

Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology

Edited by
Hubert Zapf

DE GRUYTER

ISBN 978-3-11-030837-2
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-031459-5
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-039489-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2016 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
Satz: fidus Publikations-Service GmbH, Nördlingen
Druck und Bindung: CPI books GmbH, Leck
♻ Gedruckt auf säurefreiem Papier
Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

Contents

- 0 Hubert Zapf
Introduction — 1
- Part I Ecocritical Theories of Culture and Literature**
- 1 Wendy Wheeler
The Lightest Burden: The Aesthetic Abductions of Biosemiotics — 19
- 2 Kate Rigby
Earth's Poesy: Romantic Poetics, Natural Philosophy, and Biosemiotics — 45
- 3 Louise Westling
Merleau-Ponty and the Eco-Literary Imaginary — 65
- 4 Hanjo Berressem
Ecology and Immanence — 84
- 5 Hannes Bergthaller
Paradox as Bedrock: Social Systems Theory and the Ungrounding of Literary Environmentalism in Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* — 105
- 6 Gernot Böhme
Aesthetics of Nature – A Philosophical Perspective — 123
- 7 Hubert Zapf
Cultural Ecology of Literature – Literature as Cultural Ecology — 135
- Part II Issues and Directions of Contemporary Ecocriticism**
- 8 Kate Soper
Neither the 'Simple Backward Look' nor the 'Simple Progressive Thrust': Ecocriticism and the Politics of Prosperity — 157
- 9 Catrin Gersdorf
Political Ecology: Nature, Democracy, and American Literary Culture — 174

- 10 Mita Banerjee
Ecocriticism and Postcolonial Studies — 194
- 11 Christa Grewe-Volpp
Ecofeminisms, the Toxic Body, and Linda Hogan's *Power* — 208
- 12 Nancy Easterlin
Ecocriticism, Place Studies, and Colm Tóibín's "A Long Winter": A Biocultural Perspective — 226
- 13 Axel Goodbody
Animal Studies: Kafka's Animal Stories — 249
- 14 Serpil Oppermann
From Material to Posthuman Ecocriticism: Hybridity, Stories, Natures — 273
- 15 Greg Garrard
Conciliation and Consilience: Climate Change in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* — 295
- Part III **Between the Local and the Global: Cultural Diversity vs. Eco-Cosmopolitanism**
- 16 Scott Slovic
Narrative Scholarship as an American Contribution to Global Ecocriticism — 315
- 17 Alfred Hornung
Ecology and Life Writing in Transnational and Transcultural Perspective — 334
- 18 Serenella Iovino
From Thomas Mann to Porto Marghera: Material Ecocriticism, Literary Interpretation, and Death in Venice — 349
- 19 Elena Past
Mediterranean Ecocriticism: The Sea in the Middle — 368

- 20 Rachel Bouvet and Stephanie Posthumus
Eco- and Geo- Approaches in French and Francophone Literary Studies — 385
- 21 Elmar Schmidt
Latin American Environmental Discourses, Indigenous Ecological Consciousness and the Problem of 'Authentic' Native Identities — 413
- 22 Swarnalatha Rangarajan
Women Writing Nature in the Global South: New Forest Texts from Fractured Indian Forests — 438
- 23 Ogaga Okuyade
Ecocultures and the African Literary Tradition — 459
- 24 Cheng Xiangzhan
Ecosophy and Ecoaesthetics: A Chinese Perspective — 481
- 25 Sylvia Mayer
World Risk Society and Ecoglobalism: Risk, Literature, and the Anthropocene — 494
- Part IV Ecologies of Literary Communication**
- 26 Sieglinde Grimm and Berbeli Wanning
Cultural Ecology and the Teaching of Literature — 513
- 27 Alexa Weik von Mossner
Environmental Narrative, Embodiment, and Emotion — 534
- 28 Katharina Donn
Beyond the Wasteland: An Ecocritical Reading of Modernist Trauma Literature — 551
- 29 Christopher Schliephake
Literary Place and Cultural Memory — 569
- 30 Timo Müller
The Ecology of Literary Chronotopes — 590

- 31 Erik Redling
Cultural Ecology and Literary Translation — 605

Part V Genre and Media Ecologies

- 32 Scott MacDonald
PANORAMA: Three Ecocinematic Territories — 621

- 33 Aaron S. Allen
Ecomusicology from Poetic to Practical — 644

- 34 Suzaan Boettger
Within and Beyond the Art World: Environmentalist Criticism of Visual Art — 664

Index of Subjects — 683

Index of Names — 701

List of Contributors — 713

Elmar Schmidt

21 Latin American Environmental Discourses, Indigenous Ecological Consciousness and the Problem of 'Authentic' Native Identities

Abstract: One central and actively discussed component of environmental discourses in Latin America is the tension between the stereotypical representation of indigenous cultures as essentialized 'ecological natives,' and the pragmatic possibilities the stereotype implies for indigenous social actors in the context of political struggles. The debate is constantly threatened by culminating into an 'authenticity fallacy,' which deprives indigenous communities of the possibility to position themselves in mediated global discourses as actors with recognized flexible political identities. In this context, Francesco Taboada Tabone's documentary *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* (2008) serves to illustrate how the imagery of indigenous 'defenders of nature' can be strategically employed in the particular circumstances of the joint resistance of several villages in the Mexican state of Morelos against governmental construction plans, to generate symbolic capital on regional, national, and transnational levels. The film merges an anti-neoliberal, Neozapatista argumentation with contemporary environmental discourse, dedicating special attention to the creation of an indigenous, communitarian, and ecologically sustainable identity. Nevertheless, the film transcends this ethnically and locally limited identity and converts it into a basis of identification available to non-indigenous anti-neoliberal movements on a broader scale.

Key Terms: Authenticity fallacy, documentary film, ecological native, Francesco Taboada Tabone, indigenous identity, Latin America, Mexico, social movements

1 Latin American Environmental Discourse, Contemporary Literature and the Critique of Neoliberal Development Policies

In the multiple and heterogeneous realities and modernities that coexist, overlap, and intertwine on the Latin American continent, environmental problems and concerns are treated in very different ways and forms, depending on the most diverse contexts. Ecological agendas in the megacities may contrast with those fought about in rural areas. The environmental challenges faced by the inhabitants of the US-Mexican border area might be distinguished from those of the Patagonian population,

whilst the mining industry in Peru may produce another ecological imagery than oil extraction in Venezuela or dam building in Brazil. Environmental issues discussed in the Andean highlands emphasize other issues than those disputed in coastal areas or in the Amazon basin. Yet, despite the cultural and ethnical, social and political, as well as geographical and biological diversity of the Latin American continent, one common denominator seems to stand out in the public debates about environmental affairs. In a general situation where massive ecological degradation tends to affect particularly the marginalized parts of the populations, aspects of ecological crisis are mainly discussed not only as possible threats to living standards but as serious socio-environmental problems. Environmental destruction is often debated in very politicized ways and directly linked to the neoliberal political agendas imposed since the 1980s, to extractive development concepts, and to economic modernization framed by the external demands of globalized capitalist markets. The Uruguayan intellectual Eduardo Galeano, e.g., adds ecological aspects to the arguments of the dependency theory developed in the second half of the 20th century. He demonstrates that since the conquest environmental deterioration in Latin America is the result of the continuous exploitation of the continent's natural resources for the exclusive benefits of changing regional elites and global centers of power. In this context of what Galeano (1994, 13) calls the "*desarrollo hacia afuera*" ("development toward the outside"¹), he invokes the principles of environmental justice, condemns an "*ecología neutral, que más bien se parece a la jardinería*" ("*neutral ecology that appears to be more like gardening,*" 1994, 19), and propagates a politicized environmentalism that confronts ecological destruction as well as exploitative and unjust global economic structures. Galeano's writings can also be seen as one prominent example of how essayistic writing, literature, artistic expression and, more recently, film and new media, have accompanied and influenced the emergence of specific Latin American perceptions of nature, environmental discourses and political ecologies. For example, as Barbas-Rhoden (2011) points out, a growing number of contemporary Latin American authors dedicate their fictional works to the recovery of specific local senses and knowledges of place and, at the same time, register environmental problems against the background of a broad range of historically rooted sociopolitical topics as well as global economic dependencies:

