

EXTRACOLONIAL: Reflections for Action

Fundamentally, extractivism comprises a calculus of accumulation by dispossession ... an accumulation without corresponding deposit (except in the form of waste, disease, and death), which transforms whatever it touches—be that mines, forests, rivers, oceans, or human and nonhuman life— into economic value...

— T.J. Demos, *Blackout: The Necropolitics of Extraction* (2018)

In its broadest definition, **extractivism** is a process by which natural resources are drawn from the earth, commodified, and exchanged on global markets. Signaling towards the seduction of capitalist narratives around progress, free markets, and the flow of international commerce, this term belies an uneasy and uneven distribution of power between those whose lands are mined for resources and those who profit from the extraction. Ecuadorian economist Alberto Acosta describes extractivism as a “mechanism of colonial and neocolonial plunder and appropriation.”¹ Extractivism manifests as a system whereby resources derived from the land—including lucrative minerals, crude oil, and agricultural crops—are extracted predominantly from developing nations at the hands of greater economic powers for the purposes of mass exportation and marketization.

In the Americas, the origins of extractive industries can be traced to the beginnings of colonization and the overseas expansion of the English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish crowns into the so-called ‘New World.’ Extractivism has thrived across North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean in a long and painful history of oppression. In a Latin American context, the Spanish Empire of the 15th and 16th centuries invaded the continent under directives of conquest and the extraction of riches, fueling genocide and the slave trade through the mining of gold, silver, and other resources for import into Europe.² The Spanish crown reaped the financial rewards of this activity for centuries to come while its colonial outposts in Latin America faced the fallout of the systemic inequalities proliferated in this unequal union, resulting in widespread disease, oppression, and violence faced by Indigenous peoples. Today, this troubled legacy endures across Latin America as multinational corporations partner with local governments and stake claims on the land to carry through large-scale projects and commercial developments—oil pipelines, hydroelectric dams, factory farming, and industrial logging—that displace local communities, disrupt the surrounding environment, and contribute to systemic success economic disparities between the Global North and South.³ For the developing economies of Latin American states, these asymmetric partnerships have generated myths of economic progress which justify “environmental destruction” as the “inevitable cost of

¹ Alberto Acosta, “Extractivism and Neoextractivism: Two Sides of the Same Curse,” in *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions from Latin America*, eds. Miriam Lang and Dunia Mokrani (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2013), 63.

² Anna J. Willow, *Understanding ExtrACTIVISM: Culture and Power in Natural Resource Disputes*, (Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2019), 103-104.

³ Eduardo Gudynas, “Extractivisms: Tendencies and consequences,” in *Reframing Latin American Development*, eds. Ronaldo Munck and Raúl Delgado Wise; (London: Routledge, 2018), 62 - 65.

achieving development.”⁴ As a result of this longstanding history of resource exploitation, Latin America remains the world’s most unequal region.⁵

The visibility of grassroots organizing around the Trans Mountain and Dakota Access Pipelines brought to popular awareness the fallout of extractive activities in a North American context; a largely overlooked history that persists beyond the immediate attention of news outlets and policymakers. It is a history hidden in plain sight. These projects—funded, constructed, or purchased under the aegis of governmental support—strike unsettling parallels between the contemporary moment and the colonial histories of North America, which saw the forced displacement of Indigenous peoples, the separation of their communities and families, and put into jeopardy their safety and the health of their lands. Lured by the promise of resource wealth, and in a desire to replicate the prosperity of the Spanish crown in its colonial conquest of Latin America, the British and French colonized the lands that would become Canada and the United States. Capitalizing on vast expanses of unfarmed, arable land, the British and French took to America in an economic fervor to feed growing demand in Europe for furs, tobacco, sugar, and other cash crops and resources.⁶ In the aftermath of these extractive activities, fledgling colonies and burgeoning governments institutionalized policies that brought forth legacies of devastation in the form of unacknowledged land rights, the depredation of wildlife and natural environments, and one-sided treaties with Indigenous nations.⁷ These policies continue to frame the legislative and judicial systems of Canada and the United States.⁸

