Indigenous contestations at the frontiers of extended urbanization and rentier capitalism in the Ecuadorian Amazon region

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Abstract

Amazonian urbanization has emerged as a distinct and expanding field within social sciences, where critical theory plays a central—yet often fragmented—role. This thesis empirically demonstrates the value of a multi-theoretical approach that draws on political economy, decolonial, and anti-racist perspectives. It grounds its analysis on the spatial limits of extended urbanization in the Ecuadorian Amazon, shaped by rentier capitalism and large-scale infrastructure development. At its core, this thesis examines Indigenous resistance as it manifests within the spatial configurations of extended urbanization. By bridging critical geography with Amazonian anthropology, it also investigates the relationship between space, capital, and Indigenous resistance. Methodologically, it adopts an iterative inductive–deductive approach grounded in critical theory. This design facilitates comparative learning across multiple cases and generates new conceptual tools, including residual urbanization, the Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap, and Amazonian Settler Colonialism. Each of these concepts characterizes Indigenous contestations in the region and collectively expands the boundaries of urban studies. The results section details how this inductive–deductive approach manifested across five peer-reviewed articles, each advancing different intersections of critical theory. These intersections form the theoretical core of the thesis. The conclusion synthesizes the thesis' contributions and emphasizes the political significance of urban plurinationality for rethinking cities during a time of deepening authoritarianism and spatial exclusion. Finally, it outlines possible paths forward through the lens of plurinationality while accounting for the limitations and future horizons embedded in this reflection.

Kurzzusammenfassung

Die Urbanisierung des Amazonasgebiets hat sich als Forschungsgebiet in den Sozialwissenschaften etabliert. In diesem Bereich haben kritische Theorien eine vorrangige Rolle eingenommen, wenn auch in deutlich fragmentierter Form. Diese Dissertation liefert einen empirischen Nachweis für die Leistungsfähigkeit eines multiplen theoretischen Ansatzes, bei dem kritische Theorien der politischen Ökonomie, der Dekolonialisierung und der Antirassismusbewegung gemeinsam zum Einsatz kommen. Dazu bewegt sich diese Arbeit an den Grenzen der *extended urbanization* des ecuadorianischen Amazonasgebiets im Kontext eines durch den Bau von Infrastruktur für das Kapital geförderten Rentierkapitalismus. Konkret analysiert diese Arbeit die indigenen Widerstände innerhalb dieser Grenzen der *extended urbanization*. Disziplinär bewegt sich die Arbeit zwischen kritischer Geografie und Amazonas-Anthropologie, um den Zusammenhang zwischen Raum, Kapital und indigenem Widerstand zu verstehen. Die Methodik der Arbeit greift diesen Ansatz kritischer Theorien ebenfalls auf und schafft eine interaktive induktiv-deduktive Methode. Diese Methode ermöglichte vergleichende Erkenntnisse zwischen verschiedenen Fällen und führte zu neuen Konzepten, die aus dieser Dissertation abgeleitet wurden, wie z. B. *residual urbanization*, Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap oder Amazon Settler Colonialism. Diese Konzepte charakterisieren die indigenen Widerstände an den Grenzen der *extended urbanization* und schlagen eine klare Erweiterung des Feldes der Stadtforschung vor. Die Dissertation zeigt im letzten Abschnitt, wie die induktiv-deduktive Methode in fünf wissenschaftlichen Artikeln umgesetzt wurde, in denen verschiedene Schnittpunkte zwischen kritischen Theorien hergestellt wurden. Diese Schnittpunkte bilden den Kern des theoretischen Beitrags der Dissertation. Daher befassen sich die Schlussfolgerungen mit jedem der Artikel, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf der politischen Bedeutung der urbanen Plurinationalität für ein Umdenken in Zeiten festgefügter Machtsysteme liegt. Sie zeigen auch einige Wege auf, die im Zeichen der Plurinationalität beschritten werden können, und gehen auf die Grenzen und zukünftigen Erweiterungen ein, die diese Reflexion mit sich bringt.

Declaration

This cumulative dissertation entitled "Indigenous contestations at the frontiers of extended urbanization and rentier capitalism in the Ecuadorian Amazon region" is submitted to the KIT-Faculty of Civil Engineering, Geo and Environmental Sciences. The work in this dissertation was carried out at the Institute for Regional Science under the supervision of Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Michael Janoschka between July 2020 and May 2025. This dissertation is the result of my own work and is based on the five-following peer-reviewed publications:

Article 1: Published. Bayón Jiménez, M., & Moreano Venegas, M. (2023). A climate justice approach to urbanisation processes in the South: Oil axis in Ecuador. Landscape and Urban Planning, 239.

Manuel Bayón conducted conceptualization, construction of the argument, fieldwork, and drafted the manuscript. Melissa Moreano contributed theoretically.

Article 2: Published. Bayón Jiménez, M., & Durán, G. (2023). Decolonizing urban studies from the Amazon: Indigenous practices to dispute planetary urbanization. Revista INVI, 38(107), 13-48.

Manuel Bayón conducted theoretical conceptualization, overall argument, systematization, and drafted the manuscript. Gustavo Durán conducted the fieldwork strategy.

Article 3; Published. Uzendoski, M. A., Bayón Jiménez, M., & Durán Saavedra, G. (2024). Residual Urbanization and the Social Relations of Collective Struggle in an Amazonian Kichwa Commune from Ecuador. Journal of Global South Studies, 41(2), 279-306.

Michael Uzendoski conducted ethnography and drafted the manuscript. Manuel Bayón conducted theorical conceptualization, mixed methodology and mapping strategy. Gustavo Durán conducted fielwork strategy.

Article 4: Approved in publication. Bayón Jiménez, M. & Janoschka, M. (forthcoming). Extractive Frontiers of Extended Urbanization: Everyday Practices of Resistance Against Displacement and Dispossession in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Urban Geography.

Manuel Bayón conducted the framework and fieldwork and drafted the manuscript. Michael Janoschka contributed to the conception of the manuscript and supervision.

Article 5: Submitted. Bayón Jiménez, M. (forthcoming). The Amazonian Indigenous city against settler colonialism. Urban Studies Journal.

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Manuel Bayón
May 2025

List of publications

- Bayón Jiménez, M., & Durán, G. (2023). Decolonizing urban studies from the Amazon: Indigenous practices to dispute planetary urbanization. Revista INVI, 38(107), 13-48.

- Bayón Jiménez, M., & Moreano Venegas, M. (2023). A climate justice approach to urbanisation processes in the South: Oil axis in Ecuador. Landscape and Urban Planning, 239.

- Uzendoski, M. A., Bayón Jiménez, M., & Durán Saavedra, G. (2024). Residual Urbanization and the Social Relations of Collective Struggle in an Amazonian Kichwa Commune from Ecuador. Journal of Global South Studies, 41(2), 279-306.

- Bayón Jiménez, M. & Janoschka, M. (forthcoming). Extractive Frontiers of Extended Urbanization: Everyday Practices of Resistance Against Displacement and Dispossession in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Urban Geography.

- Bayón Jiménez, M. (forthcoming). The Amazonian Indigenous city against settler colonialism. Urban Studies Journal.

- Bayón Jiménez, M., van Teijlingen, K., Álvarez Velasco, S., & Moreano Venegas, M. (2021). Cuando los sujetos se mueven de su lugar: Una interrogación al extractivismo y la movilidad en la ecología política latinoamericana. Revista de Geografía Norte Grande, 80.

- Bayón Jiménez, M., Durán Saavedra, G., & Bonilla Mena, A. (2024). Hacia una aproximación inductiva a la gentrificación desde las periferias: Entre vivienda social, renovación urbana y enclaves extractivos de Ecuador. Ciudad y Territorio Estudios Territoriales, 56(219), 207-224.

- Zaragocín, S., & Bayón Jiménez, M. (2023). Celebrando los 250 Años de Nacimiento del Buen Geógrafo Alexander von Humboldt: Críticas Desde la Geografía Descolonial y Antirracista. ACME, 22(1), 791-816.

- Álvarez Velasco, S., & Bayón Jiménez, M. (2023). "Por trocha": Circumventing the Episodical Criminalization of Migration in the Andes. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 709(1), 24-45.

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1. Introduction.

1.1. Research gap addressed by this thesis: contributions to critical urban theory through theoretical intersection from the Amazon.

In recent years, Amazonian urbanization has emerged as an important field within critical studies of the spatial limits of capital. The expansion of extractive and transport infrastructures throughout the region has intensified urbanization and generated growing academic interest (Côrtes & Silva Júnior, 2021; Richards & VanWey, 2015). Critical theories have approached this development from different angles. The framework of planetary urbanization, rooted in Marxist political economy, has drawn attention to the capacity of capital to reorganize space at multiple scales, including the Amazon (Brenner & Schmid, 2014; Kanai, 2014). Meanwhile, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives have foregrounded cultural transformation and indigenous resistance as central features of the urban condition in the region (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Mitsuishi, 2022). These lines of inquiry have developed mainly in parallel, complementary in their concerns, but conceptually disconnected. It is precisely this gap that this PhD thesis seeks to address. By bringing these perspectives into closer dialogue, it explores how class- and ethnicity-based contestations shape urbanization in the Amazon. The research aims to contribute not only to regional debates but also to broader theoretical discussions within the field of critical urban studies. Epistemologically, it draws on comparative urban theory (Le Galès & Robinson, 2023; J. Robinson, 2016) and is informed by long-term fieldwork in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Methodologically, it aligns with the principles of militant research and is grounded in engaged scholarship working alongside social movements (Gago, 2017).

Amazon has become a key focal point in global political debates, caught between the pressures of global warming and accelerating deforestation (Malhi et al., 2008; P. F. P. R. Paiva et al., 2020). The upcoming 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30), to be held in the Brazilian Amazonian city of Belém do Pará, marks a turning point in the region's geopolitical visibility. In prevailing global imaginings, the Amazon is no longer viewed as a pristine wilderness but is increasingly recognized as a space profoundly shaped by urbanization (Porto-Gonçalves, 2015; Toscano et al., 2023; Wilson & Bayón, 2017b). The rapid growth of major Amazonian cities such as Belém, Manaus, Santa Cruz de

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la Sierra, and Iquitos, the emergence of intermediate cities, and the construction of large-scale infrastructure through the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) have all contributed to this urban shift (Cabrera-Barona et al., 2020; van Dijck, 2013). In dominant narratives, Amazonian urbanization is viewed simultaneously as a driver (Ramos et al., 2018; R. Ribeiro et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2017) and a consequence of deforestation (Côrtes & Silva Júnior, 2021; Martins, 2019). Much of the academic literature has tended to frame it primarily as a paradigm of environmental degradation.

A comprehensive review of the existing literature reveals a gradual shift away from this narrow perspective.[1] For this research, the literature has been divided into two broad categories that trace the evolution of the dominant approaches. The first category encompasses studies that focus on the external effects of urbanization, typically grounded in environmental science, anthropology, or toxicology. The second, which has gained increasing traction in recent years, focuses on the internal dynamics of urbanization in the region. While research on deforestation, pollution, and ecological degradation remains prominent, a growing body of work now addresses the quality of life in Amazonian cities, the expansion of transport infrastructures, and everyday experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.[2] Together, these contributions signal the consolidation of an emerging

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[1]All articles published between 2013 and 2023 that included the terms "amazon*" (covering amazonian, amazónico/a/os/as in Spanish, and amazônia in Portuguese) and "urban*" (covering urbanization, urbanization, urbano/a/os/as in Spanish and Portuguese) within the fields of social sciences were reviewed in the Web of Science database. By country, Brazil dominates with around 200 articles out of the total 273, followed by Peru, Ecuador, and studies combining several countries, each with between 20 and 30 articles. Colombia and Bolivia appear further behind, each with fewer than 10 articles.

[2]The first group ultimately accounts for fewer articles during the 2013–2023, with 127 publications compared to 146 in the second group.

Table 1: Number of articles by category referring to "Amazon" and "urban" in the Web of Science database.

Category	Frequency	Group
Environmental degradation	63	1
Agricultural frontier	6	1
Climate Transition	9	1
Urban pollution	36	1
Urban ecosystem services	13	1
Quality of life	37	2

interdisciplinary field that approaches Amazonian urbanization at the intersection of urban sociology, geography, anthropology, and planning.

A notable shift has occurred in how literature approaches questions of urban quality of life. Earlier studies focused on malnutrition in urban settings and leisure practices (Pettigrew et al., 2019; Sarti et al., 2015; Watson, 2018). More recent work, however, has increasingly turned to questions of access to education and technology, employment conditions, and the emergence of urban citizenship in the Amazon (Arias-Gutierrez & Minoia, 2023; Colliaux, 2020; de Souza et al., 2021; Díaz-Combs, 2023). Public health has also become a central theme, addressed from multiple angles, including hospital infrastructure, food security, and the relationship between health outcomes and access to safe water (L. Pereira et al., 2021; Rivero et al., 2022; Sousa et al., 2022). The prominence of these concerns has led to the consolidation of a distinct research subfield focused on epidemics and pandemics (Feged-Rivadeneira et al., 2019; Ferrante et al., 2022; Fuchs, 2021).

Another key topic is the process of urbanization itself. Contributions in this line examine the genesis of the urban in the Amazon, including its precolonial roots (Blackwell et al., 2017; C. T. Fisher, 2022; Fuchs, 2021), the historical development of territorial and urban planning that has shaped contemporary city structures (Campaña, 2023, p. 20; dos Santos et al., 2023; Huera-Lucero et al., 2020; Rego, 2017), regional migration patterns (Kolen et al., 2018; Macdonald & Winklerprins, 2014; H. C. Pereira et al., 2022; Randell & VanWey, 2014), and

Epidemics	17	2
River mobility	4	2
Urban Patriarchy	2	2
Urban planning	8	2
Urbanization process	26	2
Transport networks	14	2
Environmental risks	10	2
Urban segregation	6	2
Indigenous urbanization	22	2
Total	**273**	

Source: Author's elaboration based on a literature review in the Web of Science database.

the role of core cities as hubs of transformation (Cardoso et al., 2015; Kanai, 2014; M. A. C. Paiva, 2022; Tobias et al., 2019; Wilson, 2023). This thesis is particularly concerned with research that analyzes how settler urbanization linked to mega-infrastructure projects unfolds, how state planning practices shape urban space, and how real estate capital operates in Amazonian cities (Calvi et al., 2020; De Souza et al., 2018; Lima et al., 2021; Schmutz, 2023).

From a cultural perspective on Amazonian urbanization, a growing body of scholarship has examined the role of Indigenous peoples. Early studies often portrayed them through a passive role, as subjects of acculturation or migrants driven by the need to access education, casting Indigenous communities as external to or acted upon by urbanization processes (Emperaire & Eloy, 2015; Nasuti et al., 2015). More recent contributions, however, have recast Indigenous peoples as active protagonists in Amazonian city life (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Campbell, 2015). This work highlights how Indigenous urban presence reinforces broader territorial claims across the region (Sobreiro, 2015; Steele, 2018; Wroblewski, 2019) and explores how Indigenous worldviews and languages shape distinct forms of spatial contestation in urban environments (Maher & Cavalcanti, 2019; Shulist, 2018). This review provides insight into Amazonian urbanization and its associated inquiries, highlighting the intersection of external and conservationist perspectives through nuanced studies of the region's political dynamics and urban transformations.

The following section examines how recent scholarship in critical theory has begun to engage more seriously with the Amazon as an emergent site of extended urbanization, one that complicates the rural–urban divide. Studies highlight how extractive projects, commodity circulation, and the gradual consolidation of infrastructure and service hubs generate distinct urban peripheries throughout the region (Mejía & Checa, 2022; Monte-Mor, 2004). Marxist urban theory, particularly that rooted in political economy (Soja & Kanai, 2014; Wilson & Bayón, 2015), has gained renewed traction amid the re-primarization of Latin America's economies (Galafassi, 2019; Purcell et al., 2018; Svampa, 2012) and successive cycles of resource exploitation in the Amazon (Guerra, 2012; Little, 2002). The clash of worldviews triggered by recent waves of extractivism—in a region that holds over 90% of the world's voluntarily isolated Indigenous peoples—has drawn renewed attention to the colonial logics

underlying these projects and the forms of resistance they continue to provoke (Descola, 2004; Viveiros de Castro, 1998). The growing presence of Indigenous peoples in urban life, both politically and spatially, marks a significant turning point in their history. Urban theory has only recently begun to acknowledge this shift, particularly through decolonial and anti-racist frameworks (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Campbell, 2015).

Analyzing imperial expansion in the Amazon requires a multivalent theoretical lens. Material structures and systems of colonial, racist, patriarchal, and capitalist domination often operate simultaneously and in layered ways. The territorial struggles unfolding across Ecuador, the Amazon, and the wider Abya Yala region defy interpretive frameworks grounded in theoretical orthodoxy. This thesis situates itself within the unresolved tensions between Marxist and decolonial thought, divides that have shaped some of the most contested debates in recent critical theory. The exchange between Zizek and Mignolo remains paradigmatic: while Mignolo rejected the centrality of class exploitation (Dabashi & Mignolo, 2015), Zizek dismissed the urgency of decolonization altogether (Kapoor, 2018). These polemics resonate through contemporary critical urban studies. Postcolonial scholars have critiqued Northern Marxist frameworks for their tendency to totalize analysis and erase epistemic diversity—a concern echoed in urban geography through critiques of concepts such as gentrification or planetary urbanization, which are often deployed uncritically in Global South contexts (Liu et al., 2021; Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Conversely, Marxist theorists have argued that postcolonialism sometimes dovetails with neoliberal multiculturalism, absorbing relational ontologies[3] and pluriversal[4] frameworks in ways that mitigate class struggle at the spatial limits of capital (Swyngedouw & Ernstson, 2018; Wilson, 2022). From this thesis's perspective, many of these disagreements emerge from misreadings or decontextualized arguments that obscure the complexity of both traditions and stifle meaningful dialogue. Such

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[3] Relational Ontology is a concept with a long tradition in philosophy that compares Eastern and Western systems of thought (Frisina, 2002). This concept is taken up by Amazonian anthropology to show how the division between society and nature has no place in indigenous societies (De la Cadena, 2010; Oslender, 2017). Thus, it opens up the possibility of rethinking the multiplicity and forms of knowledge beyond modern-western systems of thought (Viveiros de Castro, 1998).

[4] Pluriverso is a concept enunciated by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), with the slogan 'a world where many worlds fit' (Morel, 2023). It is a proposal to recognise the different histories of the indigenous peoples of Latin America. At the same time, it proposes looking at utopia from more than one prism, and the construction of socialism from autonomy. It is taken up by decolonial thinkers for other Latin American contexts from Political Ecology in their critique of development (Escobar, 2015).

disputes remain detached from the lived realities of those who simultaneously confront capitalism, colonialism, and racism.

This tension has long concerned scholars in critical urban studies, where many have called for renewed dialogue across these theoretical divides—dialogue that produces useful tools for political praxis (Hart, 2018; Horn, 2018a; Wyly, 2020). A typical example from Amazon helps illustrate this: when a state agency transfers Indigenous land to a transnational corporation, it triggers a legal and political process shaped by original accumulation, settler colonialism[5], and systemic racism. Similarly, when a municipality refuses to grant land titles to Indigenous residents of a self-organized settlement, citing bureaucratic limitations, the underlying forces at play are the same. Confronting this entanglement requires both political and analytical clarity. In this context, the thesis turns to literature that addresses the Ecuadorian Amazon's struggles for plurinational recognition and against the imposition of white-capitalist spatial orders.

The project builds on this foundation by constructing theoretical bridges between Marxist and decolonial approaches. The original aim was to develop a conceptual synthesis grounded in the framework of extended urbanization (Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Monte-Mor, 2004). This provided a critical starting point for dialogue between Anglo-American radical Marxism (Harvey, 1982, 2014; Smith, 1984, 1996) and Brazilian critical geography (Haesbaert, 2005; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009b, 2015). The work then revisits the "ontological turn," drawing from both decolonial theory and the political-epistemic contributions of Indigenous intellectuals in the region (Blaser, 2010; Descola, 1996, p. 199; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018; Zapata et al., 2007). These engagements also intersect with Latin American Marxists who have long worked in solidarity with Indigenous movements (Echeverría, 2000; Martínez-Gutiérrez, 2017). The thesis further revisits dependency theory and its relevance to understanding imperialism, peripheral capitalism, and the formation of dependent urbanization in Latin

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[5] Settler colonialism is the form that defines the form of territorial usurpation of native populations through peasant populations (Wolfe, 2006). This peasantry arrives after the military phase and materialises the change in the logic of space according to colonial power. There is a theoretical discussion about when and where this form of colonisation took place, with the West of the United States being the most emblematic (Eichler & Baumeister, 2021; L. Taylor & Lublin, 2021). However, the social sciences have developed a field of knowledge that analyses the processes of contemporary dispossession of this type of colonialism more broadly (Krautwurst, 2003).

America (Cortés, 2017; Marini, 2022)—a necessary step in mapping the spatial dynamics of capital and articulating points of convergence between Marxist and decolonial geographies. It also draws on work that explicitly bridges these traditions through the lens of Latin American thinkers (Hart, 2018). The first section of the theoretical framework begins with extended and planetary urbanization, dependency theory, and twentieth-century Latin American Marxisms. It sets the stage for a deeper engagement with Anglo-American Marxist urbanism and Brazilian critical geography, particularly through the concept of territory and its potential for understanding Indigenous resistance to capitalist-colonial urbanization.

Yet as the literature review progressed, the initial effort to build a tidy theoretical synthesis gave way to more generative terrain—fields where Marxist and decolonial approaches had already begun to converge in productive ways. Several contemporary debates offered more nuanced frameworks that better aligned with the thesis's aims. Conversations within the Ecuadorian Critical Geography Collective were especially formative. Collaborations with scholars such as Sofía Zaragocin, a key figure in decolonial geography, and Soledad Álvarez Velasco, whose work has shaped mobility studies in Latin America, introduced critical insights that reframed the research. In the Caribbean and North American contexts, the development of racial capitalism[6] through Black Marxism has long sought to reconcile anti-capitalist and anti-racist perspectives (C. J. Robinson, 2000). The rise of Black geographies within this lineage offers powerful tools for analyzing the Amazon, particularly in its critique of white capitalist spatial formations and environmental racism (Hawthorne, 2019; Noxolo, 2022; Pulido, 2017). From the standpoint of this thesis, neither postcolonial critiques of Marxism nor Marxist critiques of decolonial thought offer a compelling rebuttal to the conceptual framework of racial capitalism. Instead, it emerges as an essential theoretical bridge. Anchored in this perspective, the thesis engages more directly with postcolonial critiques in geography. This occurs first through dialogues on the "provincialization" of global urbanism and strong critiques of planetary urbanization (McLean, 2018; Reddy, 2018; Roy & Ong, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2013). Second, it draws from the Latin American

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[6] The concept of racial capitalism emerges as a critique from black Marxism. Marx and Engels believed that European bourgeois society would rationalise social relations. However, Robinson explains that this view obscures the racist and slave-owning nature of capital (Melamed, 2015). On the contrary, he sees all capitalism as racial capitalism, and argues that historically the anti-racist stance is essential to Marxism (C. J. Robinson, 2000).

Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality school, which has informed the development of Latinx geographies and anti-racist regional frameworks, creating space for hemispheric conversations about racial capitalism across Latin and North America (Quijano, 2000; Zaragocin, 2023).

The literature review also underscored Settler Colonialism Theory as one of the most dynamic and generative fields in recent critical scholarship. Although initially peripheral to urban theory, it has steadily gained traction (Dorries et al., 2019; McClintock & Guimo nt Marceau, 2023). This body of work presented a valuable opportunity to deepen the ontological turn, thereby expanding the theoretical horizon of the thesis (Léonard et al., 2023; Marceau et al., 2023; Scherer et al., 2023). The mobility turn proved crucial in articulating a conceptual bridge between ontological readings of the Amazon rainforest and the production of everyday urban spaces marked by ontological multiplicity. Both Marxist and decolonial frameworks have sometimes tended to stabilize political and territorial subjects within externally imposed spatial and temporal frameworks (Adey, 2006; Álvarez Velasco, 2020; Sheller, 2018). In contrast, this thesis foregrounds the mobility of capital and populations, challenging representations that situate Amazonian actors solely through external perspectives (Bayón Jiménez et al., 2021; Galli, 2012). This shift opens up the possibility of recognizing migration as a form of social struggle (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013; Varela Huerta, 2013) and incorporating emerging contributions on multilocality (Horn et al., 2024; Raymond, 2023). At the same time, a strand of Marxist critique directed at early settler colonial frameworks enables a richer intersection with debates on land collectivization and resistance to private property, both of which are fundamental to understanding the Amazon as a contested space (Bhandar, 2018; Blomley, 2020).

The nine subsections that structure the theoretical framework are organized as a series of dialogues—each shaped by tensions, gaps, and opportunities for further exploration. Rather than aiming for a unified or closed theoretical system, the thesis embraces conceptual multiplicity as a generative tool for understanding Indigenous contestations of Amazonian urbanization. Instead of imposing coherence between Marxist and decolonial geographies, it traces points of friction and convergence that broaden the possibilities for producing original and disruptive theory. This conceptual trajectory positions the frontiers of capital in the

Amazon as a privileged lens through which to rethink critical urban theory. The research questions and objectives reflect this orientation, seeking to extend the thesis's theoretical contributions beyond the Amazonian context and into broader debates within critical thought. If the central theoretical gap lies in the need to build bridges between Marxist and decolonial approaches for analyzing urbanization according the spatial limits of capital, especially as shaped by cultural collisions rooted in colonial histories (Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Cowen, 2020; Horn, 2018b; Monte-Mor, 2014).

Main objective: To comparatively analyze how the expansion of capitalist spatial limits, shaped by processes of extended urbanization, interacts with the reconfiguration of colonial formations, to understand how Indigenous actors are constituted as political subjects in resistance to class- and ethnicity-based hegemonies.

This thesis focuses on the struggles waged against capitalist and colonial domination in the Amazon, with particular attention to the Ecuadorian context, where the Indigenous movement plays a pivotal role in challenging racialized and class-based hierarchies (Dorries et al., 2019; Horn, 2019; Iza et al., 2021; Marceau et al., 2023). Among the many forces operating at the frontiers of accumulation in the Amazon, this research foregrounds Indigenous urban struggles as both the empirical focus and the conceptual engine of its contribution to critical theory (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Mitsuishi, 2022; Steele, 2018). The guiding question challenges dominant narratives that frame urbanization as either the inevitable triumph of capital (Arboleda, 2016; Lerner Patrón, 2024) or as a mechanism of Indigenous erasure and assimilation into mestizo-white urban spaces (J. Davis et al., 2017; Nasuti et al., 2015; Pérez-Llorente et al., 2013). Instead, this thesis proposes that urban Indigenous contestation actively transforms space and opens political possibilities. It addresses a clear gap in the literature by presenting new theoretical perspectives on these contested processes (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022a; Leemann, 2021).

