Resisting body-territories – Indigenous women negotiating racism as a pandemic

Anja Habersang

Abstract

An in-depth case study of the 'Indigenous Women's Movement for Buen Vivir' in Argentina reveals how participants negotiate racism as a pandemic in their conflict-ridden everyday realities. In this multifaceted struggle, Indigenous women position themselves as 'body-territories', which links their struggles to defend territories against extractivist resource exploitation with the struggle against intersectional discrimination, racism, and the historic violation of their bodies. By highlighting an inseparable interrelation between body and nature, they radically question the Anthropocene narrative that portrays humans as having power over the planet. Instead, the Indigenous women claim a (re)construction of reciprocity with nature and other-than-human beings, as well as with humans, in short, Buen Vivir. This paper explores how the participants conceptualise body-territory through their understanding of Buen Vivir, as well as 'complementary duality', and the ways in which these notions configure both (social) relations and gender perceptions. By reclaiming Indigenous epistemologies shaped by this body/human-nature relationality, Indigenous women position themselves as anti-patriarchal rather than as feminists, framing the struggle against prevailing 'capitalist-coloniality' as one against the patriarchy. As body-territories, their resistance targets the triggers of systemic racism: capitalist, extractivist, and patriarchal exploitation, and exclusion. At the same time, it implies a struggle for transformation towards new relationalities that include other-than-human beings and nature.

Keywords: alternative futures, anti-racist movements, Buen Vivir, decoloniality, development, feminisms, Indigenous movements, intersectionality

Introduction

> Our territory inhabits us because our body is territory. Oppression cannot be analysed without taking into account our bond with our land. The forest, the river and the mountain are part of our being. Everything that is done to our land, is done to our body, which gets sick and weakens together with our land (Interview: Moira).

For Moira, her body is territory. Self-identifying as an 'Indigenous woman', she lives in a community in Patagonia in southern Argentina in a territory that she recuperated from the state twenty years ago together with her sister Evis and their mother. Today, her family resists the construction of dams on the river Carrenleufú, which are needed for planned hydroelectric power plants. The proposed dams would cause 11.000 hectares of natural forest to be flooded, including the community's territory, potentially leaving it 60 meters underwater, and, Evis fears, "kill the energies living in the river and therefore the river itself" (Fieldnotes February 2019). Due to a lack of necessary funding, the project known as 'La Elena', a hydroelectric dam to provide the required energy resources for new open-pit mining activities, is currently on hold (Energía Estratégica 2021) – for now.

When the country's economy collapsed during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the centre-left government, headed by Alberto Fernandez, promoted open-pit mining and the extraction of one of the world's largest shale gas and shale oil deposits through fracking as the way out of the crisis, unveiling a $5 billion subsidy plan (Palmigiani 2020). Since then, the resumption of open-pit mining operations in the province of Chubut, Patagonia, has been back on the government's agenda, following a ban enacted in 2003 after a popular consultation and anti-mining protests (Ambito 2021). Creating loopholes to bypass this ban, the government has proposed a new law that provides the green light for "large-scale mining extraction" (Boyadjian 2021). One of the intentions behind the new law is to enable the mining of one of the most important silver deposits in the world (Ibid.). Moira and Evis struggle against such mining and hydroelectric power plant projects, framing the hegemonic development model activities as an imminent threat to their existence. Translocalising their resistance, the sisters are both part of the '*Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir'* (MMIBV, Indigenous Women's Movement for *Buen Vivir,* referred to subsequently as the MIBV Movement*)*'.

Indigenous women position themselves as 'body-territories' as a way of linking their struggle to defend their territories against extractivist resource exploitation with the struggle against intersectional discrimination, racism, and the historic violation of their bodies. In this article I use an empirical case study of the 'Indigenous Women's Movement for *Buen Vivir*' in Argentina to show how Indigenous women – such as Moira and Evis – engage in conflict-ridden everyday realities. I do so by conceptualising their resistance as 'body-territories'. The aim of this paper is two-fold. By reconstructing the movement's participants' emic intersectional and decolonial perspective, it seeks to, firstly, explore how the Indigenous women forming part of the MIBV Movement negotiate the interwovenness of racism with various systems of oppression in capitalist 'modernity', and how an anti-racist, decolonial, and anti-patriarchal positioning and strategy emerges from their self-perception as body-territories. Secondly, the paper aims to understand how Indigenous women reclaim Indigenous epistemologies and construct body/human-nature relationality as a way out of crises-ridden times.

The MIBV Movement is a relevant case study for exploring the dynamics at the intersection of race and gender in conflicts arising out of socio-environmental justice issues. The Indigenous women who participate in the movement represent all age-groups and self-identify as belonging to different Indigenous peoples located in communities and urban areas spread from Argentina's north, such as Qom, Aymara, Quechua, Tapiete, Mbya Guaraní, Lule and Wichi, to the south, home of the Mapuche and Tehuelche. According to the participants, the movement is "instituting to amplify rights" (MIBV Movement 2018). The movement started in 2013, "when a few sisters began to travel the country with the idea of creating what is now the Indigenous Women's Movement for *Buen Vivir*" (MIBV Movement 2018), and aims "to make visible what is intended to be made invisible: our body-territories, our worldviews, our identities and our rights as [I]ndigenous women" (Ibid.). Anthropologist Mariana Gomez (2020, 144-145) terms it "the first collective of organized women of [I]ndigenous origin that made themselves visible in the Argentine public sphere".

The MIBV Movement has developed in parallel with a fourth-wave feminist movement in Argentina, which began in 2015 with the outcry #Niunamenos (not one less) – that no more women or girls should fall victim to femicide. The hashtag quickly spread internationally and has inspired a 'feminist awakening' in Latin America. Indigenous women integrated within the MIBV Movement in Buenos Aires have formed strategic alliances with others and participate in demonstrations and activities related to the feminist movement together with the alliance "Anti-Racist Column: Black, Indigenous, Racialized, Lesbian, Trans, Bisexual, Non-binary" (Columna Antirracista 2019b). The MIBV Movement is a founding member of this alliance, which aims to combat "homogenization" and "racism in social struggles" (MIBV Movement 2019b). Nevertheless, the Indigenous women at the centre of the MIBV Movement do not self-identify as decolonial nor Indigenous feminists but think of themselves as body-territories. What Zaragocin and Caretta (2021, 1504) have defined as the inseparable ontological relationship between body and territory has long been embraced by Indigenous ontologies of space, as well as decolonial understandings of the gendered body (Ibid.). Such a perception of the body as territory has become increasingly popular among social movements and other feminisms in Latin America (Cabnal 2015; Cruz Hernández, Bayón Jiménez 2020; Gómez Grijalva 2017; Leinius 2021; Leyva Solano, Icaza 2019; Rodriguez Castro 2020; Zaragocin, Caretta 2021).