EXTRACOLONIAL: Reflections for Action brings together a group of Indigenous and Latin American artists—**Ulysses Castellanos, Monica Gutierrez Quintero, Yoshua Okón, and Onaman Collective**—whose works examine the relationship between extractivism and colonialism as they have impacted the recent history of the Americas. These works propose alternate activist models to address the sustained systems of inequality seeded in this legacy of natural resource exploitation, including the uneven movement of capital, expropriation of Indigenous ancestral lands, deterioration of the natural landscape, and instances of civil unrest. The exhibition’s title marries the terms *extractivism* and *colonialism* to evoke their inextricable relationship, nodding towards the deep and insidious roots of this union throughout the Americas. The subtitle is borrowed from Alberto Acosta’s article “Post-Extractivism: From Discourse to Practice—Reflections for Action,” a manifesto that proposes new ways of living with and within the land to undo the grip of extractivism from Latin America’s various economies.⁹ Acosta, who was formerly the Ecuadorian Minister of Energy and Mines, advocates for the implementation of widespread socio-environmental reform to protect undeveloped, natural environments and the legal interests and socio-economic needs of those peoples whose ways of life are placed into jeopardy by extractive activities.

⁴ Acosta, “Extractivism and Neoextractivism,” 62.

⁵ “Latin America remains the most unequal region in the world,” *Inequality and essential services blog channel*, Oxfam International, 2017, accessed July 2019, <<http://blogs.oxfam.org/en/blogs/17-12-18-latin-america-remains-most-unequal-region-world>>.

⁶ Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, “Once Upon a Time in the Americas: Land and Immigration Policies in the New World” in *Understanding Long-Run Economic Growth: Geography, Institutions, and the Knowledge Economy*, eds. Dora L. Costa and Naomi R. Lamoreaux (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 23-26.

⁷ Brett Clark, “The Indigenous Environmental Movement in the United States: Transcending Borders in Struggles Against Mining, Manufacturing, and the Capitalist State,” in *Organization & Environment* 15, no. 4 (2002): 410 - 413.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Alberto Acosta, “Post-Extractivism: From Discourse to Practice—Reflections for Action,” *International Development Policy*, September 2017, accessed July 2019, <<http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/2356>>.

Responding to global calls for action, the artists in this exhibition offer new points of entry into a series of complex causes and histories centered on the commodification of natural wealth. Looking beyond policy and approaching art as activism, their works expose entrenched systems of oppression, putting forward strategies to undermine extractive profiteering.

One such artist is **Ulysses Castellanos** (Salvadorian-Canadian) whose work-on-paper series *The Royal Family* (2013) and *The Day Everything Became Nothing* (2013) illustrate the hard and soft power of colonial regimes. Castellanos' own family history was impacted by this uneasy history: his grandfather was exiled from El Salvador in the 1930s for protesting against the country's military dictatorship for its massacre of an estimated 30,000 Indigenous Salvadorans in 1932.¹⁰ El Salvador's troubled legacy of class struggle catalyzed this massacre, which stemmed from tensions between mistreated Indigenous plantation workers and the wealthy, land-owning elites who monopolized this land—just fourteen families controlled over half of the country's arable land—for the cultivation and exportation of coffee.¹¹ Castellanos' body of work borrows heavily from this history and the complex questions that it raises.

