo inversión privada, solo algunos son manejados por instituciones del gobierno federal, como el Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS) y de los gobiernos estatales y municipales, así como por grupos de ejidatarios (Gutiérrez-Negrín 2).

**Figura 2:** Localización de balnearios naturales y privados de aguas termales en Jalisco, 2018



se utilizan para el abastecimiento de agua de algunas comunidades indígenas como son las que se encuentran en la ribera del lago de Chapala: San Pedro Itxicán, Mezcala y Agua Caliente.

### **Clasificación de las aguas termales por sus usos y composición físico química**

Las aguas termales se caracterizan de acuerdo a su composición físico-química, a su temperatura, y al tipo de usos que se les asignan. Sus componentes dependen del lugar de donde emanan las aguas termales, así como de la combinación resultante del agua de lluvia con el agua profunda de manantial. A su vez, la mayor o menor concentración de minerales y sales disueltas depende de las propiedades de las rocas magmáticas y telúricas, cuyas temperaturas pueden liberar más o menos minerales. Aparte de los componentes minerales, las propiedades organolépticas del agua termal varían en cuanto a color, sabor, olor y conductividad, pero en esencia se caracterizan por su pureza y riqueza en componentes minerales (Reynerio Fagundo-Castillo et al. 2-3). De acuerdo con los rangos de temperatura media anual en su punto de emergencia, las aguas termales pueden ser hipotérmicas (de 20 a 35°C), mesotérmicas (de 35 a 45° C) e hipertérmicas cuando las temperaturas son superiores a los 45° (Reynerio Fagundo-Castillo et al. 5).

Las aguas termales son muy apreciadas por su composición mineral, sobre todo las aguas minero-medicinales, pues se les atribuyen características terapéuticas, las cuales son resultado de los distintos procesos biológicos y geológicos. Habría que aclarar que no todas las aguas minero-medicinales son termales, ya que se pueden encontrar aguas minero-medicinales frías y dependiendo de la temperatura que se encuentre el agua subterránea, se disolverán distintos tipos de minerales. De aquí que exista una clasificación de los distintos tipos de aguas termales en función de su temperatura, origen geológico, composición química y composición mineral, lo cual a su vez determina el tipo de uso.

La caracterización físico-química es

clave para determinar las propiedades para cada uno de sus posibles usos en aspectos curativos y medicinales. Los componentes más comunes en las aguas termales permiten clasificarlas como aguas cloruradas, sulfatadas (sódicas, magnésicas y cálcicas), sulfuradas, bicarbonatadas, carbónicas y radioactivas. A su vez, los componentes suelen encontrarse combinados, dando origen a tipos particulares de aguas en cada lugar (Reynerio Fagundo-Castillo et al. 6).

Se considera que las aguas de desecho una vez que los fluidos geotérmicos han sido utilizados con cualquier fin (generación o usos directos) deben tratarse antes de disponerse o reinyectarse al yacimiento ya que representan una fuente importante de contaminación porque pueden contener substancias potencialmente peligrosas para la salud de plantas y animales —Li, As, B, Hg, Cu, Cd, F, Na, K, Cl, Al, etc. (Barragán et al. 45).

Según la forma de aprovechamiento y tipo de usos, estos recursos hidrológicos podrían clasificarse como aguas medicinales curativas y/o terapéuticas, aguas para uso recreativo y turístico, aguas para uso público doméstico y para generación de energía geotérmica.

### **Usos curativos y terapéuticos de las aguas termales**

Las aguas termales constituyen un valioso recurso para atender la salud pública, dado que resulta beneficiosas por sus efectos curativos o de sanación y por su acción terapéutica. Esto ha contribuido a incrementar la demanda de servicios a través de lo que se llama turismo de salud. De acuerdo a la hidrología médica, los efectos activos del termalismo son benéficos para el tratamiento de enfermedades del aparato respiratorio, digestivo y locomotor, actuando a través de vías térmicas, mecánicas o transmineralizantes.

El conocimiento popular sobre las diversas propiedades curativas de los baños termales ha sido parte de la medicina tradicional. La gente suele frecuentar estos sitios para tratarse afecciones de la piel, como psoriasis, alergias, irritaciones o quemaduras. También son comunes los tratamientos terapéuticos

relacionados con problemas reumáticos, de artritis, lesiones musculares, inflamatorios, etc.

Los componentes minerales más comunes en las aguas termales para usos curativos suelen ser: manganeso, por sus propiedades hidratantes y antioxidantes, el magnesio, como estímulo para la renovación celular, el cobre sirve como anti-inflamatorio y antiséptico, el selenio por sus cualidades antioxidantes, el calcio como cicatrizante, el hierro contribuye a la oxigenación celular y el zinc que es anti-inflamatorio y antibacteriano. El dióxido de carbono (CO<sub>2</sub>) enriquece las aguas utilizadas en balneoterapia (Jiménez).

