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Diffractive Assemblies and Invertebrate Spaces

Communal Struggle in the Mexican Anthropocene

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Abstract

The importance of spaces of resistance lies in their ability to subvert and even change the hegemonic discourse. However, and despite extensive research on geopolitics and space-making processes, little has been said on the power that subaltern spaces can have in this area. Thus, it is the aim of this thesis to demonstrate the existence and strength of these space-making practices – which I choose to call invertebrate spaces. That is, diffracted spaces of radical play that can allow for the insertion of subaltern identities into the hegemonic discourse. To exemplify this, I have performed extensive ethnographic research on three subaltern civil rights groups in Mexico City.

I chose this so-called postcolonial country because of its inherent subalternity in the world stage, and its continuing process of coloniality. This setting also allows me to clearly delineate the role of invertebrate spaces and their importance within the current decolonial body of work. Moreover, it leads me to argue that their furthering and nourishment is a moral imperative that should be taken up by academics and universities alike.

Abstracto

La importancia de los espacios de resistencia radica en su capacidad para subvertir e incluso cambiar el discurso hegemónico. Sin embargo, y a pesar de una ya existente y extensa investigación sobre geopolítica y procesos de creación de espacio, poco se ha dicho sobre el poder que los espacios subalternos pueden tener en el discurso hegemónico. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de esta tesis es demostrar la existencia y fuerza de prácticas subalternas de creación de espacios, que elijo llamar espacios de invertebrados. Es decir, espacios difractados de juego radical que pueden permitir la inserción de identidades subalternas en el discurso hegemónico. Para ejemplificar esto, he realizado una extensa investigación etnográfica con tres grupos subalternos de lucha social en la Ciudad de México.

Elegí este país poscolonial debido a su subalternidad inherente en el escenario mundial, y su continuo proceso de colonialidad. Esta configuración también me permite delinear claramente en esta tesis la naturaleza de los espacios de invertebrados y su importancia dentro del cuerpo de trabajo descolonial actual. Además, me lleva a argumentar que la fomentación y apoyo a estos espacios es un imperativo moral que deberían asumir tanto académicos como universidades.

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This thesis necessarily engages with instances of violenceⁱ.

‘They tell us to be like zombies and be satisfied
And never ask about anything
Yes, that's how it's always been around here’
(Thåström, Eriksson, & Ljungstedt, 1979)

‘Why hurt the subsoil? Why open that belly as well? That ... spring, why excavate so deep? It was hurting the earth, it was hurting the water, and that water so ... for us it is so pure that we drink from it and use it to feed our children’ (PH Asamblea General de los Pueblos, 2019)

1. Introduction

In early autumn 2019 I was stuck in traffic in the southern part of Mexico City, henceforth known as CDMX, while trying to arrive to a work appointment. Anyone who has ever been to CDMX can attest that this is so common that it is something you account for in your everyday. In fact, the sprawling capital of Mexico consistently ranks among one of the most crowded cities in the world. Nevertheless, the cab driver who was taking me to one of the Autonomous University of Mexico’s (UNAMⁱⁱ) institutes mentioned something that caught my attention. While talking about the seemingly ever-increasing traffic, he mentioned Andrés Lajous Loaeza. Mr Loaeza, I found out, is the current secretary of mobility of CDMX. He oversees the betterment of urban mobility and public spaces. This includes roads, public transport, public spaces, and the upkeep of all of these while trying to find ways to decongest the city. My driver mentioned that traffic had gotten markedly worse after Loaeza took over his position overseeing the department of mobility. He said, ‘he is very well learned and has studied a lot, but he has no clue about the reality of driving in the city’ (personal communication, 2019). This caught my interest, and when I pressed the cab driver for more information he mentioned that Loaeza studied sociology and urban planning at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. However, for all his knowledge, it was obvious, at least to my driver, that he had never been a driver by profession. In addition, given Loaeza’s place of study, my driver was certain that he had never had to engage with public transport due to the prohibitive price of studying in MIT for most of Mexicans. This meant that he did not have a lived experience which would enable him to understand the *lived space* of most of the people in the city.

This conversation stayed with me for months because it underlined some of the findings I had during my time in CDMX. Here, I saw a disconnect between the everyday experiences of people living in CDMX and the plans which were enacted by the government – whether federal or local. This was a point of dissonance during my research because as of December 2018, thanks to the election of now-president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Mexico has had

what seemed to be an openly socialist government. A government which has been working on the so-called ‘Fourth Transformation’ (Fuentes, 2018) to bring about more equality in the country. Nevertheless, the spatiotemporal realities of these people, when juxtaposed against governmental discourse, were increasingly marked the lower their socioeconomic status. Indeed, the social realities of those most in need did not match, and often clashed, with the actions of the Mexican authorities. Thus, I was met with bitterness and disappointment whenever I asked about the policies enacted by the federal and local administrations.

However, the dominant, or hegemonic, sociocultural discourse of the reigning political left in Mexico was far more than discursively rejected by some people. Instead, they formed assemblies or collectives to reclaim their own space and historicity. They shunned the signs and images given to them by the current political power as much as they had done so during neoliberal administrations. In the words of Henri Lefebvre, they rejected the abstract space of power which ‘presents itself as a transparent (and hence pure) world, and as reassuring’ (1991, p. 389). To them, the name of a party or the words of a politician were solely an illusion if their discourse did not match with their actions. Further, these pluralities or counter-movements enacted their own political discourse with their characteristic ways of living and being.

1.1 La Lucha

To fully understand my findings, it is important to first explicate the meaning of certain spatiotemporal practices as well as the context of my thesis. Let us begin with *La Lucha* which can be literally translated into the fight. However, within the Latin-American context, *la lucha* acquires a specific meaning among the *clases populares*. That is, the popular class, a term used to refer to people who fall below the middle-class line in countries such as Mexico or France.

La lucha is a performative struggle that embodies discursive, social, and material acts. It is simultaneously a philosophy, a practice, and an action of social struggle that seeks justice that is always to come. In a sense, *la lucha* is akin to the Derridean concept of justice because it is a decentred struggle whose resolution never arrives. In other words, like Derrida’s justice, it is not a ‘state of affairs but rather a movement toward the particularity of the Other’ (Valverde, 1999). Consequently, the performance of *la lucha* hinges of the existence of the Other. This means that it cannot come to an end unless the otherness of the other is resolved by embracing the alterity which initiates its othering. In this case, the Other is the popular class.

Broadly speaking, the popular class is made up of the lower class – including both the proletariat and lumpenproletariat (Garnier, 2015). This means that a member of the popular class can be a factory worker, a domestic worker, or a thief. However, in Mexico the importance

of the usage of popular class resides in the fact that it represents the majority of the Mexican people (Barragán, 2017). A majority that according to some studies (Molina, 2018) is growing. Therefore, the popular class is not only populous, but also represents a plural performativity with a rich historicity that predates, but is also changed by, the Spanish conquista. However, one should be aware that this is also a term that hegemonic classes use to erase through homogenisation by situating this group below an “abyssal line” between those who live above and those who live below the line of the human’ (Dijkema, 2019, p. 254). That is, an invisible but uncrossable line between those who matter, and those who do not. Thus, one must be sensitive to the importance and the risk of addressing the struggle of the popular classes.

Yet, it is precisely in this struggle that my study focuses on. Specifically, it examines the embodiment of *la lucha* by social rights groups belonging to the popular classes in CDMX. To do this, I focus on three different social rights groups: the *Asamblea General de los Pueblos, Barrios, Colonias y Pedregales de Coyoacán* (AGP), the *Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México* (AMI), and *Iranu Colectivo* (IC)ⁱⁱⁱ. While AMI and IC are groups strictly conformed by Indigenous peoples who have usually immigrated to CDMX, AGP is a group conformed by a mix of Indigenous peoples from CDMX, as well as working class people and Indigenous peoples who are immigrants from other parts of Mexico. By contrast, IC is largely made up of Indigenous women lawyers who use their knowledge and middle-class status to help other Indigenous women. IC is an interesting case because their work and education level places them as middle-class, but the racialised character of Mexican society pushes against this and lowers their status towards that of the popular class. Thus, these collectives and their intra-active becoming in Mexican society will allow me to explore different kinds of plural performativities of *la lucha* in CDMX, and the performances that come with them.

1.2 Aim and Significance

I chose this urban centre due to the inherent neoliberal and capitalist spatial practice found in Henri Lefebvre’s abstract space (1991). Abstract space is the space of power, and the centre to which peripheral spaces are sacrificed to, to enhance the possibility of accumulation. It is also the space of representation. It is the reason and the opposition of spaces of resistance because power needs something to reflect against (Lefebvre, 1991). Indeed, cities are an accurate demonstration of abstract space because, despite only taking a small percentage of the world’s surface, political and economic forces have enabled the relocation of most of humanity into these areas. Spaces that are increasingly planned for the commodification of everything within their confines, and the control of flow of capital, thus ensuring the integration and

interconnection of networks of accumulation. Mr. Loaeza's planification of space—the abstraction and homogenisation of my taxi driver's lived space—is another example of abstract space. Therefore, by focusing on CDMX, I can also inspect the space of creation and destruction of the Other and its resistance. To do this, I shall examine the embodiment of spaces of collective resistance from the urban popular classes of Mexico.

My aim is to argue that this kind of space-making practice creates a different kind of space which I call invertebrate spaces. A practice—both as a process and product—that can give us new pathways for countering subalternity and coloniality, and which I will develop and demonstrate through this thesis.

Invertebrate spaces are subaltern spaces of performance that expand on the trialectics of Henry Lefebvre's spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space (1991), or Edward Soja's first, second, and third space (1996). Lefebvre and Soja's spatial theories are based on societal forms of space creation. As such, each spatial enaction relates to a societal practice. Spatial practice, first space, is the space of city planners and engineers. Representations of space, second space, is the conceived space such as seen in a painting. They are also tied to ideological practices that order or impose knowledge. Representational spaces are the lived spaces that result from the ideology and spatial practices enacted in spatial practices and representations of space. It is also the spatial practice where Soja departs from Lefebvre. Yet, in either framework, this is the space where invertebrate space emerges.

An invertebrate space is a representational space in that it is 'space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). It is also what Soja would call a thirdspace in that it is an open space where binaries meet. Thus, it is a space of:

'subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history.' (Soja, 1996, pp. 56-57)

As such, it is a space where otherness is brought to the forefront to create endless possibilities outside sociocultural dichotomies. However, invertebrate spaces differ from these concepts in that they are exclusively subaltern spaces that stand against the hegemony of abstract space. Indeed, this is where the strength and the importance of invertebrate spaces lies. They are spaces of diffracted radical play where the subaltern state can be superposed to create new possibilities in the discursive hegemony. Consequently, the term invertebrate stems from the high amount of adaptability enacted as a part of these spatial practices. Invertebrate, calls to a rejection of the anthropocentrism incentivised by Cartesian practices that have elevated humans

and human-like practices over the rest of nature, thus favouring the study of vertebrates as superior life-forms (Aquiloni & Tricarico, 2015).

Therefore, invertebrate space-making practices are important because they allow for the enactment of other ways of living that can subvert dominant social contexts (Lefebvre, 1991). These spatial practices can be used to break away from sociocultural oppression and create new possibilities for the future – a feature lacking in Lefebvre’s and Soja’s trialectics despite their calls for revolutionary spatial practices. As such, the nurturing of invertebrate spaces can allow for the countering of subalternity. This makes them a key process in decolonialising the modern discourses of the Global North and Global South.

Nevertheless, resistance implies a mattering in a world that is iteratively becoming. Further, it implies a mattering that (en)counters an Other; in this case, the sociocultural hegemonic discourse of a the Mexican nation-state. This leads us to three important questions which I shall explore throughout this thesis to substantiate the mattering of invertebrate spaces:

1. How are these spatial practices enacted in material and digital spaces?
2. What responses do these practices elicit from the nation-state and hegemonic discourse?
3. Why are these subversive spaces important and how can academic institutions nurture them to counter subalternity?

By exploring these questions, I will elucidate on why these spaces matter, and why the academy would be well-served in enabling the creation of these subaltern spaces. The subaltern has been well researched even before Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s push into the limelight. Therefore, and as Spivak has endlessly argued, maybe it is time that the academy stops historicising this othering and starts finding ways to insert the subaltern into the hegemonic space (Kock, 1992) to bring it into the conversation.

1.3 Ethics, Care, and Linguistic Violence

There are many things to keep in mind when interacting with subaltern groups – particularly when they actively engage in their own civil rights plight. First, we must remember that civil rights activism is an area which, at least in Mexico, is fraught with danger for those participating in it. Activists are often murdered, and their cases left unsolved. Two recent examples are feminist activist Isabel Cabanillas (Gamboa, Shen-Berro, Guzmán, & Abdelkader, 2020) and the Indigenous land rights activist Samir Flores (Giordano, 2019). This is something that everyone who chose to talk with me was aware of: talking to a stranger can lead to torture, disappearance, and death. In fact, murdered activists are often remembered and

named by activist groups in Mexico as part of their own space-making practices. They serve as reminders and catalysts of both *la lucha* and state repression.

This gives rise to three issues when interviewing or researching subaltern groups at risk as underlined by Wilson and Hodgson: trust, coercion, and care (2012). Although Wilson and Hodgson's study addresses a very different group, there are similarities that can be drawn between activists in Mexico and this work. Particularly, their focus on care towards both informants and researchers is what draws me to their method.

To begin with, trust is a key component when addressing groups who are known to have or can expect to have violent clashes with authorities. In the case of the groups I studied, it is a known secret that state and local authorities often infiltrate journalist and activist circles (Gatti, 2014). This is to gain information about possible threats to the established power. As such, the first meeting with each of the groups was essential for establishing a rapport upon which trust can be built. Moreover, and because of the nature of the marginalised status of some of these groups, it is of great importance to not allow oneself to be swept by the hegemonic discourse around them. That is, while the areas which I sometimes visited were portrayed as dangerous in the media, I had to be aware that this would not necessarily be the case while still taking precautions. As is the case in other liminal communities, 'using another person's perception of risk and acting on bad reputation can taint the process' (Wilson & Hodgson, 2012, p. 114). Yet, this is a perception that must be kept in mind for safety reasons. For me this meant contracting a cab driver through an app where I could call for help, go to new places accompanied, and telling other people where I would be that given day. This way I could minimise my risks without insulting the people who were similarly placing themselves at risk by talking to a stranger. Nevertheless, I was consistently met with people and surroundings which went very much against the portrayal given by authorities or news cycles.

However, through my interactions with the civil rights collectives, it also became obvious that I had to be careful at drawing the line between insistence and coercion. This issue presented itself at the rapport stage, before I could gain my informants' trust. As Charlotte Davis clearly pointed out in her own work (2008), informed consent must be kept at the forefront. Yet, I was also aware that people have their own lives to deal so drowning them with information from the get-go would not get me far. Further, a busy life also means that people will sometimes take a long time to reply – especially in the context of an assembly where decisions must be voted on first. Further, because being interviewed was not at the forefront of their priorities, my informants could forget to reply. If we add security concerns to this equation, then establishing rapport becomes a delicate balancing act. By this I mean that you

must introduce yourself with enough information to have people feel comfortable with replying, but not so much that they will not read your message. This lack was made up for in later contact because I would often be asked to write a complete proposal after the initial introduction was vetted. Moreover, while a lack of response can be interpreted as a refusal (Wilson & Hodgson, 2012), I found this to not necessarily be true. In an average day, the people who I worked with often had to deal with their personal and political lives in a hectic city. It is easy to understand why replying would slip their minds, so I had to remember this while also not pushing my desire for information onto them. I found electronic messaging to be useful in this regard because I could keep an eye on the amount of days since last contact. Additionally, I could send a message that the receiver would choose when to read and reply to.

Then, there is care. I had to consider the dangers of homogenisation through representational discourse in a group of people who consciously represent themselves as a group. That is, I needed to respect the collectivity of assemblage that these groups use as both political statement and safeguard while being clear about distinctions between different individuals through my analysis. As Heather Rae points out in her book *State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples* (2009), homogenisation is a part of the hegemonic discourse. It is through this homogenisation that political elites can ‘redefine bounded political communities as exclusive moral communities’ (Rae, 2009, p. i) by defining the other as a threatening faceless outsider. Further, it is also a tool that has been used to (re)define the mestizo/indigenous dichotomy that modern Mexican society has been built on (Berkin & Le Mûr, 2017). Therefore, it is something I decidedly had to be mindful of while attempting to bring forth the collectivity that is so important to Mexican assemblies and collectives. To solve this, I have chosen to attach the initials of different Latin-American revolutionary fighters alongside the initials of their assembly to differentiate each of my informants. This comes from a practice of one of the groups which I worked with where they give out the names of Latin-American civil rights fighters when pressed by the authorities to identify themselves. They had initially resolved to never give out a name other than the assembly’s. However, given repeated requests of names, they resolved to use the names of those who have fought before and alongside them as an homage to *la lucha del pueblo*, the people’s struggle.

I should also underline that while the current ethical rules and guidelines prefer written consent from participants (Johansson, 2019), the collectives involved in this study proved reticent to sign paperwork that would include their name. This is partly due to their nature of collectivity, and partly because of the inherent danger in their work as a collective. Regardless, all collectives received extensive information on the motives, methods, and consequences of

the research. I provided two of the collectives with an extensive written proposal, followed by further questions answered by phone or private messaging (PM). Additionally, I gave an in-depth explanation about the study via PM to a participant of the third collective who had closely worked with another informant. This was followed up by an informal meeting where I further clarified the objective of this study. Therefore, everyone who participated gave oral consent, and has been given access to all the information I collected about their group to supplement their archival material. Further, while the pictures in this thesis show some of the faces of the participants in this study, this is based on their own decision to not cover their face during their practices. Per the words of one of my interviewees: ‘all our protests [are] always with our faces uncovered ... whether we cover ourselves or not ... we do it collectively’ (JQ AGP, 2019).

Lastly, I need to tackle the subject of language. If we agree that the speech act is the iterative performance of the transmission of intentional content (Ponzio, 2018), we cannot ignore the violence that language inscribes in the body. This is violence that many of my interviewees referred to as the enacted erasure of *Indigenous* selfhoods by the nation-state.

That is, because Spanish has been used as a way to unify the national identity after the Mexican Revolution (Hernández, 2016), Indigenous languages have been otherised nearly to the point of extinction. Indeed, Indigenous peoples carry with them the memories of violence and linguistic control enacted on those who did not learn Spanish: ‘it came with a brutal punishment, or they imprisoned the parents [of Indigenous children] ... because their son, or daughter, wanted to continue talking in their language at school’ (JP AMI, 2019b). Moreover, while open punishment by authorities has ceased, other social forms of punishment are still in place throughout Mexico, specially in urban centres (Cruz, 2016; Hernández D. R., 2016).

This violence, then, constitutes an act of control on the enactments of Indigenous selfhoods and their oral historicity. Thus, I am aware, that writing in English from the standpoint of colonial history of Mexico is a ‘practice in shifting the geography of knowledge’ (Mignolo, 2005, p. 107). Yet, I have chosen to write this thesis in English because I recognise the linguistic imperial differences among languages. After all, English is the *lingua franca* of scholarship at a global scale (Mignolo, 2005). Moreover, to not enact linguistic violence on the colonial wound preserved in Mexico, this thesis would need to be written in one of the Indigenous languages that are part of the country’s ignored discursivity. However, this would bring about either self-defacement or appropriation. That is to say that this could be equated with either ignoring my own situatedness as a Mexican mestiza living in Sweden, or the enaction of a subaltern personhood that is not mine. Moreover, while my words are in English,

I have attempted to think from a place of alterity. A place that does not erase, but, rather, points towards the borders of the colonial wound in which coloniality is iteratively created in Mexico.

1.4 Disposition

To answer the questions I have posed, this thesis is structured into five additional chapters. In Chapter 2, I begin by presenting previous studies on the creation of space and having a look at current discussions on subalternity. I follow this by laying the theoretical and methodological framework for my analysis. Chapters 3 and 4 are an analysis of the space-making practices of the groups I worked with in CDMX. For clarity, I have chosen to divide this analysis into material and digital spaces. This will be given context through an overview of Mexican sociocultural discourse in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 will conclude this study with reflections on the importance of subaltern space-making practices. I hope that these entangled diffractions will serve as a frame of reference for future applicability and research.