The Royal Family is a suite of paparazzi photographs culled from the pages of tabloid magazines from the mid-1990s which documented the lives of the British monarchy. Castellanos recasts these icons of high culture in a humorous yet sinister light: he paints their faces and clothes in black paint, creating grotesque but vaguely recognizable counterparts to Prince Charles, Princess Diana, and their family. Through his iconoclastic approach, Castellanos delivers a critique of the British colonization of the Americas and the centuries of exploitation the continent has endured as a consequence of European rule. As a counterpart to *The Royal Family*, the series *The Day Everything Became Nothing* looks to a more obscure history of colonialism. Painting on pages from an old Bavarian book on the founding of Venice in the 5th century CE—following the collapse of the Roman Empire which, in turn, triggered invasions by the Huns—Castellanos reflects on patterns of occupation and forced migrations throughout history. The book's pages feature texts which illuminate the founding of the city by a people evading conquest; stories of refugees fleeing nearby Roman towns to the islands in the lagoon that would become Venice, a swampy geography that deterred invasion. Castellanos, however, has concealed these writings and denied their legibility with layers of white paint. In this literal whitewashing of history, Castellanos critiques the erasure of unpalatable narratives from national myths; common strategies in the nation-building programs of the Americas. And in tearing out and de-contextualizing the pages from this book, Castellanos universalizes the material and brings this past into conversation with cycles of conquest and colonization spanning geographic boundaries.

Similarly informed by histories of civil war, unrest, and inequality, **Yoshua Okón's** (Mexican) two-channel video work *Octopus* (2011) presents a tightly-choreographed reenactment of the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996), a story mired in the history of Chiquita Banana and its ties with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Filmed in a Home Depot parking lot in Los Angeles, and starring undocumented Guatemalan-Mayan day laborers hired on-site, the work

¹⁰ "El Salvador," *The Centre for Justice & Accountability*, 2016, accessed August 2019, <<http://cja.org/where-we-work/el-salvador/>>.

¹¹ William M. LeoGrande and Carla Anne Robbins, "Oligarchs and Officers: The Crisis in El Salvador," *Foreign Affairs* 58, no. 5 (Summer 1980): 1085.

pointedly critiques the alliances between politics, capitalism, and the devastating fall-out of American imperialism abroad.

Octopus is titled after the local nickname given to the Guatemalan-based American monopoly United Fruit Company, now known as Chiquita Brands International (and more popularly as Chiquita Banana); a leading distributor of bananas in the United States.¹² In the 1950s, United Fruit Company—Guatemala’s largest land-owner at the time—stood at odds with the country’s democratically-elected President Jacobo Arbenz. His plans for agrarian reform were in opposition to the company’s financial interests: Arbenz sought to rescind United Fruit Company’s tax-exempt status and expropriate their idle, unfarmed lands.¹³ As Arbenz began to implement these reforms, the United States government, under the advisement of then-Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, sought to protect its economic and political investments in Guatemala: including U.S.-backed bank loans to the Guatemalan government, sizable investments in the banana crop managed by the United Fruit Company, among increasing anxieties around the burgeoning relationship between Guatemala and communist bloc nations. The CIA, working from Honduras and El Salvador, assisted in organizing a counterrevolutionary army which led a coup to illegally depose Arbenz, placing General Carlos Castillo Armas into power.¹⁴ This intervention by the CIA brought about nearly three decades of civil unrest in Guatemala, leading to the rise of a series of oppressive dictatorships that protected and prioritized multinational interests and enacted a mass genocide against the country’s Indigenous Mayan population.

The day laborers who star in Okón’s *Octopus* are Indigenous Mayans who hail from the Ixcán region of Guatemala, the zone most devastated by the civil war. They fled to the United States in the 1990s, at the tail end of the unrest, for economic opportunities not afforded to them in their homeland. Home Depot stores in America are often gathering sites for undocumented migrants looking for cash-in-hand opportunities as day laborers. Against this backdrop, the video documents the indifferent shoppers and workers alongside earnest performances from the day laborers, who were themselves once soldiers fighting on opposing sides of the Guatemalan Civil War. The laborers reenact gestures of military formations and covert operations drawn from their experiences of war. Capturing a moment of rest, Okón records the laborers speaking in their ancestral Mayan tongue. The audio record of their native language, dislocated within the context of a suburban Home Depot parking lot, brings attention to the perseverance of customs and cultural forms by Indigenous Mayans in the face of Western imperialism, neoliberal profiteering, and decades of violence.