New novels of ecological imagination have appeared in a moment of rapidly accelerating globalization in Latin America. [...] New Latin American ecological imaginations instill in the minds of readers a world with real limits. They emphasize the boundaries imposed by the nonhuman world on human societies. They draw attention to both environmental degradation and unresolved social issues: land claims, indigenous rights, classism, sexism, and ethnic exclusion. And ultimately, [...] authors of ecological imagination from Latin America wield the discourse of nature as a literary weapon against the homogenizing agenda of neocolonial and neoliberal

1 All translations by the author.

enterprises. They craft this discourse of nature in their fictions as an intervention for democracy, for local knowledge, for human rights and environmental justice. (167–168)

The conjunction of local ecological and social problems with global political and economic power structures also seems to embed literary environmental discourses in Latin America into a broader ‘environmentalism of the poor’ (Martínez Alier 2002) articulated from the Global South. (On postcolonialism and environmental perspectives from the Global South, cf. ↗10 *Ecocriticism and Postcolonial Studies* and ↗22 *Women Writing Nature in the Global South*). As Slovic, Rangarajan and Sarveswaran explicate:

What is particularly poignant in the literature and ecocritical commentary from the Global South, though, is the frequent critique of the impacts of global capitalism, a force largely transplanted from the Global North to the developing world, usually against the will of the human population of non-industrialized areas (and, of course, without any effort to consult with the natural environment). (2015, 9)

From a global point of view, the environmental discourses in Latin American culture, literature, film, and media produce similar critical positions towards capitalist concepts of economic modernization and development. At the same time, they also absorb the ecological imagery of the Global North and participate in its constant development and reformulation from a peripheral perspective, as they appropriate and modify distinctive elements. Local perceptions, concerns and debates thus transform global environmental discourses, as they adopt and translate them into regional ecological realities. The heterogeneous realities of Latin America, “the first born child of modernity (Ashcroft 1998, 14), have, since the conquest, been distinguished by processes of transculturation in a diversified “contact zone” (Pratt 2008, 7). They continue to produce hybrid cultural formations and expressions in the age of global environmental transformation and ecological crisis.

2 Latin American Appropriations of Global Environmental Imagination

What Heise (2008, 21) postulates as the “field of tension between the embrace of and the resistance to global connectedness, and between the commitment to a planetary vision and the utopian reinvestment in the local” can be observed in specific, paradigmatic forms and variations in Latin America. Contemporary Latin American writers such as Ignácio de Loyola Brandão, Gioconda Belli, or Homero Aridjis draw on the complete arsenal of dystopian and apocalyptic as well as place-based bucolic and edenic rhetoric and imagery available in current occidental environmental discourses. At the same time, they reinscribe this imagery in the contexts of the

peculiar historical conditions as well as the hybrid cultural and literary traditions of Latin America, adopting it to the complex sets of ecological problems of specific urban or rural realities. The cultural implications of recycling could be mentioned as another example. As Heffes shows, collecting and reusing the consumer society's waste has become a widespread practice in Latin America, but, unlike in the industrialized parts of the world, it is primarily connected to dehumanizing circumstances of subaltern subsistence and survival. Simultaneously, as an informal practice at the margins of society, it holds a transgressive, insubordinate moment against neoliberal modernity, and, as such, is reflected with new meanings in literature, theatre, and art (Heffes 2013, 243). The most prominent example for the multiple processes of how global environmental imaginations entangle with local discourses in Latin America, are appropriated, transformed, and retransferred, with new connotations, to global circulation, probably is the concept of *buen vivir*. As the principle of 'good living,' *buen vivir* is commonly and congruently defined as an ethics of human life in social equality and sustainable harmony with nature (cf. Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara 2014, 26). The concept, on one hand, draws on a wide range of discursive sources, from Aristotelian thought to aspects of Kantian Enlightenment philosophy adding positions critical to Western civilization such as Nietzsche's or Adorno and Horkheimer's (cf. Bretón, Cortez and García 2014, 16), from contemporary environmentalism and feminist positions to liberation theology and (neo-)Marxist ideas (cf. Bretón 2013, 87). On the other hand, *buen vivir* develops in concrete sociopolitical situations in Latin America. From very heterogeneous perspectives, political actors and social movements appropriate and transform the discursive material by rebuilding it on rediscovered – or maybe "legitimately reinvented" (2013, 87) – indigenous knowledge and traditions such as the Quechua *sumak kawsay*. Interpretations differ widely, from the implementations in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia and its consecutive, highly debated applications to actual social, political and economic realities in both nations or particular forms of exegesis by indigenous intellectuals themselves, to readings by anti-neoliberal scholars advocating decolonized post-development politics (cf. Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara 2014). In any case, the Latin American concept of *buen vivir* is channeled back to global debates and circuits of imaginations. Here, it seems to offer a highly successful reference for positions in search of ecologically and socially sustainable alternatives to capitalist globalization and a destructive modernity based on the perpetuation of (neo-)colonial power structures (cf. Quijano 2012). It could be postulated that the popularity of *buen vivir* can be traced back precisely to the fact that it is interpretable as an open concept that works on local as well as on global scales. Moreover, it successfully integrates aspects of indigenous cultural difference as opposed to non-sustainable industrialized culture and, at the same time, builds partially on discursive material and a set of ideas that were already available, e.g., to Western audiences, but are now restructured from a new point of view.

3 Representations of Indigenous Cultures, Socio-environmental Commitment and Documentary Filmmaking

The discussion of *buen vivir*, thus, does not only exemplify how “the adverse effects of global ecological crisis transform nearly all national socio-cultural formations, rendering place based narratives to be more ‘translocal’ than purely bioregional” (Oppermann 2012, 412). It also leads us to the central topic that is to be discussed in the following lines, and that so far has only been partially evoked. The tension between the stereotypical representation of indigenous cultures as essentialized “ecologically noble savages” (Redford 1991, 46), on the one hand, and the pragmatic possibilities for indigenous social actors in the context of political struggles implied in the image of “nature’s defenders” (Gibbings 2007, 257), on the other, is a central and actively debated component of environmental discourses and imaginations in Latin America. The appropriation and utilization of stereotypes, e.g., by indigenous social movements, involves the risk of relying on the construction of a “hyperreal Indian” (Ramos 1994), a construction continuously threatened, as the case may be, by the possible discrepancy between the lived reality of the indigenous populations and its stylized projection. Discursively contrasted with destructive industrialized modernity, this projection depends on the maintenance and fostering of an ‘authentic’ cultural difference. The present contribution proposes the reconceptualization of the strategic potential of the image of “the ecological native” (Ulloa 2005, 134), while problematizing and discarding the seemingly inevitable presupposition of ‘authenticity.’ I will suggest the recognition of indigenous social movements as social actors that, like any other actor in a globalized, mediated world, can, should and know how to strategically operate flexible identities.