Central question: How do Indigenous contestations reconfigure the frontiers of extended urbanization and rentier capitalism in the Amazon region?

To deepen this inquiry, the thesis is structured around three secondary questions, each paired

with a specific objective. The first focuses on the theoretical contributions that emerge from the proposed intersection of Marxist and decolonial thought; the second centers on methodological innovations grounded in the thesis's situated research approach. The third addresses the political implications of Indigenous urban struggles and their broader relevance for analyzing contemporary capitalism. To situate these contributions within critical urban theory, the thesis asks: What conceptual gaps become visible within existing frameworks when viewed from an Amazonian standpoint? As noted earlier, engaging with Marxist and decolonial dialogues provides an essential entry point (Hart, 2018; Hawthorne, 2019; Horn, 2018a). Yet this work also seeks to move beyond inherited categories, asking what new intersections emerge when class and ethnic struggles are analyzed jointly in contexts of extended capitalist urbanization. Complementarily, it contends that Marxist geographical theory can be significantly enriched through this intersection, particularly by reworking concepts such as uneven development and rent gap theory in Amazonian urban contexts (Slater, 2017; Smith, 1984, 1996). At the same time, it argues that decolonial theory can benefit from integrating insights from political economy, particularly those derived from critiques of planetary urbanization (Khatam & Haas, 2018; Reddy, 2018) and analyses of relational ontologies in urban land and property disputes (Blaser, 2010; Oslender, 2021). Located at the intersection of these traditions, the thesis aims to advance current debates on racial capitalism and settler colonialism, contributing to a broader rethinking of how critical theory engages with space, power, and resistance (Addie & Fraser, 2019; Van Sant et al., 2021; Zaragocin, 2019).

- *Secondary question 1: What theoretical-conceptual contributions are found in the intersections between class and ethnicity in areas of extended urbanization of capitalism?*
- *Secondary objective 1: To generate a theoretical breakthrough in neo-Marxist and decolonial intersections on responses from shaping political subjectivities in conflict with extended urbanization promoted by infrastructural and extractive projects.*

This thesis positions its methodological contribution within the field of comparative studies by bridging inductive approaches grounded in decolonial, situated epistemologies with deductive reasoning drawn from general theoretical critiques of capital (Hart, 2018; Nijman,

2015; Peck, 2024). While a single, in-depth ethnographic case might have offered a more granular view, particularly of how relational ontologies are being reconfigured in Amazonian urban contexts (Descola, 1996; Escobar, 2015), this research soon encountered the need to engage with a broader set of historical and spatial dynamics. Capturing the heterogeneity of Indigenous urban struggles across the Ecuadorian Amazon demanded an approach capable of addressing multiple temporalities and scalar registers (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020; Peck, 2023; Roy & Ong, 2011). This required a method that was attuned to particularities while also being capable of identifying broader patterns and generating conceptual abstractions. To that end, the thesis explores a double movement at both the strategic and fieldwork levels: one that synthesizes thick particularism with relational comparison, forging a methodological path that navigates across difference while sustaining critical theoretical reflection (Coombes et al., 2014; M. Ugarte et al., 2021). A key aim of this work, then, is to contribute to methodological innovation by examining this dual approach and addressing the existing gap in how such theoretical intersections are methodologically operationalized.

- *Secondary question 2: How can we analyze the new forms of territorial deployment produced by Indigenous struggles during extractive booms in urban settings?*
- *Secondary objective 2: To generate theoretical and methodological innovations for analyzing the racialization of urban space that fosters dialogue among critical theories with scarce dialogue.*

In the third place, this thesis also aims to intervene in how social change is conceptualized, mainly through the lessons emerging from Amazonian struggles. With the thesis unfolding between 2019 and 2025, there is already accumulated experience regarding the shifts and constraints resulting from Ecuador's 2008 Constitution, which introduced plurinationality and expanded territorial rights for Indigenous peoples (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022b; Walsh, 2008). These achievements are often found in the Andean region, alongside Bolivia's plurinational constitution and the first draft of Chile's constitutional reform (Schavelzon, 2018). However, this thesis seeks to establish lessons that could be useful elsewhere, particularly in contexts where racial capitalism starkly reveals its violence (Bhandar, 2018; Danewid, 2020; McCreary & Milligan, 2021), and amid the global resurgence of far-right

movements (Elliott-Cooper, 2019; Ferrante et al., 2022; Orozco Ríos et al., 2023). In this context, the relational ontologies proposed for inhabiting urban spaces open powerful new avenues for rethinking urban ontological multiplicity (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Roy, 2016a, 2016b). Thus, envisioning cities as sites of struggle against racism and exclusion, both within the Amazon and beyond (Cahen et al., 2019; Legg, 2023; Steele, 2018).

- *Secondary objective 3: To explore the current political proposals of urban Indigenous enclaves in Amazonian territories and the strategies hegemonic forces use to implement megaprojects.*
- *Secondary question 3: What contributions do relational ontologies offer to the analysis of urban violence about segregation, racism, and exclusion produced by extractive capitalist projects?*

1.2. Methodological approach to address the research questions and objectives: militant research and inductive-deductive comparativism across five case interaction exercises.

This thesis grounds its methodological approach in the positionality shaped by a commitment to militant research and the epistemological implications it entails. While the formal research was conducted between 2019 and 2024, the learning processes that enabled this work began in 2011, when the author of this work, newly arrived from Castilla, Spain, relocated to Ecuador to collaborate with organizations defending human and nature rights. That same year, a first visit to the Amazon took place in the area where the U.S.-based oil company Texaco had been operating for over two decades, leaving behind widespread environmental destruction. The visit took place shortly after a landmark court ruling that ordered the corporation to pay $9.5 billion in reparations to affected families in the northern provinces of Sucumbíos and Orellana (Martín Beristain et al., 2009; Pigrau, 2014). Between 2011 and 2018, knowledge of the Ecuadorian Amazon deepened through collaborative mapping projects that documented environmental damage and generated reports on regional human rights violations (Bayón & Torres, 2019; Martínez Yanez et al., 2019). These years of work helped forge enduring relationships with Indigenous communities, grassroots leaders, and residents across Amazonian towns and cities—relationships that provided the foundation for this thesis and without which the research would not have been possible.

At the same time, working within Ecuadorian universities created new opportunities for investigating Amazonian urbanization. It opened the space for engaging with state and corporate actors, as well as neighborhoods and communities not directly tied to social movements. In its initial stage, the research focused on megaproject planning in the Amazon, shaped by a formative theoretical and methodological experience at a Marxist research center in Ecuador led by British geographer David Harvey (Wilson & Bayón, 2017b). A second phase enabled more sustained fieldwork across urban areas in the Amazon, tracing neighborhood histories and the strategies communities employ to inhabit the city (Bayón-Jiménez et al., 2024). These stages expanded the analysis of spatial conflicts in the Amazon beyond environmental issues, paving the way for collaboration with Indigenous communities affected by urbanization. Also, participation in the Ecuadorian Collective of Critical Geography fostered connections between knowledge production and practical application for grassroots organizations (Bayón & Zaragocin, 2019; Bonilla et al., 2016). An ongoing intellectual exchange developed with Brazilian geographer Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves during his visits to Ecuador (Bayón & Torres, 2019).

The final years of this thesis unfolded amid deepening political and social turbulence across Ecuador and the Americas. In Ecuador, the intensification of neoliberal restructuring has dramatically worsened living conditions and facilitated the spread of transnational narco-criminal networks. This deterioration triggered major Indigenous and popular uprisings in 2019 and 2022, each met with aggressive military repression and blatant state racism. These uprisings reshaped the political landscape, revitalizing organizational processes and giving rise to a new generation of young leaders within the Indigenous movement (Iza et al., 2021; Santillana Ortiz et al., 2024). Daniel Noboa's rise as Ecuador's oligarchic president and his re-election campaign reflect broader trends, such as Donald Trump's return in the U.S., Javier Milei's election in Argentina, and a global rise of far-right authoritarianism. In this context, concerns grow as calls for social justice and human rights are dismissed as "woke"[7], while militarism and violence are legitimized as tools of statecraft (Madigan, 2023; Orozco Ríos et al., 2023). The Israeli state's violent actions in Gaza, an actual act of colonial genocide,

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[7] Woke is a term that originated in the African-American community in the United States as a way of referring to those who stand up to or remain vigilant in the face of racism in the 1930s (Lopez Bunyasi & Smith, 2019). Nowadays, the extreme right has begun to use the term in a pejorative way to the left-wing and progressive ideas as a whole (Madigan, 2023).

alongside military incursions in Lebanon and Syria, expose the resurgence of contemporary imperial violence (El-Affendi, 2024; Nijim, 2023).

This thesis fulfills two core commitments. First, it contributes to advancing Ecuador's plurinational project, established in the 2008 Constitution, which recognizes Indigenous peoples as political subjects predating the Ecuadorian state (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022b; Jameson, 2011). Seventeen years after ratification, a new generation of Indigenous leaders is expanding this project's scope beyond its initial ambitions. This research supports efforts to dismantle embedded colonial and racist logics and affirms Indigenous land-back demands for greater autonomy and justice (Ramírez, 2020b; Tomiak, 2023). Plurinationality thus presents an opportunity to transform global inhabitation and democratize urban space across areas characterized by structural inequality (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022a; Horn, 2019; Nejad et al., 2019). Second, the thesis critiques the environmental movement for portraying Indigenous peoples as mere defenders of nature, thereby reinforcing racial and colonial tropes such as the "noble ecological savage" or "ecology of the poor" (Eichler & Baumeister, 2021; Ellingson, 2001; Moreano Venegas, 2017). It addresses these reductive views by supporting Indigenous communities in decolonizing institutions such as universities, NGOs, and knowledge production sites, hence creating nuanced narratives of Indigenous experience and political agency (Cabnal, 2010; Guzmán Arroyo, 2019). Thus, the thesis embodies militant research within institutional tensions, offering critical insights for Ecuador's social movements and practical contributions to the communities involved (Halvorsen, 2015; Russell, 2015).

This learning and research process began with a grounded understanding of the Ecuadorian Amazon, which shaped the decision to center comparative strategies from the outset (J. Robinson, 2016). In recent years, comparative analysis has emerged as a valuable bridge between Marxist and decolonial approaches. While some decolonial perspectives regard comparison as a homogenizing and hegemonic practice, certain orthodox Marxist views tend to dismiss comparative studies for reducing cases to isolated particularities, thereby limiting their capacity to inform structural theorization (Nijman, 2015; Peck, 2015). In response to this epistemic divide, the thesis adopts an iterative, spiral methodology that moves between inductive and deductive phases. A line of inquiry has emerged regarding comparative

approaches, where cases and their particularities are viewed as mutually constitutive, allowing for the observation of structures and specific situations in a productive, tension-filled relationship (Hart, 2018; Peck, 2023). This research aims for deep learning and context-sensitive theoretical abstraction through inductive engagement with specific realities, rooted in historical and spatial configurations (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020; Streule, 2020). Deductive reasoning synthesizes these insights, creating comparative dialogues as points of departure for renewed inductive inquiry from fresh perspectives (Nijman, 2007; Schmid et al., 2018). This dual methodological approach enables the emergence of new concepts, not as definitive theoretical constructs, but as working formulations of a comparative methodology driven by the open-ended, exploratory nature of the research. Within the framework of militant research, this iterative method aligns with community needs through participatory mapping developed in collaboration with territorial actors (Atia & Doherty, 2021; Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012).

Research case selection often follows the formation of affective and political ties through sustained engagement between communities or neighborhoods and the academic or activist institutions connected to the researcher (Pile, 2010). The cases are situated along two of the Ecuadorian Amazon's principal urbanization corridors, each shaped by the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) (Féliz & Melón, 2020; Kanai, 2016). The first is the Troncal Amazónica highway, which runs north to south along the Andean foothills, connecting cities that have increasingly taken on the role of provincial and cantonal capitals (Hurtado Caicedo, 2017; León Vivanco, 2021). The second is the Manta-Manaus corridor, which has spurred the construction of port, airport, road, and river infrastructure linking the Pacific coast to the interior Amazon, passing through several key capitals (Durán, 2013; Wilson & Bayón, 2017b). These two axes represent the fastest zones of extractive frontier formation and transport expansion, and the research sites are embedded in the spatial conflicts emerging around them.

Several cases emerged from prior engagements along these corridors. Along the Manta-Manaus route, connections first formed in 2015, particularly along the Napo River and in the peri-urban zones surrounding Coca and Tena. Among these, some peripheral neighborhoods took shape informally during the most recent oil boom; others emerged around new state

infrastructure; and still others reflect settlements built through state-sponsored social housing programs financed by oil royalties. Along the Troncal Amazónica, the researcher formed connections with neighborhoods and communities resisting oil and mining projects, often in conjunction with the environmental movement. In cities like Lago Agrio and Coca, many districts remain significantly impacted by oil extraction. At the same time, in the southern Amazon, entire communities have been displaced to accommodate the country's first large-scale mining operations. Additionally, several neighborhoods along the Troncal Amazónica face acute challenges concerning urban infrastructure and housing quality, issues that have been previously examined through collaborative university research initiatives that have fostered various levels of synergy.
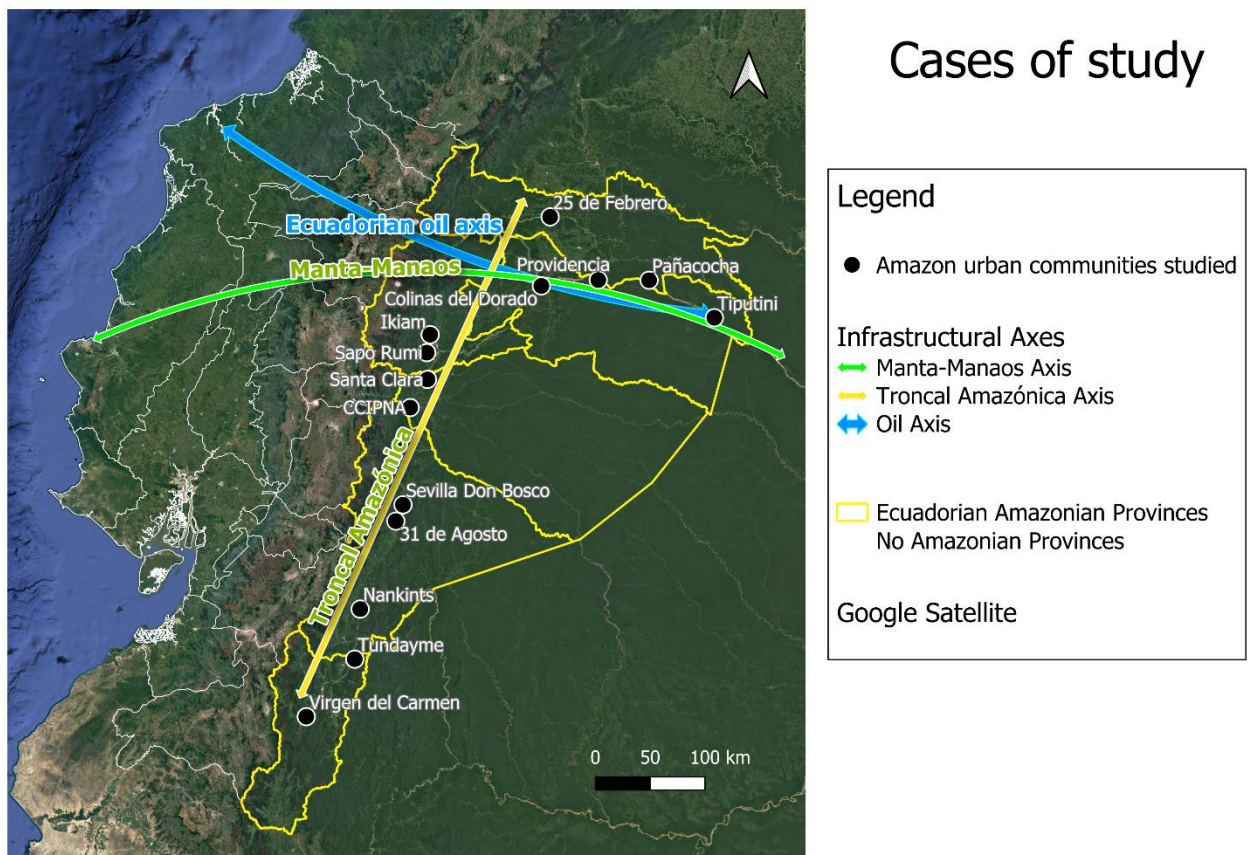
Map 1.1: Urbanization axes and research cases.

Drawing from this set of cases, the research developed a series of techniques to address knowledge gaps in each territory and enable comparative analysis through more deductive lenses. To reconstruct the territorial histories of each site, the research relied on archival materials, secondary sources, interviews with community leaders, and spatial analysis using Geographic Information Systems (Betancourt Santiago et al., 2015; M. Ugarte et al., 2021). These methods established the foundation for cross-case comparison, particularly in identifying regional patterns. Engagement often exceeded conventional academic inquiry, supporting legal proceedings and community demands. This involvement enabled the use of ethnographic and participatory methods, shaped by community rhythms rather than academic expectations (Atia & Doherty, 2021; Muratorio, 1998; Wyly, 2009). These engagements also informed an investigation into the discursive strategies of state, religious, and capitalist institutions, providing insights into the spatial operations of racial capitalism (M. Ugarte et al., 2019). The thesis's theoretical contributions arose from these interactions, culminating in a comparative synthesis of findings. Additionally, the uniqueness of specific cases necessitated deeper engagement with relational ontologies (Uzendoski & Saavedra, 2010) and land politics from settler colonialism debates (Milner, 2020).

The thesis takes the form of an article-based dissertation comprising five articles, each designed to explore the research questions and objectives from a different angle. Two articles provide a comprehensive characterization of extended urbanization in the Amazon, examining how racial capitalism influences spatial transformations and how Indigenous resistance evolves in response to these changes. The other two present in-depth case studies focused on specific sites of contestation, unpacking how resistance takes shape in particular urban and territorial configurations. A final article offers a more explicitly comparative analysis, building on insights from across the cases to examine points of convergence and divergence. Each article pursues a distinct argument and purpose. The first two maps regional trends by clustering cases and highlighting conceptual innovations, demonstrating how intersecting theoretical frameworks help reveal key dimensions of Amazonian urbanization.

The article, "A Climate Justice Approach to Urbanization Processes in the South: Oil Axis in Ecuador," analyzes five cases of urbanization along Ecuador's oil corridor. It explores urbanization at multiple scales, revealing new spatial formations marked by class segregation

and environmental racism. These cases demonstrate how extractive urbanization perpetuates racial and class inequalities, providing insights into theories of racial capitalism. Methodologically, the article combines inductive case analysis of each site's role in the oil circuit with deductive categorization to conceptualize the structural logics of the oil axis. The second article, "Decolonizing Urban Studies from the Amazon: Indigenous Practices to Contest Planetary Urbanization," extends the thesis's argument by examining eight cases and identifying four typologies of Indigenous urban contestation, both historical and contemporary. These typologies challenge prevailing assumptions in urban theory, particularly the notion that Indigenous engagement with urbanization is either recent or peripheral. Instead, the article foregrounds the enduring and transformative role of Indigenous ontologies in shaping Amazonian urban space. In doing so, it introduces the concept of residual urbanization as a decolonial critique of dominant planetary urbanization frameworks. Methodologically, the article transitions from detailed, inductive case analysis to a deductive synthesis that classifies the various strategies of Indigenous resistance.

The third article, "Residual Urbanization and the Social Relations of Collective Struggle in an Amazonian Kichwa Commune from Ecuador," analyzes an Indigenous community on the urban edge as it navigates urbanization while preserving ancestral practices and reinforcing communal structures amid extractive displacement. The article critiques planetary urbanization through a decolonial lens, emphasizing the role of relational ontologies in shaping urban processes. The fourth article, "Extractive Frontiers of Extended Urbanization: Everyday Practices of Resistance Against Displacement and Dispossession in the Ecuadorian Amazon," builds on a Marxist argument by applying Rent Gap Theory to peri-urban Amazonian contexts. It introduces the Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap (APRG), integrating insights from the mobility turn, ontological turn, and Latin American critical geography's concept of territory. Citing three of the eight cases from the second article, it demonstrates how Indigenous resistance disrupts dispossession mechanisms, preventing the closure of the rent gap through transgressive strategies. Thus, the APRG emerges as a theoretical synthesis that highlights the need to bridge Marxist and decolonial approaches to understand Indigenous contestation against the extractive practices of urbanization.

The fifth and final article, "The Amazonian Indigenous City Against Settler Colonialism," focuses on one of the three cases featured in the previous article. It examines how a large, multi-ethnic Indigenous landholding on the city's edge challenges capitalist, colonial, and racially charged urban models by enacting the constitutional principle of plurinationality in practice. This final contribution completes the thesis by reversing its usual synthesis. While much of the thesis extends decolonial and Latin American insights into Marxist theory, this article channels Marxist perspectives into contemporary debates on settler colonialism. It analyzes the political implications of collective land ownership, challenging the Ecuadorian state and real estate capital, and its effect on relational ontologies. It further examines how this Indigenous project subverts the racialized logic of capitalist urbanization, confronting racism and classism. By consolidating the thesis's findings, this article supports a grounded, inductive approach to engaging with the dynamics of racial capitalism.

These five theoretical exercises highlight the importance of dialogue between critical traditions. They introduce original concepts, develop innovations, and outline a comparative methodology that addresses the thesis's core questions and objectives.

2. Theoretical dialogues between Marxism, decolonization, and anti-racism.

The theoretical framework of this dissertation aims to outline the various conceptual foundations on which the thesis is based. Instead of presenting each framework separately, the chapter develops interconnected dialogues, where each section anticipates key themes, revisits previous arguments, and builds upon existing insights. The first central section navigates between Anglo-American and Latin American Marxist traditions, offering an interpretation of the historical influence of Marxist geography on Amazonian studies. It lays the groundwork for dialogue with decolonial and anti-racist theories by examining extended and planetary urbanization—two frameworks central to critical Amazon debates. It then shifts focus to Latin American Marxism, particularly dependency theory, clarifying how the Amazon fits within global capitalist dynamics. This section revisits Anglo-American Marxist geography to examine uneven development and rent gap theory, concluding with an exploration of Latin American critical geography, particularly the concept of territory as a site of Indigenous struggle, in dialogue with Brazilian Marxist geographies.

The second section focuses on decolonial and anti-racist perspectives while establishing connections with Marxist debates. It begins by exploring anti-racist Marxist approaches across the Americas and then transitions into contemporary postcolonial critiques of urbanization emerging from diverse global contexts. Building on these foundations, the chapter introduces decolonial perspectives rooted in Amazonian contexts, engaging with the ontological turn and the spatial contributions of contemporary Indigenous practices. It also incorporates insights from the mobility turn to better understand multilocality and migration as modes of contesting capitalist spatial regimes. The section concludes by addressing current debates in Settler Colonialism Theory, a field that intersects with the dissertation's primary theoretical currents. This final discussion clarifies how colonial, racial, and capitalist formations converge in the expropriation of land and territory under private property regimes.

These two central axes converge in a final section synthesizing the theoretical strands explored throughout the dissertation. Rather than treating each framework in isolation, this section demonstrates how their sequencing and interrelation clarify the dynamics of urbanization and Indigenous resistance in the Amazon. Based on this synthesis, the dissertation outlines five conceptual interventions concluding the theoretical framework.

First, extractive urbanization corridors illuminate the relationship between racial capitalism and dependency theory. Second, residual urbanization provides a framework for understanding Indigenous contestation against extractive urbanization. Third, it interprets residual urbanization through Indigenous ontologies of territorial construction. Fourth, the Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap integrates multiple theoretical insights to provincialize Marxist urban theory within the Amazonian context. Lastly, Amazonian Settler Colonialism is developed through engagement with Marxist debates, viewed through the lens of plurinational collective landholding in urban spaces.

2.1. Foundations from Marxist Traditions: between major debates in Critical Urban Theory and a Latin American perspective on Marxist Geographies.

2.1.1. Extensive urbanization and planetary urbanization from an Amazonian perspective.

This framework examines the contributions of Latin America and its colonial centers in North America and Europe, aiming to highlight paradigms for interpreting the thesis. It seeks to rethink narratives of critical theories within the Amazon. The dominant frameworks of the 1970s and 1980s, which focused on peri-urbanization and rural-urbanization (Allen, 2003; Bauer & Roux, 1977), fail to explain capital accumulation and the emergence of new urban nodes in the Amazon. Comparative studies of urban development in Brazil's Amazon and major megacities have led to the concept of extended urbanization ("urbanização extensiva," in Portuguese), which addresses the processes shaping the Amazon under the influence of these large urban centers (Monte-Mor, 2004).

This conceptualization stems from the city-country dialectic, a phase of capitalist development linked to the Industrial Revolution. Here, the city dominates the countryside, creating a spatial divide between agricultural and manufacturing labor. However, with the 1973 crisis and the rise of neoliberalism, capital entered a new phase of expansion that surpassed previous limits. Thus, the traditional dialectic is reinterpreted as an implosion-explosion dialectic (Castriota & Tonucci, 2018). In the "implosion", cities condense greater amounts of surplus value and population, evolving into mega-urban forms. Meanwhile, in the "explosion", industrial cities extend their infrastructures to unprecedented scales, reaching deep into the Amazon (Monte-Mor, 2014). Although grounded in Lefebvre's theory of the urban revolution, this reconceptualization originates from the Amazon itself and is critically reworked to reflect the region's specific spatial, historical, and political conditions (Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Lefebvre, 2003).

The Anglo-Saxon North introduced planetary urbanization, shifting focus from settlement typologies to sociospatial processes, termed nominal essences. It redefines urbanity as continuous, transcending strict city-countryside divisions (Brenner, 2014b, 2014a). Although inspired by extended urbanization, this framework has gained greater global influence, partly due to regional and linguistic hierarchies in knowledge production (Castriota & Tonucci,

2018). In the last decade, it has emerged as a key concept in critical urban studies (Angelo & Goh, 2021; Brenner, 2014a). Planetary urbanization has sparked a global debate, contributing to the urbanization discourse from Africa (Lesutis, 2021), Asia (Jain & Korzhenevych, 2022; Salgueiro Barrio & O'Shea, 2022), Oceania (Galindez, 2023), and Latin America (Arboleda, 2015, 2016).