In a Canadian context, **Onaman Collective**—comprised of Indigenous artists **Christi Belcourt** (Michif), **Erin Konsmo** (Métis/Cree), and **Isaac Murdoch** (Ojibway)—employs art-based activism to support environmental causes that affect First Nation communities, and particularly water and land protection actions. In support of demonstrations and grassroots organizing against the exploitation of natural resources and extractive activities, collective members Belcourt and Murdoch created a series of graphic banners for use by activists from all

¹² Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala, Revised and Expanded*, (Cambridge: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005), 81.

¹³ *Ibid*, 74 - 77.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 122 - 126.

nations and walks of life in efforts to curb commercial activities that compromise the safety of the natural environment—particularly, the extraction of crude oil and its transport through pipelines. These banners are hosted on the Onaman Collective website and can be freely downloaded and printed for non-profit, non-commercial use. Silhouetted representations of people, wildlife, and the natural landscape, which share similarities with the pictographs of Ojibway spirit writing, feature in these works alongside phrases about the sacred nature of the environment and its ties to First Nations belief systems and spiritual traditions. The banners, some written in both English and Spanish, advocate for a wide array of environmental causes at the precipice of global climate crises.¹⁵

The Thunderbird Woman, a powerful figure of protection and nurturing across a range of Indigenous mythologies, is a recurring symbol in Onaman Collective's protest banners.¹⁶ Her presence signals the need for the motherly stewardship of nature and tender care of the Earth. She is often depicted pregnant, standing in flowing water and conjuring rain, with a fist raised in support of water protection causes. The Thunderbird Woman is most often accompanied by slogans protesting pipelines that endanger waterways, notably the efforts to halt the expansion of the government-owned Trans Mountain Pipeline. The pipeline, first built in 1953, currently spans an expansive territory across over 1,150 km (710 miles) of Western Canada:¹⁷

...the existing pipeline and corridor crosses Treaty 6 territory, Treaty 8 territory and the Métis Nation of Alberta (Zone 4). In British Columbia, [the Trans Mountain Pipeline crosses] numerous traditional territories and 15 First Nation Reserve lands.¹⁸

Since 2012, the proposal to expand this pipeline has garnered an ongoing and contentious debate between the interests of corporate and governmental powers and the rights of the First Nations who would be subjected to the deleterious effects of its construction.¹⁹ Canada's federal government has framed the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion as an opportunity for increased economic development in the context of international trade, arguing that the pipeline would allow Canada to sell oil beyond the American Midwest and break into Asian markets. Representatives of First Nation communities and their advocates, however, have voiced concerns about risks to the health and livelihoods of those Indigenous communities who inhabit the areas through which the pipeline and its infrastructures cross: threats of chemical contamination, sound pollution, and the disruption of sacred lands could endanger communities as well as the waterways and wildlife on which they rely for food and commerce.²⁰ One of Onaman Collective's posters reads "Consultation is Not Consent," pointing towards what has been regarded as a failure to respect the Indigenous voices who have raised diverse concerns and desires surrounding the project. Gridlocked by years of legal and regulatory delays, the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion has become a symbol of ongoing power struggles that have

¹⁵ Mary Annette Pember, "Onaman Collective Puts Art Into Resistance," *Indian Country Today*, 2017, accessed September 2019, <http://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/onaman-collective-puts-art-into-resistance-NybUvvo4Tk-4TsF5G_dDkA>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Expansion Project," *Trans Mountain*, accessed September 2019, <<http://www.transmountain.com/project-overview>>.

¹⁸ "Indigenous Peoples," *Trans Mountain*, accessed September 2019, <<http://www.transmountain.com/indigenous-peoples>>.

¹⁹ "Trans Mountain Pipeline," *The Council of Canadians: Acting for Social Justice*, accessed September 2019, <<http://canadians.org/kinder-morgan>>.

²⁰ Ibid.

endured from the period of colonialism through the present day.