In the case of the MIBV Movement, rather than referring to feminist theories, reclaiming Indigenous epistemologies is framed as an emic tool to combat racism, violence, and oppression through decolonising knowledge, relations, bodies and territories. By extending their intersectional analysis to the spatial dimension, the Indigenous women participating in the MIBV Movement claim self-determination for both their body and their territory: "we fight for the self-determination of our bodies, our territories and our peoples" (MIBV Movement 2018). As a way out of crises-ridden times, the MIBV Movement campaigns to (re)establish reciprocal relations with nature and between living beings by emphasizing the inseparable interrelation between body and nature.

This article now proceeds as follows. Firstly, it reviews (decolonial) intersectionality as it is applied by the movement. Secondly, the reader is introduced to the research methods and some reflections on my positionality, before contextualising Indigenous struggles in Argentina. Thirdly, the analysis focuses on the participants' positioning as resisting body-territories, and by exploring their political calls for a new human-nature relationality, shows how the movement negotiates racism as a pandemic, as part of their anti-racist, decolonial, and anti-patriarchal positioning and strategy.

(Decolonial) Intersectionality as an analytical tool

Employing a decolonial and intersectional perspective forms part of the emic approach of the Indigenous Women's Movement for *Buen Vivir*. As Juana, who self-identifies as Mapuche, is in her mid-fifties, and lives in a community in Patagonia, points out: "we are discriminated against because we are Indigenous, because we are women and because we are part of the working class and poor" (Fieldnotes October 2019). The Indigenous women repeatedly emphasize how different social inequalities are interwoven in Argentine society in specific ways, therein disentangling the complexities of how racism and discrimination are experienced. They highlight the intersections of different categories – such as 'gender, class and race' – and their dimensions of inequality, as well as various systems of oppression.

The unravelling of the interrelations between different forms of discrimination is inherent to the movement's emic approach. Such an awareness of different, crossing axes of domination and exclusion was coined 'intersectionality' by Crenshaw in 1989 in order to expand feminist theory and antiracist politics by "embracing the intersection" between gender and race (Crenshaw 1989, 166). Since Crenshaw's contribution, scholars have developed different ways of doing intersectional analyses, in order "to move the field beyond the comparison of groups and towards a conceptualization of how multiple systems of inequality are interlocking and co-constitutive" (Scarborough 2018, 6). Daniel (2021, 16) summarised that intersectionality can be used in three different forms: either as a demand in terms of a collective action frame, as a tool for intersectional activism, and as a research lens.

By reconstructing the way in which the Indigenous women who participate in the MIBV Movement analyse their own everyday realities, this paper explores how their intersectional analyses are shaped by the participants' decolonial thinking that describes global capitalism and neoliberal globalisation as deeply colonial; causing exclusion, inequality, and oppression. In addition, it sheds light on how Indigenous women see an "emancipatory potential" in the process of decolonisation (Burman 2011). Decoloniality is considered a heterogeneous and plural field of practice, thinking and praxis (Walsh 2020, 81). Decolonial Latin American scholars, such as Lugones 2008, Maldonado-Torres 2007, Mignolo 2011, Walsh 2020, or Quijano 2000, aim to reveal prevailing coloniality by examining problematic "racialised, gendered, territorialised, and

heteropatriarchal operations of power" (Walsh 2020, 606). Coloniality refers to how colonial domination has expanded trans-historically and that its effects continue to be perpetuated in contemporary times (Moraña et al. 2008, 2), hence, 'modernity'. As such, "there is no modernity without coloniality" (Mignolo 2011, 2-3), and modernity can be said to reflect a complex narrative that emerged with the history of European invasions, building "Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while hiding at the same time its darker side, 'coloniality'" (Ibid.). The "coloniality of power" (Quijano 2000), structurally embedded in global capitalism, has legitimized social relations that are shaped by domination and resulting in superiority or inferiority (Walsh 2010, 15). As part of this process, patriarchy and, in the words of Mignolo (2011, 143), "racism, as we sense it today, was the result of two conceptual inventions of imperial knowledge: that certain bodies were inferior to others, and that inferior bodies carried inferior intelligence."

In contrast, the Indigenous women that take part in the MIBV Movement conceptualise the body as territory. Firmly rooted in a relational worldview or ontology (Escobar 2011), the movement strives for the (re)construction of a reciprocity with nature and other-than-human subjectivities, as well as one between humans, in short, *Buen Vivir*. "It is necessary, in the sense of inevitable, to build a society where *Buen Vivir* as a right is possible" (MIBV Movement 2021a). The notion of *Buen Vivir* translates from Spanish as 'good living' and has been advocated by numerous Latin American and Indigenous movements to suggest alternatives to development (Acosta 2016; Gudynas 2011; Escobar 2016; Ranta 2020; Walsh 2010). It deconstructs development as "linked to an economy of production and desire, but also of closure, difference, and violence" (Escobar 1995, 214), and fostered by "the will to end many worlds that produced the one-world and its excesses" (de la Cadena 2015, n.a.). The analysis delves into how the participants of the MIBV Movement conceptualise body-territory through their understanding of *Buen Vivir* and 'complementary duality', by exploring the ways in which these notions shape both (social) relations and gender perceptions.

Research methods and positionality in the field

My access to, and my position in, the field was influenced by my earlier experiences in Chile as a human rights activist and researcher. Networks connecting Indigenous activists in Chile and Argentina and my positioning as a human rights activist opened the door to engagement with the MIBV Movement. Consequently, I place my work within the tradition of engaged, activist scholarship (Hale 2006) and follow an actor-oriented approach (Long 2001). This meant regarding research participants as "active stakeholders", who "are knowledgeable and capable" (Gerharz 2018, 2), and thus, who have agency. Further, this approach implied following the people and the conflicts. Hence, I moved back and forth between different regions in Patagonia, where I lived for five of my seven months stay in various Indigenous communities, and Buenos Aires, where I spent another three months in 2019.

My positioning as an 'activist scholar' is rooted in being actively engaged with the movement: collaborating during its events and actions; asked to be a human rights observer in court hearings or activities, such as a ministry's peaceful occupation. For this analysis, I navigated between my recordings from such events, observation protocols, fieldnotes of informal conversations, and 34 semi-structured interviews (this number also includes interviews with stakeholders in other societal fields such as political, economic, or academic actors who helped me to understand the contextualisation of Indigenous struggles in Argentina). In terms of material from members of the MIBV Movement, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews, and talked to around 15 other women whom I encountered during my engagement with the movement – most of them on a regular basis and on multiple occasions. As the movement as a collective "tries to articulate a collective, [I]ndigenous and feminine voice" (Gomez 2020, 148), I also considered the movement's campaigns, communiques, and statements publicised on social media, especially after returning from Argentina during the phase of remote data collection which also involved staying in touch with my closest contacts via messenger Apps. The quotes transcribed in this paper are translated from Spanish by myself.