Numerous studies have examined planetary urbanization in the Amazon through infrastructure expansion; however, they initially did not align with the original formulation of extended urbanization (Kanai, 2014; Wilson & Bayón, 2015). The emergence of new urban zones around megaprojects, along with mega-urban centers serving industrial and service functions, has been a key aspect of planetary urbanization approaches to the Amazon (Kanai, 2016; Lerner Patrón, 2024; Wilson & Bayón, 2016). Planetary urbanization has also been used to trace spatial patterns of implosion and explosion in the region (Cabrera-Barona et al., 2020; Mejía & Checa, 2022). Concurrently, the concept of extended urbanization, developed by Monte-Mor, has gained traction, particularly in Brazil, where it critically examines the relationship between the regional Amazonian scale and the national scale (A. C. D. Cardoso et al., 2023; Côrtes et al., 2020; Vieira & Almeida, 2017).

Extended and planetary urbanization, while being essential to explaining how this thesis on small settlements fits within critical urban studies, also epitomizes the potential of viewing the world from the peripheries of the peripheries. Within this examination of the connections among Latin American urban theory production, Anglo-Saxon Marxist geographies, and the relationships between Lefebvrian and Brazilian Marxism, we can position the approaches and perspectives on Amazonian urbanization. An urban theory that emerges from analyzing Amazonian urbanization serves as a crucial starting point for this thesis, providing a lens to examine the region and its external relations. Therefore, the following subsection will discuss Latin American Marxist approaches through dependency theory, explore proposals in Anglo-Saxon Marxist geography, and ultimately consider Latin American critical geographies.

2.1.2. Latin American Marxisms: between dependency theory and rentierism in capitalist modernity.

Latin American Marxisms offer significant potential for critiques of capital in our region (Hart, 2018). By the mid-twentieth century, Latin American cities were facing the rise of modernism and the formation of popular peripheries amid industrial decline, a result of U.S. and European imperialism. During this period, the primary debate centered on dependency theory, which argued that the international economic structure fosters unequal exchanges between core and peripheral countries. Core countries dominate the economy through the surplus value generated by technology, while peripheral countries are integrated globally through the exploitation of labor and natural resources (Bambirra, 2021; F. H. Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Gunder Frank, 1966; Marini, 2022).

The urban branch of dependency theory explains the widespread poverty and absence of urban public policies in Latin America. Urbanization reveals how Latin American urban networks are shaped by dependency dynamics, which stem from the marginalization of rural lifestyles and the forced migration to cities that have become megacities (Cortés, 2017; Vegliò, 2021). Brazilian critical geographies analyze the specific formation of urban spaces in Latin America, linking the continent's subordinate position to the unique challenges its cities face, where poverty arises from a capitalist market that systematically excludes popular sectors from formal integration (Santos, 2008, 2021).

In the 1980s, the debt crisis diminished the prominence of dependency theory. The following decade's neoliberal reforms reshaped Latin America, driving rapid urban growth and bringing to prominence a sociology of poverty centered on the critique of inequality (Duhau, 1998; Pradilla Cobos, 2002; Schiavo et al., 2013). The predominant urban form during this period was vast, unplanned peripheries, which became central sites of social disputes and powerful political subjects (Carrión & Erazo Espinosa, 2012; Cruz-Muñoz & Isunza, 2017; Zibechi, 2012). Over the next few decades, critical urban studies institutions and scholarship flourished across Latin America, focusing on territorial transformations influenced by neoliberalism and globalization (de Mattos, 2008; M. di Virgilio, 2021; Rodríguez & Sugranyes, 2004). Recently, dependency theory has experienced a resurgence from Marxist perspectives, particularly in dialogue with planetary urbanization (Arboleda, 2020; Reis &

De Oliveira, 2023; Reis & Lukas, 2022). This revival critiques the dominant studies of peripheries that primarily focus on segregation and inequality (Caldeira, 2017; Peralta-Arias & Higueras-García, 2017). Furthermore, this resurgence has also extended into labor studies and demographic impacts in the Amazon, although with a more tangential focus on urbanization (Felix, 2021).

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, a new generation of Latin American thinkers developed Marxist approaches relevant to this thesis, focusing on rentierism —a phenomenon linked to the export of raw materials. Building on dependency theory as a historical foundation, these scholars focused on analyzing the social consequences produced by the rentier model, which rent-seeking elites have historically dominated. In the 1990s, debates on capitalist modernity led to a reexamination of rent theory (Touraine, 1997), particularly through a Lefebvrian interpretation of Marx that highlighted land and subsoil resources. This postcolonial perspective, grounded in alternative space-times (Coronil, 1997; Hart, 2018), diverges from the classic center-periphery model, suggesting that peripheral capitalism nurtures the core and shapes the modern world (Coronil, 2000; Machado Aráoz, 2018). It also reflects how oil extraction and land rent create social structures that control elite wealth, which popular sectors often contest (Alarcón Cevallos, 2021; Coronil, 1997).

Analyses of Latin American capitalist modernity define it as "baroque modernity," characterized by disconnection from productivity and appearances that mask underdevelopment (Echeverría, 2011; Martínez-Gutiérrez, 2017). This "baroque ethos" shapes social relations through mimicry, illusion, and theatricality, providing a framework to analyze capitalist forms, rentier elites, and social struggles of colonial and republican periods (Bartra, 2014; Echeverría, 2000). Extractive enclaves have emerged as critical areas of urbanization outside city limits, connected by extractive infrastructures and representing extended urbanization paradigms (Guzmán-Gallegos, 2012; Uribe & Guzmán-Rocha, 2022). These enclaves mark the end of "explosion" infrastructures, where new social and urban formations arise, reflecting "implosions" distant from traditional centers and showcasing the rentier illusions of states during extractivist booms. This perspective is especially relevant for Amazon and has been highlighted in recent studies for its strong explanatory power regarding new extractive megaprojects (Wilson & Bayón, 2017a, 2017c).

This form of analysis is highly relevant to Amazon and has been addressed in recent studies, considering its theoretical and explanatory potential for new extractive megaprojects. From a political ecology standpoint, scholars argue that wealthy countries continue to extract value from peripheral regions by overexploiting cheap labor and natural resources, including oil, thereby establishing global labor divisions and unequal ecological exchanges that perpetuate dependency (Sultana, 2021). Consequently, the co-production of centers and peripheries, along with the persistence of dependency, can be understood as spatial relations of superexploitation driven by the use of fossil fuels. Under these conditions, the mechanisms of wealth extraction limit workers' ability to sustain their lives and hinder the development of fully realized capitalism in peripheral countries (Marini, 2022).

Climate change stems from the "spatial dialectic of productivity and plunder" (Moore, 2015, p. 293), triggered by the Industrial Revolution and the growth of cities driven by fossil fuels. Climate injustices worsen as Global North countries boost urbanization by intensifying fossil fuel extraction in Latin America, creating new forms of colonialism disguised as climate policy (Sultana, 2022). Conflicts over planetary urbanization, climate injustice, and center-periphery structures emerge simultaneously (S. Fisher, 2015). The Amazon is central to these debates, highlighting the connection between this thesis and dependency and rentierism studies.

2.1.3. Anglo-Saxon Marxist Geography: Limits to Capital, Uneven Development, and Rent Gap Theory

This section highlights the contributions of Marxist theory to the study of urbanization in the context of neoliberal expansion. Concepts such as "limits to capital," "uneven development," and those derived from the "rent gap theory" provide frameworks for understanding the spatial dynamics of capital (Smith, 1984, 1987). Analyzing capital circulation is essential for grasping spatial patterns. This cycle involves expanding initial investments through commodity production and market consumption (Harvey, 2010). The quicker this cycle operates, the greater the capital's self-valorization and competitiveness (Harvey, 2006). As extraction, manufacturing, and consumption sites are geographically distinct, transport and communication impact the duration of the capital circulation cycle. Thus, creating

infrastructure to shorten these times is vital for capital accumulation (Harvey, 2010). Capital seeks to achieve the "annihilation of space by time," breaking spatial barriers to enable more capital circulation cycles within a given timeframe (Harvey, 1982). Examples include constructing the Panama and Suez Canals to avoid lengthy voyages, developing telegrams and the Internet for faster communication, and expanding railway networks.

The annihilation of space by time leads to strategic placement of transportation infrastructures, including canals, ports, highways, railways, airports, fiber-optic networks, industrial zones, and dams. These become fixed capital assets funded by capitalist states, creating spatial differentiation: spaces with infrastructure are privileged production sites, while those without are marginalized (Harvey, 1982; Smith, 1984). These infrastructures promote the dynamics of extended urbanization (Wilson & Bayón, 2017a). Meanwhile, intercapitalist competition drives further infrastructure development, eroding initial advantages and monopolistic rents. A tendency toward equalization thus accompanies the capitalist tendency toward spatial differentiation, and as these tendencies globalize, spatial equalization becomes a planetary trend (Harvey, 1982; Slater, 2017; Smith, 1984).

These dynamics underpin uneven geographical development, where differentiation and equalization shape capital's spatial patterns across global, national, and urban scales (Smith, 1984). At the core is Marx's idea of capital's cyclical fluctuations, leading to "locational switches," driven by spatial differentiation and equalization, resulting in periods of devaluation and revaluation (Slater, 2017; Smith, 1979). Differentiation enhances spaces with new infrastructures, while equalization often devalues capital and land. Peri-urban and exurban areas play a crucial role in these valuation processes relative to central urban areas. The Rent Gap Theory emerges from these locational shifts, explaining how gentrification displaces working-class residents to make way for more profitable activities (Smith, 1979). This theory shows how public policies can drive investments in exurban areas, devaluing specific central spaces until their prices fall below potential values. When capital's locational balance shifts, investment intensifies in devalued central areas, triggering gentrification (Smith, 1979, 1984, 1987).

These phenomena were studied in U.S. cities during the neoliberal transition, revealing clear patterns of gentrification: working-class neighborhoods in central areas were devalued and

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subsequently targeted by public policies that promoted reinvestment, closed the rent gap, and enabled landlords and developers to generate substantial profits from land and housing (Hammel, 1999; Porter, 2010). Similar trends are evident in regions outside the United States, including Denmark, Lebanon, and New Zealand (Krijnen, 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Risager, 2022). In Latin America, studies have examined the region's unique urban processes, highlighting the state's role through pricing policies, urban renewal programs, and strategies to reclassify neighborhoods (Hidalgo & Janoschka, 2014; Janoschka, 2016; López-Morales et al., 2021). As late capitalism enters a more advanced phase of financialization, the surplus capital generated globally increasingly shapes urban spaces (Harvey, 2013). Recent discussions on Rent Gap Theory have focused on investment funds (Birchall, 2019; Christophers, 2022; Janoschka et al., 2020) and short-term rental platforms (Amore et al., 2020; Bosma & van Doorn, 2022), leading to new concepts like the "commodification gap" (Bernt, 2022).

As barriers to capitalist investment erode and global rent gaps equalize, the phenomenon has expanded planetary-wide, prompting reflections on the "planetary rent gap"—a convergence of planetary urbanization and rent gap theory (Slater, 2017). Global gentrification processes have sparked indignation and grassroots organizing among affected communities, making them critical sites of struggle against rent gap closures (Wyly 2023). Thus, class struggle in cities is inherent to these processes of dispossession. The Rent Gap Theory provides insights into the structural violence inherent in urban reforms driven by capital accumulation (Slater, 2017). Today, the housing struggle unfolds increasingly in capital realization rather than production, with resistance movements defending everyday life, especially in the Global South (Caldeira, 2017; Harvey, 2014; Zibechi, 2012). These battles against capital realization focus on protecting the commons, particularly in the areas of housing and land, key arenas where commodification conflicts arise, and resisting enclosure and privatization (Dardot & Laval, 2019; Hardt & Negri, 2011). In Latin America, indigenous and urban-popular movements have been central in defending the commons, utilizing territory as a vital political concept to build autonomous institutions that protect collective rights (Galafassi, 2018; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009b; Sevilla-Buitrago, 2015). The significance of territory in these struggles will be examined in the next section. To date, discussions of Rent Gap Theory have mainly overlooked the Amazonian context. This thesis aims to address this oversight by

applying and expanding frameworks to enhance our understanding of urbanization dynamics in the Amazon.

2.1.4. Latin American critical geographies and the centrality of the territory in Indigenous and urban-popular struggles

Milton Santos highlights that Latin American critical geographies arise from a Marxist perspective unique to the region. Although they align with other traditions, their ideas have evolved in tandem with Latin American historical and political contexts. In the 1960s and 1970s, Marxist critiques in Europe and the United States examined the role of geography in imperialism and capitalism, promoting critical and radical geographies (Lacoste, 1977; Peet, 1969; Stea, 1969). Consequently, Brazilian critical geography emerged, reflecting on geography's regional role and engaging with Latin American Marxisms (Moreira, 2018; Santos, 2021). Key topics included the connection between modern geography and imperialism during Brazil's dictatorship, as well as the impact of capitalist globalization on Latin America (Santos, 2021). The concept of space production, as outlined by Lefebvre, became a central focus. The growth of Latin American critical geography is linked to a broader epistemic and political revolution in regional social sciences, with sociology and pedagogy serving as foundational pillars that support transdisciplinary approaches aligned with revolutionary movements (Erreguerena et al., 2020; Fals Borda, 2009; Freire & Macedo, 2014). In the Anglophone world, similar developments occurred, such as urban geographical studies in Detroit during the civil rights movement and African American communities (Benach, 2017; Bunge, 1974; Bunge et al., 2011).

The rise of political groups resisting expropriation and colonization, along with demands for social revolution and agrarian reform, led to movements such as those of rubber tappers in Brazil and indigenous mobilizations in Ecuador, Bolivia, and Mexico during the 1980s. These sparked indigenous uprisings across the continent in the 1990s, particularly notable in 1992, marking 500 years since the arrival of colonization (Porto-Gonçalves, 2009b). This period saw a shift from "space" to "territory," as embraced by territorial movements. International bodies, such as the International Labour Organization and the United Nations, have recognized indigenous and collective territorial rights, as reflected in the national

constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, within the framework of plurinationality (Schavelzon, 2018; Toledo, 2005). Consequently, indigenous and peasant movements sought to foster new dialogues and translations with critical geographies. A notable exchange between Brazilian geographer Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves and indigenous leader Luis Macas in the 1990s emphasized the importance of indigenous struggles for plurinationality and pluriterritoriality, underscoring that "our struggle is political and epistemic" (Macas, 2005; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009b).

Critical geographies revisited territory by examining classical state theory, questioning the modern state's singular authority. Modern European states have monopolized biopolitical control over a defined population within territorial spaces (Foucault, 2007, 2014). The shift from the spatial powers of medieval times—church, nobility, monarchies—to modern states established the basis for classical state theory. A territorial power emerges at state borders, configuring exclusive areas (Jellinek, 2000; Sassen, 2006). Modern territorial states, such as England, Sweden, France, and Spain, began to emerge. Here, self-determination serves to defend territorial integrity and autonomy against other states, as claimed by newly independent states resulting from the fragmentation of empires, such as the Austro-Hungarian and Prussian, and following anti-colonial wars in the Americas, Asia, and Africa (Porto-Gonçalves, 2002).

Colonial states were the first territorial states, linked to modernization, capitalist development, and colonial conquest. Brazilian critical geographies view these states as part of a homogenizing project involving internal and external colonization, thus labeling them modern-colonial territorial states (Porto-Gonçalves, 2009a). Space plays a crucial role in this homogenization, as it denies alternative understandings of space that diverge from the modern state's methods of territorial control during colonization. These dynamics persist in Latin America's independence processes, resulting in the emergence of new forms of internal colonization (González Casanova, 2009). Indigenous and peasant uprisings consistently aim to reverse this history through concepts like territory, territorial rights, pluriterritoriality, and plurinationality (Bonilla et al., 2016; Silveira, 2019).

In Ecuador, the Indigenous Movement has been the primary social force challenging neoliberalism since the 1980s, notably through uprisings in 1990, 1997, 2000, 2019, and 2022

(Da Silva Araujo & Reis Da Silva, 2022; Iza et al., 2021; Jameson, 2011). The cumulative effect of these struggles, along with the recognition of indigenous rights in international agreements like ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, culminated in Ecuador's 1998 and 2008 constitutions, which formally recognized interculturality and plurinationality (Ortiz-T. et al., 2016; Pacari et al., 2021). While these constitutional recognitions have not dismantled the modern-colonial state structure, and critiques highlight the instrumentalization of plurinationality, Ecuador and Bolivia still offer significant opportunities for community processes that challenge colonial-capitalist logics (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018; Silveira et al., 2017). Moreover, the institutionalization of plurinationality and the involvement of Indigenous and peasant movements within the state apparatus demonstrate a considerable ability to limit the logic of colonial capitalism, fostering community-based contestation processes (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022b; Walsh, 2008).

Not aligned with culturalist perspective, Latin American critical geographies reinterpret territorial struggles by critiquing classical state theory, focusing on colonial and republican histories, and engaging with Lefebvrian Marxist theories of space. If space represents power, it is essential to look beyond the modern state's claims and reveal how contestations emerge from subjects that existed before its colonization. Building on Lefebvre's notion of appropriation, critical geographers underscore territory as a space actively formed by social subjects, articulated in the triad "territory-territoriality-territorialization" (Haesbaert, 2005): territorialization denotes political action over space, and territoriality signifies the meanings assigned to spatial practices (Haesbaert, 2004; Porto-Gonçalves, 2002). This theoretical development exhibits notable convergences with the Anglo-Saxon Marxist geography discussed earlier (Machado Aráoz, 2018; Moreano, 2019), and this dissertation seeks to deepen those connections specifically within the Amazonian context.

Critical geographies have consistently supported plurinational and pluriterritorial processes from the 1970s to the present (Barragán-León, 2019; Neves & Fialho, 2019). In recent decades, collectives of critical geography have emerged across Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Mexico, forging activist bridges between academia and social movements (Colectivo de Geografía Crítica del Ecuador, 2019; Zaragocin et al., 2018).

New themes, including ecological, feminist, and migratory struggles, have gained prominence; however, the defense of collective territories remains a transversal concern, addressed through anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial, and anti-racist perspectives (Bayón & Zaragocin, 2019; GeoBrujas et al., 2023; Ruiz Muriel & Álvarez Velasco, 2019). This resurgence has fostered multigenerational dialogues and proposals that reimagine critical geography's contributions to territorial struggles (Haesbaert, 2020; León Hernández, 2016). This first block underscores the significance of dialogues among indigenous subjects, material and symbolic spatial disputes, Latin American critical geographies, Marxist perspectives across the Atlantic, and the conceptual resignifications embedded in the idea of territory. Simultaneously, to deepen our understanding of the broader implications of territorial struggles, the next part will examine decolonial and anti-racist perspectives, providing key insights into indigenous contestations of Amazonian urbanization.

2.2. Contributions of Antiracist and Decolonial Perspectives in Geography: Essential Tools for Addressing Urbanization on the Amazon.

2.2.1. Racial capitalism and Marxist black geographies as a starting point.

This thesis weaves together perspectives on racial and class oppression. It explores how space is contested in the Amazon by inhabitants and resistors, as well as their critiques of dominant territorial systems. Black geographies offer an approach that shifts the focus from decolonial and Marxist debates to racial capitalism, emphasizing social processes over the appropriation of academic knowledge (Noxolo, 2022). Black Marxism reveals that capitalism's phases are intrinsically connected to the development of a racial structure supporting labor exploitation, with slavery epitomizing capitalist accumulation (C. J. Robinson, 2000). The religious ethnocentrism of medieval Christian Europe shaped capitalism, a view that European Marxism carried into its critique of capital while ignoring racism (C. J. Robinson, 2000). Anticolonial Marxist thought played a vital role in shaping critiques within independence movements in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, as expressed through psychoanalysis reworked from colonial and racial experiences in the Caribbean (Fanon, 1974, 2008). This intellectual lineage influences Black geographies, emphasizing the embodied experiences of the Black diaspora and spatiality produced under colonialism (Hawthorne, 2019). It also addresses displacement and mobility across several spatial scales: from the colonial city to national geographies under colonial administration to imperial geopolitics (Conroy, 2023). These reflections are essential for a thesis on Indigenous struggles over urbanization in the Amazon, given how the region's spatial organization has been profoundly altered by racial capitalism.

Black geographies challenge the ghettoization from traditional non-antiracist geographies by showing how spaces shaped by slavery, forced displacement, and labor exploitation are integral to capitalism (McKittrick, 2006). The plantation model in the Americas and its resulting transnational geographies exemplify this (McKittrick, 2011). This model influenced spatial innovations in European cities, transforming London's West India Docks, where racial segregation and capitalist accumulation mirrored the plantation system (Legg, 2023). This framework is now being applied to contemporary global megacities, where racialized violence, displacement, and capitalist accumulation persist, reinforcing that racism is a permanent aspect of capital accumulation (Danewid, 2020). Thus, considering racism in the

production of urban space is a central contribution of Black geographies. This is examined through carceral geographies (Hawthorne, 2019; McKittrick, 2011), racial dynamics of displacement and gentrification (D. L. Baldwin & Crane, 2020; Heitz, 2022), and the critique of white privilege in elite urban spaces (Pulido, 2000), where environmental racism significantly shapes spatial organization (Pulido, 2017)[8]. The environmental racism evident in spatial organization also reveals the racialized production of nature under capitalist ecology, highlighting the devaluation of Afro and Indigenous knowledge systems for inhabiting the planet (Gill, 2023).

In response to these layered forms of violence, Black geographies highlight how racialized bodies create spaces of life and resistance (Hawthorne, 2019; Pulido, 2017). They express a Black sense of space, offering a multitemporal approach to resistance (McKittrick, 2011). Marronage, or escaping and founding free territories (García, 1989; Roberts, 2015), serves as a geographical emblem (Bledsoe, 2017) and has informed urban survival strategies in the face of oil contamination (Valdivia, 2021). The historicization of African American organizations and their thinkers has become a political struggle in universities (A. Y. Davis, 1983; Hawthorne & Heitz, 2018; C. J. Robinson, 2000). Recent research has explored Afro-spatial utopias, including the Back to Africa movement's vision for a Black nation-state, the Black Panthers' autonomous urban territories, and the Republic of New Afrika, which is rooted in African socialism (Bledsoe & Wright, 2019). Studies also reveal how family land ownership in the Caribbean preserved peasant spaces after the abolition of slave plantations (Franzen & Bascomb, 2022). Notably, Black women's agency is significant in contemporary struggles against spatial racism (McKittrick, 2006), shaping urban sensibilities that inspire political movements (Meché, 2020), acknowledging rural Black queer spaces (Eaves, 2017), and leading efforts against police violence through Black women's leadership (Elliott-Cooper, 2019). Beginning with racial capitalism and Black geographies provides a collective

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[8] This initial reference to white privilege includes a footnote that clarifies the term "whiteness". It describes racist structures, first critiqued in North American antiracist scholarship (Pulido, 2000). Latin America adopted it linguistically as "blanquitud" and adapted it regionally. Black geographies transformed it into the verb "whitening," describing a racialized spatial process favoring dominant white groups (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000), corresponding to "blanqueamiento" in Spanish (Zaragocin et al., 2024).

perspective to reframe the decolonization of geography and urban studies, emphasizing the essential intersections between labor exploitation and racism.

2.2.2. The need to think of the Amazon as a locus of enunciation: decolonial contributions.

In the context of racial capitalism, Latin America's role requires a distinct analytical approach due to its class structures and colonial histories. Decolonial theories have emerged as a subaltern Latin American paradigm in postcolonial thought (Zapata, 2018). The genocides by the Spanish and Portuguese empires, along with their systems of slavery and dispossession, created unique spatial configurations. In the context of modern state narratives, which in the 19th century framed mestizaje as a tool of internal colonization and dispossession, indigenous and Afro-descendant territorial practices have persisted in resistance (Little, 2002). Recognizing the interconnected histories of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples is essential to prevent the fragmentation of anticolonial and antiracist struggles (Curley et al., 2022). The Modernity–Coloniality–Decoloniality (MCD) framework has become a key reference, challenging the coloniality of knowledge and the practices that sustain it (Lander, 2005; Quijano, 2000). The decolonial turn has resonated globally, producing conservative, liberal, and anti-Marxist interpretations (Bautista Segales, 2022; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), as well as radical, anti-capitalist projects that bridge critical theory (Hart, 2018; Lander, 2005). Additionally, orthodox Marxist critiques of decolonial approaches have also emerged (Swyngedouw & Ernstson, 2018; Wilson, 2022).

As noted in the thesis's introduction, contemporary anti-colonial struggles in Amazonian territories often feel distant. However, lived experiences require more open, dialogical approaches, a trend that has gained momentum recently (Horn, 2018b; Locatelli Santos, 2022; Wyly, 2020). The historical contributions of Andean Marxism from Peru and Bolivia are crucial for understanding the simultaneous struggles against capitalism and colonialism by Indigenous subjects (Aguiar, 2018; Alimonda, 2015; Ávila-Rojas, 2021). Latin America's emerging decolonial geographies have embraced a dialogical rather than defensive stance, with recent scholarship highlighting the whitening of space and academia's role in Indigenous struggles (Carmo Cruz & Araújo de Oliveira, 2017; Zaragocín & Bayón Jiménez, 2023). Indigenous intellectual traditions and territorial proposals rooted in their cosmovisions offer

new perspectives on spatiality, which the next section will explore further (Canales Tapia, 2014; Cusicanqui, 2012; Zapata et al., 2007).

This thought aligns with decolonial knowledge from urban studies globally. In Anglo-American academia, decolonial geographies interact with Modernity–Coloniality–Decoloniality theory (Asher, 2013; Radcliffe, 2017). The presence of Latin American women scholars in U.S. universities has boosted a decolonial geography rooted in Chicano thought, shaping Latinx geographies alongside Black geographies (Ramírez, 2020a; Zaragocin, 2023). A hemispheric perspective is emerging, utilizing frameworks like América Latina and Abya Yala to create anti-racist alliances among Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and migrant communities (Dos Santos, 2017; Viveros Vigoya, 2020; Zaragocin, 2024). The targeting of Indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders, seen in the murders of Berta Cáceres and Marielle Franco, highlights these intersections (Mollett, 2021). This growing body of thought connects Black geographies with decolonial geographies, emphasizing approaches that challenge the divide between Indigenous decolonization and Afro-descendant abolition. It holds that enslaved African populations in the Americas also lost their original lands, emphasizing convergences (Curley et al., 2022; Pulido, 2018). Combating the whitening of space has become a unifying goal, with critical geography playing a key role (A. Baldwin & Erickson, 2020; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). While these discussions require further development regarding Amazonian urbanization, they provide vital frameworks for fostering a plurinational Ecuador based on alternative narratives and revealing spatial processes of whitening. This thesis aims to connect these hemispheric proposals to the Amazonian context, focusing on Settler Colonialism Theory, particularly relevant for understanding urban Amazonia.