A comparable imbalance of human rights and corporate interests unravels as the central conflict of *The Case of Gran Colombia Gold - Crude Gold* (2014), a short-form documentary directed by **Monica Gutierrez Quintero** (Colombian-Canadian) which follows the history of the Frontino Gold Mine in Segovia, Colombia and the once competing claims for its ownership between a local miners union and the eponymously titled, Toronto-based mining company Gran Colombia Gold.

Founded in the 1930s, the workers union of the Frontino Gold Mine successfully negotiated for collective benefits: higher wages, company adherence to industrial safety standards, and the social safety net of retiree pensions. Following years of prosperity, economic downturns in the 1970s forced the Frontino Gold Mine to declare bankruptcy in 1978 after periods of inconsistent compensation or non-payment to its workers.²¹ Operation of the mine continued in an artisanal, unlicensed capacity for decades under the management of the union. In 2001, a document—known to the miners as the New York Act—was unearthed; written just one year after the declaration of bankruptcy, the document suggests that the former owners of the Frontino Gold Mine should have “yielded to their workers the title of the mine as compensation” for the debts incurred by the company in its insolvency and for the non-payment to workers during this time.²² Following the years of independent operations and the language of the New York Act, the miners and pensioners of the union saw themselves as the rightful owners of the mine.²³

Under the neoliberal policies of former President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, free trade agreements between Colombia and more developed economies—including Canada and the United States—were employed to court foreign investment in the country’s resource mining industries.²⁴ Companies such as Eco Oro and Gran Colombia Gold flocked to Colombia’s gold-rich northeastern region. Lacking formal, legal ownership, the former Frontino Gold Mine was liquidated by the Uribe government; Gran Colombia Gold purchased ownership of the mine in 2010. The entry of foreign multinational companies effectuated a new chapter of Colombia’s gold mining industry: violent paramilitary groups emerged with the influx of steady capital, collecting taxes from the region’s miners and smaller mining operators against the threat of injury or death.²⁵ At the same time, foreign multinationals like Gran Colombia Gold dog-whistled concerns about the safety of mining operations and pressured Colombian authorities to implement new, stricter mining codes;²⁶ these regulations only served to make the process of

²¹ Monica Gutierrez Quintero, *The Case of Gran Colombia Gold - Crude Gold*, 2014, digital video, 10 minutes, accessed September 2019, <<http://vimeo.com/124268118>>.

²² Adrián Restrepo Parra, Wilmar Martínez Márquez, and Juan José Moncada Carvajal, “The Gold Trade and Human Security in Segovia and Remedios,” in *Profits, Security, and Human Rights in Developing Countries: Global Lessons from Canada’s Extractive Sector in Colombia*, ed. James Rochlin, (Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2015), 125n44.

²³ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁴ Bram Ebus and Karlijn Kuijpers, “The State-Corporate Tandem Cycling Towards Collision: State Corporate Harm and the Resource Frontiers of Brazil and Columbia” in *Environmental Crime and Social Conflict: Contemporary and Emerging Issues*, eds., Avi Brisman, Nigel South, Rob White (New York: Routledge, 2016), 132-136.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁶ Gustavo Rodríguez Albor, Jairo Agudelo Tabora, and Ibelis Blanco Rangel, “Open Pit Coal Mining in Northern Colombia,” in *Environmental Crime and Social Conflict: Contemporary and Emerging Issues*, eds., Avi Brisman, Nigel South, Rob White (New York: Routledge, 2016), 133 - 134. Although this essay speaks specifically to the coal mining of Northern Colombia, the discussion around mining codes addressed in this essay as well apply to the gold mining taking place in Segovia and throughout the region.

acquiring a mining license prohibitive for local, independent miners.²⁷

“Mining [in Segovia] still exists in the same commercial establishments and with the same machinery [as before foreign investment],” says Dario Alberto Rúa Aristizábal, one of the men interviewed in Gutierrez’ documentary, “the only thing that changed was the status of the workers... we went from having stable work, from having collective agreement, to having nothing.”²⁸ Despite legal action and protest against the selling of the Frontino Gold Mine, the miners lost their ownership claim: many of their representatives and supporters were threatened, forced into exile, or killed.²⁹ Rúa Aristizábal continues: “It’s like repeating the same old story... when colonizers found riches in Segovia [during the colonial period]... they stripped the Indigenous people of their rights and their properties [for the mining of gold]. That is exactly what is happening now.”