As Daniel (2019) pointed out, research on protests in the 'Global South' by researchers from the 'North' is conducted in a special area of tension. Some participants and actors openly voiced their suspicions towards me and often I had to navigate contested terrain where I felt embraced by many, yet rejected by others. What accompanied me was my 'privileged position in society as a white European', which was often referred to in discussions. Yet some contacts pointed out that everyone – including themselves – needs to focus on decolonising one's own mind and knowledge, in order to deconstruct racism because "all of us are racist because all of us were colonised" (Fieldnotes March 2019). This resonates with Bonilla-Silva's (2021, 520) understanding that "racism is systemic because it incorporates all actors into the game. We are all participants because we are racialized subjects, but also because we act racially in conscious and unconscious ways". Being engaged, questioned, and challenged was essential for me in grasping an understanding of the movement's negotiation of racism in contested fields of struggle.

While I recognise the importance of avoiding "methodological collectivism" (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 212), or "unjustifiable homogenisation" (Gerharz 2018, 2), the analysis shows how a specific positioning as a collective actor and 'Indigenous women' reflects the emic perspective of the participants involved in the MIBV Movement. In the process of negotiating belonging as a contested "emotionally charged social location" (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 4), Indigenous women denote a collective subjectivity (Marcos 2009, 29). Indigeneity is in this context what Murray Li (2000, 151) refers to as a positioning which "draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle". Here, the category 'Indigenous woman' is associated with a connection to land and the defence of their territory (Gomez 2020) in "struggles over the enactment,

stabilization and protection of multiple socionatural worlds" (Li 2013, 401), reflected in their positioning as body-territories. Thus, the Indigenous women participating in the MIBV Movement construct a collective voice that subsequently emerges when exploring the positionings, imaginations, and practices that accompany their resistance as body-territories.

Contested fields of struggle: nationhood and development in Argentina

This section contextualises Indigenous struggles in Argentina, where conflict in terms of identity construction arises from the national myth that constructs the Argentine people as being those who arrived on boats from Europe, simultaneously making invisible genocidal practices against Indigenous peoples during the nation-building process. While numerous Argentine scholars have provided evidence of these genocidal practices (see for example Delrio et al. 2010; Lenton 2018; Trinchero 2006), to date, the state still officially denies such crimes committed against Indigenous peoples, even though the "genocidal project is linked inextricably to the constitution and organization of the Argentine national state" (Delrio et al. 2010, 138). After capturing territories from Indigenous peoples in military campaigns, the state transferred these to private holders, mostly belonging to the roughly six million immigrants who arrived in different waves of migration over the last centuries, mainly from Europe. As president Alberto Fernandez stated in June 2021: "we Argentines came from the boats, and these were boats that came from Europe, and that's how we built our society" (Ise 2021, n.a).

Thus, the nation-building process was accompanied by a state policy of actively supporting large-scale land acquisitions and today the country is leading this trend in Latin America, together with Brazil (Zoomers and Kaag 2014). Hand-in-hand with contested land ownership, the country's prevailing extractivist development model is one based on the export of agricultural raw materials, mineral resources, hydrocarbons, or plants for industrial use (Brand 2016). This commodification of nature presents another contested field of struggle. Aided by continuous neoliberal restructurings, Argentina – formerly heralded as the "poster child" of the Washington Consensus (Undurraga 2015) – has transformed into an emblematic case of expanding extractivist activities such as agribusiness, mega-mining, and more recently, the exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbons through fracking (Álvarez 2016, n.a.). This has caused numerous conflicts in Patagonia, among other places. As Acosta (2013, 82) points out, a complex dilemma arises in societies that promote extractivism: on the one hand they are rich in natural resources, and on the other hand they are impoverished. Consequently, increasing extractivism has deepened social inequalities in Latin America (Acosta 2013; Burchardt and Peters 2017; Svampa 2019).

The MIBV Movement visibilises their communities' conflict-ridden realities, as they focus on the everyday challenges women face. Irma, who self-identifies as

Mapuche, is in her mid-fifties, and lives in Buenos Aires, recalls the beginning of their activism in 2013: "to become visible, we decided to organize a demonstration in Buenos Aires. Finally, in 2015, a demonstration that in the beginning was only aimed at making ourselves visible, transformed into a march to promote *Buen Vivir* as a right in order to foster reciprocity and harmony with nature" (Interview: Irma). According to the organizers, around 10,000 people heeded the movement's call to demonstrate in Buenos Aires (Lilén 2015). Towards the end of the march, representatives of the MIBV Movement entered the National Congress to deliver the draft for a bill to create a 'Council of Original Women for *Buen Vivir*', whose objective is, according to Moira, in her early-fifties, who self-identifies as Mapuche and lives in the community referenced earlier, "to carry out a process of consultation, participation, information and dissemination to propose regulations and policies for the recognition of *Buen Vivir* as a right" (Interview: Moira).

The founding of this council has not yet eventuated, and because "they did not listen to us" (Interview: Irma) the strategy of its organisers changed, after a second demonstration in 2016 using the slogan "*sin nosotras no hay país"* (without us there is no country) (Alegre 2016). "In 2018, we organized a parliament of Indigenous women to search for new ways to work against the state and to survive against all the oppression. (…), we decided to become a movement" (Ibid.). When I asked Moira, why they became a movement, she responded: "[to take] a new transformation step for the strengthening of the struggle of the 36 Indigenous peoples and nations that inhabit this territory, so that our rights against constant subjugation are respected" (Interview: Moira). This reveals how the language of Indigeneity is used as a political resource (Gerharz et al. 2018, 14), and that a rights-based approach forms part of the movement's strategy in demanding reforms, justice, and rights from the state. Maria, in her mid-thirties, who self-identifies as Quechua and lives in Buenos Aires, explained: "we are Indigenous women organized autonomously, we are self-managed and self-financed" (Interview: Maria). Despite relating to the state, the movement terms itself autonomous with respect to their demands for self-determination over their body-territories. Their autonomous positioning is also reflected in their practices of political self-management and self-organization, such as the founding of soup kitchens during the COVID 19 lockdown, which will be detailed in the following section.

Since the organization of the first parliament, where the participants originally decided to become a movement, parliaments have been organized annually in order to make decisions – by consensus – about campaign topics, strategies, and actions. When 250 Indigenous women participated in the movement's parliament in 2019 (Frontera 2019), an idea emerged to peacefully occupy the Ministry of the Interior, as Maria told me. During a two-week occupation in October 2019, in which I participated in my movement-assigned role as human rights observer, I witnessed how the participants negotiated their claims with representatives of different state institutions, including the Minister of the Interior (Fieldnotes October 2019; MIBV Movement 2019d).

Hence, among the movement's strategies are direct actions, such as the occupation, organising demonstrations, visibilisation campaigns – also via social media, where they promote their activities – for example, among their 34 999 followers on Facebook – as well as strategic alliance-building, which will be explored in the final section. Alongside these outward-directed actions are those that provide mutual support, affection, and solidarity (economy) – exemplified by the soup kitchens. The subsequent analysis first looks at how the movement negotiated racism as a pandemic during the lockdown, and how they acted in the context of their conflict-ridden everyday realities.