Considering urbanization beyond cities, it is essential to acknowledge that road networks and extractive enclaves reflect colonial domination. Decolonial and anti-racist critiques of infrastructure projects in Brazil illustrate how urbanization unfolds across multiple scales (Davies, 2021). Research on colonial railroads in Africa demonstrates how imperial racial projects were spatially organized (Cowen, 2020; Kimari & Ernstson, 2020). Today, global infrastructure development perpetuates internal colonialism by viewing racialized populations as threats to capitalist infrastructure (Crosby, 2021; Enns & Bersaglio, 2020;

Féliz & Melón, 2020). In Latin America, research into environmental racism linked to extractive infrastructures is growing, especially in Brazil (Rougeon et al., 2023), alongside studies on Afro-Ecuadorian resistance (Valdivia, 2021) and Indigenous hydro-territories in Paraguay's Chaco (Correia, 2022).

Scholars in Asian urban studies argue that their megacities should not be viewed as "specificities" diverging from a singular Western global city trajectory but as alternative urban modernities grounded in varied historical experiences (Roy, 2016a). Postcolonial urban studies in Asia offer a comparative and relational perspective on urban processes across different latitudes, challenging singular notions of urbanity (Roy & Ong, 2011). The manifesto for provincializing global urbanism engages with Spivak and Chakrabarty, marking a turning point in critiquing the evolutionary mandates of global cities. It promotes a "worlding" of subaltern urbanism, enabling a deeper understanding of the Global South's histories beyond Northern theoretical frameworks (Sheppard et al., 2013). The manifesto advocates reclaiming urbanization histories by challenging paradigms shaped by European and U.S. provinces ("geohistory 1" in Spivak's terms) and recovering the lived experiences of social majorities in cities worldwide ("geohistory 2"). This aligns with the urgent need to dismantle territorial stigmas (Wacquant, 2007) affecting working-class neighborhoods globally (Krijnen, 2018), notably in Latin America (Lopes de Souza, 2016).

The critique of planetary urbanization aligns with this spirit, as captured in a special issue of Environment and Planning D, and can be summarized in three points. First, it challenges the ambition of planetary urbanization to configure a totality, overlooking diverse spaces and responses from cities in the Global South, while neglecting the experiences of different bodies in urban processes (McLean, 2018). Second, it stresses the need to deconstruct urbanization and city concepts, highlighting the importance of urban struggles and their leaders, to ensure that extended urbanization does not overshadow other dynamics (Khatam & Haas, 2018; Reddy, 2018). Third, it highlights the absence of an "ontology of everyday life" and the silencing of subjects and diverse subjectivities as a major limitation of the planetary urbanization framework (Ruddick et al., 2018). These debates have not yet reached the Amazonian context, and this thesis seeks to foster that dialogue, provincializing global knowledge and analyzing urbanization through the lens of subaltern Amazonian urbanity.

2.2.3. Ontological Turn: The richness of ancestral knowledge for urban contestation

To support decolonization and provincialization of urban studies, the ontological turn offers tools to understand the worldviews of Amazonian peoples. These perspectives, rooted in indigenous knowledge, rely on alternative ontologies to grasp the cosmos, nature-society relations, and territorial struggles (Escobar, 2015; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018; Tzul Tzul, 2018). Amerindian perspectivism, which theorizes diverse worlds and holistic indigenous visions, originated in the Amazon (Descola, 2004; Viveiros de Castro, 1998). When indigenous actors shape the city, they alter urbanization processes, challenging the notion of a singular modernity through ancient spatial perspectives that transcend the Western-liberal binary of society and nature (Blaser, 2010; De la Cadena, 2010; Ingold, 2021). This starting point acknowledges that urban spaces are sites of "ontological multiplicity" and require a different body of knowledge to be fully understood (Roy, 2016a). Despite having long histories, indigenous urbanization processes in the Amazon have faced successive waves of colonization, resulting in the whitening of urban spaces. Recently, political contestations have emerged, with indigenous actors asserting their claims over urbanization processes(Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Bayón Jiménez, 2021; M. Chaves & Nova, 2018). These urbanization projects are embedded in Amazonian lifeways that constitute alternative modernities, or ways of interpreting modernity through the lens of alterity (Erazo, 2013; Whitten, 2008).

Resistance to spatial whitening emerges from this perspective, influenced by the ontological turn across latitudes. The struggle to re-signify central urban spaces is crucial. In Quebec's Cabot Square, indigenous leaders claim the right to occupy public spaces—ancient ancestral territories that are now financial centers (Léonard et al., 2023; Marceau et al., 2023). Protest is also significant, whether through indigenous demonstrations for state recognition (Dorries et al., 2019; Hanna et al., 2016) or broader mobilizations against police violence, as seen after George Floyd's murder, resonating in the UK and beyond (Elliott-Cooper, 2019; Samayeen et al., 2022). Artistic interventions in urban spaces serve as vital sites of memory and symbolism, advancing land back claims by envisioning indigenous geographies for the future

(Barnd, 2023; Schultz, 2018). Similarly, self-representation in gentrifying racialized neighborhoods resists the folklorization and monetization of cultural identities (Heitz, 2022).

A second aspect of this struggle is the long temporalities of everyday life, where minor acts gain significance, especially in working-class and peri-urban areas (Bartels et al., 2020; Lafazani, 2021). Real estate booms, mega-urban projects needing vast land acquisitions, and park privatization for bourgeois enjoyment contrast with collective land defense and urban initiatives (Cahen et al., 2019; Van Lier, 2023). These struggles demand "cities back" as an extension of indigenous land back movements, seeking land, restored jurisdiction, and the normalization of indigenous practices and infrastructure of care in urban spaces, disrupting colonial urbanism (Tomiak, 2023). The concept of "house back" emerges as Black and Indigenous families occupy private properties to collectively reclaim urban spaces while addressing childcare and housing needs through non-white spatial logics rooted in land restoration (Ramírez, 2020b). This analysis examines how neighborhoods inhabited by these groups develop through infrastructure improvements (Silver, 2014) and how indigenous collective labor, festivals, and spatial planning promote urban ethnogenesis and "ethno-affirmation" (Mantel, 2017; Melucci & Massolo, 1991). Cosmological knowledge essential for social reproduction is evident in daily practices: for the Kichwa people, clay collection for pottery linked to dreams, female-led agricultural rituals, sacred fishing tied to ancestral waters, and the ceremonial use of plants like "witug" for hair dye reinforce cosmogonic ties to space (Galli, 2012; Tanguila Andy, 2018; Whitten & Whitten, 2008).

The Black Panthers' autonomy exemplifies the self-management of territory in the Black movement in the United States through their security forces (Bledsoe & Wright, 2019), which creates a dialogue with Indigenous spaces that also maintain community guards and participate in urban mobilizations (P. Chaves et al., 2020). Indigenous planning of urban and peri-urban spaces has emerged as a method of contesting urban colonization. Among the Mapuche in Chile, this involves insurgent planning that enables Indigenous re-territorializations in Santiago (Alvarado Lincopi, 2021; M. Ugarte et al., 2021). Similar practices also occur in Brazil, where quilombola favelas and Indigenous villages engage in collective insurgent land ownership (Poets, 2021). This struggle extends beyond land access; it is also related to the cosmovisions and historical memories of Indigenous peoples and their

experiences of colonization. In these cases, the battle is not merely over physical access to land or securing space within urban logics. Instead, it connects with Indigenous worldviews and the long memory of colonization: for First Nations peoples in Canada, cultivating urban land becomes a way to re-harmonize colonial violence through their own philosophical frameworks (Hatala et al., 2019). In Mexico, the fight for street vending rights against gentrification connects to ancestral tianguis practices and their social and spatial networks (Denham, 2023). Additionally, in the post-slavery era, Black collectives established family-owned properties to reclaim space from white private property dominance (Franzen & Bascomb, 2022).

These autonomous spaces challenge the state's monopoly on rights, creating urban territories that resist financialization and gentrification (Cahen et al., 2019). They exploit capitalists' reluctance to invest in Indigenous regions, viewed as ungovernable, leading to "value valleys" (Liu et al., 2018). This challenge prompts a reevaluation of urban areas within ethnic and racial hierarchies, exemplified by El Alto's role in defending Bolivia's plurinational state (Ravindran, 2019) and the contestation of modernity by groups like the Osage Nation in the U.S. (Dennison, 2017). This subsection illustrates how the formation of autonomous urban spaces through racialized struggles interacts with alternative knowledge systems to counter capital and colonial laws, guiding specific empirical research in this dissertation.

2.2.4. The Mobility Turn in Critical Geographies: Unfixing multilocality and multiscalarity in urban ontological disputes.

In the urban peripheries of Latin America, the global reconfiguration of the working class evolves through financialization cycles affecting urban and agricultural land rent, fueling rural-to-urban migration (Schiavo et al., 2013; Walker, 2008). This has been a key focus in Latin American critical geographies for studying urbanization processes. The informality and poverty of newly formed neighborhoods highlight a setback for the popular classes (Pradilla Cobos, 2002; Sassen, 2014). This reality is prevalent and violent, but it is a mistake to view populations in popular neighborhoods as limited to migrations driven solely by gentrification or ancestral land displacement (Albet & Benach, 2017). It is crucial to see rural-to-urban migration as a contestation and co-constitution of subjects who struggle and create space

through their movements (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). This section aims to unsettle the dynamics of urban and Indigenous constitution by placing them in motion.

The "mobility turn" in Anglo-American radical geographies has generated many theoretical contributions since the early twenty-first century (Sheller & Urry, 2016; Urry, 2007). This approach asserts that movement is not just an experience "through" space but a historically situated, relational practice that "produces and transforms" space (Adey, 2006; Cresswell & Merriman, 2011). This spatial production relies on Lefebvrian theory, particularly the concept of "rhythm" in capitalist systems, which regulates the movement of bodies and objects, sustaining the production and reproduction of contemporary social life (Cresswell, 2006). From this view, practices of immobility are crucial to a "constellation of power, identity-making, and micro-geographies of everyday life" historically and geographically (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011). Moreover, it reveals hierarchies of who can move and how, exposing the dialectical relationship between mobility and immobility as embodied, differentiated, and racialized social experiences at the core of spatial production (Adey, 2006; Sheller, 2018). This lens targets the tensions surrounding migration flows from the Amazonian countryside into cities. In Latin America, such perspectives remain incipient (Zunino Singh, 2023), mainly articulated through "autonomy of migration," framing mobilities toward the North as Latin American social movements that produce and dispute territorialities (Casas-Cortés & Cobarrubias, 2020; Cordero Díaz et al., 2019; De Genova, 2017; Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013; Varela Huerta, 2013).

Another significant debate surrounding the "mobility turn" centers on the growing concept of "multilocality". It explains how, in Indigenous and campesino migrations, urban economic activities often merge with periods of rural agricultural work, forming a multi-sited livelihood strategy (Campos et al., 2023; Cielo & Antequera Durán, 2011; Horn et al., 2024). Similar dynamics appear in the spatial configurations of Polynesian peoples across the Pacific, where visits to relatives in coastal cities represent urban contestation (Raymond, 2023). This highlights Indigenous subjects in their spatial transitions, framing migrations to urban areas as proactive acts of spatial production rather than dispossession from rural spaces (Bayón Jiménez et al., 2021; J. Davis et al., 2017). In the Amazon, migrations occur along a continuum between rainforest communities and cities, driven by community-driven

strategies that meet different needs and sustain vital connections essential for the communities' reproduction (Galli, 2012; Peluso, 2015).

The naturalization of rural and forest spaces as Indigenous and urban areas as white-mestizo highlights colonial spatial planning features inherited by independent republics (Carrión & Erazo Espinosa, 2012; Martínez, 2004). Notably, Afro and Indigenous existences are deemed "out of place" by the whitening logic of urban space, despite existing on their ancestral territories (McClintock & Guimont Marceau, 2023). Dominant settler narratives about Indigenous self-governance emerge as stigmatizing discourses that discredit territorializations challenging whitening logic, whether by denigrating Afro and Indigenous autonomy (Everson, 2023) or framing these initiatives as incapable of self-rule (Gergan & Curley, 2023; Zaimi, 2020). These dynamics manifest violently through constructs like the "black popular demon" (Meché, 2020), the racial division of cities via "ethnic geopolicies" (Çankaya, 2020), or white neighborhood protests against growing Indigenous presence (Ravindran, 2019). Additionally, it is essential to consider the agency of political subjects who have reterritorialized themselves in everyday spaces, creating new forms of resistance through migration and multilocality. A substantial body of literature discusses the constitution of Indigenous rural territories in the Amazon, demonstrating that they are multiterritorialized through interactions with various agents, including the state, church, NGOs, and Indigenous peoples from other countries (Cielo & Coba, 2018; Lyall, 2020). The analysis of migration and mobility as active processes seeks to subvert the order of what is deemed "out of place" becoming a vital contribution to this thesis for understanding how Indigenous subjects contest and produce Amazonian urban spaces through movement.

2.2.5. Debates around Settler Colonialism Theory as a point of convergence between whitening processes and private property.

Settler Colonialism Theory (SCT) emerged at the century's start, providing a structural view on territorial dispossession, where the physical and cultural eradication of Indigenous peoples stems from colonial state policies. Initially based in settler states like the United States, Canada, and Australia (Morgensen, 2011; Wolfe, 2006), its early advocates connected with decolonial and postcolonial trends in Anglo-American academia, addressing genocide

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studies of Indigenous populations. The spatial aspect links SCT with decolonial geographies through concepts like geographies of elimination (Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021; Zaragocin, 2019). Debates on SCT have created a theoretical intersection of property issues, merging Marxist, decolonial, and antiracist studies—an opportunity for hybridizing critical approaches. From a Marxist viewpoint, critiques reveal an overemphasis on elimination, often missing the concurrent labor exploitation in settler colonial processes. Scholars have analyzed labor exploitation in notable contexts like Palestine (Englert, 2020), South Africa (Kelley, 2017), and Brazil (Poets, 2021). This Marxist perspective on SCT reveals that primitive accumulation, original accumulation, and accumulation by dispossession are crucial for understanding the role of settler colonialism in capital formation. It also assesses contributions from authors like Harvey (Englert, 2020). Meanwhile, political economic studies have clarified how private property operates within racialized capitalism (Blomley, 2020). While more intersections could be examined—such as Marxist feminist, antiracist, and postcolonial critiques—these go beyond this thesis's scope (Mezzadri, 2021; Zaragocin, 2019).

In Latin America, the connection between SCT and dominant antiracist and territorial debates has been limited, complicated by tensions around analytical frameworks (Speed, 2017; L. Taylor & Lublin, 2021). The mestizaje narrative has served as a form of territorial colonization and whitening. Calls have emerged to historicize settler colonialism, avoiding its treatment as an ahistorical category; it must be contextualized spatially and temporally (Krautwurst, 2003). Recent work from Ecuador and Chile has begun linking Indigenous territories to SCT by analyzing concepts such as terra nullius, revealing the false notion that Indigenous lands were considered "empty" and available for ownership during capitalist expansion (M. Ugarte et al., 2021; Zaragocin, 2019). The invocation of terra nullius legitimizes settler colonial practices that erase impoverished and racialized peoples from the land, often denying Indigenous private property that conflicts with colonial frameworks (Milner, 2020). This thesis will focus on intersections relevant to urban studies, enhancing its theoretical contributions. The broader literature reflects this in studies of white ecological planning in North American cities, positioning polluting industries near Indigenous and African American neighborhoods (McCreary & Milligan, 2021) and examining peri-urban reforms in Canada involving Indigenous land expropriations (Scherer et al., 2023). In Latin

America, studies explore urban forms where Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian actors unite in antiracist struggles to reclaim spaces against the settler logic of terra nullius (Poets, 2021) and contest urban planning practices within this framework (M. Ugarte et al., 2019).

The analysis of gentrification through SCT highlights colonialism, racism, and capitalist privatization. In the U.S., research shows how whitening processes lead to the displacement of neighborhoods historically segregated by class and race, fueled by speculative financial capital. In Brazil, analyses of gentrification reveal how Latin America's republics used "hygienization" policies—urban planning strategies aimed at eliminating the "infected"—that systematically displaced Afro-descendant and poor populations from city centers, a narrative that persists today (Garmany & Richmond, 2020). In these perspectives, class and race/ethnicity intertwine in gentrification, where private property mechanisms become the epicenter of settler colonialism—the "totem of the white picket fence" (Blomley, 2020). Private property acts as a whitening agent for urban subjectivities, regulating racialized neighborhoods (Meché, 2020; Zaimi, 2020), forcing marginalized groups to conform to white urban ideals (Legg, 2023), and obstructing collectivist urban projects (Cahen et al., 2019). Gentrification thus serves as a tool of settler colonialism, as anti-gentrification movements that ignore critiques of private property ultimately reproduce racialized spatial dispossession (Ellis-Young, 2022; Kent-Stoll, 2020). Capitalist gentrification contests the racial foundations of the colonial city. Strategies to assert place in the city include leveraging the legal framework of settler private property to protect racialized communities (Blomley, 2020). The true potential lies in connecting diverse experiences that challenge private property logic as resistance to settler colonialism, questioning racialized relationships in the institution of private property (Bhandar, 2018; Blomley, 2020). This subsection emphasizes bringing Marxist theories into dialogue with SCT studies, which illuminate colonialism and racism in dispossession. Complementing them with political economy insights reveals the interplay of class and race in urban struggle, which this thesis aims to address.

2.3. Conceptualizations emerging from the theoretical dialogue.

From this succession of interrelations among perspectives on capitalist urbanization, racial capitalism, and postcolonial and decolonial approaches in Latin America, the Caribbean, and

other regions, as well as through an exercise aimed at complementing frameworks and expanding critical urban theory with multi-situated and multiscalar contributions, several theoretical spaces emerge where a doctoral thesis on Indigenous struggles over Amazonian urbanization can make a significant contribution.

The first part emphasizes Marxist proposals, aiming to "latinamericanize" and decolonize them from the Amazon. We must see the world from peripheral perspectives, recognizing theories from the Amazon as globally relevant, using extended urbanization as a case (1.1). Next, we should understand Marxism in Latin America by studying peripheral capitalism and examining colonialism through imperialism and rentierism, particularly its ecological aspect via dependency theory (1.2). We need to contextualize Marxist discussions on gentrification in the Amazon to broaden their propositions (1.3). Lastly, we must examine the concept of territory where Latin American Marxism intersects with Indigenous political-epistemological proposals to connect with Marxist geographies (1.4).

The second part critiques decolonial proposals by rooting them in racial capitalism and examining private property within settler colonialism theory while enhancing them through relational ontologies and spatial autonomy concepts. Essentially, it aims for a Marxist reinterpretation of these proposals. It shows how Black Geographies establish a space between Black Marxisms, colonialism, and racism as key elements of capitalism (2.1). It also discusses the decolonization of planetary urbanization and resistance to spatial (urban) whitening (2.2). Additionally, it acknowledges that ancestral knowledge provides spatial visions and practices to resist capital and explore new urban inhabitation (2.3). Furthermore, it stresses the need to break from spatial fixity via the mobility turn, opposing capitalism and supporting the multilocalities of collective subjects (2.4). Finally, it evaluates how Marxist and decolonial insights on property can enhance understanding within settler colonialism theory (2.5).

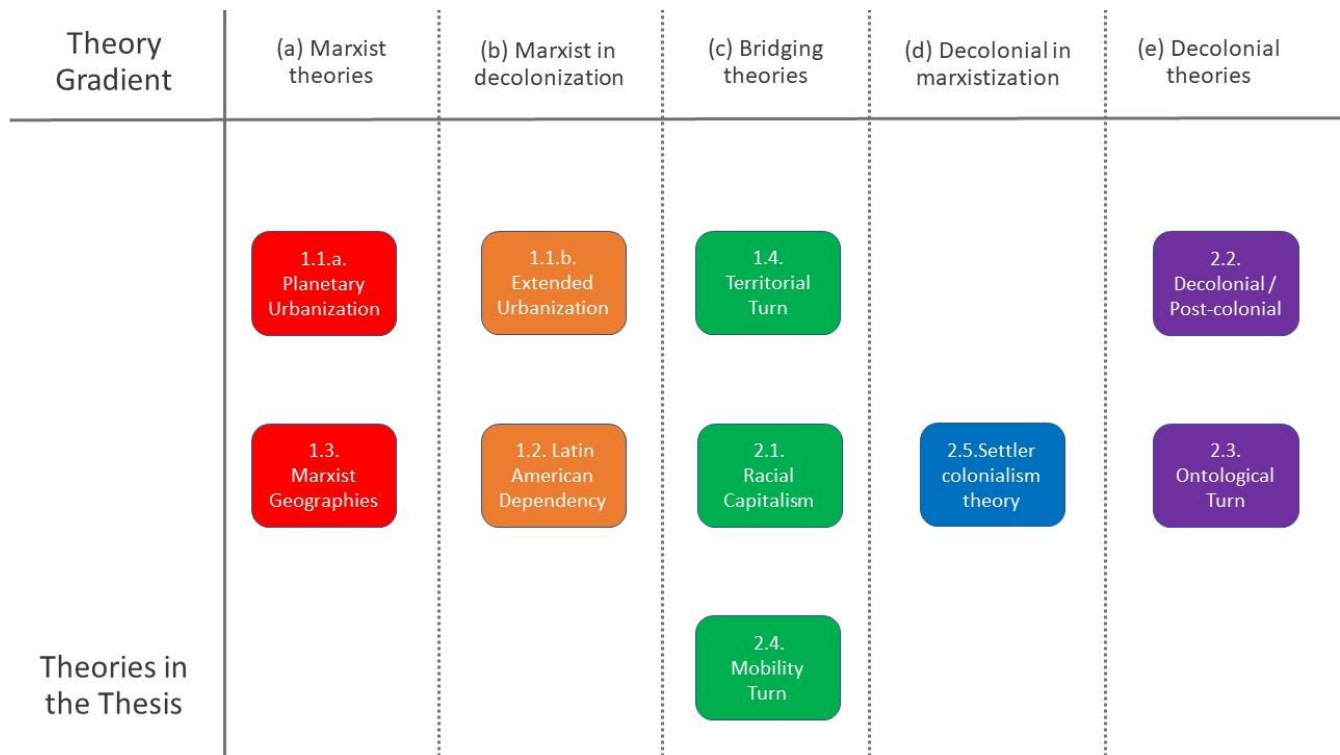| Theory Gradient	(a) Marxist theories	(b) Marxist in decolonization	(c) Bridging theories	(d) Decolonial in marxistization	(e) Decolonial theories
	1.1.a. Planetary Urbanization	1.1.b. Extended Urbanization	1.4. Territorial Turn		2.2. Decolonial / Post-colonial
	1.3. Marxist Geographies	1.2. Latin American Dependency	2.1. Racial Capitalism	2.5.Settler colonialism theory	2.3. Ontological Turn
Theories in the Thesis			2.4. Mobility Turn		

Figure 2.1. Theories related to the thesis within a Theory Gradient between Marxist and Decolonial theories.

Figure 2.1 illustrates how various theories emerged from Marxist orthodox or decolonial thought and how movements serve as bridges for dialogue. For example, planetary urbanization and Anglo-Saxon Marxist geographies from the Global North form a theoretical framework that challenges internal disputes yet largely rejects poststructuralist theories. In contrast, decolonial perspectives and the ontological turn, shaped by exchanges between Latin America and the Global North, usually lack strong ties to Marxist traditions. Aspects of Marxist theory, particularly in Latin America, have encouraged dialogues on anticolonial and decolonial perspectives, shaped by territorial struggles. Similarly, SCT has evolved from poststructuralist studies into a field where Marxist ideas thrive. Connections beyond Marxism and decolonialism emerge, highlighting theoretical currents that act as bridges and multiplicity points. The territorial turn by decolonial Marxists in Latin America, the antiracist Marxist efforts of Afro-American movements, and the mobility turn by migrant movements are essential to this thesis. This is not a comprehensive exercise, as it omits many theories and possibilities within critical theory. Instead, it exemplifies and experiments with

theoretical interactions, suggesting a "bastardization"[9] of critical theories. The goal is for theoretical nuclei to leave their epistemic comfort zones and embrace the complexities of spatial, decolonial, communitarian, and communist struggles worldwide—struggles that urgently require academia to be committed to their diverse spatial and temporal contexts.

This corollary illustrates theoretical intersections among these nine arguments by analyzing five academic articles that effectively connect with the fieldwork for this thesis:

1. The first contribution examines the uneven geographical development of racial capitalism, focusing on spatial transformations through extractive rentierism and dependency theory. It theorizes urban forms of extended urbanization affecting peripheral areas suffering from environmental racism (points 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, and 2.4).

2. The second contribution offers a decolonial critique by provincializing Indigenous historical and contemporary disputes related to extended urbanization. It seeks to explain its residual character in Amazon, influenced by uneven development (points 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, and 2.2).

3. The third contribution enhances the analysis of one of these disputes to examine more closely the residual nature of extended urbanization in a space inhabited by Indigenous modernities (points 1.1, 2.2, and 2.3).

4. The fourth contribution situates Rent Gap Theory in the Amazon, establishing links to the "Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap" and examining disputes against its realization, forming the thesis's core (points 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.3, and 2.4).

5. The fifth contribution reverses these bridges by proposing "Amazonian Settler Colonialism" through struggles for collective property in urban areas by Indigenous subjects contesting Amazonian urbanization. It reconceptualizes SCT at the intersection of Marxism and decoloniality (points 1.3, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5).

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[9] This term highlights its theoretical and political influence in Latin America. "Bastardización" translates to "bastardization," a notion coined by María Galindo and Mujeres Creando to describe their feminist proposal that transcends ideological purity, rooted in antipatriarchal, antiracist, anticolonial, and anticapitalist struggles of Bolivian women. The concept also becomes a verb through its political practice, increasingly analyzed in recent studies.

3. Methodological Framework.

3.1. Comparison as a method.

This thesis uses comparative analysis to explore complex phenomena by examining their diversity and interactions (J. Robinson, 2016). This approach spans diverse regions in Ecuador, where capitalist-colonial urbanization intersects with marginalized urban subjects. A foundation for this comparative effort was established over twelve years of collaboration in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Selecting cases for comparison began with an inductive approach to understand the characteristics and relationships of each case with other territories and scales, enabling structured comparisons through deductive exercises.

This iterative interaction, developed through several cycles, highlighted a key debate at the intersection of Marxist and decolonial approaches: the tension between a focus on particularity and the formulation of structural theorization (Nijman, 2007, 2015; Peck, 2015). Marxist approaches aim to understand how capital and class struggles produce space by particularizing structural processes (Brenner & Schmid, 2014; Slater, 2017), while postcolonial studies critique this by focusing on case studies that reveal processes overlooked by grand narratives (Roy & Ong, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2013). Recently, these positions have crystallized into lively debates that reframe comparative methodologies in urban studies, creating room for new critical approaches (Le Galès & Robinson, 2023). This thesis requires understanding diverse indigenous territories involved in urban disputes, while also identifying broader comparative tendencies, specifically engaging with Marxist and decolonial debates on critical urban comparativism.