2. Theory and Methodology

‘The tacit anthropological supposition that people like these are people without history amounts to the erasure of 500 years of confrontation, killing, resurrection, and accommodation’ (Wolf, 2010, p. 18)

Much like the performative struggle that is *la lucha*, or Karen Barad’s philosophy physics, the following chapter encompasses discursive theory and subversive praxis. While I took advantage of a short-term ethnographic approach, the depth is only possible thanks to archival efforts of the collectives that took part in this study. Additionally, while this study uses theories and methodologies developed in the Global North, it remains an attempt to consider the voices of the Mesoamerican Global South.

2.1 Previous Research

Much has been said about the nature of space, particularly the Marxist spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre. In similar fashion, the subaltern and its ability to speak has been debated since Spivak’s canonical essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (2010). Thus, it is no surprise to find an active scholarship on subaltern spaces as space cannot be thought of as an empty container that is ready to receive objects (and subjects). Instead, it is more accurate to think of space as intra-active phenomena that affects and is affected by what Donna Haraway calls ‘bodies-in-the-making and contingent spatiotemporalities’ (as cited in Barad, 2007, p. 224). That is, space is iteratively co-created by complex spatial practices with the bodies it itself co-creates.

Therefore, while the subaltern lacks a ‘space’ or a ‘voice’ within society, this does not mean that they lack spatiality or discursivity, rather, they are continuously abjected by and

from society (Spivak, 2012). There is an erasure of certain becomings from the public eye. Because of this, theoretical notions of counter-hegemonic transcultural master narratives (Jacobs, 2006), or the necessity of translation of performativities (Maggio, 2007), among others, miss the mark of Spivak's approach to subalternity. A fact of which Spivak is well-aware of: '[w]hen you say cannot speak, it means that if speaking involves speaking and listening ... the only way that that speech is produced is by inserting the subaltern into the circuit of hegemony' (Kock, 1992, p. 46). This means that the subaltern needs to be a part of a dialogue so that it can step outside of its subalternity.

The dynamics of this reality are evident in works such as Claske Dijkema's essay on youths in marginalised social housing neighbourhoods in France (2019), or Sharlene Mollett's look at the use of Consensus Mapping of Shared Boundaries Project by Indigenous peoples in Honduras (2013). Yet, both cases demonstrate subversions without denouement. That is, the (re)workings of the hegemonic sociocultural discourse are challenged by subaltern performativities, but the subaltern remains outside of the discourse it attempts to change. Additionally, there are space scholars and cultural analysts such as María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo (2016), Alison Blunt (2000), and Richard H. Schein (2006), who have looked into the graphing of the geo and cultural space creation in colonial and postcolonial contexts. These works have served as inspiration of this thesis because they demonstrate that cultural space is not innocent, and that it serves as an extension of colonial ideologies. In fact, I will borrow Schein's concept of the 'visible scene/seen' (2006, p. 5) to shed light on the built racial environments of the Mexican cultural landscape. Nevertheless, the spaces these scholars write about are often within the Global North or tend to focus more on the historicity of space creation. That is not to say that these scholars do not provide us with studies of spaces of dissidence. Yet, they remain anthropocentric in their investigation of radical space-making.

This same anthropocentrism can be seen in a variety of other studies on space making focused on the Global South. For instance, there is Walter Mignolo's performative border thinking, which builds on Gloria Anzaldúa's work, and which I will elucidate on further along. There is also Manuel Correia de Andrade and his examination of subaltern spaces in Brazil, Milton Santos and his work on urban development in developing countries, Edgar Pieterse and his look into African urban spaces, and Ananya Roy and her inquiry on urban poverty and global urbanism focusing on South Asia. As such, this thesis will engage in an extensive field of studies. Particularly, as I embrace Spivak's version of the subaltern as a phenomenon of the colonial/postcolonial subject (2012). This is to follow in the footsteps of Latin-American collective Modernity-Coloniality-Decoloniality^{iv} (MCD) which seeks to enact academic work

outside the eurocentric perspective that has been naturalised as universal (Mignolo, 2005). However, I will engage with this discipline in a way which attempts to (de)centre humans as the sole subject in this space-making by placing non-human actants as a necessary part of these practices. This, while pointing towards the fluidity of certain subaltern space-making practices that, as in de Andrade's work, frame 'subaltern agency and resistance ... through direct action' (Ferretti, 2019, p. 1632). That is, it will demonstrate how certain subaltern spaces can intra-actively reconfigure hegemonic power to insert the subaltern into the circuit of hegemony.

2.2 The Subaltern *takes* Space || The Subaltern *is* Space

Spaces are not neutral. In fact, spaces only appear neutral when they are part of the dominant sociocultural system (Lefebvre, 1991). This spatiality of the hegemonic discourse is constantly produced. This means that representational space, *lived space*, can be both prohibition or liberation depending on how it is co-constructed. Because of this, we can view space as akin to class in that, as EP Thomson says, 'class itself is not a thing, it is a happening' (1981, p. 10). Indeed, class and space are iteratively reproduced by intra-active becoming. They are dynamic creations of acceptance or rejection from the sociocultural discourse. Therefore, it can be said that subalternity is both a space of radical alterity outside the hegemonic discourse, and a group or groups of beings that are constantly (re)created in this space. This makes the subaltern a subject of contingent materializations of humanity (or the lack thereof), gender, class, and community. Yet, because this becoming is dynamic and performative, or as Barad says: '[a]gency never ends; it can never "run out."' (2007, p. 235), the subaltern as space or being is not an unavoidable ontological truth. Therefore, subalternity or hegemony, can always be challenged. Nevertheless, to explicate subalternity and hegemony in urban Mexico, I will clarify certain contexts rooted in its colonisation.

In Mexico, the subaltern has taken many faces. However, largely speaking, the subaltern is that which is closest to nature (Mignolo, 2005). This is a remnant of the Mechanical Philosophy of the 17th and 18th century, in the midst of the Mexican colonial period, where nature was a thing to be conquered (Federici, 2004). Interestingly, and unsurprisingly, that which is closer to nature is indigenous. An example of this is the portrayal of Indigenous peoples in Mexican textbooks where they are shown either as the venerated past, or as the embodiment of rural life, poverty, and folklore (Berkin & Le Mûr, 2017). I should note that these textbooks are produced by the Secretariat for Public Education which is in charge of the content of free, and obligatory, textbooks in Mexico. That makes the nature-bound Indigenous subaltern a figure that is taught and reproduced from a young age by the nation-state.

Furthermore, this production of Mexican subalternity is unequivocally gendered. This is clearly shown by Octavio Paz in his book *El Laberinto de la Soldedad* (1998) where he refers to Mexicans as ‘*hijos de la chingada*’ (p. 33). That is, as children (sons) of the fucked or raped one. He also underlines that this raped woman is the Indigenous mother – while the rapist is the Spanish conquistador. Thus, the Mexican subaltern, which is gendered and otherised, is also a trauma that must be overcome through the emulation of the modern, European father. This has led to the portrayal of the Mexican mestizo as the archetype through which the Indigenous and colonial pasts can be overcome and a modern and united Mexico can rise (Hernández, 2016). This is in juxtaposition to the Pre-Hispanic or rural Indigenous subaltern that is always in another place far away from modernity and urban life. This leaves urban subalterns in a complex position of liminality and exclusion, as one of my informants said: ‘I do not exist, they tell me I do not exist, but here I am’ (CTR, 2019).

While the Mexican urban mestizo can be seen as a ‘white but not quite’ (Bhabha, 2004, p. 35) within the global context, and the distant Indigenous Other can be thought of as pure and purely folkloric, what does that say about the urban Indigenous person? Where can we find the ethnically Indigenous but culturally mestizo subject? What about the poor brown mestizo whose roots are in *Mexicanidad*? An identity based on neotraditionalist traits that exalt Pre-Columbian civilisations and strive for the re-indigenization of Mexico (De la Peña, 1998). In a country still influenced by the caste system of the conquista, there are an untold number of Others that are erased from its sociocultural discourse. This reinforces their alterity as subjects outside the Mexican onto-epistemology that is iteratively produced by the hegemonic sphere of influence, or abstract space of power.



El tianguis es la forma en que se efectuaba el comercio en los pueblos prehispánicos y aún pervive en las comunidades de Oaxaca.

Image taken from a current textbook. 1

Whereas Indigenous groups such as the Zapatistas are hailed as decolonised subjects – the Indigenous peoples in the cities strive for a voice, and the poor brown mestizo is de-historicised for residing in what Homi Bhabha calls a liminal third space (2004). Yet, unlike Bhabha’s postcolonial hybrid, this one stems from a context of cultural and ethnical miscegenation-as-colonisation (Saldaña-Portillo, 2016). Thus, to understand this urban subaltern, it is useful to think of Nestor Garcia Canclini’s concept of hybridity. That is, a Mexican subject who stems from mestizaje, creolisation, and syncretism (Ferretti, 2019). A (post)colonial hybrid who is iterated by its own lack of purity. This leads us to also use João Pacheco de Oliveira’s concept of *mistura*, a sociocultural mixing that contaminates the pure

Indigenous culture that should be preserved and museumified^v to matter. This way we can understand the urban Indigenous subject as something inexistent due to lack of purity or historicity. We can also see a subaltern that differs from Gayatri Spivak's context because of a rejection towards interraciality in colonial India (Chludzinski, 2009). Instead, the Mexican subaltern lives within the 'ever-shifting lines of alliance or confrontation' (Mallon, 1994, p. 1511) between Europe, Mexico and countless Indigeneities; between the present, the past, and the past as social imaginary: different historical temporalities that create the promise of a multiplicity of futures. A subaltern enframed by the idea of Mexico where *at least three* geotemporal and geographical Mexicos are subsumed to create a nation-state (Rojas, 2009).

Consequently, while the work from rural Indigenous collectives remains of utmost importance in the Latin-American decolonialisation project, we must not lose track of the efforts of other groups. Moreover, to see or depict the decolonialised subject as emerging only in rural areas advances the portrayal of the Other at a distance and negates some of the effects of colonialism. This not only erases the efforts of urban decolonial collectives by further silencing them, but also works to museumify an inexistent subaltern purity. This is one of the reasons that this study is based on studying the in-between spaces of the urban subaltern, and its performative intra-active resistance in the Anthropocene.

2.3 Diffractions in the Anthropocene

The term Anthropocene refers to the age we currently live in, and which started around 200,000 years ago (Pavid, 2019). The name is a remitment to the ways in which humans have contributed to vastly change the world. Even though there remains dissent towards the use of the term in scientific circles, I find this is a clear, if anthropocentric, way to refer to an age where we have caused irreparable damage to our environment. This call towards our actions also gains weight by the placement of my study in the urban scene/seen (Schein, 2006) and the creation of a postcolonial cultural landscape. A landscape that is not passive, but that serves to outline the interactions of human and non-human activity. As Schein mentions in his book *Landscape and Race in the United States*: '[t]heir very presence, as both material "things" and conceptual framings of the world, makes cultural landscapes constitutive of the processes that created them in the first place' (2006, p. 5). They serve as onto-epistem-ological (Barad, 2003) arrangements of the world that reify anthropocentric colonial practices. These are practices that have served to ideologically remove us from the world by placing humans in a privileged position as objective knowers. Yet, this 'god trick' (Haraway, 1988, p. 581), is merely a visual mirage that (re)creates the Cartesian illusion of binary opposites where the world is made up

of matter and humans have a higher self that stands above a physical shell. This is precisely the taken-for-granted standpoint that theorist and academic Karen Barad takes issue with.

The world is not simply made up of things with congruous signifiers in Barad's work. Instead, it is intra-activity, a substance in ongoing materialisation – a doing and becoming rather than static things with marked boundaries. This means that subjects and objects are not binaries; rather, they are a trans-materiality, or a cutting together apart where the 'I' is not separated from the world (2007). This 'I' exists in an entanglement with the world where the 'entangled state ... must be understood as a single entity' (Barad, 2007, p. 271). That is, 'I' cannot exist without the world I am a part of. We are not simply enveloped by the world, rather we are part of a multi-phenomena entanglement. Even our bodies are not solely our own they intra-act with trillions of organisms inhabiting and creating them (NIH, 2012).

This intra-active world also counts with apparatuses, which are dynamic material configurations that are part in the creation of phenomena. For example, Schein's visual landscapes can be viewed as apparatuses that enact agential cuts in our everyday lives. The discursivity of these landscapes relies not solely on linguistic practices, but in 'material conditions for making meaning' (Barad, 2007, p. 335). That means that discursive practices are not only the realm of humans, but also of the world which intra-actively performs itself. Nevertheless, there is a difference of intra-actions depending on where you are in the global and temporal scale. While both time and space are created through intra-activity, this same intra-activity influences the lived reality of people around the world. Consequently, while from the perspective of European modernity, it could be said that 'coloniality is difficult to see or recognize, and even a bothersome concept' (Mignolo, 2005, p. 5), from the perspective of postcolonial countries, it is still an everyday reality. Indeed, colourism, is one of the many phenotype-based stratification systems that continue being part of the Mexican landscape (Quijano, 2011) as a part of coloniality – the logical structure of control and domination borne out of colonial control. This racial discrimination from within is one of the most prominent markers inherited from colonial systems of control, all forms of Heideggerian enframing (1977), used to justify violence in the name of Christianity or, later on, democracy. However, enframing has long been a part of the discourse of modernity outside of racial concerns. That is, it has been a part of the individualisation of humanity (Tsing, 2017), the colonisation and abasement of nature (Haraway, 1988), paternalistic attitudes towards non-human beings (Wolfe, 2010), and the stratification and control of gender (Federici, 2004).

Therefore, to study the spatial and material-discursive practices of subaltern collectives, it is useful to employ Barad's ethico-onto-epistemological concept of diffraction as both theory and methodology. Barad explains it best when she says that diffraction is a:

'material-discursive phenomenon that challenges the presumed inherent separability of subject and object, nature and culture, fact and value, human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, epistemology and ontology, materiality and discursivity ... [it] marks the limits of the determinacy and permanency of boundaries.' (2007, p. 381)

In short, diffraction is a deconstructive relationality where alterity and Derridean *différance*—difference and deferral—can appear. This allows for a type of border discursivity as seen in the works of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). Border discursivity is a performative and theoretical approach brought on by the double framework needed to engage with differing and deferring systems of knowledge of the Indigenous and the European. Still, borders and boundaries are never inherently determined. They are apparatuses – open-ended practices that need to intra-act to exist. As such, diffraction allows the researcher to read these practices 'through one another' (Barad, 2003, p. 803). This analysis will help me open spaces in the framework of the Mexican border discursivity to find the invertebrate spatiality I am propounding in this thesis. Further, as a researcher, it will enable me to be critical, self-accountable, and responsible in my engagement. This is because a diffractive analysis necessarily situates the researcher as part of the apparatus of research. Thus, rather than perceiving research as something outside of the researcher, the researcher becomes part of the apparatus through which certain properties arise. This means that the Anthropocene serves as situation and juxtaposition to diffracted enactions of collective forms of being that decentre the human from our ways of being in the world.

2.4 Collectivity within the Field

Collectivity is philosophy and practice. In a way, collectivity is like research: one cannot perform either, without being a part of cooperative entanglements with others. This much was evident as I began my fieldwork which was composed of netnography, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. Even in the first few days of research which consisted solely on netnography, I begun an inter-relationship with my two initial groups: AGP and AMI.

Netnography is a portmanteau of the words Internet, network, and ethnography (Dalal, 2019). Netnography allows researchers to use the Internet to perform ethnographic work and follow the networks that are formed in digital spaces. However, it is important to remember that many people in the Global South do not have access to the Internet. In Mexico only 65.8% of the population has Internet (Islas 2019), and those who do not tend to have access to it are

usually people with low economic resources. Luckily for me, urban areas have the largest concentration of Internet access in Mexico. Moreover, the use of mobile technologies has enabled many of those who cannot have a computer, the ability to connect with others digitally and engage in virtual space creation. This is the case for the assemblies and collectives that were part of this study and which I will outline in this section.

Another useful thing to remember while doing netnography is that the Internet holds vast amounts of information. Because of this, researchers are bound to make specific choices about what to include or exclude in their research. For my own work, I chose to focus on the collectives I studied. With this I mean that I chose to limit the information that was not directly provided by these groups. I mostly used outside sources for fact-checking. However, I also received access to a video database created by one of the collectives. This allowed me to supplement my information while still having their virtual space be central in the study.

The collective which supplied me with this database is AGP. AGP is a collective based from the communities living in the *Pedregales* of Coyoacan in CDMX. These communities are a mix of Original peoples (Indigenous people who have lived in the area from at least the time of the conquest), and first- and second-generation migrants from other parts of Mexico (Enciso & Poblador@s y Fundador@s, 2002). While many of the Original peoples have moved due to gentrification, the immigrants have kept the original traditions of the area alive by mixing them with their own. It is from them that I learnt that expressions of Mexican collectivity are a rejection of individualism, or what Paul Teller calls ‘particularism’ (Barad, 2007, p. 333). This is the belief that the world is composed of individual beings that are separated from each-other. Furthermore, this collectivity is one which includes non-human beings such as the territory and traditions of the communities which make up the collective. This connection to non-human beings is important enough to sometimes de-centre humans from within the locus of *la lucha*.

Another collective, AMI, also demonstrated forms of collectivity wherein repeated ‘acts of self-designation and self-gathering’ (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 170) serve to enact their sense of being. That is, being Indigenous immigrants to CDMX they are Indigenous not only because of their background. They are also Indigenous because of their own ongoing performance of selfhood which includes, but is not limited to, traditions, cosmovision, history, and forms of government. This is a performance that also embraces collectivity with non-human beings. Indeed, this collective performativity deems the territory as an important familial being within the collective. By territory, I mean the land, culture, traditions, and environment (Bárcenas, 2017) that merges with and creates their being as Indigenous. Thus, while their homeland always remains an important part of them, the territory is also a certain

spirit of specific Indigeneity, for example Mixe or Nahua, which they can always carry with them and enact. It is because of this intra-activity of becoming that I had to rely in participant observation as a part of my research to understand their ways of becoming.

Participant observation consists of researchers interacting with the people that are a part of their research (Davies, 2008). It is an efficient tool to see the modes in which people enact their being with the world. Further, it is a form of research that allows for the creation of bonds with the people being researched. As mentioned previously, this bond creation is important when addressing communities in need as it allows for mutual understanding between researcher and subject of study. In turn, this can open the participants to the idea of being interviewed as they get to understand the subject of research and its importance to the researcher. This connection would be difficult to make if the researcher chose to apply traditional models of methodological purity that necessarily place the researcher as the objective creator of knowledge. What is more, this stance would have been met with mistrust by my informants as the Mexican subaltern still bears the scars of academic objectivity in its otherisation (Damián & Jaiven, 2011). This was clear through my participant observation of all three collectives. Whether it was because I would ask what was most comfortable for them, or they would comment during their work against a specific institutional idea, it is evident that there remains a strong wariness towards Western-based ideas or modes of being. In contrast, it is by directly participating with them in their everyday collective work, by listening to them, and by sharing my own experiences as a Mexican immigrant to Sweden that they welcomed me.

Through these interactions with the collectives I was able to obtain nine interviews of over two hours each. Most of these interviews were semi-structured, and group-based with anywhere between three to seven informants. These were performed in the home of one of the informants being interviewed, where food, camaraderie and coffee were shared along with stories and opinions. As Davies notes (2008), semi-structured interviews are often combined with participant observation which makes the relationship between researcher and participant extend beyond that of the interview. These makes them useful when attempting to collect qualitative information that can delve deeper into the perspectives of the informants. In my case, the nature of these semi-structured group interviews allowed for a comfortable setting in which the informants could drop in and out of the conversation. Additionally, while I kept in mind the subjects that we needed to address, this method gave my informants the ability to add information that they believed pertinent. They also had the space to express emotions that they might have otherwise perceived as inappropriate. Thus, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of their performative collectivity and its importance in subaltern space-making

practices. For AMI, this information was also substantiated through three collectively created books that arose from their experience as an assembly of Indigenous peoples in the city.



Members of IC during a birthday celebration. 2

However, two of these interviews were not of a similar nature. These are the interviews which I carried out with members of IC. IC is composed of Indigenous women who migrated to CDMX for its opportunities. These women formed the collective through their own networks of Indigenous migrants, which were created because of the racism and exploitation they encountered in the city.