Las aguas termales cloruradas contribuyen al tratamiento de patologías inflamatorias y lesiones musculares, fracturas, traumatismos articulares y afecciones reumáticas; las aguas sulfatadas sirven para afecciones intestinales, hepáticas y biliares por su acción diurética; las bicarbonatadas ayudan a tratar afecciones gástricas, hepáticas y renales; las aguas sulfuradas son benéficas para afecciones de vías respiratorias; las aguas carbónicas estimulan el aparato circulatorio y curan enfermedades vasculares, entre otras. Además, las aguas termales se recomiendan para usos estéticos en la limpieza del organismo ya que ayuda a la liberación de toxinas. También se utilizan como ingrediente de productos medicinales y artículos de belleza. Cabe mencionar que se ha popularizado el envasado de aguas minerales para consumo humano, así como para uso doméstico, una vez realizado un tratamiento previo (Jiménez).

### **Usos recreativos y turísticos**

Existe una serie de balnearios públicos y privados alimentados por manantiales de aguas termales, que cuentan con infraestructura construida específicamente para usos curativos y recreativos. En otros casos los manantiales de aguas termales son aprovechados en su estado natural como balneario público, gestionados por la población local, en donde igual tienen acceso familias de escasos recursos.

El potencial hidrotérmico está asociado también con el potencial económico y social que se deriva de los usos lúdicos de las

aguas termales, tales como la creación de complejos turísticos con fines recreativos y de esparcimiento. Asimismo, la concepción moderna de la salud centrada en una mayor atención al cuerpo y la mente ha fomentado la expansión de este sector turístico que se suma al turismo de salud, mencionado anteriormente. Los nuevos balnearios de lujo o villas termales se organizan como centros de salud que ofrecen spa y todo tipo de servicios terapéuticos, además de las instalaciones recreativas para brindar una estancia agradable con paisajes privilegiados, al pie de los mismos manantiales. En los sitios que cuentan con aguas termales y espacios de abundante vegetación se suele aprovechar también el paisaje local para otorgar un valor agregado a las instalaciones del balneario.

Sin embargo, es importante mencionar que el aprovechamiento de algunos de los balnearios públicos existentes está parcialmente utilizado, tanto por la baja demanda que tienen durante parte de la semana, como por el deterioro en que se encuentran sus instalaciones. El hecho es que algunos de los balnearios de tipo recreativo, dependen de un público local que busca reunirse ocasionalmente en lugares familiares para pasar el día. Su oferta de servicios no abarca plenamente la dimensión del turismo de salud, lo que garantizaría una clientela más estable y provechosa en estos balnearios durante todo el año. El brindar servicios públicos de salud, curativos y terapéuticos a los adultos mayores contribuiría tanto a la salud y al bienestar de un amplio sector social, como a un mejor aprovechamiento de las instalaciones ya existentes.

### **Usos geotérmicos para generación de electricidad**

La explotación de los campos geotérmicos ha sido favorecida en las últimas décadas como fuente alterna de energías limpias. En México existen más de mil campos geotérmicos, pero muy pocos son susceptibles de generar electricidad comercialmente, la mayoría son aprovechados básicamente como balnearios públicos. La Comisión Federal de Electricidad ha realizado exploraciones en muchos de estos campos para analizar la factibilidad

de su explotación comercial. En 27 campos geotérmicos se han concluido los estudios de factibilidad y en 16 de ellos se ha iniciado la etapa de perforación de pozos de exploración. En el occidente de México, dos de ellos, Cerro Prieto y el de Los Azufres en Michoacán se encuentran ya en la etapa de producción de energía geotermoeléctrica. Los campos de El Ceboruco (Nayarit), Araró (Michoacán), Cerritos Colorados y Las Planillas (Jalisco), entre otros, están aún bajo evaluación y en espera de su aprobación.

A mediano plazo las concesiones para la exploración y explotación de los yacimientos de recursos geotérmicos quedarán a merced de la nueva Ley de Energía Geotérmica, expedida en 2014, como parte de la reforma energética. Las concesiones podrán ser otorgadas para generación eléctrica por la Secretaría de Energía a la Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE), a empresas estatales y a particulares bajo los requisitos estipulados por dicha ley y sujetos a la aprobación de la Comisión Nacional del Agua (CNA) y la Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT), previa manifestación de impacto ambiental. Esta nueva legislación pone en riesgo la reiterada insistencia de la CFE para explotar los yacimientos geotérmicos de Cerritos Colorados y Las Planillas, ubicados en pleno Bosque de la Primavera, al norponiente de la ciudad de Guadalajara. Como se verá más adelante, se trata de proyectos que han sido rechazados a lo largo de más de dos décadas por la sociedad civil debido a las graves repercusiones que representan para los recursos naturales que componen un valioso ecosistema, cuyo bosque contribuye a infiltrar agua de lluvia a los acuíferos.