Occupation of the Ministry of Interior *Source: MIBV Movement 2019b*

The movement's 2nd Parliament *Source: MIBV Movement 2019d*

Lockdown-realities: negotiating racism as a pandemic

Soon after the first 128 Corona-cases were documented in Argentina in late March 2020, the government decided to implement a nationwide lockdown that required people to stay at home, closing down schools and businesses, while strictly restricting movement and travel (Crawford Engagement 2021). Initial support for the measures quickly vanished as the country's economy collapsed, partly due to pre-existing high levels of inflation and a sovereign debt of over $300 billion, which left the country highly susceptible to the negative impacts of a lockdown (Arnold-Parra 2021). By the end of 2020, 42% of the population was living in poverty, according to Argentina's National Institute of Statistics and Census (2020). The specific cases presented in this section mirror some general trends compiled by a transdisciplinary investigation team from several universities (télam 2020). The report found that the pandemic has exacerbated socioeconomic inequality, racism, and discrimination, as well as verbal and physical institutional violence towards Indigenous peoples, often carried out by security forces (Ibid.).

A spark of hope is provided through the ways the Indigenous women participating in the MIBV Movement have organized autonomously to compensate for the state's absence, "resisting the lack of water and fighting against malnutrition, because hunger does not wait where the state should go" (MIBV Movement 2021b). Some began to organize soup kitchens to provide their communities or neighbourhoods with hot meals, while others raised funds for these soup kitchens. As they made visible this specific practice of solidarity economy through social media, others involved in the movement felt inspired to organize soup kitchens themselves, as Irma told me when talking via WhatsApp. In February 2021, after some kitchens had been operating for almost a year, the movement shared the news on social media that soup kitchens, initiated by participants of the movement, had spread to different parts of the country. The Qom-community 'Nam' sustains one in Rosario, while the Mbya Guaraní-community 'Ysyry' runs the soup kitchen 'Tataendy' in the Misiones region. Women belonging to the Wichi opened two soup kitchens in the Salta region, where two more, 'Yepotie Itse' and 'Umueel tok-le', are run by Lule-women. Women self-identifying as Qom started four soup kitchens in the Chaco-region, one in the pluricultural community 'ajayhu pawha', and three others in Rio Bermejito, Quitilipi, and Saenz Peña (MIBV Movement 2021 b c and d).

Source: MIBV Movement 2020e

Alejandra, in her late-thirties and self-identifies as Qom, is one of the women who started a soup-kitchen in the Chaco-region, which she named after her son, Ismael Ramírez, who was shot and killed by a police officer when he was 13-years old in 2018. Since then, together with the MIBV Movement, she has been fighting for justice. An on-going campaign demands that the officer be taken to court, framing the crime as "Indigenous infanticide" (MIBV Movement 2019c). When I shared mate-tea with Alejandra, she told me about the circumstances of her son's murder: "when Ismael was walking home with his brother David, they came across a strong police operation for an alleged looting of the town's supermarket, and there, in the middle of the street, he was shot in the chest. The policeman who murdered him walks freely through the streets of Sáenz Peña. They don't mind killing 'Indians'" (Fieldnotes October 2019: Alejandra). The campaign makes the accusation that "the racist state is complicit" (MIBV Movement 2019c), ascribing the lack of justice in this case to institutional racism. The movement thereby discloses police discrimination and the violence suffered by people because of their Indigeneity, incidents which increased during the pandemic. According to Freedom House (2021, n.a.), "[e]nforcement of the national quarantine produced a rise in police brutality". The media have also reported the use of abusive tactics to enforce lockdown measures in low-income neighbourhoods (Miguel Vivanco 2020).

When a police raid occurred in the Tapiete community Misión Tapiete, in the province of Salta in northern Argentina, police officers, who according to eye-witnesses were completely drunk, entered the community firing their guns arbitrarily at whoever crossed their paths (Cebrelli 2020). They particularly targeted the house of Fabiola Roda, shouting threats to rape and kill her. Roda is one of the community's spokespersons and a member of the MIBV Movement. Such threats are not simply isolated incidents, as Roda vocally denounced when I met her during one of the movement's activities in Buenos Aires a couple of months before: "the youth is mistreated and beaten by the police. They cannot attend school because they are afraid that something will happen to them on their way to school. They are afraid that the police will make them disappear. How can this happen to our communities?" (Interview: Fabiola).

The MIBV Movement spread the news of this violent incident and the circumstances surrounding it via social media, and filed a criminal complaint with the Human Rights Prosecutor's Office, which is in charge of investigating crimes committed by members of the provincial security force. Using this incident as a platform, the movement raised further questions which they also spread via social media:

> we want to ask the whole country and the Argentines, how many more dead bodies do they need from Indigenous peoples to become aware of the criminal racism that inhabits Argentine institutions and that is fed by the racist indolence of the citizens? Criminal racism is the one who devours, every day, every minute and in every corner of our territories, the innocent lives of Indigenous girls, boys,

> women and men. We still have to fight for the right to live with dignity, for the right to be and to exist (MIBV Movement 2020d).

When struggling with conflict-ridden everyday realities during the lockdown, the MIBV Movement declared that "racism is the pandemic" (MIBV Movement 2020b), further explaining this by stating that "institutional racist violence increases" (Ibid.), which directly affects their bodies, as the previous examples revealed. To explore how the Indigenous women negotiate institutional and systemic racism, the following section relates the movement's positioning and resistance as body-territories to their criticism of racism as interwoven with "other factors in social stratification" (Bonilla-Silva 2021, 519).

Resisting body-territories

> We are Indigenous women organized before the call of the earth to protect our territories from sinister extractivist policies that sicken our body-territories, prey on our nature, exterminate our nations, commercialize our culture, reify our worldviews (MIBV Movement 2018b).

By highlighting an inseparable connection between body and territory, the Indigenous women of the MIBV Movement frame their opposition to the extractivist development model as not only having devastating consequences for their territories, but also for their bodies. Consequently, the forests, the rivers, and the mountains, as they cannot be separated from their bodies, cannot be transformed into commodities to be sold. As Marcos (2009, 44) paraphrases: "actions and their circumstances are much more interwoven than is the case in Western thought, in which the 'I' can be analytically abstracted from its surroundings" (Marcos 2009, 44). Ana, a Mapuche university-student in her mid-twenties, explained what this means as we drove the 600 kilometres through the Patagonian steppe to one of the movement's activities in Comodoro, saying that her territory travels with her, meaning that her body cannot be separated from her territory.