As one of my informants said when it came to her studies in the capital, ‘the professors would not give me the space to make comments and when they passed list they would not call out my name ... if I pointed this out, I was simply dismissed’ (BC IC, 2019b). It is because of cases like this one that the women of IC first turned to one another for support. This led them to create IC to help other Indigenous women who might not have the same resources that the IC members found in each other. It also allowed them to expand their network and use their contacts in the academic and political worlds to hold seminars and find new ways to help others. Still, because the collective was starting their work by the time of my visit, and because its members were often busy, it was easier to have my interviews done online so they could respond whenever they had the time or energy.

This brings into focus the relative ease with which digital interviews can be conducted (Stewart & Williams, 2005). I should underline that because these interviews were done via textual media, rather than through video call or audio, they lightened my workload by making transcription unnecessary. However, while I, and my informants, found this form of ‘asynchronous discussions’ (Stewart & Williams, 2005, p. 403) useful, I am aware of its possible applicability issues. That is to say that I know that this ease of digital communication was largely due to our previous in-person interactions which included celebrations. Thus, I am uncertain of how viable this form of interviewing would be if they were carried out with postcolonial subalterns without there being previous in-person experiences with the researcher.

3. Spatiotemporal Becomings

‘They teach us to despise what is ours and, then, they tell us ... here, this is what suits you, this individual western thought, this western civilization, this way of seeing the world vertically, from superior to inferior, you can ... be a westerner and we, well, we believe it.’
(JP AMI, 2019a)

Mexico is not a Western country. Rather, while the *idea* of Mexico is Western, the *lived reality* of most people in Mexico falls far from the ethos of the West. This is easy to begin to understand when we realise that Mexico is a Western creation. Indeed, there is not an ontological *a priori* of Mexico before the time of the conquest. It is true that there were people living in the area now known as Mexico, and it could be said that they were loosely brought together by the Spanish empire to form New Spain. Nevertheless, as Walter Mignolo said of all of Latin-America, the current geographical and geocultural formation of Mexico is a ‘subaltern historico-political and cultural configuration’ (2005, p. 89). That is to say that Mexico was created and exists for the sake of political and ideological projects it never initiated – first the empire, now modernity. Further, it is the Creole elites, people of European roots born in Latin-America, who took the mantle from the Spanish empire and formed what is now called Mexico (Mignolo, 2005; Rojas, 2009). Yet, and despite the intensified efforts of unification under mestizaje that came after the revolution in the 1920s (Hernández, 2016), the Other that is the Indigenous, the cholo, the Afro, or the dark skinned mestizo has not been erased. These performativities of selfhood have created their own spaces, whether urban or rural, reaching different levels of success along the way. Thus, this chapter focuses on the analysis of the material space making practices of AGP, AMI, and IC to provide concrete examples of the enaction of invertebrate spaces in the city and their (re)actions to the hegemonic discourse.

3.1 From the Sacred Hills to the Edges of Urbanity

AMI was founded in 2001 by first generation Indigenous migrants in CDMX. Its original vision was that of a space where Indigenous peoples could meet and give advice to each other, perform their rites and customs, and inform themselves about their rights. My informants within the assembly were JP, a *Mixe* from the hills of Oaxaca, and his extended family. When I met them, they were active in AMI even though the assembly was dispersed because they lacked a central space to meet up. However, this lack of physical space had come about within the past three years. They lost this space because of a combination of rising prices due to the gentrification of the area, and the instability that goes hand-in-hand with informal employment – the type of employment most Indigenous peoples have access to in urban areas (Télliez & Gabayet, 2018).

My first contact with AMI was through Facebook. I messaged them asking about the status of Indigenous women in CDMX, but my interest shifted towards AMI during this chat. Thus, I decided to enquire about the nature of the assembly itself. After exchanging messages and emails where I presented them with a project proposal and replied to their questions, I had the opportunity to talk to JP over the phone. He was cordial if direct. He told me that most of

their members would not have time to meet with me. Because the assembly is made up of everyday people, they must divide their time between work, family, and the assembly. This is not aided by the fact that AMI members are spread over several districts of CDMX.

I will now illustrate why location is an issue. On a good day, it can take three hours to cross CDMX if you are driving. However, this time is nearly doubled when using public transportation (Canada, 2018). Furthermore, and as I mentioned in this thesis' introduction, these times are subject to traffic, the weather, the day of the week, or if there are one or more demonstrations or public activities in the city. As an example, it once took me three hours to get from a university institute to the CDMX airport. This is a trip that would normally only be about forty minutes since it is roughly 20.5 kilometres. However, traffic was bad that afternoon for a host of reasons that are not abnormal in an urban area: it was Friday, people had just received their paychecks, a car broke down and slowed down traffic, etcetera. Of course, this also means that a similar thing could have happened to any member of AMI when attempting to reach a community centre. However, this would be less draining if going to the centre was a part of their everyday lives. It would be annoying, yes, but something that they had already accounted for when planning their day or week. Yet, because AMI had lost their community centre, there was no such place for me to talk with its members. Nevertheless, JP invited me to his home to meet him and his family the following Sunday so we could talk about the assembly. He was also quite mindful while giving me detailed instructions on how to arrive to his home.

JP and his family live in one of the southernmost regions of the city. Surrounded by greenery, and ecologically protected areas, this district used to be satellite town of the city. The community is tightknit, and the local chapel still has the records of every person living in the area. It is also easy to get lost because most of the streets were built by the locals as the town developed. Consequently, there was little to no planning regarding its growth. Instead, it was made to fit the needs of a growing population. There is also no use for something like Google Maps because mobile reception is nearly non-existent. Thus, when first arriving to the area, I could understand why I was given such clear directions to JP's house. It was lengthy trip. Additionally, anyone not familiar with the zone, would have a difficult time finding JP's house or a place in its vicinity if they were to go there for a workshop or meeting.

I was lucky during this initial trip because CR, JP's wife, decided to look for me and my companions as we were running late. During this meeting we discussed AMI's inception and current work. We also talked about the latest government programs aimed at Indigenous peoples in Mexico. This is when JP and his son, IB, mentioned the urban erasure of the Indigenous migrant: 'if you come from a geographical location, you are Indigenous ... but if

you are elsewhere or were born elsewhere, then you cannot consider yourself to be from that [Indigenous] place' (IB AMI, 2019). That is, there is the idea that once the Indigenous person moves to the city, neither they nor their children can continue considering themselves to be Indigenous. IB's words are substantiated by the government funded, *Diagnostic of Indigenous Population* (Téllez & Gabayet, 2018). The study shows that government representatives believe that Indigenous peoples are usually "absorbed" by the city' (Téllez & Gabayet, 2018, p. 63). That is, they believe that Indigenous migrants are acculturated into urbanity, thus eschewing their own ways of being in favour of modernity. There is also the belief that migrants who settle in or around the areas where Original peoples reside adopt the "less pronounced" (or more modern) Indigeneity of the groups around them. This largely stems from Indigenous peoples' choice of not speaking their native tongue or refusing to wear their traditional garments in public to avoid being targets of discrimination. Thus, the Indigeneity of migrant peoples is reduced to visual or linguistic signifiers that can be taken or removed at will. Further, it ignores the sociocultural conditions wherein Indigenous peoples have to adapt their lifestyles



The view by JP's house. 3

and expressions to overcome societal stigma.

This double negation of being results in the reification of subalternity for Indigenous peoples and their existence in the urban environment. Moreover, the reliance on visual signifiers of the "right" kind of Indigeneity, the one that is always at a distance, serves to strengthen the (re)creation of the urban mestizo: you too can be one of us if you choose to. This constitutes a negation of non-mestizo ways of being in the city – it is the Indigenous that is iteratively elsewhere. Consequently, reality is (re)created and simplified to elevate modernity, its colonial twin, and westernhood: 'there is a unique thought about reality, about the world ... which is the one that comes from Europe, or the one that comes from the west, where all your thinking is built' (JP AMI, 2019a). However, much like other Indigenous groups, AMI rejects this erasure. Instead, its members choose to diffractively practice their personhood by adapting their Indigenous being to the urban environment. These dynamic adaptations constitute a sort of *chimeric polarity* where their indigeneity overlaps and seemingly bends when encountering an obstruction (Barad, 2003). This does not mean that their indigeneity is over- or underdetermined by modernity, but that it is iteratively entangled with the semiotics of the urban environment to produce a diffracted personhood. Furthermore, because of this intra-activity of becoming, their personhood will be enacted differently according to the semiotic surroundings. That is, the space through and with which their Indigenous performativity arises.

Consequently, Indigenous personhood is an entangled and dynamic practice, or what Barad would call an ‘intra-acting from within, and as part of, the phenomena produced’ (2007, p. 56). This makes the material Indigenous communal space an exigency for their personhood. While Indigenous peoples have this social space-making practice as an organic part of their becoming in rural communities – the same cannot be said in an environment that actively attempts to erase them. A space that (re)enacts an ‘historical relationship that is reproduced as a colonial inheritance [and] that is adapted to the present’ (Malvido, et al., 2015, p. 25). Because coloniality—the political and sociocultural practices stemming from colonial practices (Mignolo, 2005), is embedded in modernity—urban spatial practices of modernity inevitably attempt to erase the Other found in Indigenous practices. Moreover, the abstract space of power clashes with Indigenous space-making practices because abstract space is a feature of the capitalist practices embedded in modernity/coloniality systems.

Yet, and despite the loss of a stable space to meet, the members of AMI still create spaces for their reproduction of Indigenous selfhood. One such case is the philharmonic rehearsals that the group has for *Mixes*. *Mixe* peoples, or *Ajuuk*, have a strong musical tradition as a part of their rites and customs (Dounce, 2009). Each town, regardless of their size, is expected to have a philharmonic to attend to the cultural and religious needs of the community. JP even went so far as to claim that ‘before children learn to read or write, they learn to play an instrument, and they learn to read music’ (JP AMI, 2019a) in his community. IB also added that for him and his brother, growing up in CDMX meant that playing music ‘helped us a lot to understand that we didn't need to be born in our community to feel Mixes, or to feel Ajuuk, or to feel Indigenous’ (IB AMI, 2019). This is a practice that was originally carried out at AMI’s community centre. However, the lack of a regular space to create communal music did not stop them. Instead, they began appropriating spaces by repurposing them to fit their needs.

The place they were using by the time of my visit was a large semi-abandoned state in a central area of the city. The house was owned by a well to-do Spanish couple who had chosen to move back to Spain. In their absence, they hired a caretaker to keep an eye on the property while they found a buyer for it. The caretaker was a *Mixe* woman, ETC. ETC is a single mother who has been living in the city for 30 years. She works as a domestic aid – a section of the informal job market in urban areas that is dominated by Indigenous women. This is an often exploited job sector because of the still ongoing naturalisation of home-based gender roles in a strongly patriarchal culture (Malvido, et al., 2015). As such, I was not surprised to find out that the only pay ETC received for her work as the caretaker of the property was the ability to live in the grounds and use the space, as long as it was done so outside the main building.

ETC chose to open this space to her community as a place where the philharmonic could practice. These sessions happened most Sundays and were divided in two time slots. The morning lessons were basic music lessons for *Mixe* students who were not adept musicians either due to their age or level of practice, whereas the later time slot was taken up by experienced musicians that wanted a communal space to practice. When I asked both groups what the difference was between playing with mestizos and with other *Mixes*, most responses related to the familiarity found in the communal way of practicing music. They said that while the western way of playing was focused on the talented individual who joined other talented musicians, for them playing music was about ‘being part of something’ (HGG AMI, 2019). Therefore, learning and practicing in a *Mixe* environment means feeling ‘more comfortable because they ... understand the context and how important music is for us’ (HGG AMI, 2019). This feeling of comfort, what some of my interviewees described as homeliness, was evident during the sessions I witnessed. The participants, students and seasoned musicians alike, treated each other with familiarity while they were playing, even if they had just met. They spoke mostly in *Mixe*, joked around, and felt free to interject with the practice and comment. There was an air of relaxation and play in their communal practice that framed the importance of the process of music making as something as important, if not slightly more so, than the result.

This communal entanglement was a strong feature of every meeting I had with AMI’s members. Whether it was a chat on early Sunday morning, a seminar, or music practice, there was an ongoing communal intra-activity that (re)created the Indigeneity of individuals through a collective being. This plural performativity cannot be reduced to removable signifiers that depend on the



Music lessons for the younger students. 4

spatiotemporalities of its subjects. Instead, it is a dynamic performance that needs the other to create its own discursivity. Being *Mixe*, *Nahua*, or *Tenek* is not something that AMI’s members take for granted. It is something that they perform to become. Further, this performance needs a space to be (re)created communally.

This communality is needed because it is a way in which they can overcome precarity as an ‘existential category that is presumed to be equally shared’ (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 20). That is to say that precarity can only be overcome through a primary relation to the other which enforces the recognition and inclusion of the other through which we come into being. This is a relation that is in contradiction to the abstract space of the capitalist nation-state that dominates urban centres, and which exalts individuality and promotes the thingification of

beings through their subalternisation (Spivak, 2012). Thus, it makes sense that AMI's material communal space did not last because, as Henri Lefebvre outlined, abstract space 'seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters' (1991, p. 49). However, Indigenous peoples in these urban spaces subvert the capitalist practice of space as commodity when they reify their indigeneity. They do this through performative spatial practices that can emanate in in-between spaces. These are fluid invertebrate spaces that can take the form of a cheap apartment, a semi-abandoned back yard, or the periphery of an urban capital.

What is more, they are spaces that subsist because of the diffractive nature that allows them to live, if in a dormant state, even after their apparent defeat. They are material-discursive contributions to the subaltern resistance. In a way, invertebrate spaces are part of what Walter Benjamin calls the 'oppressed past' (as cited in Rojas, 2009, p. 146), which lays alive and in waiting for its chance to enact a revolutionary change in the hegemonic discourse. Thus, even after losing its space, AMI continues with practices of communal space-making because it is a way to resist subalternity and (re)create Indigenous personhoods. These boundary-drawing practices allow them to enact the materiality of their indigeneities even within the homogenising practices of abstract space. However, AMI were not the only collective I met which has been affected by gentrification, as I will demonstrate in my next section.

3.2 Stone and Spring

The first thing I learnt about AGP, is that its creation is the reason and result of over thirty years of struggle. To extrapolate this, I will outline the history of the *Pedregales* of Coyoacan, where the communities that compose AGP live.

Around mid-twentieth century, the *Pedregales* were on the periphery of CDMX and belonged to *comuneros*. *Comuneros* are people who 'own agrarian rights of a land and possess them in common with other individuals' (Legalmag, 2014). This form of landownership is part of the traditions of Indigenous or Original peoples who, due to the systems of oppression inherent in coloniality, struggle to retain ownership of their land and territory. Consequently, when impoverished migrants arrived to the *Pedregales* in 1971 (Enciso F. D. & Poblador@s y Fundador@s, 2002), they were met with resistance. However, the *Pedregales* were not a land which the *comuneros* used. They lived and had their crops and animals on neighbouring areas but ignored the *Pedregales* because the terrain was not conducive to their labour.

Briefly, *Pedregal* refers to the type of rocky soil found after a volcanic eruption. Coyoacan has this rocky soil because of the eruption of the *Xitle* volcano centuries ago, which created this layer (Interruptus Radio 2016). This made the area largely unusable due to its

inadequacy for crops or cattle. However, the invaders (as they are called to this day), arriving to the area in the 70s did not care about the viability of land usage. They needed a place to live and saw in the *Pedregales* a place that they could call home. Therefore, and after contentious exchanges with armed *comuneros*, that left at least two people dead (Enciso F. D. & Poblador@s y Fundador@s, 2002), the owners of the land relented to the arrival of new people.

As one of my interviewees said:

‘because and ... it reminds me a lot of an Indigenous *compa* (comrade) from another territory that said, well, it is that, for me, if they come to me and ask me for land for someone else that is just as *jodido* (screwed) as I am, I have no problem. I mean, because you know that it is someone who is just as *jodido*, and who has the same origin as you’ (PRC AGP, 2019)

This companionship in precarity has been the drive for both the *Pedregales* and AGP. Indeed, the migrants could exist and persist in the area thanks to the guidance of the locals: ‘those of us who arrived later owe it to those who arrived first ... they almost took us by the hand’ (PH AGP, 2019). This unity grew as the *Pedregales* developed from a few huts made out of rock with aluminium ceilings, to an urbanised area with homes largely built by the the community.

That is, while the *Pedregales* of Coyoacan are an urban area with all the comforts that the city can bring, they are a subversive place in their inception. Even though the residents were helped in the planning of the area by university students from the neighbouring UNAM, the building of the *Pedregales* was left to the residents themselves. Indeed, the manual labour was done by the inhabitants who ‘broke their backs working’ (Enciso and Poblador@s y Fundador@s 2002, 19) without help from the government. This bottoms up co-creation is entangled with the history of the area, as pointed out by a member of AGP: ‘we had to work from below ... where I am living right now, my home ... we carried all that stone, the applicants carried it to make the foundations’ (JA AGP, 2019). Thus, for these communities, the *Pedregales* are more than just a place where people live. Instead, the territory is a part of the becoming of its inhabitants while intra-actively being a member of the community. While the invaders brought their own traditions, stories, and customs, the *Pedregales* became an integral part in their performance – a communal space where they had to be bricklayers, blacksmiths, plumbers, and electricians working in concert with each other. The *Pedregales* were ‘formed based on work [that] has an origin ... in certain traditions because the people who came to inhabit them ... [were] used to collective work, to *tequio*’ (MN AGP, 2019a). In other words, the *Pedregales* came into being through the interactions and selfhood of its inhabitants, and not through the plans of people in power. They are the enaction of space-making practices where becoming is iteratively entangled with living to create community and home.

The *Pedregales* were created as and through the fluidity of invertebrate space which needs communal performativity from subaltern sectors to emerge. Unsurprisingly, the hegemonizing power of abstract space led this to be forgotten, either temporarily or permanently. It is often that my interviewees mention a time where there was a loss of community with people and territory: ‘over time, well, that began to be lost’ (MN AGP, 2019a). During my interviews, it was often said that this loss of community was exacerbated by growing mistrust among the population due to rising crime rates – a topic which I will expand on in Chapter 5. However, because places of alterity are always subsumed or erased (Lefebvre, 1991), the destructive power of capital has (re)created the need for resistance in the *Pedregales*. This is because the commodification of space intrinsic to the city has began threatening the communities that form AGP and prompting the (re)creation of an assembly. Lefebvre pointed towards the occurrence of this phenomena in his own work: ‘[s]ooner or later ... the existing centre and the forces of homogenization must seek to absorb all such differences, and they will succeed if these retain a defensive posture and no counterattack is mounted’ (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 373). While spatial differences often arise in the margins of urbanity, abstract space will eventually try to destroy them through absorption into the surrounding urban morphology. This destructive power can only be quelled if it is met with strong and dynamic resistance.



Picture of a neighbour lifting a hose going from the building site to the sewer. 5

Thus, while the Otherness of the *Pedregales*, led to their formation – it is also the reason for their possible destruction. This possibility has grown together with CDMX because, while Coyoacan used to be at the edges of the city, it is now physically, although not ideologically, in its centre (Vega, 2016). This centrality has led to the arrival of real-estate developers to the area, which has led to gentrification and displacement. Assuredly, these threats are what ignited the formation of AGP in 2015. Indeed, there have always been forms of collectivity in the area. However, this means that AGP is an assembly that cannot be understood without looking at the seeds for its germination – the collective and social space-making that led to the existence of the *Pedregales*. This historicity is part of the performativity of AGP’s members as a collective.

I initially learnt of the existence of AGP because of an internship I had at one of UNAM’s research institutes. AGP was slated to work with a now-closed area of the institute to find new avenues of resistance against a real-state agency called *Quiero Casa*. *Quiero Casa* had begun building a housing complex in the area in 2015. While there had been previous resistance against the incursion of developers in the zone, *Quiero Casa* had gone unnoticed

because the size of their housing complex was smaller than previous developments. However, problems arose when neighbours noticed hoses coming out of the building site and into nearby drains. Upon further inspection, they saw that these pumps carried large amounts of what looked like potable water into the sewage system.