Together, these various works by Castellanos, Okón, Onaman Collective, and Gutierrez make visible the social inequities and environmental devastation endemic to extractive activities. And through their critical approaches, the artists make arguments for new ways of sustainable living, illustrating how art can be an agent for social, political, cultural, and environmental mobilization. These works have all taken vernacular, everyday forms: pages ripped from books and periodicals, historical reenactment in a parking lot, posters that can travel to the front lines, and documentary footage that records and serves as testimony for the stories of people whose voices go unheard. Action can manifest in the most ordinary of gestures which, in turn, can be charged with the political potentials to mobilize individuals into movements around the pressing causes of this age.

Activisms of all kinds play an important role in shaping the history of the future. And through these efforts, people—alone or united in collectives—rally to alter unfavorable or unjust conditions to better reflect their interests within the structures that would define their immediate and longer-term social, economic, and political circumstances. Ruling powers have historically worked to quash rebellion and violence is often the strategy employed to censure and censor activists whose values do not align with the status quo: in the works explored above, Indigenous Salvadorans lost their lives, as did Guatemalan Mayans, First Nation peoples, and impoverished Colombians at the hands of class struggle rooted in the colonial plunder of generations past. Injustice endures in these accounts. Luis Fernando Alvarez, another of the men in the *The Case of Gran Colombia Gold - Crude Gold* documentary, spoke to these inequities with a plea to the viewer:

We ask the Canadian people to demand that these companies respect labor laws, rights to assembly, rights to form unions and organize workers, and to

²⁷ “Gran Colombia Gold Monitoring Civil Situation in Segovia and Remedios,” *Gran Colombia Gold*, September 2016, accessed September 2019, <<http://www.grancolombiagold.com/news-and-investors/press-releases/press-release-details/2016/Gran-Colombia-Gold-Monitoring-Civil-Situation-in-Segovia-and-Remedios/default.aspx>>. Miners in Gutierrez Quintero’s video, as well, mention the

²⁸ Gutierrez Quintero.

²⁹ Diego Ibarra Sanchez, “Illegal gold mining fuels violence in Colombia,” Al Jazeera, May 2017, accessed September 2019, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2016/10/illegal-gold-mining-fuels-violence-colombia-161005063014208.html>>. In addition to this ongoing violence and as mentioned in *The Case of Gran Colombia Gold - Crude Gold*, Luis Fernando Alvarez and Dario Alberto Rúa Aristizábal—two of the men interviewed in the documentary—have fled Segovia on threat of violence.

acknowledge that the workforce should not be outsourced.³⁰

In his call to action, Alvarez brings attention to our own participation in these industries and how we might unknowingly support unfair conditions in the ways we live and the decisions that we make through our participation in the flow of capital. Are the companies from which we purchase goods and services committed to ethical practices? How do we exist within these systems as Western participants who are so removed from this violence? Where are we positioned politically across these crises and debates? In reflecting on our place within these complex, international systems, we are left to audit our current political and economic structures. Can the governments which support such inequality be considered successful and effective?