Everything belonging to what has been termed 'nature' is alive, as I learned from Evis, who is in her early-forties, who self-identifies as Mapuche and lives in the community referred to earlier, as she described what 'life' meant: "for the life of the lakes, of the mountains, of the rivers, of the forests that form part of a sacred circle of life" (Interview: Evis). Hence, "we are fighting to preserve the life that will perpetuate the possibility of the existence of humanity", Evis said. The metaphor of "a sacred circle of life" suggests a relational perspective, where all living beings are connected and interrelated. This interconnection also includes non-human beings and subjectivities, which are considered as living and sacred beings, such as the stone, the mountain, the river, as well as the energies/forces inhabiting nature (MIBV Movement 2020c). This

conceptualisation of the body as territory resonates with de la Cadena's observation that there are no "distinctions between the physical and the metaphysical, the spiritual and the material, nature and human" (de la Cadena 2015a, 25).

Related to their perception of an inseparable interrelation between the body or humans, and 'nature', the MIBV Movement campaigns for *Buen Vivir* to be recognised as a right. Escobar (2016, 26) writes that *Buen Vivir* "implies a different philosophy of life which enables the subordination of economic objectives to the criteria of ecology, human dignity, and social justice." From a relational perspective, or what the MIBV Movement refers to as "three-dimensional life" (MIBV Movement 2020c), *Buen Vivir* is understood by the movement as the reciprocal relations with nature, and between humans and other-than-human subjectivities, including the energies which regulate and create life on earth, or the spiritual ecosystems (Ibid.).

At the beginning of my engagement, I struggled to understand how the movement perceives the spiritual ecosystem. When I asked Sofia about it, a Mapuche in her mid-thirties and active in the MIBV Movement in Patagonia, she said that it is just as important as the other two dimensions of life, the tangible ecosystems and the people who inhabit them, because all three are interrelated. Ana exemplified this understanding by stating that once these spiritual energies are killed/destroyed by extractivism or other large-scale development projects, their forces are gone forever and cannot be brought back to life via, for example, reforestation projects. No matter how many native trees are replanted, the forest cannot be brought back to life if the energies that once inhabited them are gone; what used to be a 'living' forest is then a mere reforestation, without the possibility of becoming a forest again. "We defend our territories in order to also defend these energies/spirits, which make life on earth possible. When there is no interference in terms of human intervention, it is through these energies composing the spiritual ecosystem that from nature life emerges," Sofia added to the conversation.

Throughout my field research, I came across other examples that disclose the role of energies, or the spiritual ecosystems, in generating life. During the summer of 2019, I spent several days in the beforementioned community located in Chubut, Patagonia; the land that was recuperated by Moira, Evis and their mother 20 years ago. During the hottest hours of the day, we spent time by the river Carrenleufú that runs through the communal territory. Before going for a swim, Ana explained that she always asks the energies of the river for permission before entering the water: "many people drown because they enter without asking." From a young age, children learn that – according to Indigenous cosmovision – one should not throw stones into the river. On the one hand, because the energies of the river should not be disturbed, and on the other, because the stones themselves are living beings and therefore are just as sacred as any other living being. Thus, the stones have the right to stay where they are instead of being forcefully displaced for amusement. Everything is related and connected, according to Ana.

While we are talking, we are standing waist deep in the river's ice-cold water. When looking down, I can see my feet standing on the riverbed. The water is crystal clear; there are as yet no mining activities close by, something that is planned to change. To grasp a better understanding of what the spiritual ecosystem means for the participants involved in the MIBV Movement, it seems helpful to remember an earlier quote. Evis framed the construction of hydroelectric power plants, which are to provide the energy necessary for open-pit mining, as a project which would assassinate the river because it kills the river's energies, the regulatory forces that sustain life.

In the late afternoon, we head back to the communal house that is just a few minutes' walk from the river. I would have liked to stay longer, as it was still too early to begin preparations for dinner, but I was told that one should not stay close to the water during this time of the day. The energies recompose themselves before sunset and during this process they should be provided with the necessary space and not be disturbed. This episode illustrates how spirituality shapes everyday life.

The Indigenous women's positioning as body-territories underscores reciprocal relations with 'nature'. Moira specified what human-nature relationality means, namely, structuring "life in a harmonious relationship with all the forces with which we cohabit the territory. (…) the Mapuche peoples did not have the idea of a god, but the great question that has structured the philosophy of the Mapuche peoples is how do I relate to what has been created, and it has been 14,000 years of answering this question. Being peoples of the earth is this; asking, how do we intertwine with the lives of other beings in a harmonious way in order to continue weaving life" (Interview: Moira). Thus, as Moira suggests, only through reciprocal relations with 'nature' does life on earth remain possible.

Hence, the Indigenous women's positioning as body-territories reveals what Escobar called "a relational (non-dualist) and pluri-ontological understanding of life" (Escobar 2016, 21-22). From such a relational perspective, the MIBV Movement frames the present as crises-ridden and dystopian: "we have allowed the imposition of a system of death" (MIBV Movement 2019c). Therefore, "we believe that it is extremely necessary to build a new civilizational matrix, for the planet that needs it more than ever in this time of crisis" (MIBV Movement 2020a). This "denatured humanity" (Ibid.) resonates with what has been termed the Anthropocene narrative, which, according to Malm and Hornborg (2014, 62), "portrays humanity as a species ascending to power over the rest of the Earth System", and fosters a dichotomy between humans and nature.

In order to create more balanced and relational worlds through the (re)construction of *Buen Vivir* and the process of decolonisation, the MIBV Movement "say[s] enough to this capitalist, racist and patriarchal system that is putting the life of the planet at risk" (MIBV Movement 2019c). By making visible how different systems of oppression intersect and reinforce each other, the hegemonic development model of global capitalism is framed as 'a racist and patriarchal system' as well as an imminent threat to human existence. By linking

racism to a pandemic and criticising the increase in institutional racist violence during the lockdown" (MIBV Movement 2020b), the MIBV Movement frames racism as institutional or systemic. Systemic racism refers to a society where social, political, economic, cultural, and even psychological rewards are partially allocated along racial lines. Other important factors in social stratification are gender, class, and sexual orientation, for example (Bonilla-Silva 2021, 519).

The subsequent section demonstrates how the MIBV Movement disentangles the interconnections between different systems of oppression and social stratification factors, exploring why their anti-racist/decolonial struggle is also one against the patriarchy.

Body-territories positioning themselves in the 'feminist awakening'

During my field research in 2019, I witnessed the rousing energy of the fourth-wave feminist movement on several occasions, such as on International Women's Day on March 8 when over 100,000 demonstrated in the streets of Buenos Aires. Even though the Indigenous women at the centre of the movement do indeed bring feminism into their discourse and take part in activities and demonstrations related to this feminist uprising, they do not position themselves as feminists, but as body-territories. In so doing, they include reclaiming Indigenous epistemologies through decolonisation in their discourse and resistance.

