

Editorial / Editorial

Commonly remembered for its heritage of great pre-Columbian civilizations, Central America receives some timid scrutiny that registers tragic events and highlights aspects that seem to be limited to its geography, marked by volcanic splendor and the memories of earthquakes that force painful beginnings, which the oral tradition reminds us. Some curious people, full of astonishment, have heard news about forced migrations and other violence, such as internal conflicts, revolutions and the truncated trials of a few genocidal generals, among the many that have marked the paths of death of the economic policies in the region.

On the other hand, the superficiality with which the multifaceted and never-ending processes of nation-building have been approached, through the eyes of historical and contemporary colonizers, condemns the lands of this region to be reduced to mere “banana republics”. Few scholars are interested, for example, in the history of the Federal Republic of Central America, whose ephemeral existence (1823-1839) raised hopes of forming an independent and modern federation, enriched by the international trade that would link the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. In its place, engineering megaprojects are gaining strength, updating already century-old proposals for the use of the isthmus, to facilitate the controversial dynamics of the international commodity market, made possible by hydrological projects orchestrated by the hegemonic powers of the moment, in the bleak and shifting scenario of global geopolitical disputes.

Within this framework, the socio-cultural, political and economic history of Central America, strongly marked by violence of the most diverse kinds, is constantly challenged by inspiring trajectories of resistance, interwoven with an ancestral rationality. This other rationality summons us to conceive development alternatives that question not only the relations of economic exploitation

of capitalist societies, but also their structures of domination and subordination of bodies, knowledge and territories, guided by spurious alliances between local elites and the insatiable interests of transnational corporations.

Aiming to counter the systematic amnesia that the isthmus has suffered, even in the eyes of Latin American scholars, the Observatory of Nationalities, in an initiative of collaboration with the Central Americanist and Central American platform-network O Istmo, dedicates this special number of *World Tensions* to the living and latent memory of the peoples of Central America.

The present dossier, called “Central America: territories, conflicts and resistances”, has a significant number of articles based on social theory and history, addressing some of the most relevant themes for the recent trajectory of the region. In it, we gave special emphasis to the conflicts that are exacerbated in the scenario of the imposition of undertakings related to energy production and other infrastructure works associated with the advance of extractivism in the region. These conflicts have triggered a series of political, social and economic problems, such as forced disappearances, land grabbing, expropriation of traditional peoples’ lands, systematic aggressions and persecutions of community leaders and human rights defenders, femicide and migration processes that characterize the Central American scenario of institutional, socioeconomic and political crisis, aggravated by the violent actions of paramilitary groups, organized crime, and inhumane immigration policies.

In this scenario, processes of resistance are emerging, articulated by different sectors of Central American societies, especially indigenous and peasant movements, as well as the political and intellectual action of indigenous women, among others linked to human rights organizations. These are some of the collective subjects who permanently denounce the existence of territories and peoples systematically violated by large corporations and interest groups that operate at the national and international levels. Faced with the advance of neoliberalism and large-scale extractivism at the global level, we consider, therefore, that the trajectories of struggle and the paths of resistance carried out in

the most diverse geographies of the Central American region are of special interest to academics and popular leaders from all over Latin America.

In this sense, with the goal of giving greater visibility to the problems, challenges and socio-cultural identities that characterize the Central American region, this special issue offers a set of reflections that contribute to a greater approximation between researchers, curious readers and the academic and literary production of Central Americans.

Thus, we begin with the reflections of William I. Robinson, who warns of the emergence of a scenario for what the author calls a second implosion of Central America - which inspires the title of his article. From the perspective of the researcher, mass struggles and state repression are presented as key elements in the collapse of the fragile Central American political systems, marked by corruption and drug trafficking, as well as by land grabbing and forced migration of millions of workers and peasants, which result from a new cycle of development that global capitalism has brought to the fore in the region.

In "Central American Subalternity and Regional Identity", Aleksander Aguilar Antunes, founder and researcher of the platform/network The Isthmus, makes some instigating provocations about the place of the region in the center-periphery relationship and highlights the indispensable relevance of its geopolitical condition in the consolidation of hegemonic geographies that impose subordination as part of Central American regional identity.

In the article "The *Popol Wuj* in the contemporary Mesoamerican indigenous struggle", Lia Pinheiro Barbosa, researcher of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), brings to the surface one of the main works that compose the anthology of colonial historiography and Mayan literature written in the sixteenth century. As she argues, the *Popol Wuj* is an expression of the breadth and depth of thought, literary and astronomical capacity, the development of scientific knowledge and the organization of the social, spiritual and political life of the Mayan peoples. In her article, the author shows that the *Popol Wuj* is a central cultural and theoretical-epistemic matrix for understanding the historical

political action of the Mayan peoples, not only in Central America, but in the Mesoamerican region. In this vein, she presents examples of the historical, aesthetic and political legacy of *Popol Wuj* in the Mesoamerican indigenous peoples' struggles, particularly in Guatemala and Mexico.

As a result of the historical contradiction of colonial relations and the development of capitalism, the Central American region pulses with a millenary resistance, especially that articulated by the Mayan peoples and which affects the revolutionary struggles of Guatemala, according to researcher Edgar Arturo Esquit Choy, of the Interethnic Institute of the *Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala*. In her article "*Los Mayas en la Revolución de 1994 en Guatemala*", she argues that the political and economic transformations introduced by the 1944 Revolution in Guatemala mutually affected the revolutionary government and the Mayan communities. In this way, the encounter between the two, which opened a political space of self-determination, was a moment that made the struggle possible, but also reproduced colonial styles of domination over the Maya themselves.