A hybridization of these approaches is underway, facilitated by practical exercises that emphasize mutual contributions and theoretical connections that geography must further explore. Hart's proposal links Latin American Marxisms, Caribbean antiracist contributions, and Lefebvre's historical methods, calling for a rethinking of Marxist dialectics through a postcolonial lens (Hart, 2018). He suggests viewing space and time dialectically to reconstruct history in reverse, examining how interconnected conjunctures shape current situations. To integrate a decolonial sensibility, Hart traces genealogies that connect Marx, Gramsci, Fanon, Coronil, and Chatterjee, thereby enhancing the progressive-regressive

method to address the complexities of multiple colonial histories better. This approach examines the development of capital and its relation to colonial relationships across various conjunctures (Hart, 2018). Thus, the progressive-regressive Marxist method becomes more comparative in nature. This conjunctural approach has emerged in recent years, emphasizing the need for new historical frameworks, including those in China (Peck, 2023). It proves helpful in understanding Indigenous-urban disputes across different historical and spatial contexts with shared comparative links. Therefore, this comparative approach illustrates how history, conjunctures, and the necessity for comparison intertwine, often drawing on incomplete fragments among cases (Peck, 2023).

This thesis conducted a conjunctural analysis in two steps. First, it developed inductive exercises focused on each case and their connections, leading to situated methodologies for each case (Parnell & Pieterse, 2016; Parnell & Robinson, 2012). This inductive method facilitated theoretical advancements by creating new categories and redefining existing ones (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020). In the second step, based on the inductive learnings, deductive exercises generated joint understanding matrices that connect each case with broader spatiotemporal processes, uncovering new aspects (Lancione & McFarlane, 2016; Schmid et al., 2018). This subsequent deductive phase deepened the understanding of the structural dynamics underlying Indigenous and popular disputes against capitalist-colonial urbanization, while examining case differences (J. Robinson, 2016). This inductive-deductive approach rethinks theory from new angles aligned with conjunctural analysis, proposing an alternative to formalist methodologies that enhances context exploration from contradictions (Peck, 2023).

The comparative approach evolved through the contrasting of cases and the systematization of findings. This thesis invites further iterations. Through learning, comparison is essential for understanding broader contexts and enhancing case analysis by integrating insights from other studies. From a structural analysis perspective, this thesis demonstrates that more robust deductive exercises emerge when focusing on the particularities of each case. From a case-based particularist approach, comparative analysis yields deeper inductive insights from similarities or absences revealed through comparison. This dual methodology facilitates contributions across theoretical fields, as shown in this document. It is not sequential but

dialectical, employing iterative inductive-deductive reasoning through various phases of learning about case comparisons.

In summary, Figure 3.1 illustrates that this inductive-deductive approach began (Phase A) with inductive thinking, focusing on case specificity while identifying connections. This was succeeded by deductive systematization based on those insights (Phase B). The following inductive phases (C and E) were enhanced by the prior cycle, fostering deeper engagement with territories shaped by evolving theory. This led to more thorough deductive approximations (Phase D). This spiral relates to Andean views of time, where linearity is absent, and circularity prevails; each cycle is distinct due to accumulated experience (Gavilán Pinto, 2011; Mamaní, 2015; Suárez Delucchi & Rivera Ugarte, 2024). The production of different articles reflects various moments within this inductive-deductive sequence, forming a continuum of thought with interrelated phases that create a unity that may lack coherence. The spiral ultimately pauses due to the doctoral program's time constraints but remains open, continuing to foster interactions and new ideas.
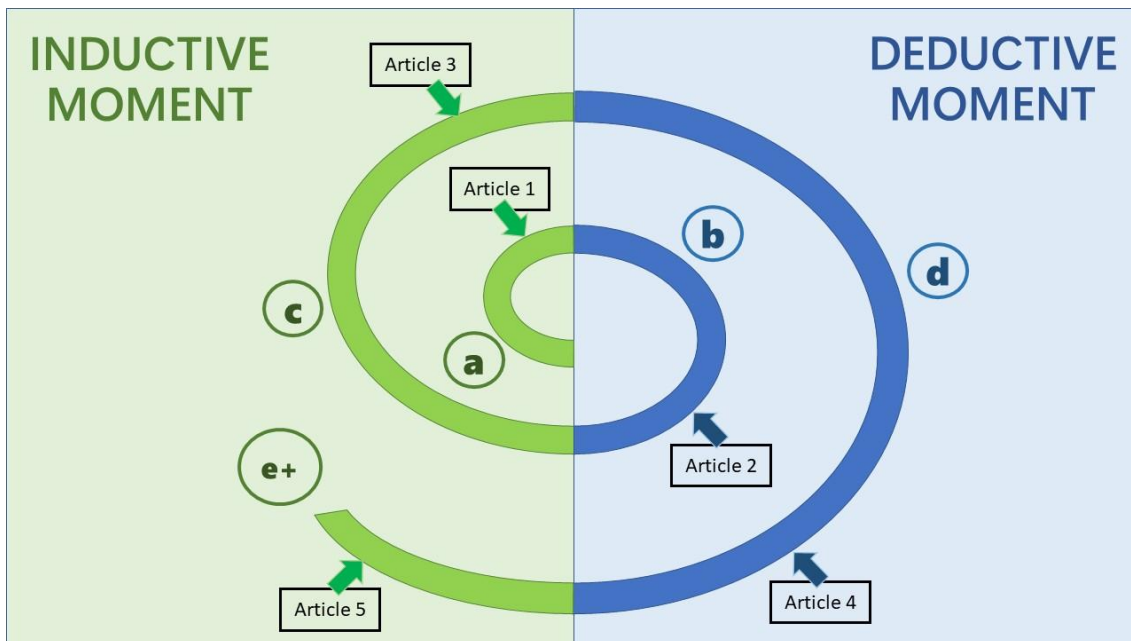

Figure 3.1: Methodological strategy known as the iterative inductive-deductive method.

3.2. Positionality: institutional multiplicity.

This thesis was conducted by a person from a Castilian family in Andalusia who moved to Ecuador in 2011 and has lived in Quito for 12 years, mostly working in the Amazon region. His connection to the area stems from the anti-oil struggles of Indigenous and peasant communities, as well as environmental collectives. The dissertation unfolds within the context of two collectives: (1) Yasunidos, which achieved a significant decision through a national referendum to leave the oil underground in Block 43 of Yasuní National Park, and (2) the Yasuní people, who have a long-standing relationship with the park. The Ecuadorian Collective of Critical Geography engages in cartography, territorial analysis, and geographic training with communities facing territorial dispossession (Bayón Jiménez & Arrazola Aranzábal, 2020; Bayón & Zaragocin, 2019). Much of the work arises from militant research and its biases and limitations (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2013; Halvorsen, 2015; Russell, 2015). The approach to urban Indigenous communities is facilitated through research in academic institutions, including the Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales within the National Center for Strategies for the Defense of Territory, directed by David Harvey (Wilson & Bayón, 2017b). I was at the Department of Urban Studies at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO-Ecuador) and part of the doctoral program at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. The Contested Territories Network enriched this dissertation through a European project led by the University of Leipzig and the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, which involved a year at FLACSO-Ecuador and meetings with colleagues across Latin America and Europe on related topics.

In some cases, the approach to these territories emerged at the request of communities or neighborhoods that contacted the collectives or the researcher's university, seeking cartographic support for conflicts related to the loss of sovereignty and autonomy (Bonilla et al., 2016). Previously, an academic research interest evolved into a collaborative relationship highlighting universities' supportive roles in urbanization struggles (Bayón Jiménez, 2021). This was developed through reports, studies, and expert judicial documents from academic institutions and civil society, aiding territorial efforts. Additionally, urban morphology research methods were applied to various neighborhoods, including Indigenous communities, which agreed to collaborate with FLACSO to share their histories better and

enhance recognition of their experiences in the urban-Amazonian territory (Cabrera-Barona et al., 2020).

While this institutional multiplicity and positionality provided a comparative exercise across diverse territorial experiences, it also introduced limitations and biases that must be critically addressed (Medby, 2019). Academic institutions often create distance due to their historical role in supporting epistemic extractivism, producing studies that facilitate state-driven dispossession, or overlooking community dynamics and needs (Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021). The possibility of an institution with strong social standing supporting the community claims shaped expectations that influenced research interactions. Even when aiming to challenge academic hierarchies, the research remained linked to historically powerful institutions (D. L. Baldwin & Crane, 2020). Viewing the university as a powerful artifact requires careful research design. Where trust was deeper, feedback processes enabled communities to review drafts, correct errors, determine the accuracy of published information, and incorporate diverse perspectives. This practice enriched the dissertation while acknowledging that these efforts were time-bound and shaped by unavoidable hierarchies.

This thesis explores the history of epistemic dispossession and extractivism by universities in Latin America's national centers, especially in the global North (Cusicanqui, 2012; Grosfoguel, 2016). Developed from a self-critical stance within the Ecuadorian environmentalist movement (Bayón Jiménez et al., 2021), this perspective examines the political limitations of idealized anti-extractivist Indigenous communities in the Amazon, which stem from movements contesting urbanization (Ellingson, 2001; González & Tacha, 2018; Moreano Venegas, 2017). The thesis critiques misconceptions of urban land-back struggles, challenging the colonial view of Indigenous belonging in cities as "out of place" (McClintock & Guimont Marceau, 2023; Poets, 2021). This work highlights the political force of these processes while addressing biases within the ecological movement.

This reflection comes from someone born outside the Amazon and Ecuador. Despite attempts at linguistic and cultural hybridization, they remain largely unfamiliar with Indigenous cultural codes and cosmogonic knowledge (Viveiros de Castro, 1998). Additionally, community and institutional actors view the author as an outsider due to two dynamics.

Firstly, the researcher's Spanish background enables public officials and business people to easily recognize the racist imaginaries influencing Amazonian territorial planning (S. Ugarte, 2023; Zaragocín & Bayón Jiménez, 2023). This positionality carries biases and limitations in understanding the complexities of the studied territories, risking the reenactment of colonial dynamics (Bourke, 2014; Rahman & Kazmi, 2024). In the foreseeable future, scholars from the Amazon region and those studying Indigenous-popular urban processes will likely produce research that expands and critically interrogates many of the findings of this thesis. Additionally, this dissertation was written during the ongoing bombardment of the Gaza Strip, a stark manifestation of settler colonialism, akin to genocide by the Israeli state in Palestinian territory (Englert, 2020; Khatam & Haas, 2018; Lichinitzer & Snir, 2022)—an emotional context that influenced this thesis's writing.

3.3. The selection of cases based on their multiplicity, connections, and contributions.

The cases were not selected based on a prior theoretical decision. Instead, they were approached through emotional geographies, affect, and mutual commitments formed over time (Gupta & Medappa, 2020; Pile, 2010). These cases allowed, among other experiences, for the systematic development of learning processes surrounding indigenous-popular disputes against capitalist-colonial urbanization, the focus of this thesis. Many territories could have been included, some potentially with stronger processes; however, no working relationship was established. There were also instances of greater research engagement and political commitment, but these were excluded due to vulnerability to private or state actors, internal fragmentation that discouraged publication, or stages too early in urban consolidation, which exposed them to risks.

After filtering, twelve Amazon cases were selected for this thesis. Three were identified through CENEDET: Sumak Ñambi, a community impacted by the Manta-Manaus corridor river ports, later supported with the Colectivo de Geografía Crítica; Atacapi, where Ikiam University is located in Tena, monitored by FLACSO; and Pañacocha, the site of a Millennium Community housing project, solely researched for this thesis. In environmental justice cases, the approach emerged from ecologist collectives, such as the oil extraction work in Yasuní National Park and the "25 de Febrero" neighborhood of Lago Agrio, where oil wells were reopened in the past decade. In Tundayme, Ecuador's first open-pit mine led to

neighborhood destruction and the establishment of new settlements for mining workers, while Nankints saw a similar project halted by Shuar resistance. Similar issues arose in neighborhoods like La Propicia in Esmeraldas, affected by the oil refinery, and Chillogallo in Quito, where the oil pipeline runs. Field visits assessed impacts and spatial configurations.

At FLACSO, researching the Amazon's urban peripheries led to the identification of indigenous territorial disputes. For instance, in Sevilla Don Bosco, an urban Shuar center resists colonization. Work was conducted with Shuar leaders to redefine their urban center within their territory. In Sapo Rumi, near Tena, a FLACSO professor collaborates with his Kichwa family, fostering various partnerships. New Indigenous territorial disputes emerged during visits to urbanizing areas, such as the Santa Clara housing development and the popular neighborhood "Colinas del Dorado" near Coca, which were uncovered through municipal records. Virgen del Carmen in Zamora and the "31 de Agosto" neighborhood in Sucúa, of pluriethnic origin, also stem from Shuar disputes, with leaders sharing their experiences with FLACSO. Finally, the Comunidad Ciudad Intercultural de Pueblos y Nacionalidades (CCIPNA) requested FLACSO's direct involvement in their territorialization as a plurinational urban neighborhood in Puyo. Since then, CCIPNA has been foundational to this thesis, leading to collaborations, such as with the ancestral commune of San Jacinto del Pindo. This commune, which was potentially included in CCIPNA's territory before Puyo's expansion, sought legal defense support from the Colectivo de Geografía Crítica del Ecuador, creating another opportunity for contribution to this thesis. In Puyo and elsewhere, academic institutions sparked initial interactions and research. However, political support often extends beyond the university's scope, with civil society collectives better positioned for territorial struggles. This raises important questions about the institutional limits of academia and how to address them. Figure 3.2 outlines these institutional interactions in the ten selected Amazonian cases that were ultimately chosen for the articles linked to this thesis.
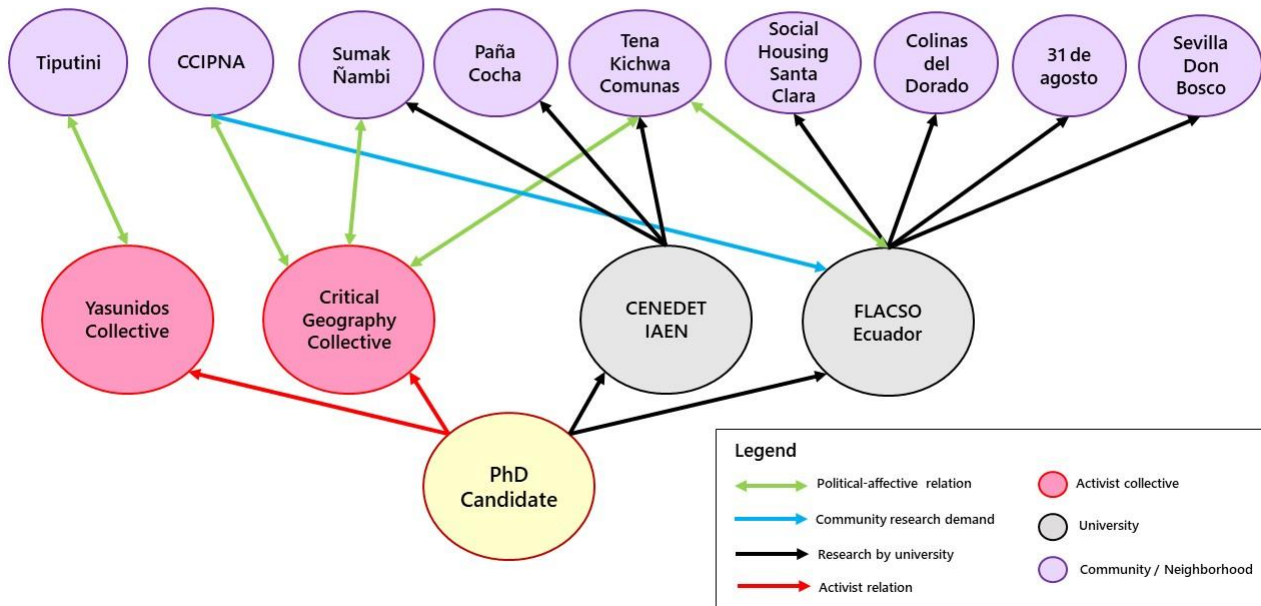
Figure 3.2: Main communities and neighborhoods linked to the thesis and the types of engagement.

The inductive-deductive methodology utilized iterative work cycles to systematize cases and identify comparable categories. This helped trace the manifestation of capitalist racial-colonial urbanization and forms of contestation in each context. To understand capitalist urbanization in the Amazon linked to oil extractivism, case selection emphasized segregation by class and ethnicity, leading to spatial and climate injustices that provoke contestations. A diverse collection of cases highlighted varying urbanization scales along the oil extraction and export chain, facilitating analysis of key variables through the petroleum axis. Five cases were chosen, each representing a different scale. After developing these scales and categories, further research addressed gaps in understanding the drivers of extended urbanization, environmental inequalities, and struggles for better conditions.

An analysis examined various indigenous-popular responses to urbanization processes across eight cases, including the repeated case of Sumak Ñambi—these cases aligned with two axes of extractive urbanization, each marked by distinct historical processes. In total, twelve cases were reviewed to categorize indigenous struggles, resulting in four typologies that explain these contestations. Two examples were selected per typology, totaling eight cases, while

four cases were excluded. In addition to this comparison, an inductive categorization and scale analysis were conducted, followed by a deductive comparative exercise to understand the historical contexts of indigenous resistance to capitalist colonization, the associated forms of contestation, and the dynamics of indigenous urban life in Amazonian cities.

This general map illustrates the infrastructure of capitalist urbanization and indigenous-popular territorial disputes. The thesis advances new cycles of induction and deduction, analyzing three cases that disrupt dominant debates in critical urban theory: Sumak Ñambi, which reflects urbanization from the Amazonian port of the Manta-Manaus corridor; Sapo Rumi and Kichwa communities resisting urban tourism and mining; and CCIPNA, which counters evictions by creating communal spaces. These cases share struggles marked by significant territorial changes and transformative proposals. A deeper analytical engagement enhances the thesis's theoretical contributions, enabling effective deployment of complex research tools. Each case refined previously generated categories. By comparing these cases, the Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap (APRG) was theorized, introducing new explanatory categories and advancing the thesis through various critical matrices. This marked another turn in the inductive-deductive cycle, between specificity and generalization, leading to conceptual innovations. Ethnographic fieldwork defined categories characterizing the APRG: (1) the role of valorization cycles for extractive rents, (2) class struggle against rent gaps, (3) territorial mobility, and (4) resistance forms in organization and everyday life.

Two exercises delve into specific concepts through case studies. Sapo Rumi examines relational ontologies and residual urbanization to comprehend indigenous struggles and the complexities of modernity. CCIPNA's debate on plurinational collective urban property reexamines aspects of Settler Colonialism Theory through proposals for plurinationality. This analysis contributes to SCT in four ways: (1) it challenges colonial urban space logic by creating a plurinational neighborhood; (2) it asserts a space with urban services and Indigenous principles while forming alliances with white-mestizo and Afro-descendant groups in a broader coalition; (3) it promotes collective land ownership in response to dispossession by capitalist property; and (4) it contests privileged, white-dominated spaces with high environmental quality and connectivity, enabling diverse mobilities. Figure 3.3 maps the cases linked to these exercises leading to the five articles in the thesis.
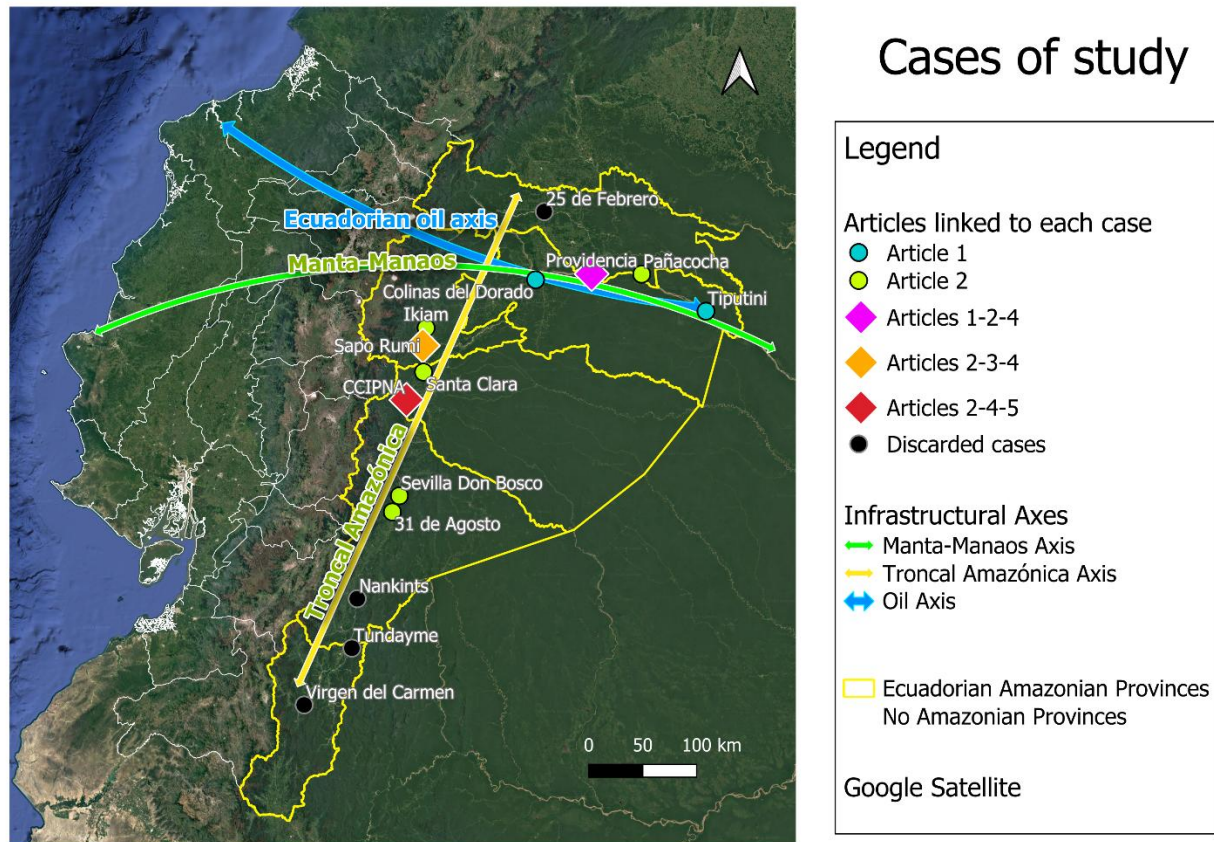
Figure 3.3: cases linked to thesis articles.

3.4. Selection of fieldwork methods for comparison

After describing the cases and their roles in the thesis's methodology, this section outlines the fieldwork methods employed across all cases to identify significant trends in capital, urban-Indigenous, and popular practices. The focus is on three cases where deeper methodological engagement allows for a thorough understanding of key research questions. The strategy was to establish a basis for comparison by analyzing the historical context of territorial disputes and the processes of de- and re-territorialization (Haesbaert, 2005; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009b). Recognizing the significant events of capitalist colonization and territorial expansion was crucial, as they triggered numerous disputes (Little, 2002; Peck, 2023). Reconstructing these processes required cartography from historical documents and GIS for spatial representation, essential for understanding Amazonian urbanization

(Betancourt Santiago et al., 2015; Cabrera-Barona et al., 2020). GIS engaged through a counter-mapping lens challenges dominant narratives (Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012; Van Teijlingen, 2023) and critiques colonial spatializations (M. Ugarte et al., 2021), allowing Indigenous ontological perspectives to emerge through intercultural dialogue (Melin et al., 2020). This counter-mapping and historical reconstruction of space embraces a multiscalar perspective (Lacoste, 1977), problematizing the very notion of scale beyond physical-spatial schemas and proposing multiscalarity as a necessary tool to capture the spatial dimensions in which capital operates (Marston & Smith, 2001). Following this view, space is seen as a product of uneven power relations, and "the city" is understood as neither given nor static. Instead, urban injustices are viewed as "locally contingent, contextually dependent and constructed across scales" (S. Fisher, 2015, p. 73), which underpin the very constitution of cities.

Fieldwork took place from 2019 to 2022 across the cases, involving a total of 45 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with community leaders (S. J. Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). These interviews revealed how Indigenous and mestizo actors perceive urban spaces, their movement toward new infrastructures, and the disputes that arise as they create their own spaces within these metropolitan areas. Due to limited knowledge and inaccessible maps, a mobile ethnography strategy was adopted (Streule, 2020). This approach emphasizes heterogeneous, iterative, transductive research methods. Participant observation often involved "exploratory walks" and "walking interviews" with community residents, revealing key elements of daily life and the histories that shape these neighborhoods (Streule, 2020). This practice clarified the use of cultural space and critical aspects of daily life, such as transportation dynamics, access to services, and residential trajectories (M. M. di Virgilio & Gil y de Anso, 2012). Additionally, 25 interviews with state, ecclesiastical, and private actors involved in territorialization projects revealed anti-Indigenous and anti-popular views in their "common sense" understandings of urban planning (M. Ugarte et al., 2021). Engaging with these actors led to an ethnography of my experiences with the whitening logics they promote (Adams et al., 2022) and how my academic whiteness positioned me as presumed capable of understanding racist narratives about the Amazonian population (Wilson & Bayón, 2017b; Zaragocín & Bayón Jiménez, 2023).

In three areas of sustained work, we overcame the limitations of lacking ethnographic methods and engaged in deeper intercultural dialogues (Muratorio, 1998). We collaborated to create counter-maps in response to territorial threats posed by colonial capitalism, such as mining in Tena and mass evictions resulting from urban planning in Puyo and Puerto Providencia. Mapping served as a subversive tool in imminent eviction situations (Maharawal & McElroy, 2018). These counter-maps captured elements ignored by hegemonic cartography, advancing subaltern cartography and insurgent planning (M. Ugarte et al., 2021). While it does not resolve all contradictions in cartographic representation (Tilley, 2020), communities have adopted strategic positivism to contest state spatial narratives and assert their mappings (Wyly, 2009).

Building on this mutual commitment, various ethnographic, geographic, and legal methods emerged, linking critical geography to social processes and collective mapping with relational research (Atia & Doherty, 2021). During the pandemic, fieldwork shifted to audiovisual ethnography (Hine et al., 2011; Méndez & Aguilar, 2015) due to challenges in the Amazonian context (Abad Espinoza, 2022). Once collective mapping was feasible again, walking ethnography practices expanded (Lebowitz & Trudeau, 2017; Yi'En, 2014). In these three spaces, mapping politicized younger generations unfamiliar with community territory facilitated intergenerational transmission of technological and cosmogonic knowledge. The systematization and debates following the mappings became politically potent and methodologically challenging spaces. Insights from counter-mapping initiatives across Abya Yala (Halder & Kollektiv Orangotango, 2019; Melin et al., 2020), ontological mapping practices (Oslender, 2021), and Indigenous cartographies were adapted to the Amazonian context (Schultz, 2018), supporting a situated ethnography of these territorial processes (Muratorio, 2013).