"We are not feminists, we are anti-patriarchal but not feminists", Moira stated when I interviewed her in her community in Chubut, Patagonia. When I asked her for the reasons behind this distinction, she replied: "because feminism is a logic that analyses women's oppression in terms of the perception of oppression among people. Our territory inhabits us because our body is territory. Oppression cannot be analysed without taking into account our bond with our land" (Interview: Moira). Moira's statement reveals how, according to her perspective, feminism does not sufficiently relate oppression to space and territory. Noelia, a young Qom in her mid-twenties, who lives in Rosario, adds to this debate by rejecting her self-identification as a feminist because she ascribes feminism as a concept coined by the 'Global North' (LATFEM 2019). In this perspective, 18-year-old Rain, a Mapuche and one of the youngest active members of the movement in Buenos Aires emphasizes that "it is very necessary that feminism is decolonial because otherwise it remains patriarchal" (Ibid.). A statement published on International Woman's Day, when the MIBV Movement echoes this position: "you cannot depatriarchalize without decolonising" (MIBV Movement 2019a).

Moira explains a central distinction between Indigenous and feminist perspectives by referring to her positioning as body-territory, which is not a new concept and is, indeed, discussed in feminist collectives. In Latin American feminist and women's movements in general, defending "body, territory and therefore life has become a point of convergence between rural and Indigenous as well as feminist activists" (Leinius 2021, 215). Body-territory is thus part of

an incipient feminist analysis of territory, as well as a data gathering and analytical method that is in use in contemporary feminist circles in Latin America (Zaragocin and Caretta 2021, 1504). The collective *Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* (Critical Views of Territory from Feminism) (2017, 14), for example, has developed methodologies for mapping body-territories in order to understand how "violence leaves footprints in our bodies but is also connected with the more global invasions of our territories" (Ibid.).

Despite the existence of active feminist discourses concerning the body as territory, the participants involved in the MIBV Movement adopt a long term historic perspective and frame themselves as anti-patriarchal: "our anti-patriarchal struggle is not recent but began when the invader imposed his sword and cross on our territories" (MIBV Movement 2019b). Paula, a Mapuche in her mid-thirties living in a community in Patagonia, explained the reason for this positioning:

> we believe that the anti-patriarchal struggle is an anti-systemic struggle, and it is an even deeper struggle, it is a struggle against a civilizing matrix, which is anthropocentric, individualistic, sexist, racist and also misogynous. (…) Patriarchy is not only a practice of sexist violence. Patriarchy is [present] in all manifestations of life, of humanity, because the global system is built on that logic. Patriarchy has also brought us the construction of the geopolitics of nation-states, it is a reflection of the ideological identity of patriarchy. The anti-patriarchal struggle of our movement is therefore a resistance that extends to all structures and particles of this system (Interview: Paula).

Hence, as the movement emphasizes in their communiques, "our anti-patriarchal struggle is an anti-colonial struggle" (MIBV Movement 2019c), framing it as an anti-systemic struggle against multiple, interrelated systems of oppression: "enough[!,] to this capitalist, racist and patriarchal system" (MIBV Movement 2019c). The body-territory nexus directly relates to decoloniality, as from the point of view of the movement, capitalist 'modernity' is characterised by colonial relations of power, where the intersection of race and gender enables the bodies of Indigenous women to be labelled as inferior to others, and territory to be transformed into an exploitable resource.

When tackling social stratification, such as in the example of gender inequality, instead of identifying as feminists, the MIBV Movement reclaims Indigenous epistemologies in the process of decolonisation: "formerly we were always a complementary duality united by reciprocity and love between beings." (Ibid.). The notion of complementary duality further explains what positioning themselves as body-territories means for those active in the MIBV Movement.

'Complementary duality' as a way out of oppression

By highlighting the inseparable interrelation between body and nature, the MIBV Movement campaigns to (re)establish reciprocal relations with nature

and between living beings, as a way out of these crises-ridden times, echoing the principles of *Buen Vivir*. A similar understanding of relationality is reflected in the notion of complementary duality, which refers to the interdependence between opposites and adds another layer to the participants' perception of what the body-territory nexus means. Duality, not to be mistaken for dualism, is a pervasive element of Indigenous worldview and spirituality that does not have an equivalent in "Western thought" (Marcos 2009, 32). The historical memory of how complementary duality explains social and gender relations, as well as human-nature relationality is still vivid in the case of the Mapuche, who lost their autonomy only 140 years ago, after a state-led genocidal military-campaign. As part of my research, I spoke to around twenty self-identifying Mapuches about gender relations, who all referred to complementary duality as a central concept of both their cosmovision or worldview, and their cultural, political, and social organization.

As I learned from these conversations, opposite or different forces or energies mutually exist and constantly interact in a world – and therefore also in nature – that is shaped by a complementary duality. The 'duality' means that the forces/energies/poles are neither good nor bad, male nor female, sky nor earth. They rather exist at the same time, and intersect, composing the same reality in search of balance. What this means in daily life is best exemplified by the practice of spirituality that aims to establish a connection with the different forces or energies that inhabit nature and regulate life on earth. As is common practice in Indigenous communities, many important activities, events, or actions instigated by the MIBV Movement, for example, the aforementioned occupation of the Ministry of the Interior, begin with a ceremony.

Ana's perception of how territory inhabits her and travels with her when she physically leaves her communitarian space is also an example of how body and territory intersect, namely that the energies and forces of nature inhabit her body. As these energies are moving elements, the forces not only enter her body but also move with her. Thus, elements that are framed as opposites in other epistemologies, such as the dichotomy between humans or bodies and nature, are perceived as interdependent. This is "in many ways in stark contrast to Western philosophical models, which have historically tended towards an 'antagonistic dualism,' the view that the opposites are engaged in an eternal struggle for dominance" (Webb 2021, 69).

Hence, complementary duality refers to an interrelation between opposites that are not hierarchically organised but rather interdependent parts in constant motion, searching for balance in an ever-evolving, fluid process. Understanding the world as composed of interrelated opposites in search of balance disrupts the idea of static relations based on social classifications, or stratifications that enable domination. Complementary duality provides an example of how this is translated with reference to gender relations. According to the Mapuche worldview and practice, this means that feminine and masculine (energies/forces/poles) interact in "each element of nature", thus in both humans and non-human beings, as Ava, a participant in the MIBV Movement

who identifies as Mapuche, is in her early forties, and based in Buenos Aires, explains:

> we understand that all these ideologies: patriarchy, machismo, feminism, are actually constructed from a quite hegemonial viewpoint, which is the anthropocentric gaze. We native women have had a philosophy, we have been part of a political, spiritual, economic, and cultural system, where we believe in complementary duality. We believe that each element of nature has the feminine and masculine force in itself, and what we have to achieve is this balance, that relationship of complementarity, of solidarity and reciprocity between us (Interview: Ava).