### Balnearios de aguas termales en Jalisco

En Jalisco, la existencia de aguas termales en un sitio no implica solamente usos curativos o recreativos para los habitantes del lugar. Los usos domésticos para las necesidades de la vida diaria incluyen todo tipo de aprovechamientos: desde agua para beber, para cocinar, para bañarse, para nadar, para lavar ropa, para riego, entre otros. En muchas comunidades

los manantiales son fuente esencial del abasto público de agua, sobretodo, cuando no cuentan con tubería e instalaciones para agua potable dentro de la vivienda. En otros casos, cuando los manantiales son abundantes, la población puede beneficiarse de un abasto permanente de agua termal para usos personales, familiares y terapéuticos. Aparte de utilizarse para balnearios públicos recreativos que atraen al turismo regional, como sucede con las aguas termales de Temacapulín, en el municipio de Cañadas de Obregón, así como en Tala y Atotonilco. Este tipo de aprovechamientos se encuentran también en los municipios de Chapala y Poncitlán en las localidades ribereñas del lago de Chapala: San Juan Cosalá, Agua Caliente, Mezcalá y San Pedro Itxicán en Jalisco. A continuación, se muestra un resumen de sitios importantes en el cuadro no. 1.

**Cuadro 1: Balnearios de aguas termales en Jalisco (2018)**

Municipio	Balneario
Acatic	La Barranca de Támara; en el Río Verde, una gran cascada llamada “Velo de Novia”.
	El Salto de Damián, albercas de aguas termales, cabañas ubicadas dentro de la barranca
	Las presas de Calderón y Lagunillas y el bordo El Carricillo.
	El Balneario Rancho El Venado
Ajijic	Tobolandia
Ameca	Las Tortugas
Atotonilco	Balneario la Gruta
Atoyac	Paseo de aguas termales
Ayotlán	Parque Acuático Santa Rita
Cañadas de Obregón	Temacapulín
Cuautla	Balneario los Limones-Hotel Villa Luz

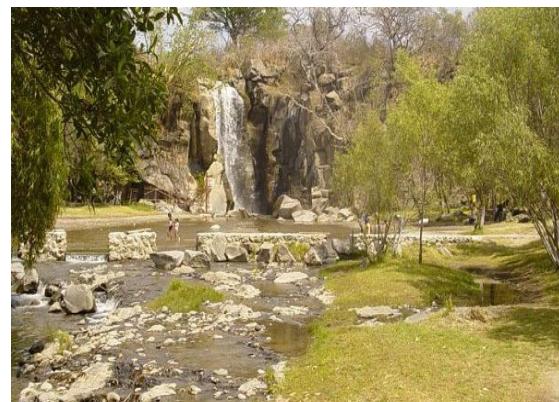
Guadalajara	Chimulco
	Agua Caliente Parque Acuático
	Balneario Cañón de las Flores
	Tobolandia
Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos	Aqualand Parque Acuático
Lagos de Moreno	Parque acuático Kikapú
Ocotlán	El Hongo Club, Parque acuático y balneario
	San Jerónimo
Poncitlán	Aguas termales de Agua Caliente
	Aguas termales de San Pedro Itxicán
	Mezcalá
San Juan Cosalá, Chapala	Balnearios San Juan Cosalá
San Juan de los Lagos	Parque Acuático Paraíso Alteño
Tala	Los Tejabanes.
	Los Chorros
	Balneario de San Antonio
	Balneario Río Escondido
	Balneario los Volcanes
Tamazula de Gordiano	Las Jarras
Teocuitatlán de Corona	Manantiales termales: Atotonilco, San José de Tula, San Joaquín.
Tlajomulco de Zúñiga	San Antonio
Tonalá	Agua Caliente
	Las Cascadas
	Las Pilitas
Villa Corona	Agua Caliente Parque Acuático

Zapopan	Bosque de la Primavera
	Balneario Cañón de las Flores
	Balneario Las Tinajitas
	Balneario Nuevo Paraíso y San José

Fuente: Elaborado por Alicia Torres Rodríguez, 2018

En el estado de Jalisco se han reportado diversas fuentes termales potencialmente explotables por sus propiedades minero-medicinales. En 22 municipios de Jalisco se detectaron balnearios naturales y privados de aguas termales, los cuales se encuentran ubicados en la franja tectónica del Centro-Occidente de México, destacándose los de uso recreativo y turístico, como se puede apreciar en las siguientes imágenes.