The question surfaced, then, how long this dumping of water had been going on for. Additionally, given that CDMX has stringent regulations against the waste of water because of the severity of the water crisis in CDMX (Moreno 2019), neighbours were quick to call the authorities. Shortly after this initial discovery, Patricia Mercado, then secretariat of the CDMX government, claimed that the water that *Quiero Casa* was disposing of was composed of sewage spills (Sánchez, 2016). However, knowing the history of the area, the residents were dubious of these claims even though workers from the Water Systems of Mexico City (SACMEX) had conducted an investigation into the matter. This lack of trust is easy to understand given the amount of corruption in the Mexican government which has centuries long historical antecedents (Rodríguez 2013). Further, because of the residents' link to the history of the area, many of them knew that the area used to be known as *Hueytlilatl* which is Nahuatl for between springs. This relates to an extensive network of springs that was later covered by volcanic rock due to *Xitle*'s eruption. This led the locals to reason that *Quiero Casa* had dug too deep and fractured an aquifer. In fact, residents were aware that any digging in the zone could damage the urban infrastructure built around the aquifers or the ecosystem itself.

I learnt as much because most of this was pointed out in the first press release by AGP, in which some of its members refer to the 169 OIT Agreement signed by the Mexican government and which relates to the protection of indigenous and original peoples (Agencia SubVersiones 2016). This agreement states that any work that directly affects the communities in the areas where Original peoples reside, needs to be agreed upon by a general community assembly. In their press release, AGP members also state that this was initially agreed upon, but later ignored, by the developer and the government. Consequently, and given the lack of trust towards Mexican authorities, AGP became a growing movement. A growth which was supported by their *plantón*—a temporary encampment which serves as a form of protest—before it was closed by local authorities.

We could say that *Plantones* are a form of temporary appropriation (TA). TA is the informal use of public space in the urban landscape. As such, this practice is key in urban space-making as it 'plays a decisive role in sustainability in [the city's] social dimension' (Lara-Hernandez, Melis, & Lehmann, 2019). That is to say that TA has a central role in subverting the hegemonic discourse that permeates urban public space. However, given that public space

is widely presented as originated in representations of space (Mitchell, 2003), TA ignores other subversive space-making practices that are not part of this realm. As Judith Butler notes on the nature of public assembly: ‘when crowds move outside the square, to the side street or the back alley, to the neighborhoods where streets are not yet paved, then something more happens’ (2015, p. 71). Thus, for theorist of the public space, enactments of resistance differ once they happen in spaces outside the public sphere. Yet, it is in these spaces where resistance is often initiated. Moreover, TA truncates the subversivity of spatial practices unless they are observed by a specific public (urban and hegemonic). Therefore, the adaptability of invertebrate space-making practices can help us examine the subversive spaces created in private, in public, and within the cracks of the in-between spaces such as side-streets, porticoes, or back alleys. It can also help us examine practices outside of the urban sphere, even if this thesis focuses on urban assemblies. Consequently, while TA is an important part of plural performativity, the iterative mattering of resistance necessitates referencing the *interpenetratedness* of its becoming. This is a porosity that is iteratively enacted by AGP, as I learnt during my first march with them.

Marcha por la Justicia, or March for Justice, was my first formal introduction to AGP after having exchanged messages with one of its members, JQ. The march was divided in two groups that united in one location to continue marching. One group began at a median strip of a busy intersection. In the meantime, the other group began at the portico of a community-



Assemblies demonstrating. 6

built art, crafts, and sports school for local youth. Thus, while one portion of the people marching began their journey in a public space, the other began in an in-between area that is often only visited by the locals. Furthermore, both halves of the march chose to go through the small side-streets of the *Pedregales* rather than being present on the main streets. This was a conscious choice of engagement with the local communities as it was evident through the chants of the protesters that would explain their presence in the area. It also allowed the protesters to be in a space that enabled their engagement with neighbours, as I noticed when I saw them talking with residents who would approach the march and ask questions. It was an opening, a call, for other subaltern individuals to join *la lucha*. This means that they created a dynamic space of resistance that followed them through different physical and emotional spaces, and that was targeted towards an audience that could identify it. This act of plural performativity addressing another plural performativity provides a mutual understanding that articulates the voice of the ‘people from the singularity of the story and the obduracy of the

body, a voice at once individual and social ... [and that permits] the reproduction of community or sociality itself as bodies congregate and “live together” on the street’ (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 173). That is, it allows for the identification of the self in the Other as a part of a specific community – that of the people. In this case, the subaltern people of CDMX.

Thus, AGP does not only appropriate space, it creates it. This space, much like AGP, materializes *through and as part of entangled intra-relations* (Barad, 2007) that form its ethico-onto-epistemology. Invertebrate spaces can only emerge through their iterative becoming and cannot be separated from ethics. They necessitate material engagements that participate in the (re)creation of the world through their resistance of hegemonising and homogenising practices. They are adaptive, diffracted, and radical. In addition, and because of their (de)stabilised differential boundaries, invertebrate spaces can be enacted within spaces of power – as long as it is done so by the subaltern. Such is the case in my next example.

3.3 Alterities in Partnership

IC is the only group I worked with that worked with or within sections of the government. In fact, the members of the collective were lawyers who had worked with the different institutions—governmental, academic, or non-profit—that are often hailed as gatekeepers or reproducers of coloniality (Canclini, 1995; Mignolo, 2005; Spivak, 2012). As such, IC seemed to counter much of what I had learnt through my fieldwork. They had been successful within governmental prescriptions, and grew both as individuals and as a collective within the institutions that were said to be their oppressors. However, there was a lot more to these inter and intra-actions with the official spheres of power in the country, than initially met the eye.

I came to know of IC via my main contact with them, BC. BC had studied law at UNAM and had been part of a now-closed academic laboratory. Further, because this laboratory focused on studying and helping ethnic, environmental, and gender-based alterities, I knew she was invested in institutional activism. Although activism is often seen as an extra-institutional action meant to help resolve problems within sociopolitical processes, institutional activists break this boundary by providing possibilities for change from within institutions (Pettinicchio, 2012). This can be done by working towards organizational changes or policy reforms. Institutional activists also open spaces for the Other within the institutions they work for. Yet, because of the flexibility of the term, they are often compared to sympathetic elites or institutional entrepreneurs – giving them a higher social position than that of other activists. In fact, within the Mexican context, institutional activism can still be perceived as untrustworthy because of the elite/institution connection (Bedregal, 2011). Additionally, and as I mention in

Chapter 1, this perception is worsened by the lack of trust towards the institutions that have aided in the historic subalternisation of peoples and territories in Latin-America.

Yet, having this view of the women of IC would negate their history and experiences as Indigenous women in Mexico: a group that has historically been the target of abuse and repression. This would, in turn, result in additional discrimination and erasure of their selfhood. It is true that the members of IC have created connections with powerful institutions that have allowed them to garner knowledge and experience in this realm. However, this does not erase their subalternity. Instead, because of their sociocultural space within coloniality, the members of IC can best be seen as members of Gramsci's organic intellectuals rather than elites of some sort. Per Kate Crehan's discussion of organic intellectuals, they are people borne into subalternity and who are 'capable of articulating subaltern experience as new political narratives, confident "to speak in their own name"' (2016, Intellectuals section, p. 10). They are subaltern or previously subaltern people, who have found or created a political space that allows them to attempt to engage with the hegemonic discourse. This does not mean that they will be heard—hence their subalternity—or that they will be successful in their enterprise. Still, they have a greater potential to insert themselves in the hegemonic sphere and achieve authority within it – a becoming of hegemonic selfhood which the members of IC are attempting.

The members of IC are driven by the materiality of their everyday. As such, it is in their performative collectivity that we can understand their entangled institutional becomings. I could observe these collective enactments through their engagement and discussions during a series of seminars meant to teach Indigenous women their rights. These were six seminars that were held every other Saturday over a two-month period. Each of them was seven to eight hours long, and was held at conference room in the Mexican senate. Every seminar had guest speakers, all women, knowledgeable in different aspects of the law such as the constitution, women's rights, or Indigenous rights. Four of the six seminars had mestizo women as speakers, while the first and last seminar were reserved for Indigenous speakers. I was able to attend three of these seminars in person, but I also analysed video recordings and pictures of the rest.

The first thing that struck me about the seminars was their location – the Mexican Senate. For a quick rundown, the Senate is currently situated in *Paseo de la Reforma* (Promenade of the Reform), one of Mexico's oldest and most important streets. Its original name was *Paseo de la Emperatriz* or *Paseo del Emperador* (Promenade of the Empress or the Emperor) (Assad, 2005). This name was chosen by Maximiliano I, second emperor of Mexico and archduke of Austria. The idea was for the avenue to connect the growing capital to the Imperial Palace while resembling the great boulevards of Europe (Excelsior Redacción, 2013).

This project of European modernity has not faltered and was only briefly halted during Benito Juárez's time in power. In fact, at several points through its history, this avenue has been seen as a nexus of urban modernity. In its current iteration, it is lined with modern buildings, banks, corporations, and monuments. It is an avenue that exalts and attempts to cultivate modernity and coloniality from a place of monumentality. Consequently, if we remember that Lefebvre pointed out that monuments 'exercise ... attraction only to the degree that [they] create distance' (1991, p. 386), we can see how this avenue enacts the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion that CDMX performs in its inhabitants. It is an avenue meant to house and exude power built on a colonial past and modern present – a dominant/dominated space of *pax capitalistica* from the centrality of abstract space in the *lived* CDMX.

Yet, this Senate is rather new – it was finished in 2011 to the price of 2,563 million pesos (Expansión, 2011). This is in contrast with the old Senate which was housed in the Historic Centre of the city in *Antigua Casona de Xicotencatl* – a palazzo from the 17th century. Originally, a Catholic academic centre, this building is now a museum, although it remains as a reserve senate in case of emergency (Gobierno de CDMX, 2020). Thus, we see the enactment of a change of power from religious to capitalist: both performances of a power that is constantly (re)asserting itself through organizational and structural aspects. And it is here that the members of IC chose to give their seminars to other Indigenous women.

Given its centrality in the Mexican power sphere, the entrance to the Senate is closely guarded. The times I attended a seminar, I had to give my name, reason for visiting, and leave my ID with the security guards who gave me a temporary permit. Said permit was only valid for the times that the seminars were ongoing. In fact, when I arrived early, I could not enter the building five minutes before the seminar was supposed to start. Additionally, I saw several guards patrolling the entrances while carrying automatic rifles as well as unarmed security personnel walking inside the building. I also noticed security cameras, and later learnt that the only places without cameras were the conference rooms where meetings or seminars were held.

It is in one of these conference rooms that IC members held their seminars, although each time we were given a different room which meant that someone had to wait by the main entrance to guide late arrivals. The seminars were attended solely by Indigenous women, although all but one of them had an academic background. This woman was a middle-ranking police officer in charge of the training of new officers.

While remaining mindful of my presence as an outsider, I was given the chance to participate in the seminars and engage in the ongoing discussions. I noticed that there was an initial sense of distance towards me because of the content and audience of the seminars. Yet,

this was mostly gone after I was given the opportunity to explain my presence in the seminars during a round of introductions. Another factor in my favour was that I chose to remain mostly silent during the seminars. I was aware that I unwillingly represented the same society that targets these women. Furthermore, when I asked questions, they were always guided towards the women in the audience and meant to frame them and their experiences as Indigenous women in the city, rather than my own. I did not do this because of my interest in them as informants, but because I was mindful of not taking up a space that was not meant for me. I think this was the best choice to communicate the awareness of the space I was taking while



Picture of IC's second seminar in 2019. 7

also remaining ethical.

Nevertheless, this choice proved to be fruitful as the women attending the seminars progressively felt at ease talking about their experiences. Thus, I was able to learn of their ongoing attempts to engage with the hegemonic discourse. I recall an example when one participant narrated the experiences of a close friend of hers who had been hired to work at a high level position in the banking sector. This woman was the target of constant aggressions by several of her co-workers. They regularly made racial jokes when she was within earshot, and would off-handedly comment that the reason for her hire was a PR move by the organisation to appear more welcoming. They would also negate her accomplishments, and often blamed her for any piece of company property gone missing. Indeed, the aggressions had become so persistent that she had decided to quit. When she took her case to the state attorney, she was told that there was nothing to be done and it was best if she simply moved on.

Being targets of violence was something all too known by the women attending the seminars. They had all been abused during their time in CDMX. The guest speaker hearing this story, mentioned that racial discrimination is against both the local and national constitutions (INFO, 2017; Cámara de Diputados, 2018). However, several attendants retorted that similar, if not worse, violence was often enacted by the state on Indigenous communities. Most of the women in attendance gave testimonies about instances where they or their families had been subjected to state violence. They added that this violence often goes unnoticed until it is visible enough to the rest of the country that it prompts the state to intervene in order to save face. This precarity is exacerbated by lack of knowledge, by both citizens and state officials, of laws and regulations against racial discrimination. Thus, the only recourse these communities are left with is hiring a specialist. However, given that 71% of Indigenous peoples live in poverty (Molina, 2018), the possibility of having specialist aid is often capped by a lack of funds.

One of IC's members, EC, added that there is a blind spot in local, national, and international laws: 'many times law doesn't recognise the forms of law and self-management of Indigenous peoples' (2019). She emphasised this point when she mentioned that there are few Indigenous representatives at the United Nations, and that the 'Mexican state was formed through its invisibilisation of Indigenous peoples' (2019). When it comes to the creation of laws oriented towards Indigenous peoples, the women who participated in these seminars often cited counterproductive results because of this lack of engagement with Indigenous communities when creating laws. Moreover, this historical invisibilisation is something that was mentioned by all the participants in this study, whether they were Indigenous or not. Thus, power relations of coloniality are iteratively reproduced by institutions in the present day.

A case in point, in 2002 Mexico signed an agreement with the World Bank to promote gender equality (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, 2015). This eventually led the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures (COFIPE) to adjust and enforce gender quotas in public positions (Poncela, 2011). However, while these policies have been perceived as successful among the mestizo population, their implementation among Indigenous communities has been fraught with issues. As one of IC's members put it: 'political quotas in the community are being used to punish women who have been criminalised for breaking behavioural gender codes' (MSR IC, 2019). That means that the imposition of Western models of governance has negatively affected those it seeks to protect because these codes are used as forms of penalisation against women who are otherised by their communities. Several seminar participants cited single mothers who do not have the time, money, or desire to engage with public positions as common targets of this punishment.

This does not mean that the policies are bad, but that there is a lack of engagement with the Indigenous context. Indeed, most seminar attendees mentioned that they are often tasked with the role of translators of Western concepts in their communities because of their engagements with Mexican society. Thus, they have to first internalise a concept that often lacks an ontological *a priori* in Indigenous cosmovision. Then, they have to translate this concept into their own language, even though it has no basis in Indigenous selfhood. This often leads to frustration as Indigenous language often does not have words for Western forms of being. Because of this, the translator has to work with similes and metaphors to convey meaning, only to have to translate the Indigenous response back to Mexican society. Therefore, for the women attending the seminars, co-creation rather than imposition is needed if laws are expected to work: 'there are many concepts that [the authorities] want to impose on us ... but the changes are going to be different in each Indigenous community, so more than translating,

we should try to create together' (MSR IC, 2019). The women emphasized that such co-creation needs Indigenous women from different cultures so that they could 'knit [them]selves together' (EC IC, 2019) and create new ways of thinking.

I observed this communal "knitting" of alternative selfhoods being enacted by the women during the seminars. As such, it was not a surprise when a few of IC's members mentioned that while they are an Indigenous-only collective, they are open to including mestizo women in their group. Their only requirements are that they shared IC's goal of aiding Indigenous women in Mexico, and that they were willing to work collectively. Further, while it is clear that the Indigenous women attending the seminars were otherised by society, this did not diminish their drive to work from within institutions to co-create with like-minded people because they believe that this is an effective way to counter the abjections they endure. They proudly proclaim their indigeneity and enact communal forms of being while working within westernised parameters. Thus, they work as subversive elements within abstract spaces by embracing their alterities and using them as tools for creating diffracted possibilities.

Like overlapping ripples in a pond (Barad, 2003), the women of IC are creating differing and deferring waves whose superposition they hope will create a space for Indigenous selfhoods within the discourse of power. This means that the invertebrate space-making practices of IC members try to enact agential cuts of alterity within abstract space itself rather than creating a subversive space outside of the hegemonic discourse to engage with societal discursivity. They are trying to produce determinate spatial boundaries within apparatuses of power that enact the mattering of Indigeneities through material-discursive practices. Consequently, while AMI's space creation is often done in private or the in-between spaces of private and public, and AGP engages with private, public and the in-between spaces, IC chooses to imbue abstract space with subversivity. This underlines the fluidity of invertebrate spaces, and their capacity to adapt to the collectivities that iteratively produce them.

4. Invertebrate Terminality

'Colonels who had no one to write to them come with their novels into film; the memory of the oppressed and the disappeared maintains their testimony in ragged rock songs and video clips.' (Canclini, 1995, p. xl)

Having looked at some of the material practices of the groups that formed this study, I will now look at their digital practices. I should note that while there is much to be said about separating these practices, I do so to provide a clear focus on the different parts of my analysis.

Let us begin by addressing the term terminal space. This is a term coined by cultural theorist, Scott Bukataman. This space is that of the ‘electronic realms of the computer’ (Bukataman, 1993, p. 103). In other words, it is the space created through our interactions with digital systems. I have chosen this term because it is in counter-position to both Guy Debord’s society of spectacle and Jean Baudrillard’s simulacra. That is, in the society of spectacle, conditions of consumption arise when images become ‘advertisements for the status quo’ (Bukataman, 1993, p. 37) to create needs among the population. On the other hand, simulacra create spaces that have no connection to reality, and attempt to simulate a lived experience through the synthetisation of hyperreality to incentivise consumption (Baudrillard, 1983). While terminal spaces are spaces of creativity and production, the society of spectacle and simulacra are spaces of abstraction and commodification (Bukataman, 1993). Yet, while for Bukataman, terminal space creates a disembodied ‘virtual subject’ (1993, p. 118), I believe this lack of embodiment is an agential cut that overlooks the bodily entanglements humans have with technology. Thus, I will engage with invertebrate terminal spaces as the digital extension of subversive space creation stemming from subaltern attempts to engage with hegemony.

Through my various interactions with AMI, AGP, and IC, I encountered several forms of terminal space creation. However, this form of material spatio-temporal discourse is often not possible for the subaltern. Indeed, only about 59% of the global population has Internet access (Statista, 2020a). In Mexico, around 65.8% of the population has Internet (Islas 2019). Those who do not have access are usually the poor, often living in rural areas. Still, CDMX is one of the cities with the largest amount of Internet users in Mexico (INEGI Informa, 2019). As such, while it has been possible for me to study invertebrate terminal spaces, it is not always possible for the subaltern to engage in this kind of space-making. I would argue that engaging in virtual discursivity is often a privilege reserved to those who are part of the hegemonic discourse. As Cheryl Harris illustrates, rights are for those who can exercise them, a ‘capacity denoted by racial identity’ (as cited in Saldaña-Portillo, 2016, p. 23). Thus, coloniality is entangled with territoriality and the positioning or erasure of peoples through the creation of the cultural scene/seen (Schein, 2006): a topic with which I will engage in Chapter 5.

4.1 Indigenous Cosmivision through Terminal Enactions

There are two fundamental Indigenous concepts I need to address to understand AMI’s use and creation of invertebrate terminal spaces. These are concepts which are crucial to the constitution of the communal selfhood of Indigenous Mesoamerican peoples: *tequio*^{vi} and oneness. Per AMI’s book on communitary experiences and open software, *tequio* is any type

of work through which the individual can ‘contribute to the betterment of the community’ (2011, p. 33). In Indigenous rural communities, *tequio* is often accomplished through physical labour. This includes the building of roads or homes, communal planting, or building upkeep. However, this form of community-centred labour can also be accomplished by giving lessons on important topics for the community, having a public charge, or helping develop technologies that aid the community. Furthermore, it is through *tequio*, often by taking up a public charge, that community members can *become* a part of the community: ‘my grandfather used to tell me “now, son, no one can tell you that you are not a part of the community, that you have not done something, that you not kept your end”’ (Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011, p. 22). It is also through it that you prove your devotion to the community and earn prestige. Thus, *tequio* is how members of the community can build and maintain their ties to it even if they live or were born elsewhere. This type of work, however, becomes harder when members of the community live in urban areas because of the individualism fomented by modern institutions and neo-liberalist practices. As AMI’s book points out, this allows neo-liberal practices to ‘transform themselves into laws and physical spaces’ (2011, p. 27) that impede communal performances. This is a problem for Indigenous peoples in the city because urban norms and landscapes inhibit their enacting of oneness with their community.