Ava refers to the importance of achieving balance. Here, achieving balance is a process, and as a consequence the different poles or opposing energies are not static but constantly in motion, reorganising themselves in their search for balance. While complementarity can also be found in a hierarchy, complementary duality focuses on achieving balance in a related whole. Moira explains how one's role is determined, revealing the close link to the concept of body-territory:

> the spiritual forces that are within our body-territory guide us to fulfil roles. For example, in the Mapuche world we can be women-healers, these are medicine-women who are called *machis*. We can be women-*weychafes*, like me, we are warriors. We can be *kinche*, philosophers. In the Mapuche world, there is no role that is exclusively for men and another solely and exclusively for women. They are political, social and spiritual roles that are assigned by the forces that inhabit our body-territory and that define our spirit (Interview: Moira).

A political, social, or spiritual role is assigned by the forces/energies that inhabit one's body-territory and are not tied to one or more defining categories such as gender, class, or age, etc. The gender perspective reflected by the notion of complementary duality recognizes its epistemic foundation in other relationships that enable complex identity configurations – beyond binary oppositions. The role of women in traditional Mapuche society is constructed in their sociocultural imaginary as being complementary to the role of men. Additionally, in an individual, both feminine and masculine traits/energies can be identified. At the same time, there are other 'devices' that participate in this becoming that are beyond that what happens in the tangible world, such as the energies and forces of nature that determine who one is and becomes, as Moira explained above. Here too, humans and nature are not separate entities but interdependent beings.

"The consequences of colonization have been tremendously serious and violent, bringing with them the patriarchal logic which also became an organizational system within community territories" (Interview: Laura), Laura, a Mapuche in

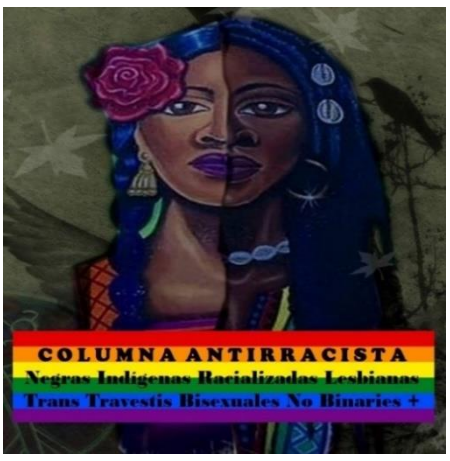
her late thirties and active in the MIBV Movement in Patagonia, states. Her perspective shows how she allocates responsibility to the colonization process for introducing the gender concept as a tool for domination according to binary oppositions and hierarchical social categories. Some scholars, like Rita Segato, question such social idealism constructed by Indigenous actors, and point out that patriarchy and machismo also existed in ancient times, conceptualising the social and political organisation of Indigenous peoples prior to colonization as a "low intensity patriarchy" (Segato 2010, 17).

Despite this, the MIBV Movement, instead of referring to feminist theory, frames the decolonisation of gender relations as the reconstruction of a socio-cultural imaginary based on complementary duality, in order to combat the violence and oppression they experience in Indigenous communities. Machismo, patriarchy, and violence do form part of their everyday experiences, as Indigenous women participating in the movement frequently denounce in their campaigns:

> to our men we say: wake up! Our anti-patriarchal struggle is an anti-colonial struggle. Review your behaviours that are permeated by this colonial, enslaved, Western mentality, which has put us in a place of submission, humiliation and abuse. Formerly we were always a complementary duality united by reciprocity and love between beings. We want to regain this wisdom that inhabits us (MIBV Movement 2019c).

This section showed that the reconstruction of the sociocultural imaginary of complementary duality is framed as an emic tool to combat racism, violence, and oppression through decolonising knowledge, relations and bodies. Although the MIBV Movement reclaims Indigenous epistemologies that understand human/body and nature as interdependent beings instead of separate entities, and do not identify as feminists, they still relate to the broader feminist movement. The last part shows how the Indigenous women form strategic alliances and bring their positionings to the 'feminist awakening' as a part of their anti-racist struggle.

Building strategic alliances to tackle racism



The MIBV Movement in Buenos Aires has formed alliances with other movements and participates in demonstrations and activities related to the 'feminist awakening'. In so doing, they emphasize their Indigenous belonging: "we [I]ndigenous women have our own worldview in the face of current problems, and we want to build dialogue with all women, lesbians, transvestites, trans, and non-binaries, who fight

for a free, decolonized, anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist world" (MIBV Movement 2019a). The next quote illustrates a criticism of those feminisms that do not recognise Indigenous and Black women as political subjects, and of "homogenization and argentinization" (Ibid.) that invisibilises their being and belonging. Consequently, the MIBV Movement states: "enough of racism in social struggles. Once again we question the feminisms that make invisible the political character of the protection of Indigenous cosmogony and the ancestral wisdom of Black people" (Ibid.).

In line with the wish to combat racism in social struggles, the MIBV Movement is a founding member of a contemporary strategic alliance that emerged in 2019 as the collective "Anti-Racist Column: Black, Indigenous, Racialized, Lesbian, Trans, Transvestites, Bisexual, Non-binary [people]" (Columna Antirracista 2019, my translation). This is an alliance that is based on shared struggles, "against structural and institutional racism and all oppressions and violence" (Columna Antirracista 2019c). Allied with others in the Anti-Racist Column, "Indigenous, Black, racialized and dissident women go out into the public space, meeting the women's movement and feminisms, because we are tired of being the OBJECT of political proposals... we are here and WE ARE POLITICAL SUBJECTS and we are going to TURN EVERYTHING [...] until our dignity becomes customary" (Columna Antirracista 2019b, capital letters in the original).

The alliance campaigns against "discursive homogenization", and maintains that power is still "exercised in much of recent Western feminist discourse, and this power needs to be defined and named (Mohanty 1984, 335)." Irma and Maria are critical of participants in feminist movements that frame Indigenous demands as class-based questions, reducing their position in society to that of 'poor women', and ignoring how categories such as race, class, and gender intersect (Fieldnotes March 2019). Such discursive homogenization resonates the "mechanisms of invisibilization" and hegemonic "discourse of national homogeneity" (Delrio et al. 2010, 148) in Argentina. Even though post-structuralist and black feminist theories offer important correctives (Motta, Flesher Fominaya, Eschle and Cox 2011, 3), a section of feminism tends to "privilege a partial, white, bourgeois, liberal perspective" (Ibid.) that exercises power over the space provided to racialised women. Instead of respecting the latter as political subjects, paternalistically 'racialised women' are reduced to what the Anti-Racist Column terms objects in need of political proposals.

During my fieldwork, I had the chance to accompany the Anti-Racist Column as they participated in some large mobilizations in Buenos Aires. One of these took place on the 24th of March, Argentina's National Day of Commemoration for the around 30,000 victims of the genocidal practices of the military-dictatorship (1976-1983). The Anti-Racist Column mobilized support by calling on people to remember other genocides in Argentina, specifically those against Indigenous peoples and People of Colour. As we gathered together behind a big red banner that reads "Blacks, Indigenous, Racialized and Dissidents", Sandra

took up the megaphone for the first rally cry. After introducing herself as "Black, Afro-activist, lesbian and feminist", she said: "we talk about genocide, racism and identity, those issues that nobody wants to discuss. We have to put them on the table and we have to know, know and know a lot and more, so that they will never patronize us again. Black and racialized Indigenous people and dissidents are political subjects" (Rally cry: Sandra).