#### Imagen 3 y 4: Spa y balnearios naturales de aguas termales en Jalisco, 2018



Fuente: Fotos del Spa en el Balneario de San Juan Cosalá, Chapala, Jalisco ([Hotel.com](#)) y Los Chorros de Tala, un Balneario Natural en Jalisco ([Entorno Turístico](#))

## Un recorrido exploratorio por manantiales de aguas termales en la región Chapala-Santiago

A continuación, nos referiremos a los casos particulares de varios sitios de aguas termales en los alrededores de la cuenca Chapala-Santiago en Jalisco. El resultado del recorrido exploratorio por estos balnearios permite describir inicialmente su paisaje, características, usos y condiciones en que se encuentran. Se seleccionaron varios sitios donde concurren aguas termales, respondiendo a la clasificación de los usos aquí mencionados, aunque no necesariamente cuentan con instalaciones para el servicio público. La siguiente descripción corresponde a la visita de los manantiales alrededor de la ribera de Chapala, los balnearios de San Isidro Mazatepec, alrededor del Bosque de La Primavera y los de Temacapulín en los Altos de Jalisco, junto al río Verde, afluente del río Santiago.

### Balneario de San Juan Cosalá, Chapala

En San Juan Cosalá hay varias instalaciones turísticas de albercas de aguas termales y spas que cuentan con todos los servicios recreativos, lúdicos y terapéuticos para los visitantes: 4 grandes albercas, spa, vestidores, restaurantes, tienda de artículos para bañistas (toallas, trajes de baño, sandalias, salvavidas, juguetes para agua, alimentos, etc). El área de Spas cuenta con diferentes servicios: albercas de aguas medicinales, temazcal, baño de vapor, vaporizadores y mascarillas faciales, servicios de masajes, regaderas y todo tipo de artículos naturistas para tratamientos terapéuticos y de belleza corporal. Durante los fines de semana estas instalaciones se encuentran llenas de gente que acude regularmente para recibir los tratamientos corporales y aprovechar la inmersión en las tinas de aguas termales que contienen mezclas de flores aromáticas, avena, café, chocolate, lodos, etc. para atender las necesidades de los diferentes clientes.

La gestión de estos negocios es privada. Los costos son diferenciados para niños y para adultos mayores, para los que acuden solamente a las albercas y para los que utilizan el spa. El

balneario cuenta con servicios de hotel para los que acuden por el fin de semana. En la localidad hay otros balnearios y spas de lujo, que también aprovechan las aguas termales de calidad que demanda el turismo de salud. Las fuentes de aguas termales se utilizan solamente para los balnearios, no para usos domésticos.

### Las aguas termales de Poncitlán

A lo largo de la ribera norte del lago de Chapala se encuentran varias poblaciones que cuentan con manantiales de aguas termales, desde la parte más occidental hacia San Antonio Tlayacapan y Jocotepec, pasando por San Juan Cosalá y El Chante, hasta la punta oriental del lago en Agua Caliente y San Pedro Itxicán, sobre la sección lacustre del municipio de Poncitlán. Sin embargo, no en todos estos sitios existen instalaciones dedicadas para usos lúdicos.

Hacia la zona noreste del lago, las aguas termales de Agua Caliente brotan a la orilla del lago y se utilizan más bien para actividades domésticas cotidianas, para bañarse y para el lavado de ropa. A la orilla del lago se observan varios tendederos de ropa recién lavada y algunas mujeres lavando, así como niños nadando y jugando en el agua. En este pueblo sufren de escasez de agua potable de calidad, además de que pocas viviendas cuentan con drenaje, por lo que parte de las aguas negras se descargan directamente al lago, aprovechando que el desnivel donde se ubican permite su escurrimiento al lago. En Agua Caliente mucha gente se abastece de agua por pipas que surten semanalmente al pueblo y es almacenada en tinacos de plástico tipo Rotoplas. Aparte compran garrafones de agua purificada para beber y cocinar. Se observa que en los techos de la mayoría de las casas se acumulan los garrafones de plástico vacíos ya quebrados, que en algún momento se recogen para reciclarlos. Recientemente fue aprobado un proyecto para perforar un segundo pozo para abastecer de agua potable a la población. Sin embargo, la aprobación de los fondos para el pozo que habían sido gestionados por varios años, quedó asignada por las autoridades municipales de Poncitlán para una población vecina. Hasta la

fecha, el pozo aún no está en operación.