Oneness is the belief of being unified with a whole that is comprised of a multiplicity of parts. However, while Meosamerican Indigenous peoples generally focus on this oneness with their community, this is but a part of the totality of oneness they believe in. That is, while they often perform oneness with their community through communal enactments such as *tequio*, this oneness goes further than that. For them, oneness is the belief that human beings are a part of a whole that flows (Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011). They only exist because everything else exists. They are a part of the world and not outside it. This also means that Mesoamerican Indigenous peoples see their existence as emerging not only through their community but through nature. They exist not through themselves, but ‘through the other’ (JP AMI, 2019c). This is a communal other that is not always human. The other through which the I exist can be maize – considered to be ‘female and male, girl and boy, father and mother’ (MD AMI, 2019). It can be a stream, a hill, the animal they kill to eat, or the one they have for company. Consequently, Mesoamerican Indigenous peoples who continue following their traditional belief systems, embrace the existence of an ontological precarity and seek to counter it through everyday practices of communality. Further, this precarity diffractively emerges through onto-epistem-ological boundaries that are dynamically (re)created with the oneness which they emerge from: the world.

This is a oneness that does not separate humans from their creations, which has a double effect on AMI's ways of becoming. On one hand, we are accountable for the other. Because of this, we are responsible for our intra-actions with the world (Barad, 2007; Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011). As such, we must be ethical in our ways of being. Indeed, for members of AMI and other Indigenous groups, this is practised through communal inter- and intra-actions. Thus, there is no ontological separation between ourselves and our technology. While our sensory and emotional experiences vary between digital and material spaces, the space-making practices enacted in either realm are part of our becoming. This means that members of AMI perform communal digital space-making practices to ethically enact their communality in both the digital and material planes.

AMI has used five ways to enact invertebrate terminal space-making. These are: the usage and development of open-source software, the creation of their Internet radio station, the production of their webpage, their engagements with social media, and their community classes and workshops on computer usage and digital media. Of these five activities, only the classes and workshops have been discontinued for lack of a material space. Regardless, because of the impact these classes had according to my interviewees, I will talk about them briefly.

AMI has a format of instruction that differs from what many people in the West would envision from a class. To begin with, and as mentioned in Chapter 3, the hierarchy between professor and students is blurry and flatter. This stems from the belief that learning is best done cooperatively and from each other. This is tied to the co-responsibility and reciprocity that needs to be enacted on everyday settings, including the classroom. Consequently, the classes given by AMI need to be co-constructed between professor and students. This creates a practical approach to the lessons themselves. For example, they 'start from what [the students] want to learn: to capture and edit audio, or learn the technical part, how to assemble and disassemble the computer' (Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011, p. 34). This means that although teachers have a rough idea of the lessons they want to impart, the teaching itself is fluid and subject to change to focus on the needs of the group. Thus, the class is meant to enact communality: a co-creation of a communal space meant for learning. This is because for students and teachers alike, communality enacts a moving forward together. That is, there is a 'digital gap' (Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011, p. 101) that iteratively excludes Indigenous peoples in Mexico. AMI's members believe that this digital subalternisation can only be surmounted as a community. This is due to several reasons ranging from the museumification of Indigeneity to lack of financial resources.

In fact, while lack of money is one of the biggest problems encountered by Indigenous peoples in Mexico, the enactment of Indigeneity as anachronism fuels this impoverishment. This is seen, for example, in the regular referral of Indigenous peoples as Pre-Hispanic:

‘we are not Pre-Hispanic peoples ... we are modern. That is, we are not modern because of Western modernism, we are modern because of ourselves, because of our modernity, because our existence is expressed at this moment, exists at this moment.’ (JP AMI, 2019b)

Thus, Indigenous peoples are iteratively juxtaposed against technology because they lack the right kind of modernity. This widens the economic gap for Indigenous peoples in a world that increasingly embraces technology. As such, having computer lessons re-positions them in the discourse: ‘housekeepers ... once they trained with us ... became teachers to the children they cared for ... [their bosses] would: say teach [my children] because you, you already know’ (JP AMI, 2019a). That makes AMI’s computer lessons a seemingly successful invertebrate space that engages with both material and terminal space-making practices.

I call this particular invertebrate space seemingly successful because it apparently succeeded, at least temporarily, in inserting the subaltern peoples who were part of it into the digital hegemonic discourse. Unfortunately, because I did not have contact with the students who attended these lessons, I was not able to learn about the length and depth of this digital engagement. Did the novelty of the students having computer knowledge lead only to a brief acknowledgement? Or was it something that became an inherent part of their daily interactions with the world? Did this awareness of their abilities lead to better opportunities in their lives? Or did it lead to new kinds of exploitation? Additionally, because of the communal nature of these practices, it would be important to know how these new knowledges impacted the family and community of class attendants. Indeed, AMI’s members pointed out that one of the important goals for these classes was that those who attended them would go on to disseminate knowledge among their own communities. They underlined a level of success regarding this in their book when they mention that students have ‘invited [AMI members] to their spaces to see how they make their [Internet] radio programs ... how they can already upload audio and video to their website’ (2011, p. 108). Thus, there is a level of self-acknowledged victory in the invertebrate space-making that occurred because of these classes. However, to explore their success would necessitate more space than can be given in this thesis. Also, researchers looking into this matter would need to gather more information than I currently have. Yet, this gives us a hint that invertebrate space-making can, if briefly, insert the subaltern into the hegemonic discourse through communal practices. It also opens the space for us to look into remaining

four invertebrate terminal practices—open-source software, Internet radio, and AMI’s website and social media accounts—as they are entangled with the creation of AMI’s computer classes.

One of the driving forces of AMI’s digitalisation has been AX. AX has a degree in computational systems, and decided to use the knowledge he acquired through his studies to help other Indigenous migrants. In fact, he began working in a pilot project for vocational training with two training institutions while he was completing his bachelor in 1996 (Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011). This project, although successful, was later scrapped by one of the Institutions after there was a change in government. Nevertheless, it gave AX the basis of what later became AMI’s computer lessons. Moreover, it underlined the lack of governmental programs that could give Indigenous peoples education in computer usage. Therefore, when AMI first found a physical space, computer lessons became one of the first goals to tackle. Yet, this posed a problem for AX and the rest of the engineers handling this project because they only had access to a digital subscriber line (DSL).

DSL connections use telephone lines to access the Internet (Cisco, 2020). While this technology is reliable and cheaper than cable or fibre connections, its largest problem is its inability to connect more than one computer at a time. Thus, AMI’s engineers were met with an inability to share Internet access between computers with the technology that they had on hand. This led AX to look into Linux when members from *Ke Huelga*, a pirate radio station based in UNAM (Malva, 2011), suggested this operating software would be easier to configure than proprietary software (e.g. Windows) to share a DSL connection among several computers. AX had never used Linux. Nevertheless, AX and other engineers at AMI were quick to adopt the operating system when they learnt that open-source software ‘builds capacities, generates knowledge, is more sustainable, and promotes innovation’ (Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011, p. 102). Additionally, they embraced its enactment of communality, as anyone who is willing can help co-create this software and improve it due to its open nature. This means that AMI’s members could ethically enact their communal Indigeneity in terminal spaces by using technology that was closely linked to their philosophy.

The use of open-source software had additional benefits for AMI’s members. To begin with, they could configure the software and develop it to suit their needs – for example, building a program in an Indigenous language. While this is also possible using proprietary software, this requires having the money to buy it; something which is not necessary with open-source software, because it is free. This means that more people can have access to software to develop tools or to enter the digital discourse. Further, because open-source software relies on communal creation, its users are often more conscious about their digital enactments. As JP

states: ‘as Indigenous people, [we] can make good use ... of technology, to access information, and that is why we use Linux ... so that we not only consume garbage’ (2019a). Therefore, AMI’s members are conscious about co-creating a communal terminal space that can benefit other communities, whether they are Indigenous or not. This is evident in AMI’s webpage design and their Internet radio station: both created with open-sourced software.

AMI’s Internet radio can be accessed through their webpage^{vii}. The site itself is designed to be easy to navigate both in a computer or mobile (Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011). This is understandable given the steady rise of mobile Internet access in Mexico (Statista, 2020b). As previously mentioned, in Mexico, mobile Internet has enabled people with low economic resources to have access to digital spaces. This was substantiated by JP during one of our interviews: ‘it is difficult to have full technological access ... we are helped, perhaps because [people] have their cellphones, and there is ... access, to a certain extent’ (2019a). Thus, mobile accessibility and fast loading times are centre points in the creation of AMI’s page. The design of the website allows for AMI’s Internet radio to always be accessible through a side-bar, so anyone visiting the website can listen to the radio without complications. Additionally, there is a section in the radio’s drop down menu which gives access to three different radio series previously published by AMI and related to Indigenous cultural contributions, Indigenous rights, and Indigenous cosmology.

Both their radio and website promote the use of open source software. In fact, the website has a section that gives some basic resources to find more information on open source software even if the site does not have a guide. What the site does have, however, is information on Indigenous rights, forms of resistance, and even a small shop of handmade Indigenous items. They are also careful to promote Indigenous events, focusing on urban areas whether in Mexico or elsewhere. One can also find public domain books focused on Indigenous matters ranging from sexuality to migration. Additionally, the website is also how most people have contacted AMI through the years (Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México, 2011). Curiously, I have not found any reference to AMI’s social media in their website even though there are various references to AMI’s website in their Facebook page^{viii}.

Facebook is the only social media site that AMI uses. Nevertheless, in it we can find hints of the different enactments of indigeneity that AMI’s members perform in the material world, such as two videos where their philharmonic is playing: one during a rehearsal, and the other during a party. Their Facebook page also serves as a way to disseminate news pieces about Indigenous peoples all over Mexico, as well as events which AMI supports or creates. One thing is certain in these terminal enactments – they show an iterative community making

with all Mesoamerican Indigenous peoples. While AMI does not have members from all ethnicities in Mexico, they are careful to frame every struggle and act of resistance in a way that communicates a oneness of being with other Indigenous groups. Each action they take in these spaces serves not only to enact that oneness, but to iteratively create a terminal space of communal co-creation. They do not frame AMI as the assembly which every Indigenous person should join, but as one of many which are a part of the decolonial struggle. It is only the agential cuts that separate them in the search for the betterment of their peoples, but they remain diffracted in their invertebrate terminal enactments with other Indigenous groups. A similar kind of diffracted oneness in precarity is performed by AGP, as I will demonstrate next.

4.2 Social Virtuality and Networked Entanglements

Much like AMI, AGP has a strong online presence – although it is enacted differently. This becomes obvious once we visit AGP’s website^{ix}, which, in contrast to AMI’s, has not been updated since 2016. Moreover, although the site gives visitors a peek into activities and news of the time, such as a water *Huapango* hosted by AGP the section that is supposed to talk about the communities in the area, is empty. Still, we can see glimpses of enactments that situate AGP within its social context. The announcement for the *Huapango* is one of such cases.

Huapango is a Mexican folk dance from the *Huasteca* region. This region is located along the gulf of Mexico and is named after its inhabitants, the *huasteco* people. *Huastecos* are of Mayan origin (INPI, 2019), but because of the the linguistic *mistura* of Mesoamerican Indigenous cultures—a common occurrence before and after the conquest—the term *huasteco* comes from Nahuatl. As a quick reminder, *mistura* is sociocultural mixing which contaminates a perceived Indigenous purity. In this case, we can see the mixing of Nahuatl and Maya even though *Huastecos* are of Mayan origin and have other names for referring to themselves. *Huapango* itself also reflects Mexican history. While the style has its origins in Indigenous peoples, *Huapango* arose during the conquest. Additionally, the dance hails from the early 20th century (EcuRed, 2019), when the nation was struggling to come together after the revolution.

Thus, to use *Huapango* as a form of resistance calls forth a specific kind of *mexicanidad* rooted in an iterative history of spoken and unspoken *mistura*, and of chosen and imposed miscegenation. Indeed, the announcement itself juxtaposes the ‘resistance against one more of the megaprojects of death’ with the slogan ‘water is life, and life is to be defended’ (Asamblea General, 2016). This constitutes a terminal enactment of the same forms of resistance I found during my interactions with the members of AGP. As such, it is unsurprising to find calls for action throughout the website. There are at least two invitations to join AGP’s *plantón*, seven

event announcements and a schedule for ongoing workshops: all held at the *plantón*. Yet, there is only a brief look at AGP's history, and nothing to be found about each community. It is as if the website was an afterthought to more prescient action, or solely a gateway to material enactments. It is not a space of resistance, but, rather, one that announces an ongoing resistance happening elsewhere. It is a different story when we look at AGP's Facebook page^x.

Indeed, AGP's Facebook page became an integral part of my initial interactions with the assembly. In it, I found vast amounts of information that allowed me to conduct a quick yet in-depth netnographic analysis to understand who they are, and what they are fighting for. I was also able to establish a rough timeline of AGP's history and actions from the time of their first two Facebook videos in June 2016. The clarity provided by AGP's Facebook page stems from two forms of intertwined performativities: terminal enactments and networking.

As I mention in a paper where I used AGP as a case study: through AGP's Facebook page, I was able to discern a 'network of friends, allies, comrades, and adversaries [that] has developed throughout a myriad of struggles' (2020, p. 14). This network is often enacted through the entangling of terminal and material invertebrate spaces such as found in AGP's international forum: *Water is Life, y la Vida se Defiende* (Asamblea General de los Pueblos, Barrios, Colonias y Pedregales de Coyoacán, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). The first thing that we can surmise from the videos taken at this forum is that the event was held at AGP's *plantón*. However, the forum did not only consist of AGP's members, and both the speakers and audience included Indigenous peoples, Original peoples, working-class mestizos, Mexican and American academics, and Native American peoples. This resulted in a myriad of topics like the mistreatment of political prisoners in USA and Mexico, the preservation of water as environmental resource and common good, the protection of the territory, and the defence of Indigenous ways of being. Thus, the crux of the forum was *la lucha* as enacted by those present.

This entanglement of terminal and material space-making was not only through the presentation of videos on Facebook, but also through forms of communication between those present. This is evident in the digital presence of Native American youth groups who did not have the resources to travel to Mexico, but who were able to participate through video calls, as seen during the talk given by one of their representatives (2017c). This digital enactment allowed for a cross-cultural and cross-border connection in the search of the communal betterment of the subaltern. Therefore, not only is an invertebrate terminal space performed, but a network is widened and fortified in its material subversion. This means that AGP uses terminal spaces to create what Nancy Fraiser would call a parallel arena of subaltern counterpublics (1990): a widened call and training ground for action.

However, AGP also performs other forms of terminal space-making in which they use their materiality and historicity to frame a shared struggle. This is mostly done through the use of the Internet as a form of digital archive for their own history of subversion. In fact, as I found through my research, this (re)creation of terminal space is done both within and without AGP's Facebook page – through alternative media networks. Just as AMI uses its Internet radio station to (re)create its digital voice, AGP chooses to make use of pre-existing Internet media to do the same. This means that while AGP members do not always create their own digital content, they rely on communal and subversive Internet-based media networks to interject in a wider subversive space-making. This is exemplified in AGP's ongoing collaboration with radio *Ke Huelga*. *Ke Huelga* is one of the few pirate radio stations in Mexico. They have existed since 1999 through both Internet and radio frequencies, which has allowed them to amass a solid following. However, it is through their Internet radio that AGP has broadcasted several pieces, mainly some of the talks presented at their on and off *escuela popular* (popular school).

An *escuela popular* is a type of alternative pedagogy of the oppressed based on communitarian learning through analysis and practice (Fernández, 2017). Consequently, through this learning space, AGP's members are able to:

‘take the street, [and] make [an] analysis, not only ... of the street, of the situation we are experiencing, but also by inviting colleagues from other states, or abroad. To learn about the problems that unite us as people’ (JQ AGP, 2019)

By (re)creating a digital presence, AGP is also able to include other members of the people in their co-creative learning processes. This allows AGP to engage in conversations with other oppressed peoples, and encourage the criticism and analysis of the hegemonic sphere. Further, it opens a digital situatedness within the people's struggle. This both creates an invertebrate terminal space, and nourishes the network that is vital in keeping AGP's struggle alive.

This need for the other was evident when I asked one of AGP's members what was her motivation behind over 40 years of civil rights struggle: ‘you are not going to walk alone, you always ... join those who fight, those who resist’ (PH AGP, 2019). This interviewee started fighting for the *Pedregales* in 1966. Nevertheless, this sentiment of communality in and through *la lucha* is enacted by most or all the members of AGP, regardless of their age or length of time in *la lucha*. Indeed, for them, their own struggle is inherently entangled with the struggles of others. As such, it cannot end until other struggles end: ‘until the wealth of the peoples is equitative, well, we would no longer have to fight then’ (PH AGP, 2019). Therefore, although they call for the engagement of a wider public, AGP does not follow Nancy Fraser's ideas of a struggle for the public sphere where counterpublics compete for equality and

recognition (Swain, 2013). Instead, AGP enacts equality for those who are in *la lucha*, as evident in any of AGP's Facebook videos where members visit other assemblies. These enactments perform a togetherness in precarity that raises forth a Levinasian position of ethical boundness to the other (Butler, 2015). While this togetherness does not necessitate a shared history or other forms of belonging, it breaks with Levinasian ethics in that it flows into creating a oneness of the people: a shared history of struggle. A history that is (re)created in AGP's material and digital forms of protest which are entangled in their own iterative space making.

However, these types of entangled material/digital spatial practices are not exclusive to AGP. As Joseph F. Swain underscores, the 'virtual-physical hybrid protest is becoming the new paradigm in political discourse and action around the world' (2013, p. 65). That is to say that with the growth of digital media, the role of Virtual Public Spaces (VPS)—or Digital Public Spaces (DPS)—has grown in the political discursive space of the masses. Yet, AGP's activities are not always announced publicly. Indeed, AGP always publicises their participation at larger protests that require social media circulation. This was the case with marches in favour of the Chilean people and against the acts of repression by Chile's current president, Sebastián Piñera. Still, these marches are usually organised by groups other than AGP. Thus, while AGP is there to enact their togetherness in struggle, they do so largely through the methods of others. This shows respect towards other ways of performing resistance and creates an organic oneness by bringing together every group as a whole. Nevertheless, AGP's organisational strategies for these hybrid protests tend to be situated and smaller. They can also be divided into three groups: open invitations, semi-open calls, and semi-private meetings.

This differential performativity between calls of action is related to the type of event and planned outcome. That is, open invitations are done for the largest events such as lectures or marches. These invitations usually start through a poster on Facebook, followed by the circulation of this image on a few messaging platforms. The poster has the basic information: the type of event, time and place of the event, and who is hosting it. The type of event informs interested parties of what they can expect, e.g. if it is a march or a talk, and this is emphasized by the chosen graphics in the poster. The size and focus of the event is also highlighted by who the hosts are. For example, if it is solely an AGP event, the event will be on the smaller side and focused on the conservation of water and territory, or the history of the region. On the other hand, an event that includes groups like the National Coordination of Users in Resistance (CONUR), will be larger and include topics such as pay strikes against the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE). Additionally, the poster will include instructions on where it will be, and will often include a map if the event will not be held at a larger street or city square.

By contrast, semi-open calls are used for things such as public talks with officials or planned tours that authorities will make through the communities. For these events AGP will make a text-only Facebook post stating the time, place, and reason for meeting. However, I quickly learnt that unless you are part of the local communities, you will not always understand exactly where this location is. This is not a purposeful obfuscation on AGP’s part. Instead, it is because of the use of specific referents that would make it easier for someone from a local community to arrive to the appointed place, that makes it difficult for someone else to understand the message. I should underline, this lack of understanding was not solely my own



Example of Event poster. 8

as several taxi drivers had similar issues understanding the given instructions, and would usually have to drop me off at a nearby area where I would ask for directions. Thus, although the event is an “open call”, it is AGP’s choice to facilitate the arrival of locals that makes the instructions of arrival difficult to understand for outsiders. Still, and regardless of the difficulties involved, the meeting is an open call, which creates the possibility of undesirable visitors.