Going into the contemporary challenges of the Central American region, the article "*Una lectura decolonial del racismo en Guatemala*", by Luis Fernando Gonzales Lopez, presents expressions of racism that denote the colonial impact in Guatemalan society. Through the prism of decolonial theory, the author uses the analysis of the content of images of graphic material, which generated discussions around the marginalization of indigenous peoples.

Highlighting the conflicts and socio-environmental and socio-territorial resistances that also shape the contemporary political scenario of Central America, in the article "*Tramas de las resistencias socioterritoriales en Guatemala*", Mariana López de la Vega, researcher at the *Centro de Investigaciones sobre América Latina y el Caribe* of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM), gives an overview of the social conflict in Guatemala, focusing on territorial expropriation. In her text she analyses the organization and resistance of communities, indigenous peoples and women's groups, as well as the relationship they establish between

communities and the State. The author highlights the difficulties, challenges and political stakes of communities in the defense of their territory.

In the article *“Caminos de resistencia al Desarrollo de la explotación en Guatemala”*, Ana Clarice Mendonça Oliveira, also a researcher at the platform/network *The Isthmus* and linked to CLACSO, analyzes how the expansion of the neoliberal development model has redesigned practices of accumulation through expropriation, deepening the instrumentalization of state apparatus for the benefit of extractivist sectors, with renewed discursive mechanisms linked to practices of subordination and exploitation of peoples and their natural goods. In confronting this model of territorial development, the author highlights initiatives of self-management that combine innovative practices and ancestral paths of resistance, referring to community life and the spirituality of the original peoples.

Continuing the approach to socio-environmental conflicts, Alberto Gutiérrez Arguedas, in the article *“Socio-environmental conflicts in contemporary Costa Rica”*, analyzes the current scenario of socio-environmental conflicts and struggles in this country, related to the control, appropriation and management of natural resources and the territories where they are located. The author classifies the conflicts around seven axes of conflict and deepens the study of the axis that corresponds to the community struggles against hydroelectric dams and in defense of rivers, a phenomenon that gained greater visibility and protagonism since the 1990s. The article seeks to relate the specificity of the Costa Rican reality to the general characteristics of these processes in Latin America.

The last block of articles in our thematic dossier deals with the problems of the Central American revolutionary challenge, analysed through the cases of El Salvador and Nicaragua. In the article *“La PNC de El Salvador durante los gobiernos del FMLN”*, Edgar Baltazar Landeros argues that the 1992 Peace Accords established a new institutional framework for El Salvador, including a new police force, namely the National Civil Police (PNC). The PNC was born with the neoliberal parameters of democratic policing and the author argues that throughout the post-war period and in the

governments of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) between 2009 and 2019, the PNC failed to meet democratic parameters and failed to improve its institutional development, by maintaining a war against gangs as a monothematic agenda.

In Paula Daniela Fernández and Fernando Romero Wilmer's "Political Crisis in Nicaragua: An Analysis for its Understanding," the authors discuss what they consider to be the most immediate antecedents to the political crisis in Nicaragua that began in April 2018, with emphasis on three references: the inter-oceanic canal project, the fire in the *Reserva Indio Maíz* and the intensification of the social conflict. According to the authors, these problems are part of a dialectic of the dynamics of capital and the expansion of the neo-extractivist model in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the last article of this dossier, "*La otra Nicaragua: empire and territories of resistance*", Yorlis Gabriela Luna argues that there are polarized opinions about the Nicaraguan political conflict, with emphasis on the period from April to July of 2018. According to the author, there is a hegemonic version disseminated by the international media, which approaches the conflict as a "crazy dictatorship murdering peaceful demonstrators", and another approach coming from the popular base, which problematizes this version disseminated by the hegemonic media. In this direction, the author presents other experiences and forms of indignation that emerge from the "soft coup" category, highlighting the capacity for resistance of popular sectors in their anti-imperialist history.

In proposing a thematic dossier on Central America, we aimed to strengthen exchange and create channels of dialogue with subjects who experience and build theoretical references for analysis of a region that has much to teach about the historical resistance of indigenous peoples, as well as their philosophical and political thinking, and the revolutionary struggles and the challenges of the present for the popular democratic sector. Moreover, these analyses contribute to the understanding of dialectical relations that imprint a condition of subalternity and exploitation to which the peoples of this region are systematically subjected, immersed in the growing pattern of capitalist accumulation, expressed in deep institutional interference, financial mega

operations and transnational enterprises. In this sense, the title of the public call for articles to compose this thematic edition aimed to instigate new reflections on the historical struggle of Central American peoples, in permanent dialogue with the trajectories of South American and Caribbean struggles, in the face of the atrocities of territorial plunder, migration processes and interventionist policies, but, above all, addressing ways for the emancipation of the peoples of our Latin America.

With the expectation of having fulfilled our purpose and the will to continue moving forward with the dialogues and reflections that enrich this editorial effort, we thank all those who contributed to this collective construction and wish you an excellent reading!

The editors.