Los manantiales de agua caliente brotan lentamente en pequeños ojos de agua a la orilla del lago, alcanzando temperaturas de alrededor de 35°C, que luego se diluyen para mezclarse con el resto del agua del lago. El agua se encuentra sumamente sucia. De acuerdo a lo señalado por el Dr. Felipe Lozano<sup>1</sup>, la contaminación del lago de Chapala en esta zona, se debe a las descargas residuales e industriales del río Lerma, que de manera conjunta se suman con la mala calidad de agua que proviene de la red de agua potable del pozo profundo de aguas termales. Además de los altos índices de desnutrición, esto podría estar provocando la incidencia de enfermedades renales, que se presentan especialmente entre niños y jóvenes menores de 18 años que residen en la zona. Esta problemática prevalece en Agua Caliente y en San Pedro Itxicán, localidades del municipio de Poncitlán ubicadas en la ribera de Chapala. Conforme a las investigaciones de un equipo de médicos de la Universidad de Guadalajara encabezados por el Dr. Lozano, se han diagnosticado 270 casos de personas con enfermedades renales y algunas de ellas están bajo tratamiento de diálisis. A pesar de ello, estas poblaciones no cuentan con los servicios de una clínica de salud ni médico de planta y las autoridades sanitarias aseguran que los parámetros de la norma oficial de la calidad del agua están en regla [2].

### Balnearios de San Isidro Mazatepec, Tlajomulco de Zúñiga

Los balnearios de San Isidro Mazatepec se encuentran ubicados del lado poniente del Bosque de la Primavera, hacia el rumbo de Tala, donde los manantiales brotan en varios puntos que son aprovechados por tres diferentes balnearios públicos de usos recreativos. Parte de las aguas del manantial continúan su flujo por pequeños arroyos que rodean el pueblo de San Isidro, para servicios domésticos.

El Balneario de San Antonio cuenta con cinco albercas con recubrimiento de cemento, separadas por sendas paredes de cemento. El agua termal está más bien tibia, a excepción de una alberca donde el agua no rebasa los

30°. Es allí donde se concentra la mayor parte de la gente, jóvenes y niños, para disfrutar el agua caliente. Las instalaciones son muy amplias, incluyen una gran palapa abierta con mesas para los visitantes, un chapoteadero, resbaladillas, juegos acuáticos infantiles, baños, regaderas, vestidores, fondas y tiendas que ofrecen refrescos, botanas, tortas, salvavidas, trajes de baño, etc. El área que circunda el balneario está tapizada de letreros y avisos respecto al cumplimiento del reglamento del lugar y el comportamiento esperado durante la estancia en el balneario.

A no más de 500 metros de distancia del Balneario San Antonio se ubica el Balneario de Río Escondido. Sus instalaciones están mejor equipadas y tienen buen mantenimiento. Cuenta con espacios ajardinados y arbolados, que favorecen un ambiente sombreado y acogedor para la convivencia. Cuenta con amplios salones para eventos, mesas de cemento con asadores a lado para preparar comidas y juegos infantiles. El balneario incluye 5 albercas, aunque las aguas termales sólo se distribuyen en tres albercas pequeñas, una de ellas es privada para servicio de grupos pequeños. Una alberca cuenta con toboganes, asoleaderos y sombrillas. Disponen de vestidores, baños y regaderas distribuidos alrededor del parque. No hay tiendas en el interior del balneario. No obstante que visité el balneario en sábado, encontré muy poca gente disfrutando de las instalaciones.

El tercer balneario, el Splash Funny parece ser de reciente creación y es el más pequeño. Aparece aún desprovisto de vegetación, lo que lo hace sentir más caluroso, árido y desamparado; colinda además con áreas utilizadas como basureros. En el lugar se privilegian las albercas con toboganes, resbaladillas y juegos varios, quizás con la intención de atraer más a familias con niños pequeños o para la celebración de fiestas infantiles.

### Las aguas termales de Temacapulín, Cañadas de Obregón

Una parte importante del patrimonio que le ha brindado la naturaleza a este pequeño poblado son sus aguas termales. El agua limpia y transparente brota de las entrañas de

la tierra a una temperatura de 40°C o más, y corre libremente por varios canales que cruzan el pueblo. El agua brota en diversos puntos del pueblo, donde son aprovechadas por la gente para bañarse en las pilas públicas, algunas acondicionadas con casetas como vestidores. También utilizan estos manantiales como lavaderos. Tal es el caso del manantial conocido como “el charco redondo,” acondicionado con piedras planas colocadas en el suelo en forma circular alrededor de una pileta; lugar donde algunas mujeres conservan la costumbre de lavar y tender la ropa sobre los arbustos cercanos (Lezama 77).