This particular downside became clear during a meeting with authorities outside a local office for the National System for Integral Family Development (DIF) in October 22nd, 2019. During this meeting, a small group of people from a neighbouring community arrived and attempted to disrupt the event. From what I could garner, they wanted to have the authorities go with them to listen to their needs. The members of AGP had no issues with this, as long as it was done after the authorities had talked with those who were at the meeting and there was an agreement made to tackle the lack of water in the area. However, the group of people from the neighbouring community did not want to wait, or form a part of the discussion AGP had arranged. This devolved into a verbal argument, and insults were exchanged among some of the people present. Nevertheless, two members of AGP managed to pull the people from the neighbouring community aside, so talking with authorities could be resumed. Unfortunately, this did not lead to an agreement between AGP’s members and the visiting neighbours, although I have not heard of further issues between the groups.

Lastly, there are AGP’s semi-private meetings. These meetings are the assembly meetings that happen on an ongoing basis to discuss internal work and bring issues to the table. When AGP had their *plantón*, these meetings would happen after a session of their *escuela popular*. This meant that they could take care of two different events in one session, and they

would have a good amount of people in attendance. However, after the *plantón* was closed by authorities, these meetings have been done at restaurants or cafés in the area. The setting for the meetings is often discussed in person between some members of AGP at the location of another event, regardless of the type. This information is then disseminated via AGP's WhatsApp chat and by word of mouth. Further, while WhatsApp servers are not encrypted, only people living in the communities that AGP is a part of are invited to the chat. As such, while authorities can access the messages exchanged through the application, only insiders are invited to participate. However, this lack of security also means that all digital exchanges requiring secrecy are done through Telegram, a cloud-based encrypted messaging system.

Yet, because of the varying levels of publicness in AGP's hybrid enactments, these can often not be deemed to fall under the VPS umbrella mentioned previously. Instead, these entangled material/terminal spatial performances diffractively work to create a differential being and accessing of these spaces. That is, while some of these events are aimed at the wider public and, as such, are announced in an accessible manner through AGP's Facebook page, other events will require increasing insider status even if they remain technically open to the public. This necessarily frames AGP's situatedness as a glocal assembly – a group that uses technology to interact with others and strengthen its network at a global scale, but with materially enacted local forms of being. AGP's performed hybridity allows it to (re)create invertebrate terminal spaces that have roots in the assembly's materiality, historicity, and ethics. Further, these enactions perform and blur the otherness of the outsider to create an ethico-onto-epistemological togetherness within *la lucha*. A oneness of purpose: we are equals even though we are not the same. However, there are other ways of enacting togetherness or 'ethics of diffraction' (Wismeg, 2020), as we will see through IC's digital enactions.

4.3 Digital Sorority

Before I delve into IC's digital entanglings, I must point out that much of IC's digital performativity is not publicly available. That is, while they have a Facebook page through which they communicate to the public, they do not post much about themselves. Through a cursory search of their page, one can find information on some of the activities they are engaged with like feminist marches or lectures on gender violence geared towards Indigenous peoples. Still, I would not know much about the members of IC or the history of the collective unless I contacted them directly. However, IC's low amount of digital public engagement, allows us to explore some hitherto unspoken aspects of terminal space-making. These are all enactments I have analysed so far, and which IC is a part of, but that I wish to problematize further.

Let us begin with IC's creation. Interestingly, IC was partially created through WhatsApp. This is not entirely surprising given that WhatsApp is a free cross-platform messaging system that is widely used in Mexico. While statistics show that Facebook is the most used form of social media in the country, WhatsApp is a close second (Statista, 2020c). Additionally, social networks and instant messaging are the most popular Internet activities in Mexico (Statista, 2020d). Therefore, most people consume rather than produce space and data, and seldom use the Internet to seek out like-minded people unless they have particular interests or political inclinations (Curtice & Norris, 2004). Of course, even when data and spaces are produced within social media or messaging spaces, we are left to wonder how much of what we produce is ours. Given the panopticon nature of many of these services, I would be remiss to ignore the use of digital spaces for things such as population control and surveillance (Sampedri & Avidad, 2018). Indeed, it is necessary to address the problems that come with using digital services to create invertebrate terminal spaces. Thus, I will now explore some of the reasons people choose to create spaces of resistance within digital hegemonic spaces.

Sociologist Marc Smith argues that VPS in social media websites or similar corporate spaces are akin to shopping malls: 'commercial spaces that encourage only a subset of public behaviors' (2013, para 3). Further, the data we use to build our online persona and space is not fully ours, or not ours alone, and can sometimes be used by the company whose services we use. The liberties that companies have with our data vary from country to country (or region to region), but are often blurry, and prone to legal loopholes. This has led to issues such as the 2018 Cambridge Analytica scandal where the Facebook data of an estimated 87 million users was shared with the political consultancy Cambridge Analytica (Cellan-Jones, 2018). This data, in turn, was used to further the Brexit campaign in the UK and Trump's presidential campaign in the US. It is widely accepted that this form of data mining contributed to the success of both political movements, thus shaping our current political landscape. Still, this only led to mild legal repercussions for the actors involved, although it also gave way to stricter General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules within the EU.

It is clear that using social media and instant messaging services comes with a risk. Further, while there is an ongoing re-adjustment of rules and regulations regarding this, many countries are far behind. Indeed, Mexico is yet to adopt international standards when it comes to cybersecurity, and data privacy laws leave most security measures up to the user (Cancino, 2019). This means that price to pay for using social media services is unavoidable and can have a wide, and dangerous, range of consequences. This can go from having your data used for marketing campaigns or, in the worst scenario, lead to torture and death. An example of the

latter comes from twitter user María del Rosario Fuentes Rubio, who was tortured and killed for her role in denouncing drug-dealers in Tamaulipas (Lagarde, 2008). Thus, there is a real and known danger for users of social media spaces in Mexico and elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the participants in this study expressed the belief that they needed to use the existing tools available to them. They acknowledge that they have to be careful in what they choose to share, and how to express themselves. Many of them are happy to only engage with social media as a tool of public dialogue because they view such applications as a distraction through which the dominant classes can keep others occupied, and themselves informed. More to their point, by using the means at hand, and, as Derrida would say, adapting and appropriating them to create a bricolage of resistance through which engagement with the hegemonic discourse becomes possible – they are certain that they can subvert the initial purpose of these digital tools. This digital bricolage can also become a gateway to enact oneness with others whose alterity resonates with our own, as is the case with IC members.

I recall asking BC how IC was formed when I met her for the first time. We were at a crowded new intercultural centre in downtown CDMX so, at first, I was not certain I had heard her properly: ‘it started through WhatsApp ... it all happened very quickly’ (2019a). When pressed for more information, BC told me that a woman whom she had previously only known online told her about the project. BC’s contact was looking for people who could join and would be willing to work in an assembly for a project that would help Indigenous women in CDMX. BC learnt that a few Indigenous migrants in the city had been talking about creating a project that would be geared towards providing legal aid to Indigenous women in CDMX, but the chance had not materialised due to lack of funds. However, this changed when they found out that the Secretariat of Original Peoples and Neighbourhoods and Resident Indigenous Communities (SEPI) had opened a call for funding projects geared towards strengthening and supporting Indigenous peoples in CDMX. Still, to be able to successfully carry the project—which started with the seminars discussed in Chapter 3—they needed more members, to distribute the workload. This was the case because, per the guidelines issued by SEPI, they could not have any remuneration from the project. Thus, they had to continue working full time, while also planning and running a series of seminars and dealing with governmental requirements that mandated regular meetings with SEPI officials. All this, while trying to avoid burnout because they wanted IC to carry on with its mission to help Indigenous women in CDMX well after the seminars were over. After some mulling over their situation, they decided to use social media to look for Indigenous lawyers living in CDMX and give them information on the project. If their contacts showed interest, they would invite them to participate.

BC was one of the people they reached out to, and she quickly agreed to a meeting to talk about the project with everyone who was interested in forming a part of IC. This meeting happened the Sunday of the same week BC was contacted with information regarding the project. By the end of this meeting, the attendants had established rough guidelines, roles, and goals for the collective as well as presented the project to members of SEPI. This means that in less than a month an idea was fleshed out among like-minded individuals and created into a collective and a project that could be handed out to authorities.

To use sociologist Manuel Castells's terms, we can equate the rapid development of IC to the enactment of networks of hope through the usage of 'mass self-communication' (2015, p. 6). That is, the people who swiftly joined IC, did so because they had a similar context of lived experiences as Indigenous women in the city. These lived experiences are part of the enactments of ideological power that has built the Mexican mestizo over a performed anachronism that places Indigenous peoples as stuck in a distant past and unwilling or unable to accept modernity through mestization. However, because IC's members have been able to progress through life in the city despite their ongoing otherisation, they have hope. They believe that there can be a better future because they are experiencing parts of it. Despite the racism and violence they are exposed to, they have a good job and are financially secure. Following Castells, this feeling of hope coming from lived experiences can be transformed: the 'big bang of a social movement starts with the transformation of emotion into action' (2015, p. 14). As such, even if they were not conscious of it, IC's members were ready to be a part of IC because they had a similar cherished goal and a life that proved a better possibility. However, it is because of digital tools that they were able to transform their hopes into action.

Indeed, it is the Internet that gave a group of Indigenous women in CDMX the ability to quickly find other people with similar experiences. In BC's case, she initially met the woman who invited her to the project through a Facebook group for young Indigenous peoples in CDMX. In fact, most of IC's members met in similar circumstances: Facebook groups, chats, or pages aimed and built by Indigenous peoples in urban areas. Here we see a digital network arising out of shared histories – an electronically mediated, pluricultural, and largely diasporic terminal neighbourhood. Therefore, while neither the Internet nor Facebook are the cause or referent for these networks, they are the space through which they are enacted. Further, this space can enable the hybridisation of material/digital networks of counter-hegemonic resistance. We can say that IC is the embodiment of digital enactments that iteratively call people to join *la lucha*. They are the performed ethico-onto-epistemological call to action for a better future. Yet, this was only the start of IC's digital entanglements.

During the Sunday through which IC was formed, its members decided that the easiest way to keep in touch was through a WhatsApp group. Later, they also created a Facebook group, a Facebook page^{xi}, and an email account for the collective. This means that the women who make up IC extended their use of technological practices to not only organisation and mobilisation through social media environments, but also by dynamically engaging in the creation of a social media space of their own. They created their own collective feminist diaspora in cyberspace. Feminist not because thirty-three out of thirty-five members of IC are women. Instead, it is because of IC's focus is in aiding Indigenous women in urban areas by providing information on their rights as Indigenous peoples and Mexican citizens, and, when possible, offering legal representation to this sector of the population. The diasporic aspect comes from the fact that all members of IC come from other areas of Mexico outside CDMX. Furthermore, IC has been built in an attempt to help a population that has often not been born or does not consider themselves to be from CDMX. Lastly, collective because IC is exactly that. They are a hierarchically flat collective that provides *tequio* for the good of the community. Although they all have assigned roles: 'it really is only on paper, among all the members we carry out the activities, although some more and others less' (BC IC, 2019b). This makes IC an enactment of communitarian feminism.

Communitarian feminism is a performative decolonial philosophy that stems from the Abya Yala (Zaniboni, 2016) – a movement created by Indigenous Mesoamerican groups from Mexico and Central and South America. This form of feminism is focused on collectively developing social proposals and (re)creating or (re)appropriating concepts from a female perspective. IC does this by taking their knowledge of the law to help Indigenous women who are in subaltern positions in urban areas. Thus, by (re)appropriating digital spaces such as Facebook, they can connect with others who are in need or who want to help enact these feminist spaces. Additionally, they create the possibility for women to come to them. However, as I mentioned at the start of this section, IC does not seem to have a large online presence. What online presence they have tends to direct people into a more direct contact with IC's members instead of using the existing social media forms of engagement like messaging or event creation. In fact, to sign up for their seminars I had to email them directly. There was no digital contact form, and their seminar announcements requested anyone interested to email them. Some of the seminar attendants also told me that they were asked to use email to confirm their attendance when they initially used Facebook messenger to contact the group.

Through my contact with BC, I also learnt that since IC's inception, its members have carried out a few lectures that did not appear in social media. Instead, they have emailed

previous seminar attendants directly and relied on word of mouth. This has been done so largely in an attempt to connect with people in what they see as a more personal manner. With this, they hope to get people involved with IC's activities and maybe reach a wider audience. Additionally, while they used to be more open to digital connections at the start of their project, a bad experience led them to be wearier. This happened during the third seminar they imparted, when an attendant stole a laptop while the seminar room was empty. They were able to learn who did this and take action because of the cameras all around the Senate building. Nevertheless, it affected IC's digital actions moving forward.

From then on, IC members chose to turn inwards and continue relying on their own networks—digital or otherwise—to help the collective grow. This is also due to their awareness that not everyone they want to reach has access to Internet. Thus, the lack of a material space that people can visit, can impossibilite their contact with Indigenous women in precarious situations unless these women know of IC through their own network.

‘We do not have a stable place ... and the truth is, it is difficult. Some people tell us that when they contact us through Facebook or through the collective's email but some of the girls have began getting phonecalls from women who need their help’ (BC IC, 2019b).

This lack was also often a point of disappointment by some members of AMI and AGP. In IC's case, it has made them turn to the network that they initiated online, but took to the material space. This has led them to diminish their digital enactments, but, in turn, it has provided additional protection, and has allowed them to focus on their material enactments for people who may not have Internet access. As such, while IC finds invertebrate terminal spaces useful, its members are aware that the digital space cannot currently take the place or surpass the usefulness of material space. However, this underlines a lack of material spaces for the three groups in this study. All three have temporarily (re)appropriated the material space which many of its members regard as perennial for enactments of resistance. Yet, because these groups stem from subalternity, they point towards a lack outside of the groups themselves – a lack of meeting spaces or spaces to perform togetherness. One of AGP's members explains:

‘what happens is that, for example, here the community centre, because we have a community centre, they rent it. If you want to use it, you need to rent it, I mean, the word community centre just stayed there’ (PH AGP, 2019)

When asked for reasons for this lack of communitarian spaces, most of the interviewees pointed towards capitalism and neo-liberalist practices that commodify spaces and elevate individuality. Furthermore, they mentioned an active breaking up of subaltern communities as a part of national strategies of control and suppression: ‘they see the community creating a

project as dangerous' (JQ AGP, 2019). Yet, if creation of communitarian spaces and projects is perceived as dangerous by authorities, how is this shown? What are the strategies that Mexican authorities employ to suppress these efforts? And, what, if anything, can the academy as an institution do to counter this suppression? If the insertion of the subaltern into the hegemonic discourse is the ultimate goal of subaltern studies and similar academic projects, as Spivak argues, then we must engage in this discussion. Therefore, the next chapter will gauge some of the suppression tactics used by the hegemonic discourse to better understand the importance of terminal spaces and the role of the academy in them.

5. Suppression and Discussion

'There was a time when, if I passed by a policeman, I could not bear it, so I had to take another street ... and there were times I could pass in front of the row of riot police like nothing. There were also times when I left marches because of the noise from the megaphone, I couldn't stand it.' (MN AGP, 2019b)

Having looked at the practices of AMI, AGP and IC, I believe it is necessary to delineate the background in which they arise. Thus, this chapter provides some explanation on the ideological and material practices enacted in and through Mexico's hegemonic discourse. This is followed by a discussion on the necessity of academic entanglements in giving a voice to the subaltern discourse, where I provide a few ideas of how this enactions can be performed.

5.1 Setting the Scene/Seen

Because I grew up in Mexico, I recall how we celebrate Columbus's "discovery" of America at school. This is a yearly celebration that includes performances by every class, separated by grade, at an assigned time and day. The celebration is a performance of different acts that enact several parts of Columbus's journey or celebrate the date with folkloric song and dance. However, the time that I recall the clearest was when I played Queen Isabella I of Castile as she supported Christopher Columbus's journey in what would lead to the discovery of the "New World." I remember how proud I was to have such a central role, and all the time I spent finding an appropriate dress to represent such an important character.

No one ever thought that this celebration was odd even though the adults were conscious that those historical moments led to the killings of millions of Indigenous peoples and the destruction of entire civilisations. Our parents had been a part of the same forms of celebration, and, in fact, similar celebrations are held to this day all over Mexico and other countries. Thus, these acts have become naturalised in the Mexican mindset as acts that, however horrible, simply had to happen. Canclini talks of these celebrations when he calls the

enactment of patrimony an ‘entire system of rituals in which the "naturalness" of the demarcation establishing the original and "legitimate" patrimony is periodically ordered, remembered, and secured’ (1995, p. 112). That is, the Mexican school system iteratively (re)creates the ideologies that demarcate what is Mexico and what it means to be Mexican. Similar forms of performativity can be seen in Mexican museums where, since the institutionalisation of the Mexican Revolution, patrimony has been arranged in different museums to signify the different stages of mexicanhood. These performances of patrimony have allowed for the creation of an Indigenous past and the mexicanisation of the Creole elites that have ruled the nation since the Mexican Independence (Rojas, 2009). However, these are not the only forms of suppression that are dynamically enacted by the Mexican state, and which I will now explore in an attempt to open up a space of dialogue with the academy.

5.2 Ideological Spaces

As I mention in Chapter 4, a government funded intercultural centre has recently opened in CDMX. Located downtown, the centre was built for Indigenous and Original Peoples, so that they could ‘disseminate, preserve and develop their traditions and culture’ (Excelsior Redacción, 2018, para. 3). Having this in mind, I asked JP and his family their thoughts on it:

‘what the government is doing by creating this centre [is] telling Indigenous people to go there ... saying, here I will tell you what you have to do ... I am going to create workshops for you ... I am going to tell you what you have to do ... But we are not asking for this ... we need spaces ... but not so that the government tells me what I have to do, but so that I can do what I need to, to reproduce my own culture, my own community life, my own collective need ... this is not the same ... I mean, I can't tell you, ah, you ... *Tének* (an Indigenous group from the *Huasteca* region in Mexico), come here and do what I tell you to.’ (JP AMI, 2019)

Similar opinions were voiced by other interviewees regarding governmental expectations of their cultural development. Consequently, for Indigenous peoples or working class mestizos, a centre that is overseen by the government is an extension of the coloniality process that seeks to control and reproduce the right kind of individual. This is an individual that is Otherised, separated from its community, and reduced to visual signifiers so it can be commodified for consumption: ‘it is a trap, because in any case, what they are saying is, come and learn ... so the Europeans who come here think it is nice’ (JP AMI, 2019a). However, I was still curious about the centre. Thankfully, I was able to visit it and gather my own impressions.

I visited the centre to observe an award ceremony. At the centre, every visitor had to wait in line to talk with armed security personnel before being allowed entry to the premises. During this exchange, I had to provide my ID and sign a ledger that included my name, ID number, Indigenous affiliation (if any), and reasons for the visit. It was clear that people could not visit the building on a whim, or plan any sort of event inside it without making an agreement with the pertinent authorities. Further, given that not all Indigenous peoples can speak Spanish,



Infographic about Indigenous language speakers. 9

know how to read or write (Resumen Latinoamericano, 2017), or have an official ID (Enciso, Torres, & Hernández, 2017), I can understand the difficulties that would arise if they chose to visit the centre. Additionally, due to the historic (Tamagno, 2011) and present Indigenous suppression by Mexican authorities (Redacción AN / ES, 2019), I could see why armed security would dissuade many from visiting a centre purportedly built for them. The warmth and welcoming atmosphere I experienced at communal gathering spots throughout my fieldwork was absent among the stone and metal architecture that gave way to an open-air room where part of the award ceremony was held. The building itself was modern with some architectural touches of colonial baroque: a style that has appeared in Latin-American architecture since mid-nineteenth century (Mignolo, 2005). In fact, the only thing that identified this homogeneous space as aimed towards Indigenous peoples was a map of the city that listed the ethnic languages spoken and percentage of speakers within CDMX borders.

The architectural structure and social rules in place thus serve to create a semiotic distance from the Indigenous Other within the institutional apparatus that is seemingly built to protect it. Indeed, as Canclini has noted of cultural institutions, the ‘mechanisms of reinforcement of distinction tend to be resources for reproducing hegemony’ (1995, p. 104). Because the Other that should be materialised in the intercultural centre is not found within it, it is displaced to another area in the city. Yet, exactly where is never made clear. This creates space for the hegemonic mestizo within the centre, because it is the mestizo that is the creator of the colonial baroque and institutional norms that shape this lived space. Therefore, the Intercultural centre allows for the existence of Indigenous identities in CDMX. However, it frames them by distancing itself from them through their reduction to data.