This work was systematized across scales. There is systematization within each community through archives of photographs, audio, and documents that compile lessons learned. In some areas, these archives were shared with the community, necessitating an internal systematization for the thesis and an external one for delivery, each with distinct characteristics. As a geographer, the initial systematization involved creating cartography by situating knowledge gathered during visits along with historical and infrastructural elements

from secondary sources (Maharawal & McElroy, 2018). Chronological narratives of community leadership, collected from interviews and walks, were enriched with historiographic sources, media analysis, and social media reviews (Galea et al., 2025; Schulte-Römer & Gesing, 2022). Grounded theory provided a framework for systematization, enabling the inductive generation of comparable categories, which facilitated learning during transcription (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Categories were refined or discarded through a process of theoretical triangulation. Initial exercises involved generating scales and comparison categories inductively, followed by deductive learning and later grounded theory approaches (Chakabwata, 2024).

As spatial ethnography became feasible, systematizing field notes and GPS data collection became essential. While grounded theory was practical for interviews and secondary sources, it was limited for participant observation, where traditional ethnographic methods were preferred (Bernard, 1994; Yi'En, 2014). In the extended fieldwork for three prominent cases with established mutual knowledge, categories and coding were developed a priori, enabling significant theoretical advancements, particularly in the concepts of APRG and Amazonian Settler Colonialism. Subsequent interviews confirmed the key theoretical elements from this spatial ethnographic work, shifting from a grounded theory approach to a focused examination of the thesis's core contributions. Representative scenes portrayed spatial tensions and multiplicity of meanings, capturing the complexity of the processes (Lafazani, 2021). Some scenes illustrated territorial powers and Indigenous struggles in Amazonian cities, even with factual certainty from multiple sources. This narrative strategy conveys the interplay of power geometries and various scales, enabling readers to grasp the complexity of the empirical material, drawing inspiration from geographers like Doreen Massey (Albet & Benach, 2012).

3.5. Illustrating fieldwork, its systematization, analysis, and limitations.

This section outlines the research process for a case, detailing the methods, agreements, and research conducted. In June 2019, CCIPNA requested that FLACSO-Ecuador produce cartography and ethnography to support their right to inhabit the former Zulay hacienda, which was facing eviction due to an order enforcing private property rights and municipal planning. After CCIPNA contacted other universities in Quito, the initial task was to

document the hacienda's history, legal proceedings, and current state through secondary literature and interviews with local researchers. This aligns with the research for all communities in this thesis, which aims to understand the territorial structure and the relationship between the present context and significant historical milestones (Haesbaert, 2005; Peck, 2023). The Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador conducted a family census; FLACSO managed historical cartography; and lawyers and activists represented the case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to prevent eviction.

To facilitate an initial exchange with the community, FLACSO organized a congress on urban contestation in Puyo in February 2020, inviting CCIPNA to participate. A doctoral candidate coordinated the event. Although CCIPNA has existed for over 10 years, they had never been invited to the State University of Puyo. Their participation included interviews, meetings, and site visits to CCIPNA (S. J. Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). The exclusion of non-legitimized social actors, like urban Indigenous Amazonian communities, by the academic establishment is significant for CCIPNA. They proposed a visit to their neighborhood on the congress's final day, allowing visitors nationwide to witness their plurinational resistance. Over 100 community members spoke at the university for the first time. The visit included a tour, a communal meal, and cultural events, showcasing the vigor of their urban Indigenous territorial proposal.[10] This event served as a crucial starting point for the ethnography, facilitating an understanding of the community's interactions with public institutions, observing its leadership during the congress, and engaging with many of its members (Simpson & Hugill, 2022).

The October 2019 Indigenous and popular uprising, the COVID-19 pandemic starting in March 2020, and the 2021 elections delayed the Ministry of Government's plans to evict over 3,000 people in CCIPNA. This postponed fieldwork relates to the community's original request. During this time, ethnography was conducted remotely via WhatsApp and social media by those involved in the land conflict, including CCIPNA, private land claimants, and local government (Hine et al., 2011; Méndez & Aguilar, 2015). In fall 2021, planning for the

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[10]CCIPNA's public statement following the event: https://ecuadortoday.media/2020/02/17/comunicado-comunidad-ciudad-intercultural-de-pueblos-y-nacionalidades-de-la-amazonia-frente-al-foro-contested-cities-ecuador/
 Event photos: https://contestedcitiesecuador.wordpress.com/2020/02/25/resumen-del-foro-contested-cities-ecuador/

mapping project began. Analyzing the court case, state recognition of CCIPNA, and existing data led to an agreement to map land use and archaeological sites. The Ministry of Culture recognized CCIPNA as guardians of Amazonian archaeological heritage since the 8th century CE on their ancestral lands. While the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (INPC) surveyed the mounds, the Ministry of Culture lacks control over land titles, which are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGAP). In 2019, MAGAP created a map of CCIPNA with a racist annotation. Although it outlined proper boundaries, it stated they were "according to its leaders," undermining the collective territorial rights authority. Thus, CCIPNA prioritized its map for legal and public communication, one that depicted boundaries without racist framing. The map would highlight archaeological sites to showcase ancestral presence before colonial land grants and the Ministry of Culture's recognition of the community as heritage stewards. Collaborating with CCIPNA leadership, an initial mapping effort visited each archaeological site, using counter-cartography to challenge MAGAP narratives (Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012). Community members discussed cultural tourism, a proposed strategy for economic development, presented at the February 2020 congress (M. Ugarte et al., 2021). During the visits and mapping, the researcher's ethnographic work was enhanced by staying overnight with families, enabling the collection of life stories related to CCIPNA, their housing trajectories, and community ties, including labor, education, and healthcare insights, as well as how they envision future home improvements (M. M. di Virgilio & Gil y de Anso, 2012).

The mapping project was completed in November 2021. Initial GPS workshops were held, finalizing the route with ten CCIPNA members involved in territorial protection, representing different sectors of the community. The mapping strategy included visiting each archaeological site identified by the INPC while documenting the land's cultural uses among different Indigenous nationalities. Mobile ethnography techniques were employed through "exploratory walks" and "walking interviews" with community leaders and elders in each sector (Lebowitz & Trudeau, 2017; Streule, 2020). These walks revealed Indigenous urban practices, as well as agricultural and water management techniques (Oslender, 2021). Once the GPS data, images, and narratives were compiled, decisions were made regarding what to include in the final map to support the argument for both ancestral and contemporary presence through their cartographic product (Maharawal & McElroy, 2018). After several

meetings, it was decided that the map would include only the MAGAP-recognized boundaries, contours of the archaeological mounds (Rostain et al., 2014), and the latest satellite image, which shows effective land use. CCIPNA aimed to highlight archaeological sites—often overlooked by hegemonic cartographies—symbolizing ancestral memory and future planning (M. Ugarte et al., 2021). In discussing alternative spatial representations of plurinationality (Oslender, 2021; Schultz, 2018), CCIPNA chose a map clear to state and judicial actors, conveying their narrative (Tilley, 2020; Wyly, 2009). Field notes, photographs, and narratives from mapping visits also contributed to the creation of a situated ethnography (Muratorio, 1998).

In response to FLACSO's work in the territory, the Ecuadorian state, through police and government officials, attempted to sever the university's collaboration with CCIPNA. The part of the community still hopeful for a resolution delivered a letter to FLACSO stating that its researchers were no longer welcome. Meanwhile, the national police in Puyo notified the university that they could not ensure the safety of its researchers. Sector leaders conducted part of the mapping using GPS devices. The cartographic work was finalized through meetings, limiting the planned ethnographic engagement with families. Several relational research tools were employed, including mapping workshops with CCIPNA's leadership and the census systematization by PUCE, which created a comprehensive documentary basis for potential judicial proceedings (Atia & Doherty, 2021). Ironically, police intervention halted the research but led to new interviews with public officials and business elites in Puyo. Local institutions viewed FLACSO as collateral damage in "Indigenous infighting," a narrative that stigmatizes all Indigenous-popular social processes by the city's white-capitalist power structure (Everson, 2023).

Between 2022 and 2023, nine interviews were conducted with various actors: a police officer from FLACSO, the former governor of Pastaza's chief of staff, the Catholic priest of CCIPNA, the province's bishop, the city's leading real estate developer, urban planning directors from two municipalities of CCIPNA, the parish president where most of the community resides, and provincial representatives from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. Respondents were asked about their views on urban growth, perceptions of CCIPNA, and envisioned future scenarios (S. J. Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). Official

documents, including the property deed for the former hacienda, the adjacent deed of the Puyo Indigenous Tribe, and cadastral records, were obtained. The interviews revealed how white power operates in the city and a consensus that CCIPNA's eviction is politically unviable. Instead, a solution based on private property is preferred, as collective territorial governance is undesirable. This process also organized my interactions regarding how these actors sought to recruit FLACSO and researchers like me as allies (Adams et al., 2022). Currently, the country's political instability has led the state to propose no viable solutions: neither eviction nor legalization via private or collective ownership. Life in CCIPNA continues, and its leaders remain active, anticipating future legal or legislative actions.

Although my affiliation with FLACSO has ended and this doctoral dissertation is nearing completion, the collaboration continues through the Critical Geography Collective of Ecuador. In a 2025 case, this doctoral candidate served as Amicus Curiae for the San Jacinto del Pindo ancestral commune, where many CCIPNA members originate, advocating for recognition of fragmented community territory due to urbanization planning.[11] In the future, drawing from the experience gained in this dissertation and the knowledge accumulated through it, I hope to continue supporting the urban Indigenous struggles emerging in and around Puyo. This final subsection provides a situated example of how institutional complexity manifests in one of the cases featured in the thesis: how mutual collaboration shapes, the dialogues for implementing critical geography tools, how research methods unfold, the insights generated, and their boundaries.

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[11]News on the lawsuit and Amicus Curiae participation:
https://geografiacriticaecuador.org/2025/04/18/participacion-en-juicio-frente-a-los-despojos-de-la-planificacion-urbana/

4. Results across five research articles.

The five-article research strategy has further developed through the theoretical and methodological frameworks detailed in previous chapters. This section synthesizes the potential contributions of the articles to the thesis's argument, followed by an exploration of each article. The theoretical framework establishes intersections for new concepts and emphasizes analyzing capitalist rentier urbanization and Indigenous contestations of urbanization. The methodological framework shows how the inductive-deductive strategy operationalizes this theoretical intersection. This results introduction will outline how these cycles were applied, what each article demonstrates, and their contributions to the overall argument.

The thesis's theoretical background synthesizes two matrices divided into five sets: (a) Marxist theories that reject decolonial theories; (b) Marxist theories engaging directly with decolonial perspectives; (c) bridge theories integrating both views; (d) decolonial theories that engage with Marxist traditions; and (e) decolonial theories that ignore Marxist contributions. The nine theories in this continuum form a potent conceptual toolbox. Each article engages with a limited subset, combining theories across the five categories for varied theoretical reformulations. Given the main research question and the secondary question on theoretical contributions, these intersections are analyzed carefully.

Article 1 examines Marxist intersections, exploring how Latin American and Caribbean Marxisms inform spatial production, especially in extractive rent contexts (Coronil, 1997). It critiques planetary urbanization (Brenner, 2014b; Brenner & Schmid, 2014) for overlooking racial capitalism perspectives (Féliz & Melón, 2022; Pulido, 2017). Furthermore, it advocates for enhancing the Anglo-American Marxist view of uneven development (Smith, 1984, 1992) with Latin American dependency theory (Arboleda, 2016; Marini, 2022). Understanding the link between racial capitalism and dependency theory is vital for analyzing how environmental racism is spatially produced, influenced by each urban area's role in extractive economies and colonial labor divisions (Pulido, 2000; Sultana, 2021). The article explores theoretical intersections to expand decoloniality by provincializing global knowledge (Roy, 2016a; Sheppard et al., 2013) while staying rooted in Marxist traditions through Latin American and Caribbean contributions. It follows a path from (a)-(b)-(c),

showing how Marxist theories enriched by colonial and racial analyses better depict the dynamics of extended urbanization (Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Monte-Mor, 2014).
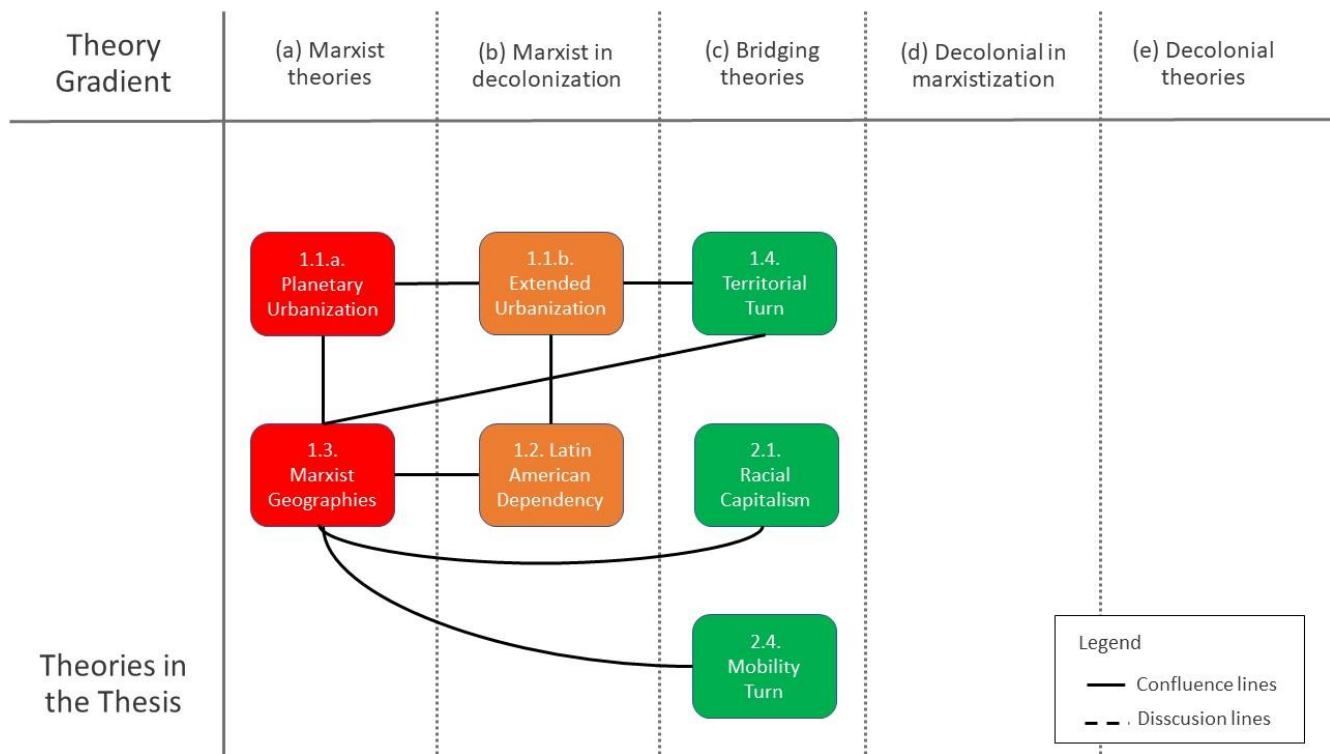

Figure 4.1: Diagram illustrating the theoretical trajectory of Article 1.

From a methodological perspective, this article examines urbanization along the Ecuadorian oil corridor, with a focus on recent transformations. It employs racial capitalism, dependency theory, uneven development, and extended urbanization to reveal deeply segregated urban peripheries: low-quality areas inhabited by racialized, impoverished populations, contrasted with affluent, service-rich zones controlled by elites in oil extraction and exports. The analysis uses an inductive approach to trace emerging urban spaces along the corridor, observing their origins, daily life, and arising contestations. It first characterizes new urban spaces within extractive rent structures, then compares class and racial inequalities evident in this urbanization. these findings are initially articulated through cross-sectional descriptions focused on the drivers of urbanization, the roots of environmental inequalities, and efforts for improvement conditions.

The second inquiry in Article 2 explores the intersection of decolonial and Marxist theories, aiming to bridge their divergent points. It seeks to decolonize planetary urbanization from

the Amazon's perspective, engaging with the Latin American decolonial critique linked to the Modernity-Coloniality-Decoloniality project (Lander, 2005; Quijano, 2000) and the postcolonial critique of planetary urbanization (Khatam & Haas, 2018; Reddy, 2018). By tracing common threads, it creates a dialogue with Marxist theories, highlighting urbanization struggles that disrupt the capitalist dynamics of uneven development (Smith, 1984). In response to criticisms of a planetary urbanization framework for oversimplifying spatial struggles, the article proposes an alternative perspective through decolonial matrices and dialectical Marxism. It examines how indigenous ontological practices resist capitalist differentiation, engaging with the ontological turn (Blaser, 2010; Escobar, 2015). The article traces a path from (a)-(b)-(c)-(e), starting with the critique of Marxist theories from decolonial perspectives and culminating in the concept of "residual urbanization." This concept provides a new understanding of contested uneven development processes influenced by Indigenous struggles across multiple scales and perspectives (Campbell, 2015; Little, 2002).
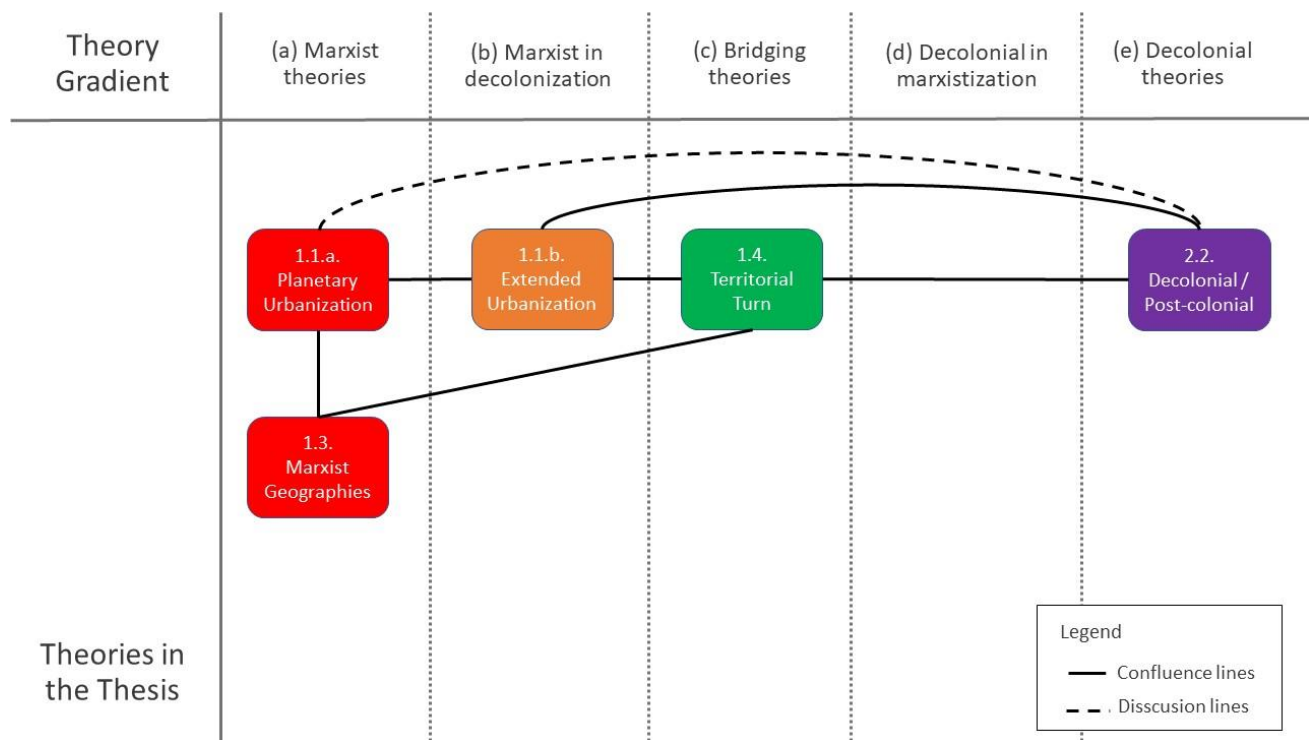

Figure 4.2: Diagram illustrating the theoretical trajectory of Article 2.

Article 2 aims to explore how Indigenous contestations of extended urbanization are categorized using the iterative inductive-deductive comparative method. Although the article is rooted in a profoundly inductive exercise to grasp how each of the eight selected contestations unfolds, it strives to organize them into new categories that facilitate a comparative description of the cases through a deductive exercise preceding the narrative of the results. The four new groupings of cases outline the core of these contestations: adaptations to urbanization, Indigenous social housing, settlements to halt colonization, and re-occupations to ensure Indigenous territory prevails. Furthermore, this article employs a multi-scalar approach: the overall historical process of uneven development, shaped by contestations, is narrated at a regional scale; the groupings connected to forms of contestation are examined at the local scale; and the successes and limitations of each of the eight cases are assessed at the everyday scale through a series of indicators. This deductive work traverses scales, groupings, and indicators, enriching the concept of residual urbanization by infusing it with the theoretical multiplicity characteristic of this thesis and grounding it through a mosaic of comparable cases.

The third inquiry in Article 3 deepens previous intersections and highlights residual urbanization. It analyzes contestations by indigenous peri-urban communities based on relational ontologies, particularly those tied to the first adaptations to urbanization (Ingold, 2021; Whitten & Whitten, 2008). The article discusses modernity's contestations through a historical continuum where indigenous peoples have shaped their paths in relation to colonization (Heckenberger et al., 2008; Rostain et al., 2024). This perspective creates an approach to relational ontologies in urbanization, facilitating a dialogue with extended urbanization, a Marxist theory intersecting with decolonial and Amazonian views (A. C. D. Cardoso et al., 2020; Monte-Mor, 2014). The intersection posits that there is no general adaptation to urbanization; instead, adaptations occur in response to the specific forms of urbanization shaped by historical indigenous contestations (Uzendoski & Saavedra, 2010; Whitten, 2008). This article thus follows a (b)-(e) trajectory in theoretical categorization, starting with the synthesis of residual urbanization and advancing towards a dialogue between Amazonian Latin American Marxisms and the ontological turn, challenging essentialist postulates and highlighting the potential indigenous peoples find within urbanization as a means of engaging with coloniality (Echeverría, 2000; Shulist, 2018).
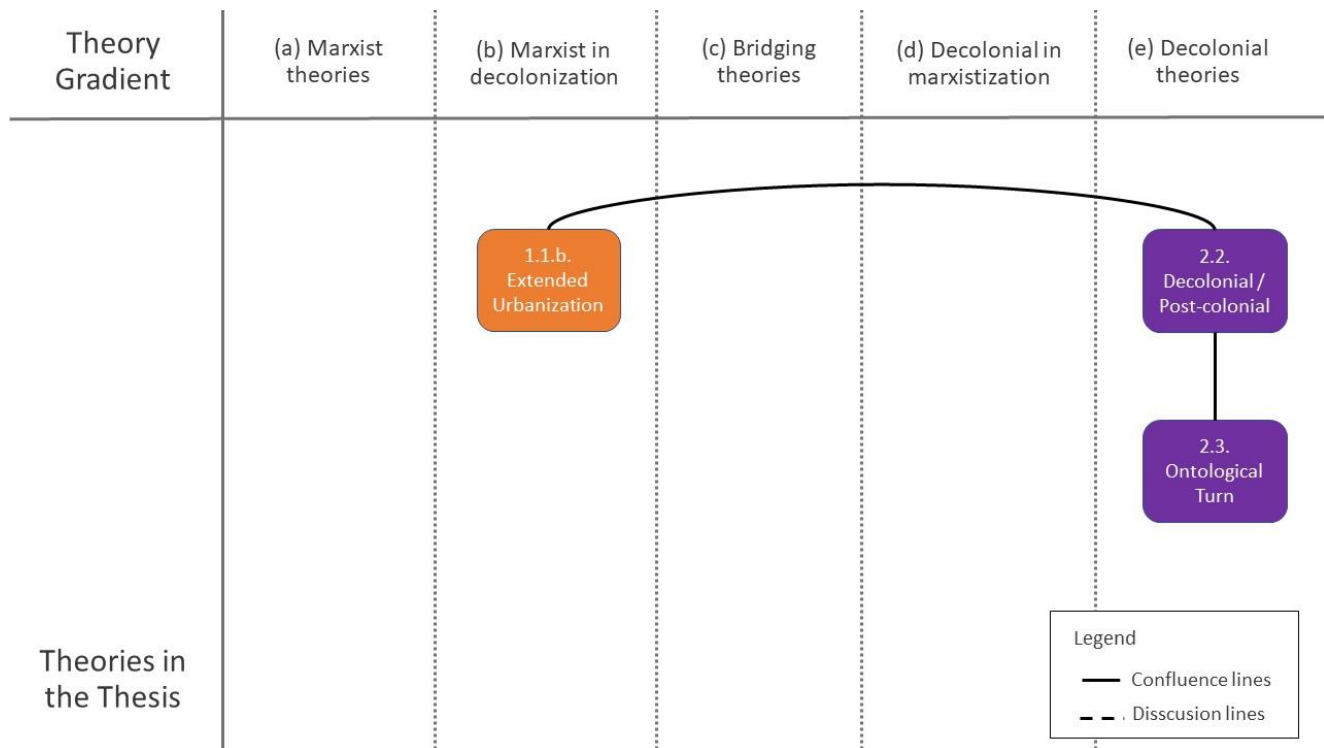
Figure 4.3: Diagram illustrating the theoretical trajectory of Article 3.

This article employs an inductive strategy based on a single case study, building on previous inductive-deductive cycles. It enhances existing deductive groupings and addresses gaps in earlier analyses. By focusing solely on one case, the article deepens understanding of indigenous perspectives on urbanization amid conflicting extractive and tourism rents, exploring future visions constructed through autonomy while navigating relational ontologies and urban-modernism spatialities.