The examination of the argumentative structures, audio-visual approaches, as well as the ecological imaginations of a representative Mexican documentary film, Francesco Taboada Tabone’s *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* (2008), will serve to illustrate the possibilities of (self-)representation of indigenous populations, the strategic power of global environmental imagery translated to and transformed by local contexts, and the importance of particular regional political constellations and circumstances such as, e.g., a whole range of national foundational narratives that may frame and embed environmentalist activism as well as specific interactions between different social movements. Taboada Tabone’s film can also be seen in the context of the rise of socially and ecologically committed cinematography, especially documentary, productions throughout Latin America, proving, once again, the specific preoccupations of regional environmental debates. (On ecocinema see also ↗33 PANORAMA: Three Ecocinematic Territories) As common denominators, Forns-Broggi (cf. 2012, 210–211) highlights elements of environmental justice, risk narratives, and critical revision of globalization, the focus on the historical

roots of ecological problems in colonization and the persistence of the sociopolitical power relations it created, as well as the desire to represent a plurality of perspectives including the continent's indigenous populations. As an initial approximation to Taboada Tabone's film, some brief details concerning the director's work and his own artistic understanding of the *raison d'être* of documentary filmmaking shall precede the analysis.

4 Taboada Tabone, Mexican Social Movements and the Political Capacities of the Audio-Visual Chronicle

Before the release of his documentary *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* in 2008, Francesco Taboada Tabone already had gathered recognition as a director with award-winning works on topics related to the Mexican Revolution.² His earlier documentaries, *Los últimos zapatistas, héroes olvidados* (2002) or *Pancho Villa: La revolución no ha terminado* (2006), outline an ideological position that combines a rearticulation of history with critical perspectives on contemporary culture, society, and politics developed by Mexican social movements. Taboada Tabone expresses a demand for democratic participation, civil rights, justice, and liberty associated with the explicit evocation of social resistance symbolized by the historical figures of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa. He thus inscribes his work in the context of the political discourses of the versatile, multidimensional and socially heterogeneous *neozapatismo* movement.³

Beyond that, he situates himself in the long tradition of the Mexican chronicle. When defining this literary form, Carlos Monsiváis (cf. 2002, 26) resorts to the chroniclers of the colonial period, like Fray Bernardino de Sahagún or Bernal Díaz del Castillo, to identify its historical roots. The genre can be traced back through Independence, early Republican times and Revolution. It is steeped in varying discourses and has diverse social functions. From the 1960s onward, it was adopted as a medium for the critical observation of cultural processes, driven by the desire "to provide an

² Likewise, *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* was awarded prizes at festivals such as the Festival Présence Autochtone in Montréal, the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival, and the Mexican Festival de la Memoria de Cine Documental Iberoamericano.

³ Leyva-Solano and Sonnleitner (2000) point out that the Chiapas-based uprising of the EZLN initiated the mobilization of various sectors of Mexican society (rural, urban, middle class, popular, etc.), which share the same Zapatista discourse and symbols, but not necessarily a common concept of armed resistance. The different parts of *neozapatismo civil* maintain strategic and decentralized alliances for civil resistance on regional as well as national or international levels.

ongoing narrative of Mexican society from a perspective that often diverges from official culture” (Corona and Jörgensen 2002, 12). Authors such as Monsiváis himself, with his work *Entrada libre. Crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza* (1987), developed a literary form that combined documentation, historiography, and reportage with narrative properties of the novel, the essay or the diary. While these *cronistas* did not pretend to write from a neutral, objective point of view, they redefined the chronicle as a possible alternative to official interpretations of past and present events. Similar to the emerging genre of testimonial literature, commitment to marginalized parts of society was programmatic, and one of the objectives was, and is, to communicate subaltern experiences to a wider public (cf. Borsò 1992, 89). Taboada Tabone’s work complies with these parameters, and it could be argued that its audio-visuality in particular adds a new variant to the chronicle which is by definition, a hybrid form. The documentary, as a medium of growing importance due to factors such as the budget-priced availability of video cameras or the internet as an easy-to-handle distribution channel, create new spaces for the articulation of alternative points of view. Like the written chronicle, documentaries extend the possibilities for the representation of voices that would otherwise remain unheard. Thus, the video documentary seems to be a most appropriate medium for a social movement as diverse, decentralized, and heterogeneous as the *neozapatismo* movement. Consequently, Taboada Tabone appropriates the video camera and its possibilities in the context of a broader political project. He outlines his approach to filmmaking in the following statement given to *La Jornada*:

Para Taboada, los directores de cine mexicano “no podemos darnos el lujo de producir películas de ficción o de ‘arte puro’; tenemos que reflejar las injusticias del país y denunciar lo que no denuncian los medios de comunicación. Debemos ser cronistas visuales de lo que sucede y ser la voz natural del pueblo.”⁴ (Camacho Servín 2008)

For Taboada Tabone, a film director is not an artist *per se*, or at least not an artist who does his job exclusively for art’s sake, nor a storyteller who invents to entertain. Rather, he should operate as a ‘visual chronicler’ and politically committed researcher who brings to light to a broader audience what would otherwise remain unseen.

In *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra*, Taboada Tabone focuses on his Mexican home-state of Morelos and narrates the resistance of a coalition of several indigenous communities against governmental construction plans for the region. In one case, official infrastructure projects for the area include the construction of about 100,000 new private homes and a golf course. According to statements made in the

4 For Taboada, [we] the directors of Mexican cinema “cannot allow us the luxury to produce fictional movies or ‘pure art’; we have to reflect the country’s injustices and denounce what the mass media do not denounce. We have to be visual chroniclers of what happens and have to be the natural voice of the people.”

film, this would threaten not only the villages' water supplies but the whole local ecosystem. In a second case, the administration of Morelos' capital Cuernavaca prepares the installation of a new waste dump in a zone partly covered by forests and partly used by *ejidatarios*⁵ as communally shared agricultural land. The members of these communities who have refused to give up their lands fear the contamination of the lands they live on. To illustrate the concerns of the people, as well as the formation, organization, and demonstration of resistance and the respective governmental responses, Taboada Tabone assembles an hour of fragments of the material he collected while accompanying the villagers' protest over several months.

13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra is loosely structured by the three Nahuatl-Spanish intertitles *TOUAXKA NEH NEMILISTLI – Nuestra historia*, *TIK IN PALEHUIKAN TOC NIHUAN – Los pueblos se unen*, and *TLAZOKAMATI – El agradecimiento*. The film is largely made up of sequences recorded at demonstrations, protest marches, and the weekly meetings of the *consejo de pueblos*, the council of representatives that affected villages formed to coordinate joint activities. Furthermore, it contains interviews with some of the council members as well as with affected villagers and shows the futile attempts to speak to mendacious and hypocritical governmental representatives. The unpredictable urgency of the situation is emphasized by scenes of peaceful, everyday life in the villages, contrasted with images of waste dumps and vast construction areas filmed in other parts of the country.

5 The Film's Discursive Structure: Historic Rights, Ethnic Identity, Resistance, and Indigenous Environmental Consciousness

The film's discursive structure is based on several aspects that interweave and interact during the course of the film. *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* opens up by pointing out the communities' historic rights: both water rights and the fact that the area endangered by the future waste dump had once been declared a protected nature reserve are traced back to the Mexican Revolution and the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas.