These debates have culminated around questions of extractivism and its exploitation of predominantly Indigenous workers, their labor, and their lands. And in response to these conflicts, neoextractivism has emerged as a possible solution in these negotiations of economic power: the neoextractive model—employed predominantly across Latin America’s more left-leaning governments—imposes stricter regulations on the export of natural wealth. Foreign multinational companies who engage in these extractive activities are, in this case, held to higher standards and are required to pay larger shares to host governments in the sale of these resources.³¹ In addition, funds from these activities are generally used by host governments to fund conditional cash transfer and other social programs. Compensation or reparations are ways to ameliorate, but not solve, the power imbalances in these systems. The miners union from *Gran Colombia Gold* took informal ownership of the former Frontino Gold Mine and managed its resources collectively. In discussions around the Trans Mountain Pipeline in relation Onaman Collective’s activist practice, some First Nations have expressed interest in investing in and thereby profiting from the pipeline.³² Referring to the beginning of this essay, Acosta’s acerbic description of extractivism reveals his objections to a system fraught with inequality, and these feelings extend to his views of extractivism’s newer formulation. In his essay “Extractivism and neoextractivism: two sides of the same curse,” he quotes Senior Researcher at the Latin American Center of Social Ecology Eduardo Gudynas to describe that, while neoextractivism has “created a new type of extractivism ... in the combination of old and new attributes,” there are, however, “no substantial changes” in its structure.³³ Gudynas notes that while governments engaged in extractive models “accept [the] global and financial rules” of participation in international markets, they remain in a “subordinate role” to more developed economies and greater economic powers, namely those which drive the demand for extractive activities.³⁴ And Acosta warns that “damage to the environment and even some serious social impacts are accepted as the price to be paid for the benefits that are obtained for the population as a whole” under governmental conditions of neoextractivism.³⁵ The lure of economic progress, prosperity,

³⁰ Gutierrez Quintero.

³¹ Eduardo Gudynas, “The New Extractivism of the 21st Century: Ten Urgent Theses About Extractivism in Relation to Current South American Progressivism,” *Americas Program Report* (Washington, DC: Center for International Policy, January 2010), 3 - 4.

³² Nia Williams and Rod Nickel, “Trudeau’s Trans Mountain nightmare could end with Indigenous-led \$6.9 billion offer for majority stake,” *Financial Post*, July 2, 2019, accessed September 2019, <<http://business.financialpost.com/commodities/energy/aboriginal-pipe-dream-might-end-trudeaus-trans-mountain-nightmare>>.

³³ Acosta, “Extractivism and Neoextractivism,” 72.

³⁴ Gudynas, “The New Extractivism of the 21st Century,” 4.

³⁵ Acosta, “Extractivism and Neoextractivism,” 72.

and development is reframed in the neoextractive context but its means and its outcomes remain as dangerous.

The seeds for the solution to these questions may lie in an ideology that indirectly drives the ethics of the discussed works: *buen vivir* (Spanish for “living well”), an Indigenous worldview of the Quechua peoples of the Andes region.³⁶ *Buen vivir* (or *sumak kawsay* in Indigenous languages) proposes harmonious ways of living between people and nature, greater care for the earth’s finite resources, and alternative means of economic growth without the fallout of environmental degradation. Addressing the limits of capitalism, *buen vivir* foresees the need for social collaboration between communities and their environment, particularly as the threat of climate change looms and as economic inequality intensifies globally. It is necessary to *live well* and ensure that compromised peoples and environments can, too, *live well* within economic and governmental structures. Perhaps what is needed is to look towards Indigenous communities, and other groups whose ways of life are threatened by extractivism, and follow their models for negotiating relationships between human needs and the natural environment.

Reflecting on the centuries-long history of natural resource extraction, *EXTRACOLONIAL: Reflections for Action* responds to the wide-reaching legacy of colonization inherited by the Americas. This past endures today; it takes shape across a constellation of conflicts and financial agendas, placing into jeopardy the humanitarian, economic, and environmental well-being of communities across the two continents. These conditions disproportionately affect Indigenous communities, who often benefit the least and lose the most at the hands of the state, its collaborations with foreign companies and governments, and their joint exploitation of Indigenous lands and labor. Castellanos and Okón confront the oppression that can emerge from these causes; while Gutierrez and Onaman Collective propose activist strategies that press for urgent change. Unearthing the failures of history and extracting the precedents set in its wake, the works in this exhibition mine the cycles of violence catalyzed by the colonial apparatus.

³⁶ Joe Quick & James Spartz, “On the Pursuit of Good Living in Highland Ecuador: Critical Indigenous Discourses of Sumak Kawsay,” *Latin American Research Review* 53 no. 4 (2018): 758.