The fourth inquiry in Article 4 explores the broadest theoretical intersection among the five. Grounded in rent gap theory, a key framework in Anglo-American Marxist geography (Smith, 1987, 1996), it intersects with Latin American Marxisms, the territorial turn, the mobility turn, and decolonial proposals stemming from the ontological turn. Latin American Marxisms view extractivism as the main source of rent production, addressing the rent gap of regional capital forms (Coronil, 1997; Echeverría, 2011). Critical Latin American geographies emphasize collective territorial belonging as crucial for understanding capitalist rent gap disputes (Haesbaert, 2005; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009b; Zibechi, 2012). The mobility turn illustrates how migration and multilocality challenge the spatial fixity in rent gap theory

(Horn et al., 2024; Sheller & Urry, 2016). The ontological turn reinterprets urban collective subjects shaped by enduring memories and cosmologies that confront urban principles (Descola, 1996; Viveiros de Castro, 1998). Together, these perspectives conceptualize an Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap, enhancing rent gap theory and critically contributing to urban theory from Amazonia, emphasizing the limitations of Anglo-American Marxist theories and the diversity of decolonial viewpoints (Sheppard et al., 2013). This complementarity constructs a theoretical proposal that demonstrates how to analyze capital at the spatial limits of urbanization, where class and ethnicity shape contestation dynamics. This inquiry reverses the dynamic in Article 4, contributing anti-racist Marxist geography perspectives to coloniality debates. It analyzes Settler Colonialism Theory from this angle, examining existing bridges and tensions, particularly about private property, a core dimension of these processes. Consequently, this article follows a (a)-(b)-(c)-(e) theoretical trajectory, tracing decolonial contributions around collective land use while critiquing racial capitalism as developed by Marxist traditions.
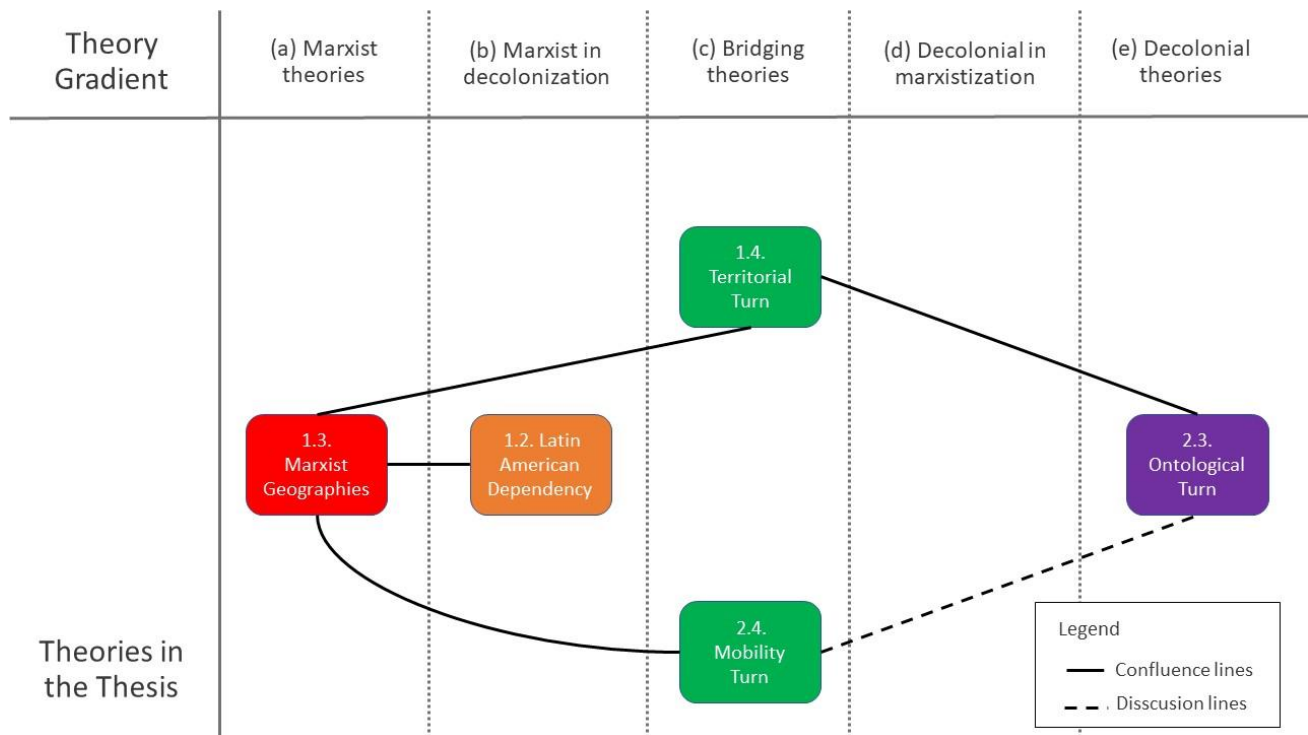

Figure 4.4: Diagram illustrating the theoretical trajectory of Article 4.

From the inductive-deductive perspective, Article 4 is the most comprehensive deductive exercise in this thesis. Building on the three spaces analyzed in Article 2, the Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap (APRG) is theoretically defined through four categories: (1) Role of valorization cycles for extractive rents; (2) Class struggle against the realization of rent gaps; (3) Territorial mobility; and (4) Resistance in organization and everyday life. Insights deepen as these categories are established, allowing smoother comparisons and addressing gaps. The deductive cycle supports a comparative analysis across cases and formulates characteristics for each category, defining the APRG. These characteristics represent significant theoretical advances: (1) Fight for Extended Urbanization and rents, (2) Alliances of popular classes against exclusion, (3) Migrations to extended urbanization areas, and (4) Reproducing community practices in new urban areas.

The inquiry in Article 5 aims to create a theoretical intersection based on Settler Colonialism Theory (Morgensen, 2011; Wolfe, 2006). It refocuses on racial capitalism, as discussed in the first article, to establish a new theoretical framework centered on structural racism and property relations, concluding the thesis (Milner, 2020; C. J. Robinson, 2000). In this final article, Anglo-American and Latin American Marxist theories yield to the concept of racial capitalism, while decolonial theories are assessed for their contributions to Structural-Cultural Theory (SCT). This inquiry counters Article 4's proposal for anti-racist Marxist geographies in coloniality debates (Addie & Fraser, 2019; Englert, 2020). Analyzing SCT from this perspective reviews existing dialogues, focusing on Marxist property debates (Blomley, 2020). The bridge lies in revisiting SCT to propose reconceptualizing private property as collective ownership. This article follows a (a)-(c)-(d)-(e) trajectory: beginning with SCT, it traces decolonial contributions on property and collective use. It primarily centers on the possibilities Marxist interventions against racial capitalism offer (Bhandar, 2018; Franzen & Bascomb, 2022; Milner, 2020).
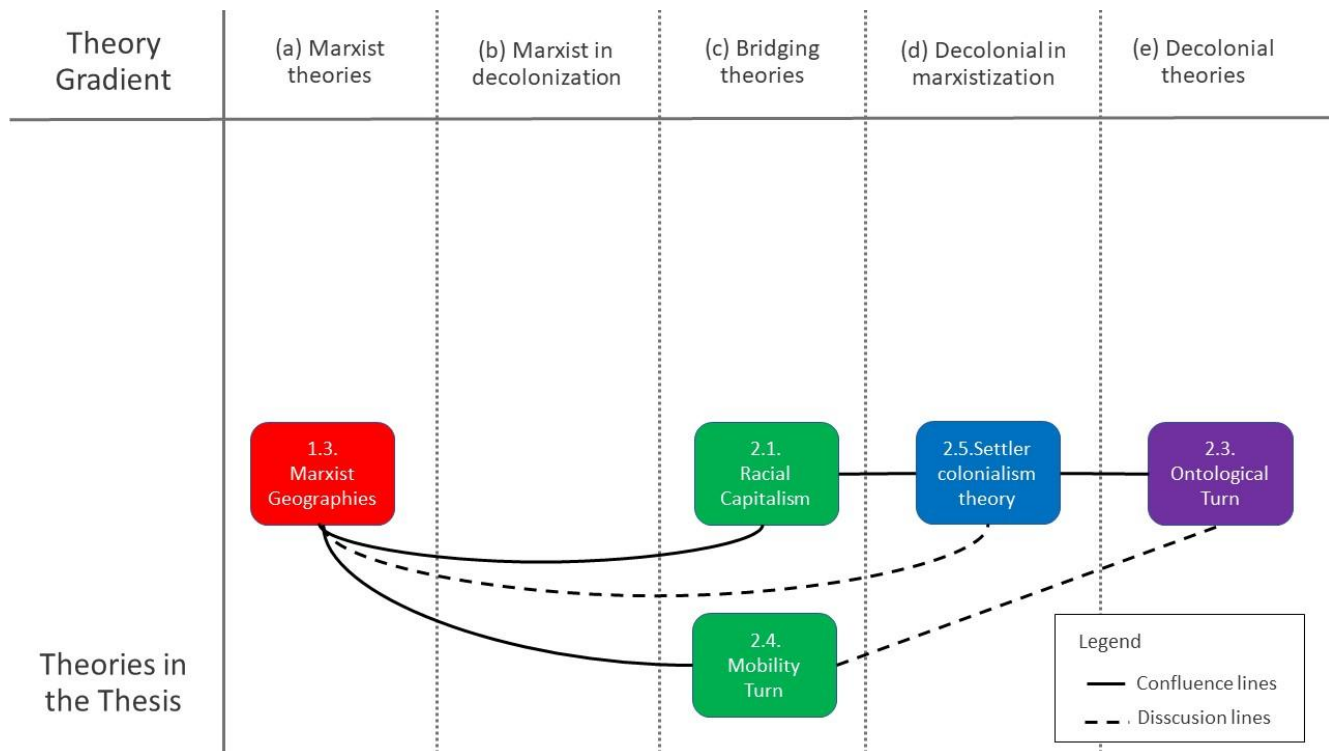
Figure 4.5: Diagram illustrating the theoretical trajectory of Article 5.

This article builds on the previous article's deductive exercise and two inductive-deductive cycles by undertaking a final inductive exercise focused on a case present in earlier cycles for maximum explanatory density. Four inductively defined categories illustrate the case's strength compared to the existing literature on SCT: (1) it disrupts the colonial whitening of urban space by creating a plurinational urban neighborhood; (2) it promotes a communal project for collective land ownership in response to dispossession experiences under capitalist property; (3) it reclaims space with urban services and indigenous principles, fostering alliances among white-mestizo and Afro-descendant populations within popular social classes; and (4) it challenges white-dominated spaces with high environmental quality and connectivity, encouraging diverse mobilities across the Amazonian region. This final single-case inductive exercise clarifies the depth of SCT in Amazonian urban peripheries. It highlights the critical role of establishing collective spaces that resist capitalist expropriation as a foundation for practicing plurinational and communal city living.

The relationships between the theories and this theoretical gradient will be presented differently in each article, according to the objectives of each one and the part of the research

gap they address. In summary, from adding the interactions produced in each of them, it can be seen in Figure 4.6 that there is a multiple and complex interaction. This demonstrates that, far from being separate theories, Marxist and decolonial approaches have numerous bridges, connections, and possibilities for cooperation to build a more complex and situated understanding of the territorial issues affecting the peripheries of capital.

Figure 4.6: Theoretical relationships across all the articles.

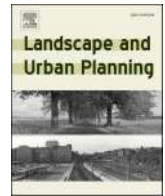## 4.1. Article 1: A climate justice approach to urbanization processes in the South: Oil axis in Ecuador.

This article is part of a special issue of Landscape and Urban Planning (SJR 2024 Q1 2.93) on geographical perspectives regarding adaptation and urban resilience for climate justice in future cities, published in 2023. The article was developed in collaboration with Melissa Moreano Venegas, the second author, a member of Colectivo de Geografía Crítica and an expert in the Marxist critique of hegemonic approaches to climate change. The first author was responsible for the article's conceptualization, construction of the argument, and fieldwork, while the second author contributed theoretically to the conceptual framework. Both authors collaborated on the scalar construction, developing the comparative analysis and conclusions.

The article explores the concept of extended urbanization to understand processes that transcend rigid rural-urban divides. It shows that examining urbanization through dependency, especially in regions like the Amazon, requires considering oil extractivism, which generates spatial transformation corridors and new urban spaces along oil pipelines and the petroleum industry. In addition to extended urbanization as a theoretical paradigm for territorial formation under extractivism and dependency theory, which explains the spatial hierarchies formed along the oil circuit, the article incorporates racial capitalism theory to illustrate how these new extractive urban areas create classism and environmental racism, resulting in highly segregated spaces. these findings enhance the uneven development perspective in Marxist geography, linking it to other scales of the oil urbanization circuit, especially related to processing and industrialization outside Ecuador.

This article presents an inductive-deductive comparative exercise focused on an oil urbanization corridor from Yasuní National Park near the Peruvian border to Esmeraldas on the Pacific coast. The research inductively defined central nodes linked to the primary oil activities at each site, establishing five urbanization nodes corridor. This exercise identified scales of extended urbanization, creating a framework to understand the process. Three analytical variables were formulated to guide empirical investigation across five urban spaces: Drivers of extended urbanization, Basis of environmental inequalities, and Struggles for better conditions. Applying these variables across the oil corridor enabled a strong

characterization of extractive urban patterns and contributed to debates on cities' roles in climate change, highlighting global urbanism's provincial context. Thus, the article succeeds in contributing to the main objective of the thesis, situating the relationship between the expansion of capitalism's spatial limits, which configures a form of extended urbanization, and the reconfiguration of colonialism, specifically, the production of peripheries through environmental racism in the Ecuadorian oil axis. The contestations of this setting are left for the following articles.

The study focused on the oil corridor from Yasuní along the Napo River to Coca, chosen for the recency and intensity of urban processes. Other corridors with distant exploitation sites would have required different roads and cities, lacking the same urban clarity dynamics. The research sites included the oil extraction area at Tiputini, oil ports on the Napo River, royalty-benefiting communities, new neighborhoods in Coca, and various neighborhoods in Quito, as well as the area surrounding the Esmeraldas refinery. Fieldwork consisted of two rounds in 2019 and 2022, allowing for monitoring of neighborhoods before and after the pandemic crisis. Connections to the cases stem from ties to environmental struggles since 2013, influencing work in Tiputini and Esmeraldas. In Providencia, the bond with Sumak Ñambi was formed through CENEDET since 2015. In Quito, relationships were built with the Colectivo de Geografía Crítica since 2012 and reinforced through daily interactions in the doctoral candidate's city. These connections allowed three rounds of fieldwork to refine the analysis and fill empirical gaps. The systematization, involving secondary source reviews, GPS mapping, and interviews with social leaders and families, helped identify specific characteristics at each scale within the extractive corridor, as well as the class, ethnic, and environmental inequalities produced by it.

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A climate justice approach to urbanisation processes in the South: Oil axis in Ecuador

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Extended urbanisation provides unparalleled framework for climate justice.
- Struggles for climate justice are struggles to be part of the urbanisation process.
- A series of multi-scales of climate injustice in the sphere of urbanisation.
- The reproduction of climate injustices at different scales of urbanisation.

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The new geographies of climate injustice seek to displace the dominant analysis in urban studies that encapsulates urban inequalities in a static city. This article analyses the extractive axis of the Ecuadorian Amazon through extended urbanisation and unequal development in dialogue with Latin American dependency theory as a framework to decolonize urban studies. Consequently, it develops a theoretical and methodological proposal as a sample of the possibilities that this extension implies in the relationship between urban studies and political ecology. In a sequential approach, the analysis of the Ecuadorian extractive axis shows the possibilities of analysing urbanisation as an ongoing process, whose climatic injustices are reproduced multiscale. The analysis combines spatial-historical and ethnographic methods to understand how social relations are produced around disputes linked to developing or limiting climate injustices, which are inseparably racial and class injustices. The journey through the scales of the extractive enclave, the fluvial transport of oil, the city of oil services, the rentier capital city, and the export refinery, allows us to analyse that the forms of capital that guide urbanisation, the bases of social inequalities and inequity in access to spaces of environmental quality are a continuum along the oil axis, which demands a continuous look at climatic injustices. It allows for an exercise that explores the overlaps and limits of urbanisation and climate injustices, but also reformulates dominant urban theories through postcolonial and dependency critique.

1. Introduction: Rethinking the uneven development of climate change through an oil extraction axis

Literature on environmental justice and urbanization in the global South has discussed how spaces of higher environmental quality are produced by the white upper classes, who occupy the best environment areas (Caldeira, 2017). The review of literature shows that environmental justice considerations are focused on the (un)equal distribution of environment services and the associated green and blue infrastructure with regard to socioeconomic groups, with special attention to income

and race/ethnicity as the main mechanisms of social stratification in the cities (Calderón-Argelich et al., 2021). A study of 20 USA cities shows that green infrastructure improvement targets do not include a social justice perspective, and therefore reproduce climate injustice (Grabowski, McPhearson, & Pickett, 2023). A comparative study of climate change interventions in Bangalore, Monterrey, Hong Kong, Philadelphia, and Berlin concludes that these interventions reinforce existing patterns of climate injustices within cities (Bulkeley et al., 2014). By climate injustice, we mean that the most polluted spaces, with unhealthy temperature conditions and high exposure to flooding or landslides, are

Fig. 1. Study nodes and scales.
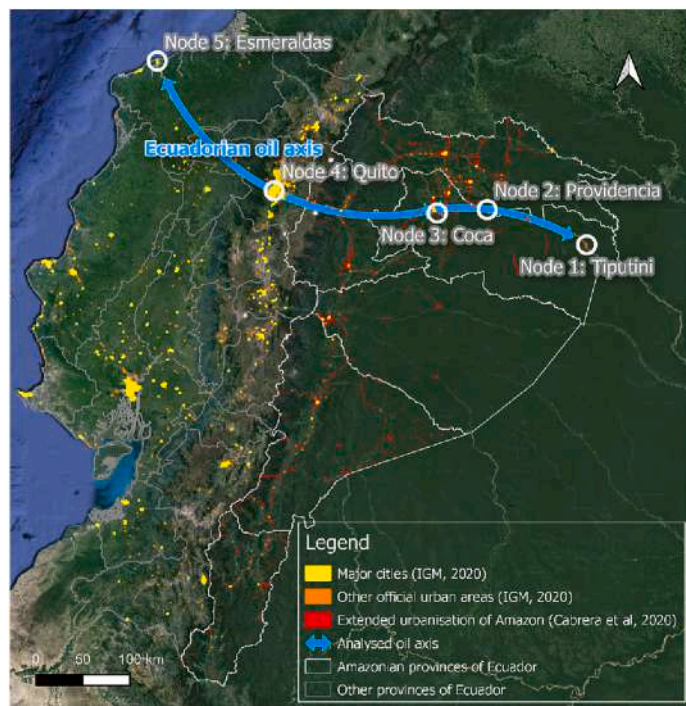
produced for the popular and racialised people, who also have very low possibilities of managing or coping with risks (Carvalho et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2022). This spatial segregation by class and race is indeed nowadays structuring cities, and it is also an undeniable feature of climate injustices around urbanisation.

Our aim is to construct a critique of the analysis embedded in this logic, in order to expand the new geographies of climate justice with a multi-scalar, place-based discussion (Fisher, 2015) of urbanisation. In this way, contributing to the post-colonial critique of urban studies and the provincialisation of global urbanism (Roy, 2016; Sheppard, Leitner, & Maringanti, 2013), specifically by broadening its relationship with political ecology from its margins (Sultana, 2021). On the one hand, we assume that the space is a product of uneven power relations and hence that "the city" is not given, nor static; in doing so, we intend to reveal the climate injustices as "locally contingent [processes], contextually dependant and constructed *across* scales" (Fisher, 2015, p. 73, our emphasis) that lie behind the very constitution of cities. To this end, we propose a more dynamic conceptual framework, developed from the Amazon, of extended urbanisation to outline what we understand as a city (Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Monte-Mor, 2014). This approach will be explored in more detail in the next section. On the other hand, we aim to transcend the local scale of the city by exposing how climate injustices are produced *across scales* in a process that is contingent to the uneven development of capitalism (Smith, 1984) and hence reproduce dependency. For that, we show how climate injustices occur along a continuum that connects different urban scales through flows of matter and energy that are extracted and transferred from the peripheries to the global centres. Furthermore, we show how this constant flow of matter and energy super-exploits the peripheries and reproduces dependency (Marini, 2022) with its "class and racial lineages" (Féliz & Melón, 2022; see also Pulido, 2000), obstructing a more just urbanization processes in the peripheries.

For so doing, the paper analyses the urbanisation processes at different scales in Ecuador (a peripheral country), fuelled by oil extraction and export, whose destination -and hence origin- is urbanization in the global north (mainly the USA, a central country). This exercise illuminates the classist and racist character of the climate

injustices generated by rentier urbanisation based on extractivism. In other words, our aim is to look at the process of urbanisation along the oil axis as a mechanism for the continuation of extractivism in the global peripheries, but also for surplus appropriation and hence for accumulation (Arboleda, 2016) by a global class society (Cano Ramírez, 2019), constituting in that way the centre-periphery colonial structure.

The analysis focuses on the social production of urban space connected to extractivism in Ecuador along the oil pipeline that crosses the country from East to West, from the zone of extraction in the Amazon to the port of export on the Pacific Ocean, a route that already has its own literature (Cielo & Sarzosa, 2018; Lyall, 2017). Accordingly, we analyse the ways in which climate injustices contribute to the production of urban space along this oil axis. We depart from the ITT oil block in Yasuní National Park, which was part of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative that proposed to leave the oil unexploited in exchange for an international compensation.[1] From this starting point, we interrogate what kind of urbanisation has been promoted by this new oil outpost in the Amazon, after 50 years of oil extraction in Ecuador (Bayón Jiménez, 2021). Using a multi-scalar methodology, we focus on the morphology of urban growth around and connected to the oil axis, the climate injustices that emerge, and the social disputes at the heart of urbanisation. As a result, 5 scales of analysis emerge inductively, which can be seen in Fig. 1: (1) the new city of Tiputini as a new extractive enclave in the ITT oil block, (2) the banks of the Napo River where many oil ports are located, (3) the provincial capital of Coca as the oil service's centre of Yasuni-ITT area, (4) the national capital of Quito as the place where an important part of urban oil rents materialise, and (5) the provincial capital of Esmeraldas where the oil refinery for export is located.

In what follows, we describe the theoretical framework (chapter 2), the mixed methods methodology (chapter 3), and a characterisation of the social relations produced in the neighbourhoods and communities of the 5 nodes under analysis (chapter 4). The spatial analysis connects the

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[1] The Yasuní-ITT initiative became an emblem of the struggle for climate justice at the global level, as it specifically proposed to prevent the emission of around 410 tons of carbon dioxide; however, the oil was finally exploited from 2014 onwards (Rival, 2010; Vallejo, Burbano, Falconí, & Larrea, 2015).

production of new urban spaces with the socio environmental disputes related to climate injustices. Specifically, we connect the new spaces produced at different scales by both the oil royalties and the economic surplus, with the social discontent activated by different forms of pollution and risk perception at the 5 urbanization nodes, with a comparison in the discussion (chapter 5). The paper concludes with a reflection on how considering the uneven geographical development of sprawling urbanisation as a new approach to ponder its intersections, could contribute to the debates on the interrelatedness between climate injustices and urbanisation (chapter 6).

2. Theoretical approach to the link between (extended) urbanisation and climate injustices through uneven development

2.1. Extended urbanisation through implosion-explosion dynamics

Extended urbanisation was coined by the Brazilian urbanist Monte-Mor who, following Henri Lefebvre, explains how capital produces space through dialectical processes of spatial expansion of infrastructure (Monte-Mor, 2004). This perspective is at the foundation of planetary urbanisation, which is one of the paradigms to understand the current dynamics of capital in relation to urbanisation, but also for overcoming the rural–urban dichotomy in favour of the more fluid notion of implosion and explosion (Brenner & Schmid, 2014). Implosion is understood as the multi-scale process of concentration of capital, materials, and population in ever larger megalopolises, but also in larger provincial and country capitals; in turn, explosion is the increase of transport networks and flows at the macro level, but also the small grids that permeate more and more peripheral spaces (Brenner, 2013). Implosion-explosion dynamics around the accumulation of capital at the global level is excellent for analysing the injustices of the urbanization process, and for looking *from* the South to central spaces, but also to the peripheral urbanisation (Caldeira, 2017) in places such as the Amazon, which have their particular features (Kanai, 2014).

We will focus on one of such features: the specific ways in which urban extractive enclaves are formed and connected by transport infrastructures. The enclave, which has its own literature in the configuration of urbanisation (Guzmán-Gallegos, 2012; Ryder & Brown, 2000), allows us to look at the dialectic dynamics of implosion-explosion characteristic of extended urbanisation. It is the place that explains the dynamics of explosion by being located at the end of the infrastructure network, but, at the same time, it becomes the node that could promote an implosion and may end up becoming itself a place of urbanisation. Oil extraction and export reproduce implosion-explosion dynamics domestically on a multi-scalar fashion that connects the extractive enclave with middle and major cities, and where a share, yet small, of oil royalties are appropriated. Enclave urbanization is in fact the spatial expression of oil royalties/ implosion-explosion dynamics (Harvey, 2013). A matryoshka game appears here, where the same dynamics are reproduced at different scales. However, far from being a process driven solely by capital, a multitude of struggles emerge led by the popular/working classes (Slater, 2017), which in the Amazon and the coast of Ecuador have strong indigenous and black backgrounds (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Campbell, 2015).

Therefore, climate injustices will not only be considered from the perspective of which neighbourhoods have better environmental quality or which regulations are in place to limit class-based access to certain goods that are essential to enjoy the city. This analysis asks about what processes of urban implosion and explosion linked to the production of global climate injustices will have different forms of climate/class/race inequalities and struggles in different moments of urban production along the oil axis. It is, therefore, necessary to delve deeper into the uneven geographical development of climate change, in order to generate a better approach to the analysis of the production of cities from this framework of extended urbanisation and to highlight the

contributions that a post-colonial vision from the Amazon can make.

2.2. Uneven development and climate justice

Climate injustices have been addressed in the literature from environmental justice and risk management perspectives that highlights how the impacts of climate change are unevenly distributed (Calderón-Argelich et al., 2021; Liao, Chan, & Huang, 2019; Zeng et al., 2022). Less common is the perspective that presents climate justice as an issue of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism that needs to acknowledge intersectional and multi-scalar justice (Brown & Spiegel, 2019; Fisher, 2015).

From a similar perspective that combines Latin American dependency theory (Marini, 2022), critical Marxist geography (Harvey, 2006), and climate coloniality (Sultana, 2022), in this paper we recall the notion that climate change is the result of the uneven geographical development of capitalism and so are the climate injustices (Malm, 2016). As many authors have assessed, the geographical expansion of the capitalist mode of production across the globe is not homogeneous, but occurs through a violent dialectical process that simultaneously produces centres of accumulation and exploited peripheries (Harvey, 2006; Smith, 1984, 1992). This is a global spatial arrangement, in which rich countries continue to extract wealth from the peripheries super-exploiting human labour and cheap nature (including oil), a flow of value that structures the international division of labour and *ecological* unequal exchange between centres and peripheries, perpetuating dependency (Marini, 2022; Sultana, 2022).