El agua de los manantiales es bombeada a un depósito ubicado en lo alto del Cerro de la Gloria, de donde se distribuye por una red para el abasto de las viviendas para su uso en las actividades domésticas y para albercas privadas. Esto implica un abasto permanente de agua y un gran ahorro energético para los pobladores, pues no necesitan instalaciones de gas para calentar el agua. La población valora mucho este patrimonio natural, pues además de que disfrutan del agua de los manantiales termales, nunca han tenido problema de escasez de agua.

Las aguas termales alimentan al parque acuático de “La Peñita,” que cuenta con chapoteaderos y albercas con resbaladillas, múltiples diversiones para niños y adultos, incluyendo canchas de fútbol, básquet y vóleibol, áreas para comer, restaurant, juegos mecánicos, etc. El parque ofrece también albercas separadas para hombres y mujeres con regaderas y vestidores. Este lugar es frecuentado regularmente por la población local y de los pueblos vecinos, que ya lo ubican como punto de reunión para fiestas familiares y días de campo. A pocos kilómetros de distancia hay otro parque recreativo más pequeño, llamado “El Salitre,” que dispone también de aguas de otro manantial cercano. En el pueblo vecino de Palmarejo hay manantiales de aguas termales que son aprovechados en albercas públicas para uso de los lugareños.

Parece incomprensible que este patrimonio natural con aguas de excelente calidad se encuentre a punto de desaparecer bajo la amenaza de la inundación por el embalse de la futura presa de El Zapotillo, junto con los

tres poblados aledaños: Temacapulín, Acasico y Palmarejo. Las aguas termales se han convertido a su vez en un patrimonio cultural, en tanto que representan un símbolo de identidad del pueblo, en torno al cual se realizan múltiples actividades sociales que cohesionan el tejido social local. Por esto, su desaparición implica la pérdida irremediable de un patrimonio cultural intangible (Lezama ibidem).

### **Los balnearios del Bosque de la Primavera**

En el área del bosque existen varios balnearios públicos y de propiedad privada que proporcionan servicios recreativos y curativos. El balneario del Río Caliente se ubica sobre un riachuelo que baja desde lo alto del cerro a temperaturas de más de 40°C. Está administrado por una sociedad ejidal y no cuenta con ninguna instalación especial, más allá de un estacionamiento y asaderos para los visitantes, quienes acuden a bañarse y a pasar allí un día de campo con la familia y amigos. En la parte baja del cerro se encuentran dos balnearios recreativos, el Cañón de las Flores y Las Tinajitas, que cuentan con instalaciones de albercas, juegos, resbaladillas, vestidores, regaderas, restaurante, asaderos y áreas para comer.

### **Bosque de la Primavera: campo de generación de energía geotermoeléctrica**

Desde mediados de la década de los ochenta, el bosque de La Primavera ha sido explorado como una alternativa para producir energías limpias, aprovechando que La Primavera es un gran volcán cuya actividad geotérmica ofrece un potencial para generar alrededor de 25 megawatts. Las exploraciones se han llevado a cabo en dos yacimientos geotérmicos: en Cerritos Colorados y Las Planillas. Los proyectos planteados por la Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE) han topado sistemáticamente con la oposición y resistencia de grupos ambientalistas, de la sociedad civil y del mismo gobierno estatal, toda vez que el bosque forma parte de un Área Natural Protegida que no puede ser intervenida, bajo riesgo de causar daños irreversibles al ecosistema del bosque de

## La Primavera.

Es bien sabido que el bosque proporciona importantes servicios ambientales a la zona metropolitana de Guadalajara, no sólo porque asegura la captación de agua y recarga de acuíferos, sino por la contribución del bosque para el clima de la ciudad. Cualquier proyecto relacionado con la generación de energía geotérmica en esta área sacrificaría recursos naturales básicos que garantizan la sustentabilidad urbana. A pesar de los altos costos ambientales implicados en este proyecto, que afectaría un mínimo de 500 has. del bosque, la CFE ha destinado más de \$930 millones de pesos sólo para estudios de preinversión, más otro tanto en perforación de pozos de exploración en los dos sitios mencionados, sin que se haya declarado todavía la cancelación definitiva del proyecto.

## A manera de conclusión

A lo largo de esta descripción se puede observar cómo es que algunas de las fuentes de aguas termales que conforman el inventario de nuestro patrimonio natural están siendo expuestas al peligro de un paulatino deterioro y a su virtual desaparición. Esto se debe a la falta de políticas expresas para la preservación y conservación de los manantiales, o bien por la intención gubernamental de aprovechar el potencial económico que brinda la generación de energía geotermoeléctrica, así como por la construcción de una nueva presa, que acabará por inundar tres pueblos alteños junto con las áreas donde afloran los manantiales. De la misma manera se observa omisión en la supervisión y vigilancia de la normatividad ambiental para evitar la contaminación de ríos y lagos, por lo que cada vez es más difícil revertir el deterioro de los cuerpos de agua y los impactos sobre los ecosistemas y la salud humana.