Right from the opening sequence, ethnic identity is performed as a further central aspect of the film's discourse. Resistance itself is explained and legitimized by ethnic

5 The Mexican system of *ejidos*, communal land used for agricultural purposes, was established during the land reforms after the Mexican Revolution, especially under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40).

difference; it is presented as rooted in indigenous identity and history. Julia Salazar, one of the members of the *consejo de pueblos*, explains:⁶

Mi pueblo se llama Xoxocotla, aquí nací y aquí nacieron mis padres, mis abuelos y mis bisabuelos. Todos nacimos aquí. Nosotros hablamos el náhuatl. Nuestro idioma no es el español. Nuestras costumbres no es de la ciudad, es del pueblo, porque somos del pueblo. Desde que llegaron los españoles estamos en lucha. En la Independencia estuvimos con Morelos y en la Revolución con Zapata. Por eso no nos dejamos.⁷ (13 *Pueblos* 3:25)

The fact that this statement is made partly in Spanish, partly in subtitled Nahuatl, right at the beginning of the film, can itself be understood as a marker of cultural difference and as an expression of indigenous identity. In this context, the subtitles can be interpreted as an audio-visual equivalent of the post-colonial literary strategy that Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin specify as “glossing”. The “implicit gap” between the indigenous original and its translation into a European language produces a “cultural sign” and “presents the difference through which an identity (created or recovered) can be expressed” (1989, 62). The villagers’ opposition to governmental construction plans is thus shown as originating in a tradition that draws on the indigenous resistance against Spanish conquest and on the indigenous support for Emiliano Zapata during the Mexican Revolution.

Indigenous identity also serves to construct a crucial difference between the government and the resisting indigenous villagers, between a destructive capitalist logic based on profit and private property and the indigenous, sustainable, and communitarian cosmology, as declared in the filmmaker’s interview with Armando Soriano, another member of the *consejo de pueblos*:

Los pueblos tienen que entender que los dueños de las tierras no son los gobiernos sino somos los pueblos indígenas. Y nosotros sí queremos compartirlas, por nuestras costumbres comunitarias. Nadie es dueño de nada, todos somos dueños de todo. Es algo que tienen que aprender las nuevas generaciones, porque nosotros no estamos de acuerdo con la propiedad privada sino con la propiedad comunitaria. Cada quien que tenga lo que necesita. Nos vemos como los pájaros. No hay ningún pájaro que diga, yo compré este laurel de la india, yo compré esto, o esto es mío, no es cierto. Cada pájaro se para en cualquier árbol y allí consigue su propina. Entonces tenemos

6 In the written transcriptions of statements given in the film, I will not adjust elements of orality, like the use of the grammatical singular for verbs in combination with a plural subject, to ‘standard’ Spanish, as they can be seen as representative of regional cultural identity.

7 “My village is called Xoxocotla, here I was born and here were born my fathers, my grandfathers and my great-grandfathers. We were all born here. We speak Nahuatl. Spanish is not our language. Our customs are not from the city, they are from the countryside, because we are from the countryside. Since the Spanish arrived we are fighting. In the Independence we were with Morelos and in the Revolution with Zapata. That is why we do not surrender.”

que comprender la naturaleza. Yo creo que hace falta conocer muy bien la cultura indígena, pero de fondo.⁸ (*13 Pueblos* 15:07)

The statement demonstrates that the opposition between capitalist and indigenous logic as well as the insistence on indigenous land rights only gains its full effect when connected to, complemented with, and strengthened by the environmentalist argument. The film explains not only the communities' resistance and their grass-roots organization as based on indigenous culture, but also their approach to environmental protection and conservation.

6 Environmental Discourse and the Representation of Indigenous People

For Buell (2001, 27), “the most distinctive ground condition of present-day environmental reflection” is “toxic discourse” (30). The “fear of a poisoned world” (30) is also one of the common denominators of the public debates on environmental problems in Latin America, as, e.g., argued by Miller in his *Environmental History of Latin America*:

Environmental disasters and rumors of disaster have broadened environmentalism's appeal in Latin America, as elsewhere. [...] Across Latin America, environmentalism is today present in nearly all forms of media and makes up a significant part of public and private education. Nearly every newspaper features daily articles on environmental issues, disasters, and efforts to save species, and the region's major television networks carry more programming with nature as subject than do the major private networks of North America. [...] And as environmentalism disseminated to the masses, politics took notice. By the late 1980s, and often earlier, environmental rhetoric became an increasingly common component of political platforms. (Miller 2007, 211)

As Buell explains, toxic discourse mostly appears linked to images of lost pastoral peace and harmony when gaining its full strategic effect:

[...] it makes sense for toxic discourse to enlist pastoral support. It refocuses and democratizes the pastoral ideal: a nurturing space of clean air, clean water, and pleasant uncluttered surroundings that ought to be one's by right. Disenchantment from the illusion of the green oasis is

8 “The people must understand that it is not the government who owns the land but us the indigenous people. And we want to share it, because of our communitarian customs. Nobody owns nothing, we all own everything. That is something the new generations have to learn, because we do not agree with private property but with communal property. Everybody should have what he needs. We see ourselves like birds. There is no bird that says, I bought this tree, I bought that, or this is mine, for sure. Every bird settles in any tree and gets what he needs. That is why we have to understand nature. I think the indigenous culture has to be recognized very profoundly.”

accompanied or precipitated by totalizing images of a world without refuge from toxic penetration. (Buell 2001, 38)

In Western, i.e., US and European discourses on environmental protection, indigenous people are allocated the role of abstract inhabitants of that lost green oasis. Drawing on the stereotype of the ‘noble savage’ available to collective imagination since the times of Rousseau, the “ecologically noble savage” (Redford 1991, 46) provides Western imagination with a discursive figure onto which environmentalist principles can be projected: “Native people in general, and Native Americans in particular, came to be widely viewed as ‘natural conservationists’ who use environmental resources in ways that are nondestructive, sustainable, and mindful of the effects on future generations” (Conklin and Graham 1995, 697). This discursive figure gains its effect particularly through being employed as the antipode to Western concepts of progress, profit, and exploitation. Gibbings explains the function of the strong emphasis on the notions of local knowledge, community, and place in this dualism:

Local systems of knowledge ostensibly are based on sustainability, harmony, and reciprocity with nature, whereas Western society is destructive, exploitative and patriarchal. Far from defining a negative relation to modernity, however, community is defined by the failure of modernity, or what modernity lacks. Therefore, for environmentalist critics of modernity and development, community and locality become an alternative and sustainable space, resistant to colonialism, the state, capitalism, and ecological domination. Identities of “dwelling-in-place” and belonging to community thus become privileged actors in the saga of environmentalist destruction and salvation. (Gibbings 2007, 259)

Environmental discourse tends to include indigenous people in an idealized way, as the inhabitants of a pastoral idyll. As Gibbings indicates, this virtual antithesis of the contaminated world has to be understood as a highly politicized, symbolic place. With its alternative concepts of community and place-bound identity, it serves as a canvas for the projection of industrialized societies’ longings.

In Taboada Tabone’s *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra*, however, the indigenous protagonists seem to take on a much more precise function. The villages, fields and valleys they long to protect maintain their symbolic status as an alternative to capitalist, non-sustainable politics and economy. Nevertheless, within the film’s Neozapatista discourse, places and protagonists are imbued with new meaning. They appear to be part of the social movement’s permanent process of constructing and negotiating an identity as a heterogeneous “comunidad de resistencia” (“resistance community”) (Gadea 2002, 69). This new symbolic place is not located outside of the movement’s realms, as an abstract canvas. Rather, its indigenous inhabitants are themselves displayed as protagonists and an integral part of the movement, with a particular environmentalist agenda. Romero Navarrete underlines that civil protest, social resistance and contemporary Mexican environmental discourse tend to interlace as

un activismo ambientalista integrado por ciudadanos cuyo origen es sumamente heterogéneo. Campesinos indígenas y no indígenas, amas de casa, usuarios de servicios urbanos, líderes populares, académicos, jóvenes estudiantes, todos ellos bajo el fin común de llevar al centro del debate la relación: empleo de los recursos naturales, mercado y pobreza y, como una consecuencia, a la democracia.⁹ (Romero Navarrete 2008, 164)

Before returning to a more detailed analysis of the film's approach to the creation of a common identity for Neozapatista, anti-neoliberal resistance, I will exemplify how it performs a particular environmental discourse by taking a closer look at a pertinent set of sequences. Its central position as the narrative climax of the film underlines its importance and persuasive potential.