Still, I visited the centre to witness an award ceremony for projects of Indigenous and Original peoples that were aimed at the reproduction and protection of their cultures. Therefore, while the building embodied a sterilised and modernised *mexicanidad*, there were plenty of

Indigenous peoples within it at the time. Yet, what I was able to gather from some of the attendants is that this was their first time visiting the centre as they had no reason to visit outside of the award ceremony. Additionally, several attendants were frustrated with the ceremony itself because it only served to give prizes to a few select projects—mostly spear-headed by local government officials—while the rest of the winners had to wait additional time and form long lines to collect their prize. Consequently, it could be said that the patrimony promoted by Mexican oligarchic sectors continued being the centre of the space that should have celebrated and given voice to those who are usually silenced. This makes sense because power often requires legitimation through staging. The history of the nation and reasons for its naturalised structures is dramatised and coded – heroes and legends are (re)created, and myths are elevated for the good of the nation as embodied in its privileged classes. This makes the mestizo the archetype of the right kind of mexicanhood: not only because it is the fruit of miscegenation, but also because it is iteratively (re)presented as sacrificing itself for the good of the nation. It is the mestizo, and not the Indigenous person, that Mexican children grow up seeing as the hero in their history books and childhood plays. The only exception is the 26th president of Mexico, Benito Juárez. However, the first and only Indigenous Mexican president is known to have seen Indigenous peoples, even his parents, as primitive (1972).

Of course, there are other institutional spaces where the Indigenous or working-class mestizo can be found. Such is the case with museums. Yet, we must keep in mind that museums are not neutral spaces. Therefore, to ‘enter a museum is not simply to go into a building and look at works; rather, it is a ritualized system of social action’ (Canclini, 1995, p. 115). To extrapolate, museums serve to order, (re)produce, and celebrate a specific history. This is the history of the hegemonic groups whose order has been naturalised in the country. In Mexico, post-revolutionary modernist policies serve to preserve and expand this semiotic regime (Canclini, 1995; Rojas, 2009). Thus, from the 1940s onwards, the institutionalisation of the Mexican revolution led to the arrangement and differentiation of patrimony. Yet, through this institutionalisation of history, Indigenous peoples have also been homogenised and distanced.

To give an example; the National Museum of Anthropology, the most renown and visited museum in Mexico, simultaneously monumentalises Mexico as a united nation while also otherising Indigeneity. Originally inaugurated in 1964, the museum counts with 45,000 square metres that house a library of at least 250,000 volumes, twenty-five exhibition rooms, a theatre, and an auditorium, among other things. The building itself is monumental: a rectangle with two large wings that create a semi-open patio at its centre. Its exhibits on Mesoamerican history successfully totalise the nation and its Indigenous peoples by showing artefacts

belonging to different civilisations at opposite ends of the country in the same exhibit. This is amplified by the lighting and colours used through the exhibits that create a sort of suspended distance to the Indigenous artefacts. The dark marble floors and darkened ceilings frame and displace the artefacts while distancing them from the viewer. Thus, through optic manipulation, visitors are given a god's eye view of a crafted Indigenous past. This god trick that allows the visitor to see 'everything from nowhere' (Haraway, 1988, p. 581) situates the viewer at a perpetual distance. It cements the Indigenous as a past that is set, quite literally, in stone.



Exhibitions at the National Museum of Anthropology. 10

The working classes, largely absent from world history, do not fare better (Rojas, 2009). Indeed, they are presented in the murals of Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco, which is of note since Mexico is known for its muralism. Yet, in the most famous paintings of these renown artists, the working classes inevitably end up lost and faceless in a visual barrage that overcodes and totalises. That is, unless a central figure emerges. One that, more often than not, has lighter skin or is a known historical character – who also has lighter skin than the rest of the characters presented. The same can be said for television, cinema, and print media. Brown skin is spare in the mainstream unless it is a comedian or background character. This much was evident when Yalitza Aparicio, the first Indigenous woman to be nominated for the Oscar, was ridiculed in TV and social media (Mercer, 2019). However, the suppression of the Other does not stop with its semiotic erasure, as I will demonstrate in the following subchapter.

5.3 Crime and the Nation-State

I will not delve deeply into the necropolitics (Mbembe & Meintjes, 2003)—the sociopolitical apparatuses that delineate how some people may live and how others must die—of the Mexican nation-state. For one, this is not a thesis about that topic – which is so large that it would take more than the given space to address it. Additionally, while it is something that arose in my interviews, my research was not focused on enactments of violence. Further, there are currently better places to gather information on this topic. Two examples, which have been used as literature for this study, are the book *Precarities, exclusions, and emergences* (Moraña & Arce, 2017) which recopilates articles on the necropolitics of Latin-American societies, or Julia

Monárrez Fragoso's article on the precarisation of individuals in Ciudad Juárez (2015). Still, a thesis about subaltern spaces would be incomplete without a section on the violence that is permitted, created, or encouraged (as some of my interviewees suggested) by the nation state.

Let us begin with a strong assertion: Mexico is a narco-state, or at least some states within the country have become narco-states. This is at least what I heard from several scholars and most of my interviewees during my stay in Mexico. Yet, what is a narco-state and how could Mexico be considered one? Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy narrowed down an apt definition for narco-state. According to the geographer, one needs to investigate three essential criteria to qualify a state as a narco-state: 'the surface area covered by illegal drug crops [compared to the arable or cultivated land]; the size of the illegal drug economy relative to the overall economy and ... the state-sponsorship of illegal drug production and/or trafficking' (2016, p. 35). While, according to Chouvy, this currently disqualifies any state from being a narco-state, it still gives us a framework. For one, while the surface of the area covered by illegal drug crops is hard to garner due to its secretive nature, statistics show that the rise of illegal drug plantations in Mexico have been driven by a sharp drop in maize prices. This made the surface devoted to opium production alone grow tenfold between 2000 and 2009 (Grandmaison, Morris, & Smith, 2019). Thus, we can see a rise in illegal drug plantations which coincides with the fall of staple crops and the rise of cartel-related violence. Additionally, Mexican cartels employ an estimate of 450,000 people, and have an income of 25 to 30 billion dollars per year (Morris, 2012a). In fact, the livelihood of around 3.2 million people is estimated to depend on this illicit trade in the country, a 'figure that does not include the thousands of people and billions of dollars involved in combating it' (Morris, 2012a, p. 217). Lastly, while the influence of drug cartels on Mexican politicians is impossible to gauge, 2019's mass shootout in Culiacán, the capital of the state of Sinaloa, used to leverage the successful release of El Chapo's son allowed the public to see but a fragment of cartel power (Johnson & Li, 2019). That is, a city of 905,265 people was held captive in exchange for one of Mexico's most notorious kingpins. This makes the need for government backing questionable for the existence of a narco-state. Yet, drug cartels reportedly spend over 500 million dollars a year in bribes, and experts agree that cartel-driven corruption in Mexican politics is overwhelming (Morris, 2012b). Therefore, even if Mexico does not qualify as a narco-state per the standards Chouvy outlines, the influence that cartels have on Mexico, and the violence that comes with it, is unquestionable.

The rise of drug trafficking in Mexico is not surprising given its status as a transitional economy in the capitalist world market. That is, the 'modern illegal drug market is constitutive of modern liberal democracies emerging from transitional economies' (Fitzgerald, 2005, p.

563). In other words, the rise of illegal drug markets in transitional economies, such as Mexico's, is not parasitic, but a part of the market's integration into the capitalist world market because they are sites for fast and easy market expansion. Further, both capitalism and the illegal drug trade thrive through incorporative processes that allow for the commodification of bodies, space, and time. In turn, this enables the exclusion and subalternisation of beings—human or not—that are ordered into the very structure of the capitalist system. A system whose violence and speed are intensified when combined with the drug market. This, while bodies are displaced from their territories by the extension of the capitalist commodity system into space creation. Thus, we see the gentrification of spaces, the rise of malls, and the consumption of space as leisure being 'dominated socially by the bourgeoisie, and ruled politically by the state' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 229). All this conjoined with the violence inherent of illegal drug trade.

For humans, this leads to a triple loss mentioned by Mbembe, the 'loss of a "home," loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political status' (2003, p. 21). This triple loss, then, leads to a loss of humanity within the system, turning the human body into a disposable commodity. Yet, humans are not alone in this symbolic garbage-ification of the body (Fragoso, 2015). All alternate bodies, whether it is because they are not human or not the right kind of human, inevitably end objectified for their consumption within the capitalist system. Rossana Reguillo said it best when talking about the treatment of Mexico's youth. The system:

'engulfs its young people and then vomits them: in narco mass-graves, in the form of bodies executed and tortured; in the form of bodies that enter the maquilas as devices at the service of the machine; as migrants; as hitmen, "hawks", "ants", "mules" at the service of organised crime; as sacrificial soldiers on the lowest scales of military ranks; like heated boots for fast food firms that proliferate in the landscape, or as ... enslaved bodies' (2017, pp. 54-55)

However, these objectified bodies are not only the bodies of young men, and these youths are not at the lowest societal level. Women, children, weaker men, animals, or the environment, rank lower. Further, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Mexican subalternity is gendered. Octavio Paz underlined this by calling Mexicans *hijos de la chingada*. The archetype of the Mexican mestizo, the child borne out of this rape, is a man, while the Mexican woman—and the motherland—are the embodiment of the raped Indigenous mother. Thus, the trauma of the Spanish father "conquering" the Indigenous mother must be overcome through the emulation of the father – perpetuating the cycle of violence on the feminine and feminised subaltern.

Whether this violence is planned is inconsequential: it is embedded in modernity, much like coloniality is. It is part of the ordering and consumption of bodies in the world market.

Silvia Federici demonstrates this when studying the reasons and results of witch burning, and its links to the subjugation of peoples in the “New World.” Federici writes, the ‘colonized native Americans and the enslaved Africans ... shared a destiny similar to that of women in Europe, providing for capital the seemingly limitless supply of labor necessary for accumulation’ (2004, p. 198). That is, subalternisation-leading-to-commodification of bodies is part of the supply needed to power capitalism. Moreover, it is capitalism that initiated modernity as a mode of life through the creation of new kinds of individual subjectivity, and its conception of the economy as a counterpart of the state (Sayer, 2005). Therefore, violence, is not just an inherent part of modernity, but its driving force. Modernity enables silent but all too deadly forms of repression and regulation: if you are too afraid to rebel, you will not do so, and if you do, you will be destroyed. This citizenship of fear has been discussed by many academic luminaries, many of whom are mentioned in this thesis, so I will limit this discussion.

Nevertheless, in Mexico like in other parts of the world, to be a subaltern means to exist in what Mbembe calls a ‘form of death-in-life’ (2003, p. 21), where the ongoing terror and uncertainty of everyday life truncate the act of being. This is one of the reasons for the rise of the Zapatistas and other forms of communal subversion like the *Abejas de Acteal* (Acteal Bees^{xii}), a counterinsurgent pacifist group. In fact, the Bees serve as a perfect reminder of the violence and horror of modernity/coloniality. Such an example was present during my fieldwork because AGP members have been a part of the efforts of helping the survivors of Acteal, a small town in Chiapas. To briefly summarise, on December 22nd, 1997, a group called *Mascara Roja* (Red Mask) arrived to Acteal during a prayer ceremony. The members of this paramilitary group, which is a subset of an Indigenous paramilitary group trained by the Mexican army, murdered forty-five residents (Scott, 2012). The siege lasted several hours, but military stationed in a nearby outpost chose not to intervene despite pleas for help. The members of *Mascara Rojas* attacked young and old alike. Further, the cruelty demonstrated towards pregnant women left many aghast as the attackers would slit the women’s bellies open to stab the foetus (Olson, 2018). Yet, many of these facts are known, not because of the authorities, but because survivors chose to speak out.

It is believed that the people of Acteal were targeted for demonstrating support for the Zapatistas. This would make sense as many of the dead were members of the Bees. What is more, finding justice has not been possible. The case has been mired with mistakes and questionable choices from the authorities. While eighteen men were sentenced because guns were found in their community, the judge chose to use Wikipedia to substantiate his decision. This came after choosing to ignore the report indicating that the calibre of the bullets did not

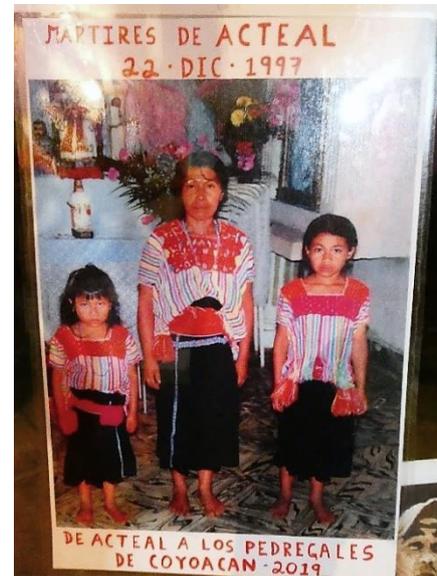
match those found on the site (González, 2007). Therefore, while some of these men admitted to the crime, their confessions are questionable. This led to the case being dismissed by the Mexican Supreme Court. No further convictions or arrests have been made.

Nevertheless, the Bees did not waver in their support for the Zapatistas. If anything, the communities that form the Bees, became more active in their support and subversion. Yet, these is one of many massacres enacted by the nation-state or Mexican cartels. For example, there are still survivors from the 1968 attack on University students in CDMX. This presidentially-mandated massacre left hundreds of dead, and many more missing (Redacción el Herald, 2019). However, not all murders are part of mass massacres. In truth, most murders in Mexico are silent occasions for everyone but the families of the dead. From these murders, feminicides are not the highest number although they are the least investigated, and often most violent (Lagarde, 2008). Indeed, few cases are resolved and even fewer perpetrators indicted. This leaves the victims of feminicide in a more or less dead state as Fragoso has pointed out: ‘more or less dead is not being able to enjoy human rights, having lived a devalued life’ (2015, p. 50). In consequence, whether it is because the victim is Indigenous or a woman, or what is seemingly worse, an Indigenous woman, in the eyes of the Mexican state and society, they die as they live: only in halves.

This half-dead status subsequently leaves them unmourned and unmournable, as exemplified by the myriad of groups of *madres buscadoras* (seeking mothers) (Madres Buscadoras De Sonora, 2020). These groups are made up of the mothers of the disappeared because the police often choose to not investigate. Thus, these mothers roam the country on their free time and dime, seeking out the remains of their loved ones.

5.4 Institutional Entanglements and the Academy

One might ask, where does that leave the law in Mexico? Is there no protection for the subaltern? The answer is that there are many protections in place even if some are not part of the Mexican constitution. For one, Mexico is one of the countries that has signed the most international treaties (Bárceñas, 2017). There are also governmental centres for women, minorities, and environmental protection that have come out of these treaties and laws. Additionally, there are many NGOs in Mexico that are working for a better future.



Martyrs of Acteal picture hanging inside the home of one of AGP's members.

Yet, when it comes to practice, the Mexican government ignores most treaties (Bárceñas, 2017). The same can be said about laws, whether they are federal or local. This is not necessarily a case of corruption either. That is, almost half of the judges do not know the laws for the protection of women or queer identities (EPADEQ, 2014), the involvement of Indigenous peoples in our society (Télez & Gabayet, 2018), or the conservation of the environment (CEDRSSA, 2015). As such, they tend to rely on their own morals and beliefs when it comes to making a ruling. In addition, institutions are sometimes all too willing to accept compromises with Mexican authorities. This leaves those who need it most without protection. An example of this is the Mexican charter of the Human Rights Committee which accepted the presidential ruling on the death of Ernestina Ascensión Rosario.

The case of this elderly Indigenous woman became national news in 2007 (Lozano, 2007). Seventy-three-year-old Ernestina was found tied and severely injured in her home in the state of Veracruz. Although she did not speak Spanish, she spent several hours telling hospital workers and local authorities what had happened as she lay in her hospital bed. According to Ernestina's statements, four military officers arrived at her home, beat her up, tied her down, and raped her repeatedly. Despite hospital care, she did not survive her injuries and died the following day. The forensic report indicated that her cause of death was a combination of a fractured skull, internal bleeding, and anal injuries that were the cause of multiple penetrations. Nevertheless, when DNA samples taken from Ernestina's body were tested against military personnel from a nearby facility, results were not released. In addition, then-president Felipe Calderón went against the report amid the scandal and declared that Ernestina's cause of death was chronic gastritis. After this, the Mexican charter of the Human Rights Committee cited its agreement with the president and pressured the State Attorney General of Veracruz to revise the forensic report (Lagarde, 2008). This second report exonerated the military officials for Ernestina's death, and sided with the presidential statement. The case has since been reopened by the Human Rights Committee, but there have been no new developments (Zavaleta, 2018).

Ernestina's case is only one example in a long history of similar institutional entanglements that have complicated the protection of Mexico and its people. Further, some rights have not made it into the Mexican constitution. For instance, when it comes to Indigenous peoples, authorities claim that it has been impossible to modify the constitution in a way that 'establishes the right to informed and clear previous consultation with Indigenous peoples regarding any matter that affects them' (Corres, 2015). This means that nothing in the Mexican constitution states that Indigenous peoples have the right to be informed about any of their rights. This particularly targets monolingual Indigenous peoples because most

information can only be found in Spanish. Moreover, it means that any new law geared towards Indigenous peoples will not be discussed with them even though the second constitutional article states that they are autonomous peoples within the legal framework of the Mexican nation-state (SIPIG-UNAM, 2001). As such, even if judges were to know every article and amendment in the Mexican constitution, this does not guarantee fair treatment. However, if I learnt anything from the people who I met during my fieldwork, it is that lack of protection does not mean that there is nothing to be done. Specifically, talking with the participants in this study has shown me that the academy can be an ally in *la lucha* and other civil struggles.

The academy is, after all, part of the iterative world-making I have been talking about in this thesis. Indeed, it has played a central role in the creation of discourses of coloniality and modernity (Canclini, 1995; Mignolo, 2005). It has helped shape and create Western nations and the Other that the West dynamically builds itself against. As Walter Mignolo expounds in his book, *The Idea of Latin America* (2005), it is in part through universities that the concepts of Latin America, Asia, and Africa came into existence. Yet, this world-creation is also larger and more specific than continental regions. For example, there is Barad (2003) and Haraway's (1988) framing of our separation from the world we inhabit through learnt processes substantiated in the sciences that the academy has disseminated. We also have Anna Tsing (2017) and Carey Wofe's (2010) exposition of Enlightenment scholars and their responsibility regarding the proliferation of individualism and Cartesianism leading to our paternalistic treatment of other beings. Additionally, there is Foucault (1978) and Butler (1988) discussing the academy's role in framing and enforcing our views on sex and gender. I could go on, but it suffices to say that the academy has always been at the forefront of social change and new ideas, largely because of its responsibility in crafting this progress. Nevertheless, the scholars I mentioned point towards an increasing awareness of the errors and injustices that the academy has been instrumental in. Further, there is a strong desire to correct these wrongs. Yet, I believe that the academy still has much to learn from those it has helped otherwise.

While looking at the principles of Indigenous communitarian work after I had done much of my research, three things stood out: their ethics of diffraction, their awareness of being through doing, and their desire for people to help within their own means. On one hand, these principles guided the virtue in good life for Indigenous communities through their awareness of the Other (Hernández, et al., 2014). On the other hand, and just as important for my argument, it is these principles that I saw being exercised during a meeting between AGP and professors of UNAM's Faculty of Philosophy and Letters (FFyL). Allow me to explain.

Part of my fieldwork involved being a bridge between AGP members and members from the research seminar of alterities from FFyL. This led to a meeting between both groups so that members of the seminar could learn more from AGP members. The professors who attended this meeting had previously been working with AGP. Unfortunately, because the project was not backed by UNAM, making it be outside of their regular work commitments, they had eventually lost touch with AGP. Still, they had continued working with the material they had on the assembly by using them as an example of communal good life. In fact, they had researched AGP's past thoroughly, so they were instrumental in providing me with insights on its formation. AGP's JQ talked about these interactions during our first interview:

'fortunately, we have managed ... to reach universities, reach scholars. There were colleagues who, when the movement started had ... some reticence or wondered why they wanted to study us ... I mean, [we thought that] it was better if they came to stand guard, or for them to march ... But not today, each one from their trench, right? Each one. Finally, all that academic work is there today and its part of history, so [those in power] will never erase us' (2019)

Thus, there is a strong awareness of the academy's societal influence, and the desire for academics to work within their area of expertise. A corresponding thought was echoed by one of the academics during their talk with AGP's members:

'to me it is very valuable that spaces like these are opened, so we can hear about the experiences of the people who are fighting ... because sometimes in the academy we talk a lot about how to fix problems ... but little is heard about, or learnt from the experiences that people have who face those problems every day ... so it seems to me as if it is very important that there are spaces to talk and listen' (HG, 2019)

As such, there is an ethics of diffraction being enacted on both sides: the subject of research and the researcher. Furthermore, this is a performative ethics that arises through the practice of listening to the Other. However, because there is an active participation between both parties, binaries are blurred and erased. By this I mean that there is a fluid conversation and learning process: they intra-actively create knowledge and spaces for this knowledge to be enacted in. This was often voiced by AGP members when addressing these interactions. Thus, academics and AGP members jointly create their own kinds of knowledge and invertebrate spaces.