Pauli and Aimé, two university students active in the MIBV Movement in Buenos Aires who self-identify as Mapuche and Quechua, distributed pictures to protestors of others they also chose to commemorate, when it was my turn, they gave me a poster print of Rosa Parks, which I held up during the next few hours.

The demonstration on the 24th of March Source: Columna Antirracista 2019c

We gathered close to the Congress, the common starting point for the majority of political demonstrations, and started to make our way slowly down the imposing Avenue 9 de Julio, which cuts through the heart of the city centre. Walking alongside hundreds of thousands of people felt simply overwhelming, every moment was filled with energy, compounded by the rage felt when remembering those who were secretly disappeared, arrested, and murdered by the military-dictatorship and beyond; somebody would shout their names and uncountable voices answered "presente, ahora y siempre" (present, now and always), while raising their fists.

The multitude walked towards the Plaza de Mayo, the oldest public square in front of the Pink House, home to the government. The plaza transformed into a focal point for social protest. Since 1977, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, characterised by their white headscarves, meet to walk every Thursday in circles around the independence monument for thirty minutes in order to demand justice for their children who disappeared during the military dictatorship. On this day, they climbed the stage in the middle of the plaza to jointly commemorate los desaparecidos (the disappeared). The Anti-Racist Column campaigns for the recognition of other genocides to be memorised on

this day and beyond, and by doing so disentangles the hidden socio-historical roots of the nation-building process and the systemic racism that continues to shape contemporary times.

Hence, the MIBV Movement's alliance-building to combat racism as a pandemic consolidated their claims within the broader feminist movement and beyond. According to Gomez (2020), the movement's activism succeeded in raising questions related to being, and/or representing Indigenous women who suffer from racism.

Conclusion

The case study of the 'Indigenous Women's Movement for *Buen Vivir*' in Argentina revealed that the Indigenous women active in the movement see racism as being constantly perpetuated and interrelated to multiple forms of discrimination and oppression which reinforce each other in a "capitalist, racist and patriarchal system that is putting the life of the planet at risk" (MIBV Movement 2019e).

By focusing on the Indigenous women's resistance as body-territories, I have showed that the women that are active in the MIBV Movement interweave their struggles against racism, intersectional discrimination, and the historic violation of their bodies with the defence of their territories against extractivist resource exploitation by global capitalism. Even though the notion of body-territory does have a place in Latin American feminist collectives, the Indigenous women whose narratives, practices, and strategies are presented here, position themselves as body-territories without identifying as feminists. By exploring how they reclaim Indigenous epistemologies and construct human-nature relationalities, this paper contributes to research on the conceptualisation of the body as territory.

Although not identifying as feminists, the Indigenous women participating in the MIBV Movement build networks and strategic alliances of solidarity in order to spread their claims in the broader feminist movement, and to tackle "homogenisation" and "racism in social struggles". Allied as "Black, Indigenous, Racialized, Lesbian, Trans, Bisexual, Non-binary", the Anti-Racist Column reclaims its space in the feminist movement as a political subject. While the alliance highlights the shared nature of their struggles against discrimination, violence, and racism, the Anti-Racist Column actively tackles multiple forms of exclusion by mobilising emic epistemologies. Other social movements and actors might be inspired by such strategies, especially those involved in struggles to decolonise place, body, and the social, such as anti-racism movements or feminisms, which can be (perceived as) exclusive, as the analysis revealed.

Despite their participation in the broader feminist movement, those active in the MIBV Movement reclaim Indigenous epistemologies rather than referring to

feminist theories. The Indigenous women perceive the process of decolonisation to imply an "emancipatory potential" (Burman 2011). The reconstruction of the sociocultural imaginary of complementary duality is framed as an emic tool to combat racism, violence, and oppression in a society – and world – shaped by the 'coloniality of power and being'. While complementarity can also be found in (social) hierarchies, in a complementary duality it refers to an interrelation between opposites that are interdependent parts in constant motion, searching for balance in an ever-evolving process. Understanding the world as composed of interrelated opposites in search of balance disrupts the idea of static relations based on social classifications, or stratifications that enable domination. This understanding of complementary duality also enables complex identity configurations, beyond binary oppositions because the notion is also perceived as an intersection and interaction between the feminine and masculine (energies/forces/poles) in "each element of nature" (Interview: Ava), thus in both humans and "earth beings" (de la Cadena 2015a).

Firmly rooted in such a relational worldview, the notion of *Buen Vivir* is transformed into the movement's transversal proposal for a way out of the current crises-ridden times. The meaning of the human-nature relationality implied by *Buen Vivir* for the central actors is exemplified by the conceptualisations of both complementary duality and body-territory. By disrupting the boundaries between humans and nature, these notions radically question the Anthropocene narrative embodied in the hegemonic understanding of development. Because the forests, rivers, and mountains cannot be separated from the bodies of the Indigenous women, they criticise the transformation of these living beings into commodities, and frame their struggle for *Buen Vivir* as one for life itself, reflected in what Paula termed (re)constructing "the art of living *Buen Vivir* as a right" (Interview: Paula).

By exploring the movement's proposal to (re)construct human-nature relationality and reciprocity between living beings, this paper looked at the pluriversal ways in which social actors challenge the here and now in proposing other ways of being and becoming. An actor-oriented approach in the research of transformative practices and epistemologies of social movements, facilitated by an engaged activism, enables a contribution to the debates concerning "practices of feminized and feminizing epistemological decolonization in thought, practice, and being" (Motta 2018, 124). Learning "from the pluriverse of alternatives already available" (Kothari 2020, 269) is of utmost importance in times of a global, interrelated crisis of capitalist 'modernity' which the COVID-19 pandemic has shed renewed light upon. Social movement studies are challenged to contribute to such debates of imagining and to construct "worlds and knowledges otherwise" (Escobar 2007, 179) by making visible the imaginaries that actors shape and practice on the ground. The relational perspective inherent to the notion of *Buen Vivir,* and the conceptualisations of body-territory and complementary duality can provide an inspiration for the necessary socio-ecological transformation towards a new relationality that also includes 'nature', and helps tackle racism, social stratification, and the asymmetric power relations that shape contemporary 'capitalist coloniality'. Far

from being a utopia on the distant horizon, body-territory or human-nature relationality is already a prefigurative practice in different parts of the world.

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About the author

Anja Habersang works as a scientific coordinator at the Center for Advanced Latin American Studies (CALAS) at the University of Kassel, Germany. In her doctoral research, she analyses how social (movement) actors negotiate 'development', a socio-ecological transformation and the future in conflicts over the commodification of nature in Argentina. She is a PhD candidate at the Ruhr-University Bochum and the Fulda University of Applied Sciences.

Email: anja.habersang AT ruhr-uni-bochum.de.