First, we are shown images of a paradisiacal place, which apparently is one of the threatened areas of land the resisting indigenous communities are fighting for. We see trees, waterfalls and people in a peaceful setting on a riverside. We are presented with close-up shots of plants and animals, such as fish, crabs, and iguanas. Even-tempered, somewhat sad music emphasizes the harmony of the place.



Fig. 1: *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* (44:18)

Then subtitles are blended in to point out that some of the animals are endangered endemic species. The scene might as well be taken from a TV documentary on a wildlife reserve, and argumentative patterns seem to work in full accord with Western

⁹ “[...] an environmentalist activism formed by citizens with very heterogeneous backgrounds. Indigenous and non indigenous peasants, housewives, users of urban services, popular leaders, academics, young students, all of them with the common goal to bring to the center of the debate the connection between the use of natural resources, market and poverty, and in consequence, democracy.”

environmental discourse, as the images of the threatened idyll are confronted with the evocation of environmental destruction.



Fig. 2: *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* (44:33)

Thereafter the inter-title *TLAZOKAMATI – El agradecimiento* is blended in to indicate once more the indigenous context and to initiate the next sequence, in which we are shown public addresses given by the villagers’ representatives, and rituals alongside the banks of several of the region’s water wells. In the first scene, Saúl Roque Morales from the village’s council of representatives makes the following statement:

El día de hoy estamos iniciando un recorrido a los manantiales de nuestro estado [...]. A la Madre Tierra, estamos con ella. Le mandamos que se revocuen todas las concesiones y permisos a proyectos de cualquier índole, que afecten contra la seguridad, salud y el medio ambiente de los Morelenses.¹⁰ (*13 Pueblos* 45:35)

During the whole sequence, people are shown wearing traditional garments and costumes, beating the drums, performing dances, saying prayers – again partly in Spanish, partly in Nahuatl – and a variety of oblations are offered to the *sagrada aguila*, the holy water.

¹⁰ “Today we start a round trip to the wells of our state [...]. To Mother Earth, we are with her. We demand the abrogation of all concessions and permissions for any kind of projects that affect the security, health and environment of the people of Morelos.”



Fig. 3: 13 *Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* (47:40)

Three important aspects can be observed in the sequence. The first is the emotionally captivating presentation of the pastoral idyll, the paradisiacal, untouched but threatened place. The second is the introduction of the stylistic means and patterns of semi-scientific wildlife documentaries to call up the recipients' prior viewing experiences with the genre and to confer upon the sequence a rational quality in addition to its ideological content. The importance of scientific grounding of environmental argumentation is explained by Conklin:

One of environmentalism's major strengths is its grounding in science, a system of knowledge with claims to authority acknowledged by a large portion of the world's public and the institutions of nation-states and global capitalism. As both a knowledge system and a political force, science has many advantages, including its goal of seeking empirical truths, its ability to change and adapt as new information comes to light, and its partial independence from political structures and state institutions. [...] Scientific knowledge has become a powerful tool for local groups attempting to resist top-down development schemes and outsider's claims on local natural resources. (2006, 166)

The third factor is the representation of indigenous environmental consciousness. The environmental discourse underlying the first sequence of images showing a threatened environment is complemented by images of what seems to be the indigenous community of the historically and culturally legitimized "nature's defenders" (Gibbins 2007, 257). In the film, the imagined community of the 'ecologically noble savage' enjoying the green oasis seems to be as present as in Western imagination, but with a different function within the parameters of toxic discourse. Here the rhetoric of the 'dwelling-in-place-identity' of the 'ecologically noble savage' is not only imbued with the promise of an unpolluted refuge from contamination. Far from bearing a mere metonymic significance, it serves as a concrete location of the forces of active struggle

against the neoliberal political and economic system. Taboada Tabone's environmental argument opens up the gates of the green oasis, hauls out the 'ecologically noble savage' and incorporates it in the construction of a new strategic identity of political resistance. In this new context, an extended concept of ecological identity is created and made available for adoption not only by members of indigenous communities, but also by non-indigenous citizens associated with *neozapatismo*, as an expression of discontent with non-sustainable and socially unjust politics.

7 Indigenous Environmentalism and the Construction of an Identity for Anti-Neoliberal Resistance

Yashar indicates that the category of 'Indianness' itself, as the fundamental common denominator of supra-regional, pan-indigenous movements has never been

a natural category. It is a category imposed by colonial powers; it does not recognize the diversity (and at times historical animosity) among indigenous communities. To forge an indigenous movement in the contemporary era, activists had to convince people to expand their self-identification from Quichua, or Shuar, or Totzil or something else to *Indian*. This was not a given. And in the process of organizing and protesting, those identities, interests and preferences were open to further change. (Yashar 2005, 10)

In *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra*, the expansion from local to transnational indigenous identification is explicitly performed in speeches and rituals, when the resisting villagers receive groups of delegates from indigenous movements from all over the Americas (15:30). This can be described as an instance of what critical analysis has specified as the re-ethnicization of the political field in Latin America since the 1970s and 1980s. The subsequent step in this development was the merging of indigenous with other subaltern social movements. The shared ground for the redefinition of goals, strategies, and alliances of indigenous and other social movements was the transition from authoritarian to neoliberal forms of Latin American governmental organization (cf. Postero and Zamosc 2004, 21). The recognition of a common objective and the joint struggle against neoliberalism brought with it new possibilities to cooperate with other social and political actors, the readjustment of organizational structures and, consequently, the strengthening of the movements' potentials for collective identification (cf. Johnston and Almeida 2006, 15). Kaltmeier points out that in this new situation, on one hand, ethnicity plays an ever more important role while, on the other hand, the distinctions between different social movements tend not to be geared as much to ethnic aspects. In the context of anti-neoliberal resistance, indigenous movements ground their existence on the interpretation of indigenous cultures in opposition to neoliberal discourse (cf. Kaltmeier 2007, 204). With reference to Ramirez-Voltaire (2004), Kaltmeier (2007) explains that, while indigenous move-

ments forge new alliances with other social movements, they introduce into these coalitions a new paradigm for subaltern self-identification. Now, ‘being *indígena*’ does not refer anymore to an exclusively ethnic identity, but has become synonymous of a cultural alternative to neoliberalism and subaltern resistance in general (2007, 204). In other words, the dissolution of the boundaries between different subaltern groups has led to a regrouping of dissident forces and, at the same time, to the production of new meanings. Local concerns mix with national and transnational ones, and are argumentatively backed by an explicit reference to indigenous identity. The new rhetorical strategies, now legitimized by the construction of cultural difference between a supposed indigenous and a capitalist perception of the world, are accessible to the whole social movement. In the case of Mexican *neozapatismo*, Gadea (2000, 63) confirms that “el movimiento introduce un debate político y cultural que lo mantendrá en ‘conexión’ con otros sujetos colectivos desde *una identidad que trasciende lo puramente indígena*, pero que incuestionablemente parte de ella.”¹¹

In the process of the construction of an expanded identity of resistance, environmentalism can be employed as a decisive unifying element. As one of the central aspects of social and political debates of the twenty-first century, it is – as we have seen – exceedingly persuasive and basically immune to attack because of its scientific rather than limited ideological approach. It is capable of serving as a rallying point for the most diverse social actors:

Identities, commitments, and communities are constructed through practice, in the performance of behavior, rituals, and identifying markers. Environmentalism offers a host of practices for communicating individual values, identity, and affiliation with others. [...] Environmentalism offers a language, concepts, and tangible forms of action to express cultural critique and assert moral agency and identity. Its ethical dimensions make it compatible with many other social movements concerned with human rights and social justice. (Conklin 2006, 168)

In *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra*, Taboada Tabone apparently appropriates environmentalism’s possibilities to broaden anti-neoliberal protest. Drawing on Neozapatista discourses, he combines the presentation of the communities’ resistance against environmental contamination with multiple references to the Mexican Revolution, to revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata, and to the possibilities of a new uprising of the discontented Mexican people. Throughout the film Taboada Tabone insists on the shared history, ideology, enemy, and political goal of the indigenous communities and the other sectors of the social movement. Taboada Tabone portrays an indigenous identity consisting of cultural difference, resistance, and environmental consciousness, and merges it with Neozapatista, anti-neoliberal protest to

¹¹ “[...] the movement introduces a political and cultural debate that keeps it in ‘connection’ with other collective subjects from *an identity that transcends the purely indigenous*, but unquestionably originates from it.”

construct a new strategic identity of common resistance. This becomes evident, e.g., in the thematic framings at the beginning and at the end of the documentary, where the local concerns of the inhabitants of the 13 *pueblos* are extended to a national level. The film opens with the introductory written words: “En el futuro las guerras ya no se pelearán por el petróleo, sino por el agua. En México esa guerra ya comenzó.”¹² Then follow recordings from a protest march that turns into a street battle between the protesters and federal police forces. The documentary thus not only ties in with debates actually held in the Mexican public sphere concerning, e.g., the legality of the privatization of water supplies. It also evokes images that are not explicitly tied to local events from Morelos, and creates parallels to other, similar incidents, e.g., the protests in Atenco summarized in another contemporary documentary, Nicolás Défossé’s and Mario Viveros’ *Romper el cerco* (2007).

Towards the end of *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra*, we are shown images from another demonstration. The event closes with the singing of the Mexican national anthem, which – with its pledge to stand up against all enemies that try to rob the soil of the Mexican people – is now interpreted as a justification for the resistance against the construction plans and the building of the waste dump: “Más si osare un extraño enemigo / profanar con su planta tu suelo / piensa ¡oh Patria querida! que el cielo / un soldado en cada hijo te dio”¹³ (56:50). The montage concludes with comments from each of the central spokespersons that had been introduced during the course of the film. Moreover, it is one of the very few times that Taboada Tabone is personally present.¹⁴ From an off-camera position, he initiates a conversation by asking counselor Armando Soriano a direct question:

- ¿Usted cree que vamos a hacer una revolución en México?
- Creo que se están dando las condiciones, ¿no? Creo que se están dando las condiciones, pero tenemos una mentalidad cerrada de los panistas y ni modo, ¿no? Si no se abran, bueno, camaradas, los pueblos tienen que llegar a rescatar sus derechos, y no vemos los caminos legales para llegar a rescatar a sus derechos, entonces nos vamos a buscar otro camino, ¿no? La constitución lo dice, pues. El pueblo tiene en todo momento el derecho de modificar o alterar el tipo de gobierno que mal le convenga, el pueblo, caramba, artículo 39.¹⁵ (*13 Pueblos* 56:55)

12 “In the future, wars will not be fought for oil anymore, but for water. In Mexico, this war has already begun.”

13 “But if some enemy outlander should dare / to profane your ground with his sole / think, oh beloved Fatherland! that heaven / has given you a soldier in every son.”

14 In another sequence, he appears for a very short moment as part of an audience at a meeting.

15 “– Do you think we will make a revolution in Mexico? – I think the conditions are being given, no? I think the conditions are being given, but we have the closed mentality of the PAN party, so there is no way. If they do not open up themselves, the people have to recover their rights, and we do not see the legal ways to recover their rights, so we will look for other ways, no? It is in the constitution. At any moment, the people have the right to modify or change the type of government that does not suit them, article 39.”

The Mexican Revolution, as another important *lieu de mémoire* of Mexican collective consciousness, is mentioned again at the end of the film, in two more statements by Armando Soriano and Julia Salazar:

Y además, acuérdense que ya falta poco para que se cumplan los cien años que ha sido la Revolución, y los 200 que ha sido la guerra de la Independencia. Acuérdense también que los pueblos no nos olvidamos del papel que nos corresponde hacer.¹⁶ (58:55)

Por eso le decimos al gobierno: si va a seguir destruyendo nuestra tierra, los pueblos nos vamos a alzar. Porque Zapata desde arriba ve todo, está con nosotros y la lucha de los trece pueblos, que ya no somos trece, sino todo Morelos, por eso nos llamamos hoy 'el consejo de pueblos.' Esta lucha la vamos a ganar, y quien nos va a agradecer son los que vienen. Porque les vamos a dejar un territorio limpio, sano, porque la lucha no es contra nadie. Es solo para defender el agua, el aire y la tierra.¹⁷ (1:00:55)

As we can see, the film invokes three of the most prominent national symbols – the national anthem, the constitution, and the Revolution – to back the protest, which thus becomes metonymic for the concerns and the fight for the rights of all Mexicans.

This finally leads me to discuss the indigenous communities' own role in fashioning this strategic identity and to ask whether indigenous populations play an active role, or whether they are passively functionalized by social movements to improve the positions of the latter in political negotiations.

8 Indigenous Participation in Shaping Environmental Discourse

The practice of incorporating an imagined indigenous subject in political discourse certainly has historical roots in Latin America. Since the very beginning of the conquest an imagined indigenous subject has been part of political strategies, and the power to interpret that image has usually been of utmost importance in political discourses. Ethnicity has, in one way or another, by means of inclusion or exclusion of

16 “Also remember that there is little time left until the hundredth anniversary of the revolution and the 200th of the Independence. Remember as well that we the people do not forget our corresponding part.”

17 “That is why we say to the government: if you keep on destroying our land, we the people will rise up. Because Zapata sees all from above, he is with us and the struggle of the thirteen villages, which are not thirteen anymore, but all of Morelos, that is why today we call ourselves ‘the people’s council.’ We will win this fight and the ones to come will thank us. Because we will leave them a clean and healthy territory, because the struggle is not against anyone. It is just to defend the water, the air and the land.”

indigenous components, continuously been used as a point of reference in the intellectual debates concerning Latin American identity. But what is characteristic of the contemporary environmental discourse is that indigenous communities and their representatives now do not just have the possibility to position themselves in this discourse, but actually participate in shaping it. The appearance of ‘toxic discourse’ in transnational and national political fields roughly coincided with a change in rural development politics throughout Latin America:

Indigenous peoples and campesinos are no longer the objects of the national modernization projects that sought to transform them into modern citizens and proletarians for the industrial state in earlier times up until roughly the 1970s. It is the resource-rich lands they live on, not the people themselves, that have become the object of development. Indigenous lands are integral to the economic strategies of nation-states attempting to survive in the global marketplace, and this fact has transformed social movements. For example, peasants around the world have recast ‘red’ struggles, demanding a more equitable distribution of state resources, into ‘green’ ones that access international environmentalist resources to protect lands. (Doane 2007, 453)

Well aware of the symbolic capital¹⁸ of the role that was assigned to them as ‘ecologically noble savages’ inhabiting the lost green oasis, indigenous movements adopt “the well-developed symbolic toolkit of the environmental movement” (Doane 2007, 452). If we take into account that indigenous communities, just like any other social actor, “create, maintain, and modify collective identities in the face of changing social, political, and economical circumstances” (Kraay 2007, 1), we can conclude that indigenous environmentalist identities were deliberately fashioned to be employed in the struggles for indigenous land rights, access to natural resources, and cultural or political self-determination. Ulloa (2005, 54) states that “an ecological identity has been conferred on indigenous peoples who, at the same time, have contributed to the existence of that identity by reaffirming their identity, practices and conceptions in its terms.” In this context, the image of “the ecological native is not only a stereotype, but a useful and effective means of indigenous self-representation in non-indigenous arenas” (134). Moreover, their capacity to orchestrate ethnicity strategically demonstrates that indigenous social actors are not only very well aware of the global rules of mediated negotiation of norms and values, but that the participation in this negotiation itself has become an integral factor of indigenous identities.