In this thesis, I have previously given examples of similar kinds of co-creation: in AGP's *escuela popular*, AMI's computer lessons, and IC's seminars. However, it is necessary for this co-creation to not only keep happening, but for it to be exercised by more academics – backed by the institutions they work at. It is through these spaces that academia can insert the subaltern into the hegemonic discourse. Further, to not rely in academics as translators—which

tends to displace the subaltern once more by making the academic the privileged expert—there must be a constant deconstructive opening of the academic space for the Other. As John Caputo has previously expressed regarding deconstruction: ‘everything in deconstruction is turned toward opening, exposure, expansion, and complexification toward releasing unheard-of, undreamt-of possibilities to come’ (2000, p. 31). Thus, there needs to be not only an opening, but an opening towards and for the Other that is the subaltern to create a space of possibilities for its voice to be heard. This opening up requires material space.

Material space production is vital because, as Lefebvre pointed out: a ‘revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential’ (1991, p. 55). As such, part of correcting injustices means creating and nurturing spaces for the subaltern both in and out of academia, otherwise we risk further historization and museumification of the subaltern rather than a conversation with it. To be sure, it is important to listen to the other, as done in areas such as cultural analysis, but there needs to be a push for other practices to develop. By this I mean that academia would do well in holding more forums and round tables that include subaltern peoples. Yet, it must also participate in the creation of invertebrate spaces and open its doors for the creation of invertebrate spaces or hybrid spaces within the academic space. A hybrid space in this context is an academic space with and for subaltern beings and interests, backed by academic discourse and institutions. An example of this is the forum *El Manantial*, held by academics of UNAM and AGP members (Raphael, 2019). This forum was held within a renowned research institute and was broadcasted live via Internet to attract more views. Such an event successfully engages the subaltern, even if only momentarily, with hegemonic discourse and opens the possibility for further involvement.

The importance of events like this is present in two ways for those who are used to not being heard: ‘when we come to places like this, we are strengthened because we know that someone is interested in us, and also that what we are doing is good and this is a recognition of it’ (PH AGP, 2019). That is, subaltern peoples can feel encouraged to continue fighting. This is partly because they acknowledge the weight that the academy has in giving them recognition within the wider sociocultural discourse. However, this and other examples I have given through this thesis are only that, examples. The possibilities within academia are endless – as long as we keep deconstructing the space of possibilities for the Other to come.

Throughout my research, all the subaltern groups and individuals I came across had one thing in common: their desire to be heard. I posit that the academy should involve itself in invertebrate space creation to enable this hegemonic listening in order to iteratively expand the sociocultural discourse towards diffractive and undreamt-of possibilities to come.

6. Conclusion

‘Your walk is long, it is something sacred in the good sense of the word, because we know that you are going to carry our word, our hugs, our struggle, our resistance, and our love, and the love of our aquifer in Aztecas 215.’ (PH Asamblea General de los Pueblos, 2019)

In this chapter, I revisit the setting of my study to give way to the questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. I briefly address each question by providing what I hope is a clear yet brief answer that will further be substantiated by situating this thesis in the age of the Covid-19 pandemic. With this, I hope to provide a framework for others to attempt similar analyses.

6.1 Between Modernity and Otherness

The last chance I had to interview JP was an early Sunday morning. He invited me to his home so we could say our goodbyes. Since the weather was lovely, we chose to sit outside. We ate tamales that one of his neighbours made and drank coffee that JP brought from his hometown. The coffee was strong but almost spicy and sweet. The tamales were stuffed with either black beans or *verdolagas* (purslane) and tasted like savoury cornbread. After talking and drinking coffee for a while, I remember that CR (JP’s wife) brought me some homemade champurrado, a hot chocolate- and lime-treated corn dough-based drink. She stayed for a bit to talk with JP in *Mixe*. Since I do not speak the language, I closed my eyes for a short while and enjoyed the breeze and sun that were much more prominent in that garden than anywhere else the city.



JP’s home and garden. 12

The CDMX landscape is quite varied. Much like the road to JP’s home, most of the city seems to be engaged in constant pushing and pulling between modernity and otherness. Perhaps, this is because this urban centre is layered with and over the heart of the Aztec empire: Tenochtitlan. This layering, or entanglement, is the result of the syncretism between the Spanish and Indigenous cultures that gave Mexican citizens a space in which to enact their *mexicanidad* as members of a new nation.

However, not all the members of this nation-state are treated equally. People like JP and CR, for example, have always been outside of the westernised version of Mexico that the country tries to enact on its citizens and project for the world. Thus, they are part of the subaltern sector that is outside of society’s hegemonic discourse. Nevertheless, they are some of the people who shared the most with me. This meant not only sharing food, but also sharing space and knowledge. That is, the social space that we intra-actively created allowed us to enact social relations that blurred the binaries between academic and subject of research. Indeed,

Lefebvre is right when he acknowledges that space is power – the power to enact social relations, relationships of production, and spatial practices of selfhood. Thus, it is up to those within the hegemonic discourse, particularly those who are instrumental in its creation, to enable the possibility for this power to be enacted by those who society silences.

6.2 Questions and Answers

To tease out the main points of this study, I believe it is time to revisit the questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. This way I hope to give a concise picture of what invertebrate spaces are, their importance, and their applicability so that they can be used as a critical tool within academic spaces. It is my hope that this co-created knowledge will open new opportunities for engaging the subaltern in academia.

1. *How are these spatial practices enacted in material and digital spaces?*

I have given several examples of how the groups who participated in this study enact spatial practices to create material and digital spaces. However, while the performances vary depending on the group and setting, I believe that I can condense these enactions into three essential points: *tequio*, oneness/togetherness, and chimeric polarity^{xiii} where the performance of the self arises in-between the push and pull of modernity and otherness. That is, free communal work performed to benefit the community; an ethics of diffraction that enacts an ethico-onto-epistemological togetherness with the world; and dynamic adaptations where subaltern forms of selfhood are iteratively entangled with the semiotics of the urban environment to produce enactions of diffracted personhood. These forms of performativity serve as the basis for most, if not all, spatial creation practices I witness in my fieldwork.

2. *What responses do these practices elicit from the nation-state and hegemonic discourse?*

The spheres of power that I encountered in my study responded with what can be summed up as three differential but entangled performances: hegemonizing, homogenizing, and violence. In other words, Lefebvre is right when he states that abstract power seeks to eliminate spaces of otherness (1991). This is usually done by appropriating these spaces through practices like gentrification; erasing their spatial differences, histories, or individual nuances by absorbing them into the national rhetoric of patrimony; and repressing otherness through physical force. While it can be argued that hegemonizing and homogenizing are forms of violence in themselves, I have often differentiated them from physical violence in this study to provide a more in-depth analysis on the actions of the Mexican nation-state.

3. *Why are these subversive spaces important and how can academic institutions nurture them to counter subalternity?*

In a world that is dynamically enacted by all of us, vertebrate spaces are important because they iteratively help combat the violence of subalternisation and the commodification of bodies. They do this by helping strengthen networks of resistance in their physical enactions in a way that enacts oneness of purpose. Additionally, they provide a nexus for differential and deferential performances of selfhood, and in their openness, they can help deconstruct the anthropocentrism that often plague our ways of being in the world. These enactions are also important within academic circles because they are crucial for breaking with the otherization that academia has helped create, and that is increasingly affecting our world. That is to say that whether it is because academic institutions are interested in gender equality, human flows, or sustainability – we need to eschew the view of man as the centre through and for which everything flows, and part ways with Cartesian viewpoints that place us outside and above the world we live in.

If we want a better future for us and for our environment, we need to learn to listen to the Other that we have built ourselves upon. However, this cannot be done by historicising or attempting to speak or translate for the subaltern. Instead, as suggested by the women of IC, we need to knit ourselves together to find new ways of being in the world. These enactions are already happening – we simply need to listen so we can be part of the conversation.

6.3 Of Interviews, and Pandemics

Among the interviews I conducted, one stands out. This was an interview that oscillated between everyday conversations, life, and the interview itself. My interviewees were all women and members of AGP: one was a retired teacher, another a stay at home mother, another was a visitor who had to flee to France because of the political persecution of students and activists in 1968, another was part of the maintenance staff of UNAM, and yet another was retiree who relied on her grown children for support as she had worked all her life in the informal sector.

During this interview, we focused on the *Pedregales*, and AGP. However, we also talked about other fights which they had been a part of. All of them had been members of other groups that had created spaces of resistance – sometimes within an unwilling space of power:

‘I don't remember why we were going to the SEP offices, but we arrived early. They informed us of who was marching, who was entering the SEP, who is carrying the banners ... and we went through different doors ... some here, others there, others here. They had a meeting with ... I don't remember who, and when they noticed, we were all inside. They closed so that no one would pass, but most of us were already inside! With the banners!’ (MN AGP, 2019b)

Yet, my interviewees had also been targets of violence, and not necessarily because of their engagements with *la lucha*:

‘I was with my husband, and with [their children]. We were leaving a store in Ayende, well, the riot police arrived, so the store clerk grabs me, pulls me into the shop with the children. Then they pull my husband in and lock ... we could only hear people running ... and the grenadiers passing by ... We were about half an hour inside the store and the store clerk said to a girl, take the children, take them all to the back, because you know it gets ugly here. (EB AGP, 2019)

The above quote demonstrates how everyday life can be disrupted when operatives by the Mexican nation-state clash with the everyday. While the scene might seem innocuous, I should underline two things. One, according to my interviewee, her son vividly remembers that day even though it happened six years before this interview took place. Thus, children are exposed to violence by the nation-state from a young age. This naturalises state-sanctioned violence, and makes it part of the habitus—the socially ingrained habits created through our interactions with the world—as they develop. Two, the operative mentioned was part of the repression against teachers, students, and supporting groups when they demonstrated against the education reforms imposed by then-president Enrique Peña Nieto (Vice, 2013).

This demonstration lasted several months and spread throughout Mexico. MN, a retired teacher adds: ‘there were those kinds of attacks, but there were also deaths, and yes, some people disappeared, yes, some were imprisoned, or fired’ (MN AGP, 2019b). Therefore, while EB and her family were impacted by the actions of violence in the capital, many others across the nation suffered worse fates – whether they were protesters or bystanders. Furthermore, the police was used against demonstrators after several months of protest in the capital, because of the upcoming celebration of the Cry of Dolores. The Cry of Dolores is a yearly event held on September 15th at the Zócalo, CDMX’s main square (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020). This event re-enacts the cry of Roman Catholic priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla as he rang his church bell and gave the call to arms that ignited the Mexican war for Independence. In other words, demonstrators and bystanders were submitted to violence to make space for the (re)enactment of a united Mexico under the ruling modern mestizo archetype whose roots lie in discourses of power of the creole elites.

Thus, we see a cycle of power (re)enacted through violence, coloniality, knowledge, and resistance. Violence perpetuated by hegemonic power to (re)establish national knowledge, thus iteratively naturalising itself, and (re)centring the mestizo in the national scene. Still, violence is not always so open. Indeed, some of this interview was about a meeting with local authorities that had happened the day before because of lack of water in the *Pedregales*. Indeed,

part of AGP's fight is due to issues with running water in the area as they sometimes go days or weeks without water in their homes. This is a problem that started around the time *Quiero Casa*, the real-state agency mentioned in Chapter 3, arrived. During this meeting, MN had the opportunity to talk with someone from SACMEX:

'he told us that the situation with the water supply and what is happening in Aztecas 215, that the truth is that nothing is done because [the authorities] don't want to ... that the mayor's office has its hands there' (MN AGP, 2019b).

While there is something to be said about second-hand information, MN's words demonstrate that this statement is believable for the members of AGP because it follows the patterns of enactment of violence/power in Mexico. That is, they believe this claim because experience has taught them that violence is iteratively enacted by hegemonic power to enforce its will. Additionally, as ECP, the visitor who had to flee to France in 1968 said: 'how come there is water for places like shopping centres? And not homes!' (ECP AGP, 2019).

This question has been asked many times by members of AGP. Nevertheless, the area still lacks a stable water supply. This was problematic at the time. However, when there is a pandemic that increases the need for water since there must be additional hygiene precautions to avoid falling ill, this lack (re)frames the abyssal line between those who matter and those who do not. This lack emphasises old truths: the people of AGP and their communities do not matter to the nation-state. They, like members of AMI and IC, have been garbage-ificated. Their bodies, while central to capitalist production, matter only as fuel, and are otherwise expendable. They are part of the necropolitics of the Mexican nation-state.

This is neither news, nor isolated to Mexico. In fact, a recent UN report states that women, Indigenous peoples, informal workers, and migrants in Latin-America will be the hardest hit by the pandemic—both health-wise and economically—because of the pre-existing inequalities in the region (CEPAL, 2020). Yet, we can find these systematic inequalities affecting subaltern sectors everywhere. A case in point: in Sweden, migrants from non-Western countries are more likely to get sick than Swedes or other Europeans (Ohlin, 2020). However, I must underline once more that the issues brought forth by this pandemic only shed light on a pre-existing problem.

6.4 Rosengård

When I returned to Sweden after conducting the study presented in this thesis, I also returned to my old apartment in Rosengård. For those not in the know, Rosengård is one of the poorest districts in Sweden (Sande, 2019). It is also one of the districts with the highest level of

unemployment, and the largest number of non-Western immigrants. At the time, I was living in a student apartment in the area, and, although I lived there for under a year, I was able to discern the differences between it and other areas of the city. As my partner, who grew up in the ghettos of Paris, mentioned, ‘it reminded me of where I grew up ... it’s a place where you don’t feel like anything can bloom’ (Taiari, 2020). Doctor Mark Vacher made a similar note of a Danish neighbourhood during a lecture in 2019. The professor was talking about his work in migrant neighbourhoods and diasporas when he presented a picture of a large green lawn between buildings. There were no trees, flowers, or distinguishable features. He pointed out that similar vistas can be found in other Danish neighbourhoods that are populated by immigrants. He underscored that this meant that young people in the area had nowhere to play or meet. They did not have a space to enjoy or call their own. Thus, having these perspectives offered to me, I can begin understanding some of the problems found in the apartment complex I used to live at in Rosengård.

Indeed, groups of local teenagers often occupy the common areas of the student complex. They hang out for hours and litter. They are noisy, and do not care much for the students coming and going. However, where else could they spend time? Additionally, given that the apartment complex is largely occupied by students from other parts of Sweden or the world, it begs the question of who is occupying whose space. Is it the teenagers who sneak into the common areas, or the middle-class students who arrive to the immigrant neighbourhood? I believe that like the youths mentioned in Claske Dijkema’s paper (2019), these teenagers enact their own resistance against the hegemonising and homogenising practices of power. They are the subalterns that the hegemonic discourse attempts to excise through absorption, or exclusion. Thus, like the people of AMI, AGP, and IC, these teenagers refuse erasure through communal spatial enactions. However, while their actions are branded as a nuisance or acts of vandalism, their otherness is (re)enacted in the practices through which they attempt to voice their being in the world. Therefore, I believe that, in order to begin solving the immigrant or integration “problem” so prevalent in Swedish discourse, we must open a space of possibilities so these subaltern sectors construct their own space. An invertebrate space where the subaltern can engage with the academy and be listened to and spoken with – instead of spoken for.

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Appendix B

List of interviewees with their respective revolutionary names used as aliases in this thesis when necessary. All grouped within their respective collective.

1. Asamblea General de los Pueblos, Barrios, Colonias y Pedregales de Coyoacán:
 - Petra Herrera – PH
 - José Quintero (El Cuaxtle) – JQ
 - Margarita Neri – MN
 - José Revueltas – JR
 - Juana Azurduy – JA
 - Adela Velarde – AV
 - Rosario Castellanos – RC
 - Rosario Ybarra – RY
 - Porfirio R. del Castillo – PRC
 - Elvia Carrillo Puerto – ECP
 - Esperanza Brito – EB
2. Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas de la Ciudad de México:
 - Jacinto Pérez – JP
 - Comandanta Ramona – CR
 - Isidro Baldenegro – IB
 - Elena Torres Cuéllar – ETC
 - Margarito Díaz – MD
 - Homero Gómez González – HGG
 - Apolônio Xokó – Apolonio – AX
3. Iranu Colectivo:
 - Berta Cáceres – BC
 - Eufrosina Cruz – EC
 - Martha Sánchez Néstor – MSN
4. Other:
 - Camilo Torres Restrepo – CTR
 - Cab driver

ⁱ I have chosen to point out which chapters have either broad mentions of violence or specific mentions of violence. Broad mentions do not give many or any details about enacted violence whether part or present. However, specific mentions of violence give details which might be difficult for some to read. I still encourage their reading to fully grasp the context in which this study took place. Nevertheless, some readers might want to approach these subchapters with caution.

Broad mentions of violence per subchapter:

- 1.3 Ethics, Care, and Linguistic Violence
- 2.2 The Subaltern takes Space || The Subaltern is Space
- 3.2 Stone and Spring
- 3.3 Alterities in Partnership
- 5.1 Setting the Scene/Seen
- 6.3 Of Interviews, and Pandemics

Specific mentions of violence per subchapter:

- 5.3 Crime and the Nation-State
- 5.4 Institutional Entanglements and the Academy

ⁱⁱ For sake of clarity, I shall henceforth use the Spanish initials for any given Mexican institute or organisation.

ⁱⁱⁱ In English: the General Assembly of the Peoples, Neighbourhoods, Communities and Pedregales of Coyoacan, the Assembly of Indigenous Migrants of Mexico City, and Iranu Collective.

^{iv} For more information see: Escobar, A. (2007). Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2/3), 179–210, or see Grupo de Estudio Sobre Colonialidad (GESCO) (2006).

Modernidad/Colonialidad/Descolonialidad: Aclaraciones y réplicas desde un proyecto epistémico en el horizonte del bicentenario, *Pacarina del Sur*, <http://pacarinadelsur.com/home/abordajes-y-contiendas/108-modernidad--colonialidad--descolonialidad-aclaraciones-y-replicas-desde-un-proyecto-epistemico-en-el-horizonte-del-bicentenario>.

^v For an exploration on the dangers of museumification in as knowledge, see: Weltman-Cisneros, T. (2020).

“From objects to subjects: the museumification of Blackness in Mexico.” *African & Black Diaspora*, 13(1), 80–97. <https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/17528631.2019.1637604>.

^{vi} Also known as *mano vuelta*, *gozona*, or *guetza*.

^{vii} <http://indigenasdf.org.mx/> chosen because it relates to them being Indigenous peoples in Mexico City.

^{viii} <https://www.facebook.com/asambleademigrantes/>

^{ix} <http://coyoxitleresiste.weebly.com/> translated to coyoxitl resists which points towards Coyoacan’s Nahua origins. Coyoacán can roughly be translated to place of the coyote owners or place of coyotes, which explains the depictions of coyotes in Coyoaca’s seal. For more information see: Montemayor C. (2007). *Diccionario del Nahuatl en el Español de México*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)

^x <https://www.facebook.com/Asamblea-General-de-los-Pueblos-Barrios-Colonias-y-Pedregales-de-Coyoac%C3%A1n-1580258772267776/>.

^{xi} <https://www.facebook.com/IranuColectivo/>.

^{xii} Henceforth referred to as the Bees since this is how my interviewees referred to them during informal conversations.

^{xiii} As mentioned in section 3.1, p. 21, chimeric polarity is the enaction of selfhood as it encounters and adapts to hegemonic ways of being in the world. In this case, we can think of the Indigenous and mestizo archetypes lying in two opposite ends of a gradient of enaction. Thus, the Indigenous selfhood is enacted differently by adapting to mestizo surroundings to avoid violence by relating to the semiotic environment through the performance of an increasing or decreasing modernity of being. This theory will be further developed in future works.