Basta con un primer recorrido por algunos de los sitios de aguas termales del occidente de México para darnos cuenta de la escasa valoración que los programas de gobierno otorgan a las fuentes de aguas termales en el país. Se trata de un patrimonio natural que está al arbitrio de la implementación de nuevos proyectos de desarrollo, cuyo sacrificio se suele

justificar en nombre de la utilidad pública. Si bien algunos de estos sitios fueron declarados oficialmente como Áreas Naturales Protegidas, tal parece que esto no impide al gobierno federal la posibilidad de revertir un decreto de conservación para dar paso a la destrucción de un patrimonio natural.

Lo anterior demuestra que se sigue privilegiando un modelo de desarrollo capitalista que valida la destrucción del patrimonio natural de áreas rurales en función de proyectos que favorecen un crecimiento económico industrial y urbano no sustentable. Tal es el caso de la construcción de la presa que despojará del agua requerida en los Altos de Jalisco para permitir el crecimiento urbano e industrial del occidente de Guanajuato. Asimismo, trata de promover dolosamente un proyecto de generación eléctrica con un bajo potencial de energía (25 MV) en el Bosque de la Primavera a pesar de los altos costos ambientales que implican para este importante ecosistema. No ahondaremos en la incapacidad institucional para impedir la contaminación industrial de la cuenca del río Lerma-Chapala-Santiago, que tantos daños ha causado para la biodiversidad y la salud humana.

Es imprescindible retomar el desarrollo endógeno, generado a partir del potencial de los recursos naturales, humanos y económicos locales bajo una perspectiva de sustentabilidad; es decir, respetando la protección ambiental y el equilibrio entre el sistema económico y el biofísico (Ortiz y Arévalo 8). Es insostenible seguir produciendo pobreza, fomentando el despojo de tierras, agua y otros recursos que constituyen el patrimonio natural y cultural que es el sustento de miles de comunidades en el país.

## Notas

[1] Ver Hernández Galán et al. 1999 y Gutiérrez-Negrín 2007.

[2] El Comisionado para la Protección contra Riesgos Sanitarios de Jalisco, entrevistado por Agustín Del Castillo para Milenio Diario, afirmó que “la calidad del agua es óptima, por eso se analizan otras causas.”-

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## Notas biográficas de las autoras

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# **Book Review**

## Urban Reflections: Photography and Poetry in Dialogue, by Wilfried Raussert and Ketaki Datta, KIPU, 2018.(Book Review)

SUTANUKA GHOSH ROY (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY, GERMANY)

*Urban Reflections: Photography and Poetry in Dialogue* is a book dedicated to street artists and urban dwellers. While we walk in the city many a times, we are present and at the same time absent –closing our eyes to people, to things near. Myriad of thoughts cross our mind while we are caught up in matters of everyday life and we walk the streets lost in glamorous sights. As the foreword to the book states, “this book wants to unravel the beauty and politics of contemporary city space in the Americas. It wishes to create a dialogue between photography, poetry, and street art.” Street art is unofficial in nature; it is independent visual art created usually in public locations for public visibility. Sometimes, it takes the form of guerrilla art, which has an intention to make a bold personal statement about the society in general in which the artist lives in.

Wilfried Raussert is chair of North American and Inter American Studies at Bielefeld University, Germany. He is director of International Association of Inter American Studies, author and editor of 20 scholarly books. Ketaki Datta is Associate Professor of English in a government college in Kolkata, India. So far, she has published two novels, two translated novels and a book of poetry. Thus, their practices may have been divergent, but it is the sense of evanescence and mellowness which the changing American city induces that brings them together –an introspective writer like Ketaki Datta so captivated by mortality and Wilfried Raussert whose photography is marked by dynamism and vigor even as he tries to capture fleeting moments of poignance before they are shattered by harsh realities of urban life.

The book begins with the photograph of a street art by Jim Morrison (photograph paired with its text on the facing page), the American singer, songwriter and poet, who served as the lead vocalist of the rock band, *The Doors*. Due

to his poetic lyrics, his widely recognized voice, his unpredictable and erratic performances and mystery regarding his untimely death, Morrison is regarded by critics and fans as one of the most iconic and influential pioneers in the history of rock. Datta writes: “Jim Morrison, after singing such/ Fiery numbers,/ How could you succumb to/ Nullity, under alien stars?” (“Light Our Fire” 1-2). A photograph of a man wearing a *luchador* mask, a fine street-art in a canteen prompts Datta to write, “A bizarre logo ‘luchador’/ Above/ Marks the canteen as unique,/ The closed eyes of a man/ With close-knit thick brows” (“Cantina Luchador” 3-4). Thus, this unique dialog of poetry with photography of street art becomes an exercise in producing the cultural history of the American people.