If “expressions of identity are flexible, strategic, and formulated in relationship to both historical and contemporary constraints and opportunities” (Doane 2007, 452), it can be argued that *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* serves as a platform for such a strategically defined indigenous identity. The indigenous communities appropriate environmental discourse by employing “self-stylized representa-

¹⁸ Conklin and Graham (1995, 696) introduce Bourdieu’s concept of ‘symbolic capital’ into the study of the construction of the ‘ecologically noble savage.’

tion as [...] ‘nature’s defenders’” (Gibbins 2007, 257). Nevertheless, the appropriation and strategic utilization of the ‘ecological native’ image also involves the risk of producing an all-too-wide gap between indigenous everyday reality and what Ramos (1994, 161) calls the ‘hyperreal Indian,’ the projection and “model that by anticipation replaces the lived experience of indigenous peoples,” in the sense of Baudrillard’s simulacrum.¹⁹ If reality cannot meet the high expectations towards the “ethical hologram” (162) of the upright and morally untouchable indigenous steward of the environment, the produced symbolic capital and the formerly forged alliances will probably be threatened to erode. However, one might suppose that this risk is not as present on a national level as on a transnational one, seeing as, e.g., living standards, political experiences, and visions for the social future between the involved actors are not as different. In *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra*, some of the evoked common denominators are – as we have seen – Mexican revolutionary history, its martyr Emiliano Zapata, and the shared experience of corrupt governmental policies. Thus, local interests and national anti-neoliberal protest merge and mutually strengthen each other. On the one hand, markers of cultural difference, like the sequences in Nahuatl that require Spanish subtitles, or the components of indigenous ritual and spirituality, are displayed in accordance with patterns of strategic essentialism. This way, they increase indigenous impact on environmental discourse, where

native people are treated not as peripheral members whose inclusion requires shedding their own traditions but as paradigmatic exemplars of the community’s core values. Indigenous people are natural partners in the global, ecological imaginary because of – not in spite of – their cultural difference. (Conklin and Graham 1995, 697)

On the other hand, the symbolic capital of imagined indigenous environmental consciousness, now conferred to anti-neoliberal protest, offers a shared ground for identification, a means to express disapproval with capitalist logic, and an internationally audible articulation of discontent.

9 Conclusions: Indigenous Identity, Ecological Symbolic Capital and the ‘Authenticity Fallacy’

In his documentary *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra*, Francesco Taboada Tabone merges environmentalist and anti-neoliberal, Neozapatista discourses. The film portrays and performs what Leyva-Solano and Sonnleitner (2000,

¹⁹ Ramos refers to Baudrillard 1983, 4.

174) refer to as strategic alliances between different sectors of Mexican society. Starting from a local conflict in Morelos between indigenous campesinos and the regional government, environmentalism as well as the Neozapatista reappropriation of national icons of the Mexican Revolution serve to build a symbolic bridge to the national and international audience. Indigenous identity is strategically employed to strengthen the film's claims. The cultural difference between indigenous cosmology and capitalist economy is integrated into the environmentalist argumentation. At the same time, it is converted into a platform for identification that is available to non-indigenous anti-neoliberal resistance so as to emphasize that the difference in question is not so much an ethnical, but rather an ethical one. Local indigenous voices and social critique on a national level thus mutually reinforce each other's standpoints. It can be argued that it is this mutuality which enables the film to construct an essentialized image of 'nature's defenders,' while it avoids selling a 'hyperreal hologram' of its indigenous protagonists. Rather, it activates, and plays with, the spectators' own longings for authentic 'ecologically noble savages' and thereby generates symbolic capital for the communities it represents.

Although *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* does not actively reflect its own ways of constructing essentialized 'ecological natives,' it still may be outlining a possible path to cope with what I would like to postulate as the 'authenticity fallacy' of environmental imagination when it comes to the perception of indigenous cultures. On one hand, e.g., indigenous activists seem to be locked into a sort of vicious circle. While trying to provoke international attention and support for their legitimate causes, they activate the stereotype of the 'ecologically noble savage.' Simultaneously, they risk to get entangled in the springes of their own essentialized simulacrum, the 'hyperreal Indian.' Symbolic capital depends almost entirely on the continuous upholding of an implicated 'authenticity,' rooted not in indigenous culture but in the Western image of the 'noble savage.' On the other hand, the 'noble savage' carburized in Western collective imagery appears like an overly demanding requirement, when applied to a whole set of cultures in exchange for moral and/or financial support. In a medialized world, where continuous reinventions of individual and collective, social and political identities have become a rather normal procedure, it stands out as something fairly strange, obsolete and archaic. It appears as if the inhabitants of the 'global village,' the 'nomadic' subjects facing ecological crisis in their global *non-lieux* (cf. Augé 1992), are longing for place-attached, 'authentically' localized and naturalized objects. They find them in the 'ecologically othered' (cf. Schmidt 2010, 285) simulacrum of the 'ecological native.' Yet, instead of requiring simulated 'authenticity' from indigenous cultures, social actors and movements, it would seem more productive to reconceptualize this specific aspect of global environmental discourses. To escape the 'authenticity fallacy,' it would be necessary to accept indigenous social actors as ones that legitimately reformulate social and political identities, invent alternative traditions, and image new communities. They apparently do so in perpetual exchange and communication with global developments and imaginations, with knowledge

about the images that circulate about them, appropriating, integrating and modifying certain elements, the way networked communities have always done. However, when it comes to environmental implications, unlike other imagined communities, the indigenous ones seem to do so under constant observation in the magnifying prism of 'authenticity.' In this context, Taboada Tabone's *13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra* might be representative of the contemporary remapping of possible discursive alternatives. The documentary applies strategic stereotypes, but at the same time tries to indicate the historical *a priori* of ethnic identity and social struggles, framing them into Mexican sociopolitical development. According to the common political goals of indigenous and non indigenous actors, it converts essentialized cultural difference into political difference between sustainable und destructive concepts of modernity and development. Moreover, a similar trend can be observed in the context of the evolution of the concept of *buen vivir*, discussed in the introductory part of the present contribution, as a transnational, decolonized, post-development, and post-capitalist proposal for the development of an alternative, sustainable yet utopian modernity.