The photograph called “Sun dried butterflies,” bypasses the lure of mythology and steers clear of gender straitjacketing. “Look, her attire has thousand flowers/ On it, that could easily be exchanged/ With the sundry butterflies/ Painted on the wall!” (“Sun-Dried Butterflies” 4-5). Various photographs of Raussert that speak of distinct street art introduce the theme, delving into enigmatic poetry of Datta that, inadvertently yet spontaneously, merge into strange, unbidden shapes. A photograph of Buddha sitting in the meditating posture in the background with a posh car and the owner in the foreground, busy wiping the last speck of dust from the car’s chassis, maps Raussert’s own journey from an artist through conversations with himself .This is matched with Datta’s tentative tapestry of ideas and cursory sketches: “With a duster in his hand,/ He keeps dusting away/ The last speck of dirt,/ That might sit firm on it,/ but, can no way-/ Work is worship to him,/ Different God is Buddha!” (“Some Other God” 10-11).

“Cleansing the Countenance,” the photograph showing an artfully weathered street and the

countenance of a glamorous damsel, with a car in the foreground carrying an advertisement which promises of maintenance and carpet cleaning, takes on the immediacy of an unfolding drama. The poet writes, " Cobwebby maze beneath thy face?/ Who again would take the risk of/ Cleaning the shadowy trail/ On thy right cheek?/ And who cleaned thy left cheek –come, tell!" (14-15). In "A Tale of Walking In and Leaving" a beguiling imminence imbues Raussert's landscape, while Datta's poem pulsates with the heave and jostle of threadbare fragments. "Anno Domini begins and/ The child stands as a dividing line? Between the Time-nascent,/ And the Time-going, going, gone!" (17-18). The next poem, "A Tale of Walking In and Leaving," unveils a fragile mind space where blurred, fluid childhood memories seem to float and coalesce into dark intimations. Here, time stands still.

The photo "Caught In Between" has a simple anchor of binaries: stillness and movement. As the accompanying poem reads: "A man caught unawares/ between two images/ Of the same lady on the wall/ Throwing avid gazes. But his pose was normal, sans any air(s)/ Though he had no choice in the pair,/ As they were mirror-reflected images/ Though he would not by mistake be in cages!" writes Datta (25-26). In a unique combination of states, the rootedness of Raussert is matched here by the reaching out of Datta. "Tricky Thing" shows two street artists spray painting the walls weaving a face out of an off-beat, infectious rhythm. The poet writes, "Representation is a tricky thing/ It depends on you and your positioning/ Representation believe me means complication/ It depends on you and your competition in the ring/ To make the representation of representation an / authentic thing" (27-28). The next pair, "Green Hue" (29-30) is a kind of private soliloquy while "Secret Sharers" (29-30) traces an insidious montage with silhouetted figures.

As the book continues, "Man and Music" warns against a proprietary, willful degradation of the murals created affectionately in the walls of cities in the Americas: "While the roads keep winding and winding/ They might jam against oblivion/ The mural washed away/ Even before tomorrow," (33-34). "Urban Mobilities" speak of Raussert's wry obeisance to Time's ravages,

Datta writes: "The fresh morning air pushes him onward/ He looks ahead/ Hoping to leave the crossroads behind" (37-38). "In Awe" speaks of the remarkable walls that the street artists created, walls that are as much about forbidding barriers as about passages of surreptitious communication. The next photograph, "Come and Dance With me" (41-42), delights the readers in a cosmic dance that soars from notional micro to macro scales. Raussert's photograph of the woman in "Walk to Walk" shows an onlooker curiously self-absorbed in a meditative anxiety, while Datta weaves fine lines with ease. "Moves off he, leaving the wall behind,/ His misconception, his surging desire/ All seemed so blind!/ Smiled he again to himself and walked on/ How was he befooled, by such impish an emotion?!" (53-54).

Overall, *Urban Reflections: Photography and Poetry In Dialogue* can be read, enjoyed and shared, in the public spaces of our cities: cafes, parks, street corners, the metro, the bus. This unique book is a poetic paperback gallery of urban life. It pleases the eyes of the viewers, it inspires the mind of the readers, it infectiously touches the reader's soul and helps people to open their eyes to the city spaces around them beyond consumerism. In sum, it is an asset to the individual and to the library.

### **Author's biography**

Sutanuka Ghosh Roy is an academic (assistant professor at a college in West Bengal), reviewer, and poet whose work has appeared in various international and national venues.