10 Bibliography

10.1 Works Cited

- 13 Pueblos en defensa del agua, el aire y la tierra*. Dir. Francesco Taboada Tabone. UNAM, GAIA A.C, 2008.
- Augé, Marc. *Non-Lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*. Paris: Le Seuil, 1992.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Ashcroft, Bill. "Modernity's First Born: Latin America and Postcolonial Transformation." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 29.2 (1998): 7–29.
- Barbas-Rhoden, Laura. *Ecological Imaginations in Latin American fiction*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.
- Borsò, Vittoria. „Die Aktualität mexikanischer Literatur: von der Identität zur Heterogenität.“ *Iberoamericana* 16.2 (1992): 84–108.
- Bretón, Víctor, David Cortez, and Fernando García. "En busca del sumak kawsay. Presentación del Dossier." *Íconos. Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 48 (2014): 9–24.
- Bretón, Víctor. "Etnicidad, desarrollo y 'Buen Vivir': Reflexiones críticas en perspectiva histórica." *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 95 (2013): 71–95.
- Buell, Lawrence. *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Camacho Servín, Fernando. "Persisten campesinos de Morelos en su lucha por defender los recursos naturales." *La Jornada online edition*. <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2008/03/14/index.php?section=cultura&article=a07n1cul>. 14 March 2008 (23 September 2015).

- Casasús, Mario. "Francesco Taboada: La Revolución mexicana es el génesis del indigenismo del EZLN y del ALBA." *Clarín.cl*. http://www.elclarin.cl/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=23003. 20 September 2010 (23 September 2015).
- Conklin, Beth A., and Laura R. Graham. "The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics." *American Anthropologist* 97.4 (1995): 695–710.
- Conklin, Beth A. "Environmentalism, Global Community and the New Indigenism." *Inclusion and Exclusion in the Global Arena*. Ed. Max Kirsch. New York: Routledge, 2006. 161–176.
- Corona, Ignacio, and Beth E. Jörgensen. "Introduction." *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle: Theoretical Perspectives on the Liminal Genre*. Eds. Ignacio Corona, and Beth E. Jörgensen. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. 1–21.
- Doane, Molly. "The Political Economy of the Ecological Native." *American Anthropologist* 109.3 (2007): 452–462.
- Forns Broggi, Roberto. *Nudos como estrellas. ABC de la imaginación ecológica en nuestras Américas*. Lima: Editorial Nido de Cuervos, 2012.
- Gadea, Carlos A. "La estrategia de los espejos: el (post)neo-zapatismo como posibilidad. Modernidad-global y dimensiones del movimiento Neozapatista de Chiapas." *Barbarói* 12 (2002): 53–75.
- Galeano, Eduardo. *Úselo y tírelo. El mundo del fin del milenio, visto desde una ecología latinoamericana*. Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994.
- Gibbings, Julie. "Becoming Nature's Defenders: Fashionable Identities and Subversive Community in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala." *Negotiating Identities in Modern Latin America*. Ed. Hendrik Kraay. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007. 257–276.
- Heffes, Gisela. *Políticas de la destrucción – Poéticas de la preservación. apuntes para una lectura (eco)crítica del medio ambiente en América Latina*. Rosario: Viterbo, 2013.
- Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet. The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Hidalgo-Capitán, Antonio Luis, and Ana Patricia Cubillo-Guevara. "Seis debates abiertos sobre el *sumak kawsay*." *Íconos. Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 48 (2014): 25–40.
- Johnston, Hank, and Paula Almeida. "Neoliberal Globalization and Popular Movements in Latin America." *Latin American Social Movements: Globalization, Democratization, and Transnational Networks*. Eds. Hank Johnston and Paula Almeida. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. 3–18.
- Kaltmeier, Olaf. "Politische Gemeinschaften und indigener Protest. Anmerkungen zu Ethnizität und Politik in Lateinamerika." *Die Ethnisierung des Politischen. Identitätspolitik in Lateinamerika, Asien und den USA*. Eds. Christian Büschges and Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2007. 152–192.
- Kraay, Hendrik. "Introduction: Negotiating Identities in Modern Latin America." *Negotiating Identities in Modern Latin America*. Ed. Hendrik Kraay. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007. 1–24.
- Leyva-Solano, Xóchitl, and Willibald Sonnleitner. "¿Qué es el neozapatismo?" *Espiral* VI.17 (2000): 163–202.
- Martínez Alier, Juan. *The Environmentalism of the Poor. A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2002.
- Miller, Shawn William. *An Environmental History of Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Monsiváis, Carlos. "On the Chronicle in Mexico." *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle: Theoretical Perspectives on the Liminal Genre*. Eds. Ignacio Corona and Beth E. Jörgensen. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. 25–35.
- Oppermann, Serpil. "Transnationalization of Ecocriticism." *Anglia* 130.3 (2012): 401–419.

- Postero, Nancy Grey, and León Zamosc. "Indigenous Movements and the Indian Question in Latin America." *The Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Latin America*. Eds. Nancy Grey Postero and León Zamosc. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004. 1–31.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 1992. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Quijano, Aníbal. "'Bien vivir': Entre el 'desarrollo' y la des/colonialidad del poder." *Viento Sur* 122 (2012): 46–56.
- Ramirez-Voltaire, Simón. "Neue demokratische Formen in Bolivien? Von der dezentralen Rebellion zur 'Neugründung der Republik.'" *Neoliberalismus, Autonomie, Widerstand. Soziale Bewegungen in Lateinamerika*. Eds. Olaf Kaltmeier, Jens Kastner, and Elisabeth Tuider. Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2004. 216–233.
- Ramos, Alcida Rita. "The Hyperreal Indian." *Critique of Anthropology* 14 (1994): 153–171.
- Redford, Kent. "The Ecologically Noble Savage." *Cultural Survival* 15.1 (1991): 46–48.
- Romero Navarrete, Lourdes. "Experiencias de acción colectiva frente a la problemática ambiental en México." *Revista mexicana de ciencias políticas y sociales* 203 (2008): 157–176.
- Schmidt, Elmar. "Naturwahrnehmung, Umweltdiskurs und ökologischer Anspruch in Luis Sepúlvedas *Un viejo que leía novelas de amor*." *Reflexe eines Umwelt- und Klimabewusstseins in fiktionalen Texten der Romania – Eigentliches und uneigentliches Schreiben zu einem sich verdichtenden globalen Problem*. Eds. Cornelia Klettke and Georg Maag. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2010. 281–296.
- Slovic, Scott, Swarnalatha Rangarajan, and Vidya Sarveswaran. *Ecocriticism of the Global South*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015.
- Ulloa, Astrid. *The Ecological Native: Indigenous Peoples' Movements and Eco-Governmentality in Colombia*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Yashar, Deborah. *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

10.2 Further Reading

- Anderson, Mark D. *Disaster Writing. The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011.
- Binns, Niall. *¿Callejón sin salida? La crisis ecológica en la poesía hispanoamericana*. Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias, 2004.
- DeVries, Scott. *A History of Ecology and Environmentalism in Spanish American Literature*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013.
- Flys Junquera, Carmen, José Manuel Marrero Henríquez, and Julia Barella. *Ecocríticas. Literatura y medio ambiente*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2010.
- French, Jennifer L. *Nature, Neo-Colonialism, and the Spanish American Regional Writers*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005.
- Heffes, Gisela, ed. *Ecocrítica en América Latina. Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana* 79 (2014).
- Kane, Adrian Taylor. *The Natural World in Latin American Literatures: Ecocritical Essays on Twentieth Century Writings*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010.
- López-Lozano, Miguel. *Utopian Dreams, Apocalyptic Nightmares. Globalization in Recent Mexican and Chicano Narrative*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008.
- Marrero Henríquez, and José Manuel, eds. *Literatura y sostenibilidad en la era del antropoceno*. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Fundación Canaria Mapfre Guanarteme, 2011.

- Rivera-Barnes, Beatriz, and Jerry Hoeg. *Reading and Writing the Latin American Landscape*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Shapiro, Daniel, ed. *Eco-Literature and Arts in Latin America. Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 45.2 (2012).
- Wylie, Lesley. *Colonial Tropes and Postcolonial Tricks. Rewriting the Tropics in the 'novela de la selva.'* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009.