Hence, the co-production of centres and peripheries and the production of dependency can be read as spatial relations of super-exploitation powered by fossil fuels use, in which the forms of wealth extraction constrain the ability of workers to reproduce their own lives and prevent the development of full capitalism in the peripheral countries (Marini, 2022). In resonance with implosion-explosion dynamics, this spatial arrangement also functions at the subnational level across the produced urban–rural divide and within cities, as internal peripheries are reproduced at different scales (Smith, 1992). The multiscalar production of uneven space also operates reproducing racial differences and, crucially, incorporating "the devaluation of nonwhite bodies into economic process", such as the urbanization process, constituting racial capitalism (Pulido, 2017, p. 2).

In this narrative and in geographical terms, climate change is the result of "[spatial] dialectics of productivity and plunder" (Moore, 2015, p. 293) driven by the industrial revolution and the sprawl of cities powered by the massive use of fossil fuels. Therefore, a focus on fossil fuels emissions reduction is crucial in speaking of climate injustices: how the "differentiated responsibilities"[2] of the global north for causing climate change acknowledge the historical ecological debt for having used the atmosphere as a particular sink for fossil fuels emissions.

2.3. Class and ethnic climate struggle in the extended urbanization

Instead of honouring the differentiated responsibilities and reducing emissions produced by fossil fuels consumption and transport, hegemonic "climate action" is perpetuating the international division of

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[2] The "common but differentiated responsibilities" were recognised in the Principle 3.1 of the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC), signed in 1992. Text of the Convention: https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf.

labour and colonial relations in which peripheral countries will continue to be suppliers of raw materials –now for the energy transition and decarbonisation[3]– and providers of carbon sinks through offsetting schemes (Moreano Venegas et al., 2021). In the meantime, climate injustices sprawl as countries in the global north continue to power the extraction of fossil fuels[4] in places such as Latin America to sustain the planetary urbanisation, reproducing "climate colonialism" (Sultana, 2022) while affirming the racialized production of space. The pervasive classist and racist character of climate injustices, in turn, blockades local climate action, which is subsumed by the global dynamics signalled by uneven development and dependency.

A more nuanced vision of the Global South may appear, as we pay attention to the false solutions to climate change and the distinct class, intersected with racial and gender, differentiations that traverse the North-South relation, and the responsibility of a *global class society* in maintaining a mode of production and consumption addicted to fossil fuels and devoted to satisfy the needs of capital. In other words, "the class origin of the climate collapse" (Cano Ramírez, 2019). But also challenging the colonial system that deemed racialized people as "second-class populations and territories liable to having their labour super-exploited and their common goods plundered" (Féliz & Melón, 2022, p. 3).

Thus, the class and racial struggles around the production of the city will be inseparable from the struggles against climate injustices, even if those struggles are not labelled as such (Fisher, 2015; Pulido, 2017). Indeed, in what follows we will show how along the axis shaped by the enclaves of extraction, the routes of transport, and the sites for oil processing and exporting embody contradictions linked to pollution, environmental suffering, and related struggles (Auyero & Swistun, 2008; Durán, Bayón Jiménez, & Bonilla, 2020). At the same time, we will find a series of contestations for the appropriation of a share of the extractive rent that circulates in these new spaces of urbanisation, which will have a strong link with how extended urbanisation is configured (Cabrera-Barona, Bayón, Durán, Bonilla, & Mejía, 2020; Coronil, 1997). Within this perspective, we will explore the interrelationship between urbanisation and class struggles against a backdrop of climate injustices in the Amazon.

3. Multiscale methodological strategy for understanding social relations

Our spatial-historical methodological approach is based on our long-standing experience in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Manuel Bayón Jiménez has worked as a researcher for different universities on Amazonian urbanisation since 2014 and has been a geographer for different indigenous and environmental organizations since 2011. Melissa Moreano Venegas worked as a researcher in the Yasuní National Park for 2 years and lived for one year in Coca working for Orellana Province government, and since then she has been working at the university level with indigenous communities criticising hegemonic climate action. Both are part of the Critical Geography Collective of Ecuador. This allowed a continuous reflection on the spatial modifications triggered by different megaprojects and infrastructures in the country and its Amazon region, hence this article is the result of a sustained dialogue across the years.

The methodological strategy aligns with the mobile ethnography

approach in which urban studies from the global south are more rigorous by generating a transductive research design and through a complementary set of cartographic, historiographic, and comparative methods (Streule, 2020). For the analysis we propose, it is important to understand the structure of the territory, the way in which different actors spatialised themselves throughout history and the territorial powers in dispute (Haesbaert, 2005). To this end, mapping has been carried out using secondary sources, such as the Military Geographic Institute of Ecuador (IGM) database, with data as of 2020, which contains many errors and limitations. Another source was the Amazonian extended urbanisation database developed by FLACSO-Ecuador (Cabrera-Barona et al., 2020). Likewise, between 2019 and 2022, GPS points were registered during the 10 tours we conducted along the study sites, which allowed us to record places that can only be recognised at street level, and which added a qualitative vision of the spatial and social relations transformations across time, towards counter-mapping (Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012). Our observations involved defining the places where the oil exploitation being conducted in the Yasuní-ITT block has triggered more urbanisation in recent years, and which are supported by different data and analyses (Wilson & Bayón, 2017).

From this historical-spatial perspective, and as a comparative exercise, a theoretical-inductive exercise was carried out, which we understand as incorporable to decolonial urban studies (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020). Such exercise resulted in defining the most important places of urbanisation along the oil axis by assessing their role in the placement of surpluses for urbanisation (Harvey, 2013). The methodological strategy responds to the impossibility of narrowing the analysis to a preconceived and self-confined city scale. Instead of this, we are committed to a multi-scale analysis where the different spatial scales generate a form of synthesis that allows us to see the problem (Lacoste, 1977). At the same time, the strategy allows us to denaturalise the conception of scale and to problematise it as a basic concept of spatial studies (Marston & Smith, 2001). As we recognise that the production of scales in the image of the needs of capital is one of the ways in which uneven geographical development is organised (Smith, 1992), we formulate a series of scales that are essential to understand how oil infrastructures that produce climate injustices are socially contested as we travel through the Ecuadorian oil axis.

As a result of this inductive exercise, the following became essential scales of analysis, as Fig. 1 shows: (1) the most recent enclave resulting from oil exploitation in Yasuní-ITT block, which is clearly Tiputini, as **scale of the extractive enclave**; (2) the river port where the infrastructure and materials necessary for exploitation are shipped to, Providencia, as **scale of river oil transport**; (3) the first city to participate in this process, which is the provincial capital of Coca, as **scale of the oil service's city**; (4) the national capital and its share of oil revenues and pipeline node, the city of Quito, as **scale of rentier capital**; and (5) the refinery where the pipeline arrives and the port where the oil leaves the country, the city of Esmeraldas, as **scale of the export refinery**.

Once these sites of analysis and the scales they represent were defined, qualitative fieldwork became essential in order to delve deeper into the disputes that are taking place around urbanisation and the class struggle around climate injustices. There is an emphasis on analysing the ways in which these new infrastructures have generated new subjects or transformed those who previously lived there or immigrated, for which we applied an ethnographic analysis of the ways in which people inhabit the space and their main political demands (Dalakoglou & Harvey, 2012; Restrepo, 2018). Therefore, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted. These interviews were conducted between 2019 and 2022 with local planners and leaders of the new peripherical urban spaces to understand their visions, demands, and ways of inhabiting (Maharawal & McElroy, 2018; Taylor & Bogdan, 1996), which over the course of the pandemic became virtual (Schulte-Römer & Gesing, 2022). This qualitative exercise took the form of a search in each of the places of analysis for an in-depth explanation of the three variables that emerge from each

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[3] The raising of alternative energies without changing the system of energy production and consumption will require to significantly increase the extraction of minerals; for example the energy transition will demand an increment of 488% for lithium, 494% for graphite and 460% for cobalt, among other minerals critical for the energy transition, many of which are located in the Global South (Olivera et al., 2022).

[4] For example, in 2020, fossil fuels subsidies globally accounted for USD 3.9 trillion, while only USD 366 billion were invested in renewable energy (REN21, 2022).

Table 1
Summary of scales and variables of analysis.

Scale	Drivers of extended urbanisation	Basis of environmental inequalities	Struggles for better conditions
(1)Scale of the extractive enclave: Tiputini	Oil camps and indigenous struggles for urban rights	New urban spaces acquire more services than communities	Differences are based on the possibility of obtaining drinking water or sewage in the context of generalized contamination
(2)Scale of river oil transport: Providencia.	Implementation of community urbanisation after negotiations with new oil developments	Oil pollution adds to a series of historical dispossessions linked to colonisation.	Differences based on the ability to negotiate basic services and fundamental rights
(3)Scale of the oil service city: Coca	Oil service economy and arrival of internal migrants	State promotes a form of informal neighbourhoods with high deficits	Differences around access to non-floodable areas and basic services
(4)Scale of rentier capital: Quito	Placement of rentier capital and labour surplus capital	Segregated planning and upper-class encroachment on natural spaces	Access to nearby natural space, cleaner air, leisure facilities, etc.
(5)Scale of the export refinery: Esmeraldas	Establishment of oil refinery and associated employment	Heavy pollution from oil refinery affecting the city	Remoteness from the refinery means better access possibilities
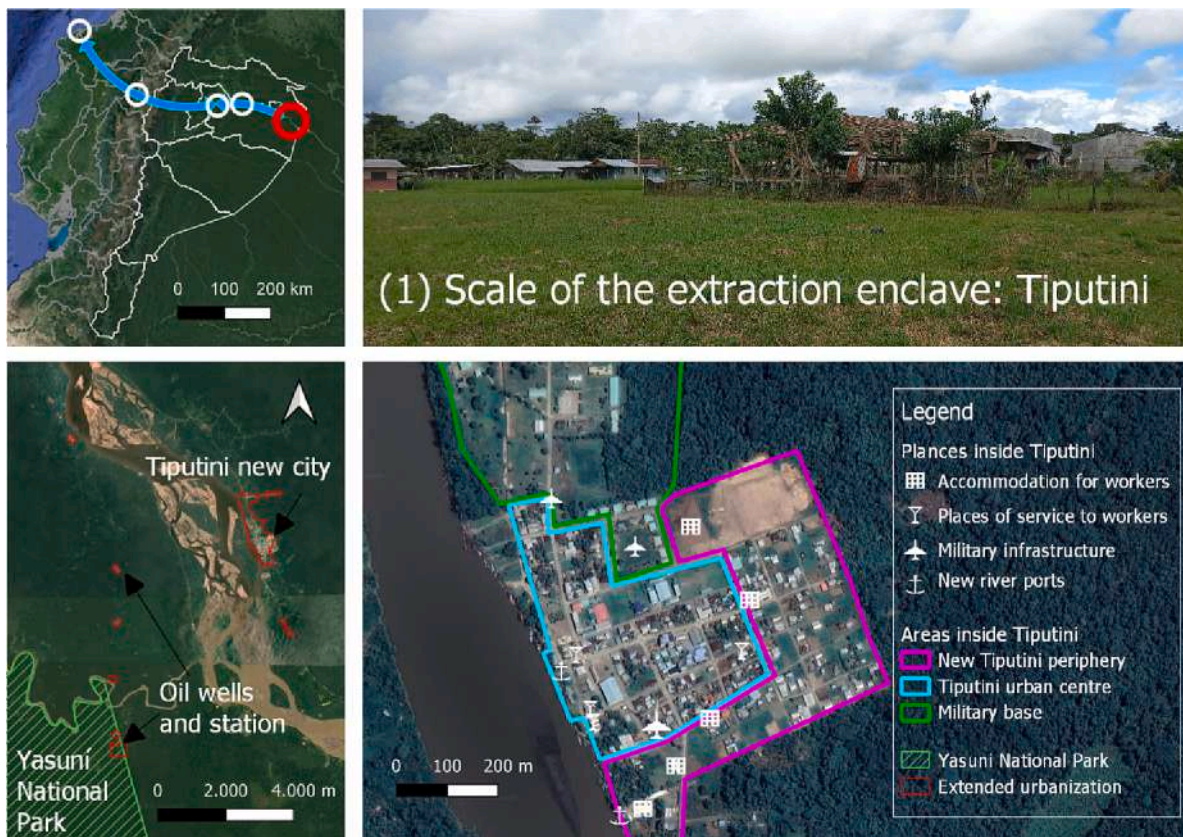
Fig. 2. New city of Tiputini and oil exploitation sites. Prepared by the authors based on the Amazon Urbanisation Index of Cabrera, et al. (2020) and fieldwork.

of the three subjects of the theoretical framework: (1) Drivers of extended urbanisation, (2) Basis of environmental inequalities, and (3) Struggles for better conditions.

4. Results: Multi-scalar tour of five scales along the Ecuadorian oil axis

The results will be presented through a journey from the oil extraction site in the Yasuní-ITT oil block, close to the Amazonian border with Peru, and through four stops to the refinery where the pipeline arrives and the crude oil is exported to California, in the city of Esmeraldas on the Pacific Ocean. In the five locations mentioned in the previous section, the three variables of analysis will be investigated. In Table 1 we anticipate the results obtained, which we will justify in the following subsections, one per scale of analysis.

4.1. Scale of the extraction enclave

In the Yasuní National Park area, oil has been extracted inside Kichwa, Waorani and isolated indigenous peoples' territories since the 1960 s (Stoessel & Scarpacci, 2021). The exploitation of the ITT oil block set a new milestone of colonisation of the farthest north-eastern portion of the park. The arrival of oil workers and companies into the capital of Aguarico canton promoted the spatial expansion of the town of Tiputini since 2014. This small town of 600 inhabitants has tripled its population in only eight years, reaching a population of around 2,000 people and expanding its *peri*-urban fringe.[5] Numerous oil workers' camps and

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[5] Data provided by the Director of Planning of the Local Government of Aguarico, in a face-to-face interview in May 2022. The rest of the information in this section comes from visits to the communities of Llanchama, Yanayaku and the Tiputini nucleus.
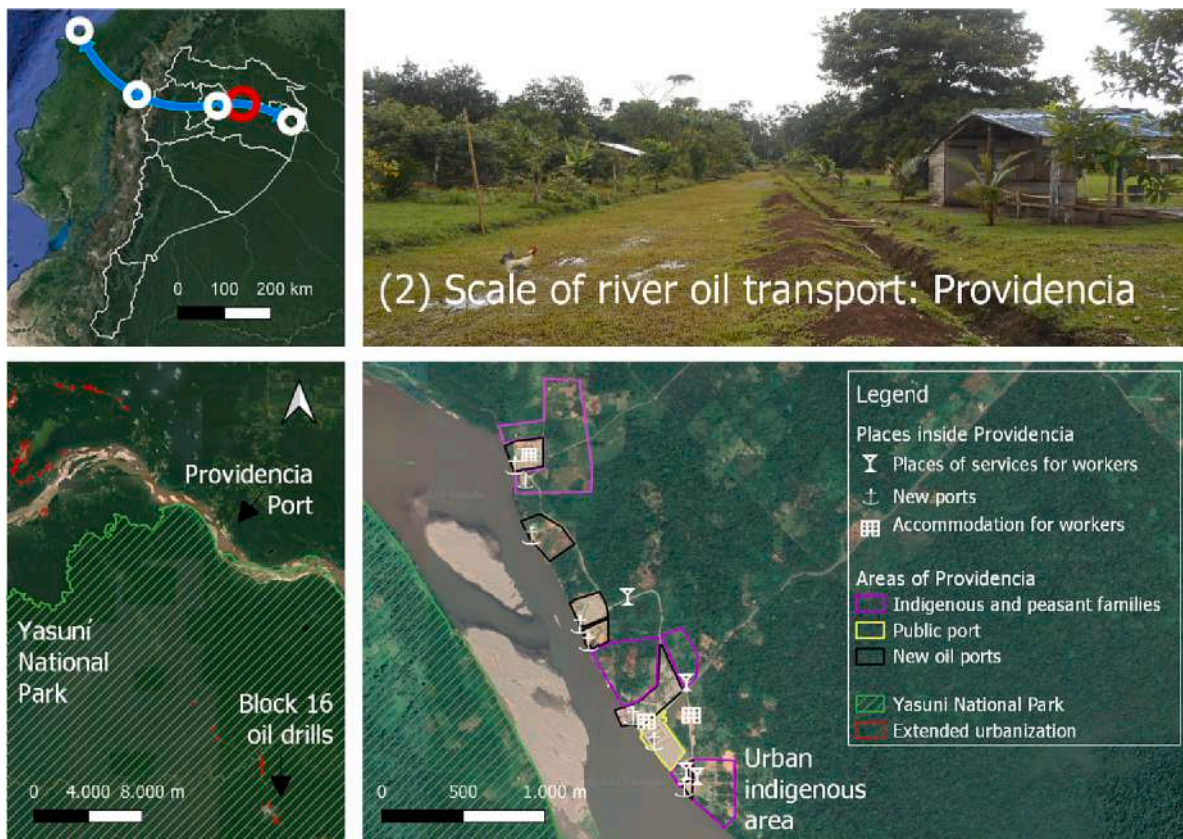
Fig. 3. Providencia in the new oil axis and new urban spaces. Prepared by the authors based on the Amazon Urbanisation Index of Cabrera, et al. (2020) and fieldwork.

associated dynamics such as restaurants and bars can be seen in the cantonal capital, as can be seen in Fig. 2: the photograph shows the new urban peripheries, which dominate the city area, and the map shows the proximity of Tiputini, the oil infrastructure and the Yasuni National Park.. The greatest impacts of oil exploitation, which generate climate injustices, have fallen on the indigenous communities, who live with the noise of electric generators, the dangers of lighters for oil flaring and oil stations, or the continuous presence of large barges on the Napo and Tiputini rivers. In the Tiputini nucleus, the climate injustices are more subtle, with less pollution because oil infrastructure is located on the opposite riverside, while the town has acceptable basic services (water, electricity, and sewage). The indigenous communities are getting some of these services very slowly after fierce struggles with the oil company and the state. Moreover, there is a complete absence of larger urbanization projects such as social housing or educative or sanitation infrastructure.

4.2. Scale of river oil transport

A few kilometres upstream, on the Napo River, we find the oil port of Providencia, designed as a place for state investment for the construction of a new industrial centre, but which was absorbed by the rentier logic predominant in the Amazon, with the arrival of numerous oil companies operating in the Yasuní (Wilson & Bayón, 2016). In this case, the state promised the surrounding Kichwa community or Sumak Ñambi to invest in basic services such as water and sewage. The demand for basic services, infrastructure and certain fundamental rights such as education, health, housing, as part of the extended urbanisation is common among the indigenous communities of the Ecuadorian oil-producing Amazon (Lyall, 2017). However, soon the logic of eviction of families around the port was imposed by local government. To avoid it, the community built their own neighbourhood as an alternative to

eviction, which would make their displacement more difficult, in a logic of vindication of their right to the city, taking advantage of the seasonal mobilities of family members who live in other parts of the Amazon and the country.[6] In this case, the opulence of the interiors of the oil companies' camps on the site contrasts with the precariousness of the services enjoyed by the indigenous families, who live with the negative externalities of the ports, such as noise and water pollution.[7] Fig. 3 shows in its local map how the oil ports took the waterfront away from the communities, who have struggled not to be evicted, which was achieved through an agreement with one of the oil companies to build their "urban" streets (photo in the figure), and the arrival of family members to erect their own homes.

4.3. Scale of the oil service city

In the next scale, we can see the dispute of the cities of the Amazon, Coca, the provincial capital of Orellana which Yasuní-ITT belongs, having received the largest public and private investments associated with oil exploitation (González-Comín, 2023). Close to the Coca River we find some areas occupied by hotels and houses of a mestizo middle class, and new oil services enterprises in the north of city. However, we cannot consider that there are middle or upper-class residential areas, because the city maintains the logic of an enclave that receives oil workers on a seasonal basis, who do not establish their habitual family

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[6] Information obtained from interview face-to-face the president of the Sumak Ñambi community in April 2019.

[7] Information obtained from ethnographic observation in the community of Sumak Ñambi in April 2019 and May 2022.
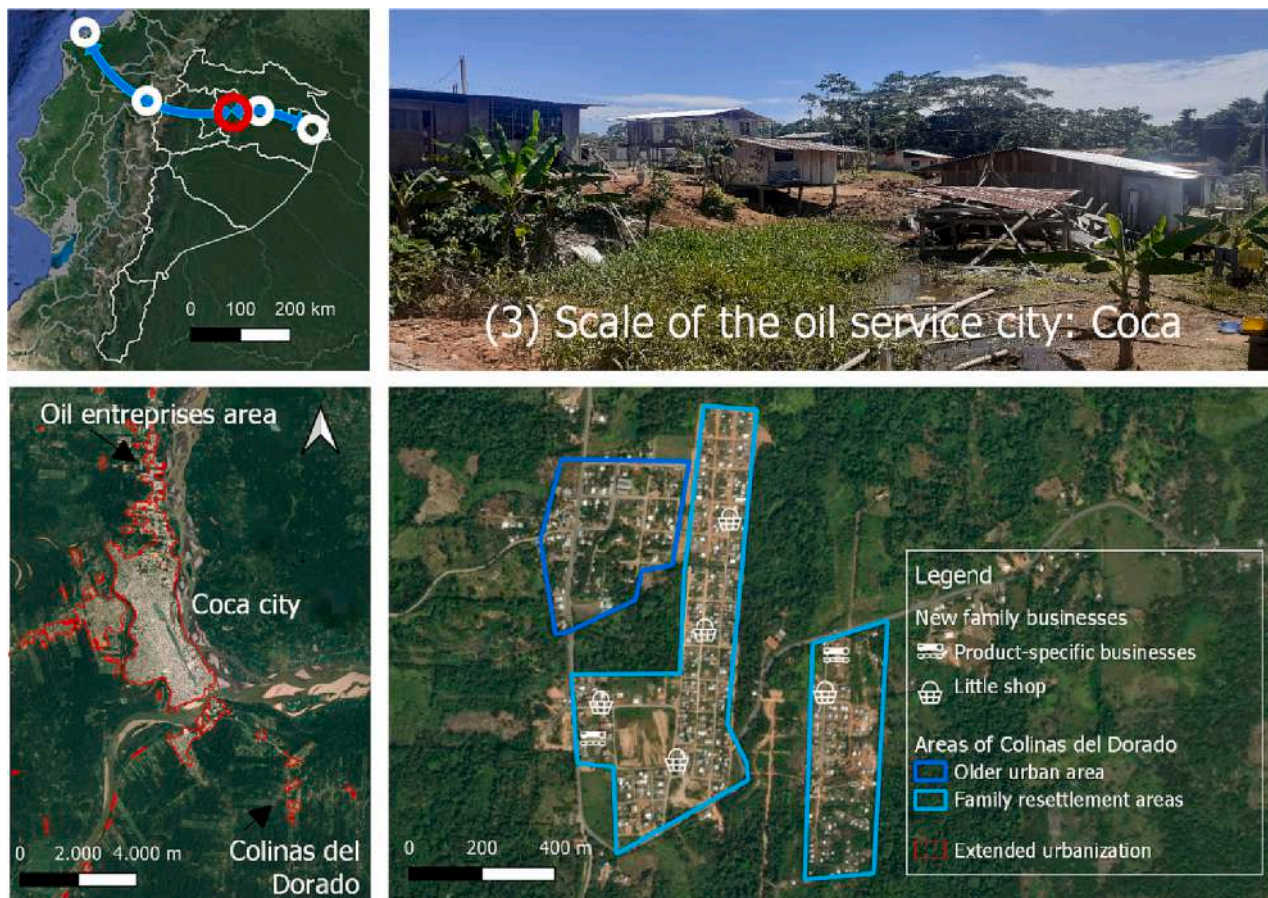
Fig. 4. Colinas de El Dorado neighbourhood in the city of Coca. Prepared by the authors based on the Amazon Urbanisation Index of Cabrera, et al. (2020) and fieldwork.

residence here.[8] On the other hand, we find a multitude of new neighbourhoods of internal immigrants who come to the city attracted by the commercial activity surrounding oil extraction.[9] Informal neighbourhoods that emerge without services of any kind, in flood-prone areas under intense climate risk, that will take years and even decades to consolidate and even be legalised, promoting an urban informality that is part of the injustices with which neoliberal cities are produced. The most recent and explosive case is Colinas del Dorado, southeast of the city as can be seen in general map of Fig. 4, populated by people who should have been resettled in 2018, who were displaced by the municipality from a risky area on the banks of the Payamino River to a swampy area that floods periodically, without basic services (photo in the figure).[10] It is evident the strong internal asymmetries and climate injustices within Coca, a city focused on the reproduction of extractivism at the sub-national level and with a myriad of disputes around urban-popular habitation.

4.4. Scale of the rentier capital city

As we have said, staying in the Amazonian scale of the enclave fails to fully explain the dynamics of spatial and climate injustices in the

process of rentier urbanisation. The expansion of the country's capital, Quito, cannot be explained without mentioning the appropriation and accumulation of surpluses of oil rentier capital, where successive oil booms have determined the growth of areas in the north of the city, and in the city's eastern valleys (Capello, 2011). This scheme correlates directly with the scenarios of rentier urbanisation through the placement of surpluses, and the formation of an upper class associated with extractivism (Coronil, 1997; Harvey, 2013). At the same time, Quito's class configuration is determined by the dispute over spaces with high environmental quality. The upper bourgeois class that has produced the city through the rentier exploitation of oil contracts with the state have progressively located in the eastern Tumbaco valley, seeking for a warmer climate, ample natural spaces and the recreation of rural life close to the city, among other factors (Serrano & Durán, 2020). In Tumbaco, the bourgeois is cornering the indigenous and peasant territorialities that still re-exist there (Bayón, 2016). Moreover, in its route to the sea, the oil pipeline crosses transversally the city through the south, an area largely planned by the elites for the working classes that arrived in Quito because of the successive crises, in a scheme of class and racial segregation (Carrión & Erazo Espinosa, 2012). These neighbourhoods were produced under to maximise the use of space for housing, with few green spaces or facilities that have only arrived nowadays, after vigorous struggles.[11] Various industrial zones were located here, that are supplied with local labour, and which then advance over natural areas or sloping land susceptible to landslides, which are increasingly frequent due to local climate changes, such as the Chillogallo neighbourhood, where the

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[8] Data provided by the Director of Planning of the Local Government of Coca, in a face-to-face interview in October 2021.

[9] Information obtained from ethnographic observation in Coca in October 2021 and May 2022.

[10] Information obtained from ethnographic observation in Coca and interview face-to-face with President of new neighbourhood of Colinas del Dorado in October 2021.

[11] Information obtained from ethnographic observation in Chillogallo and interview face-to-face with its leader in June 2022.
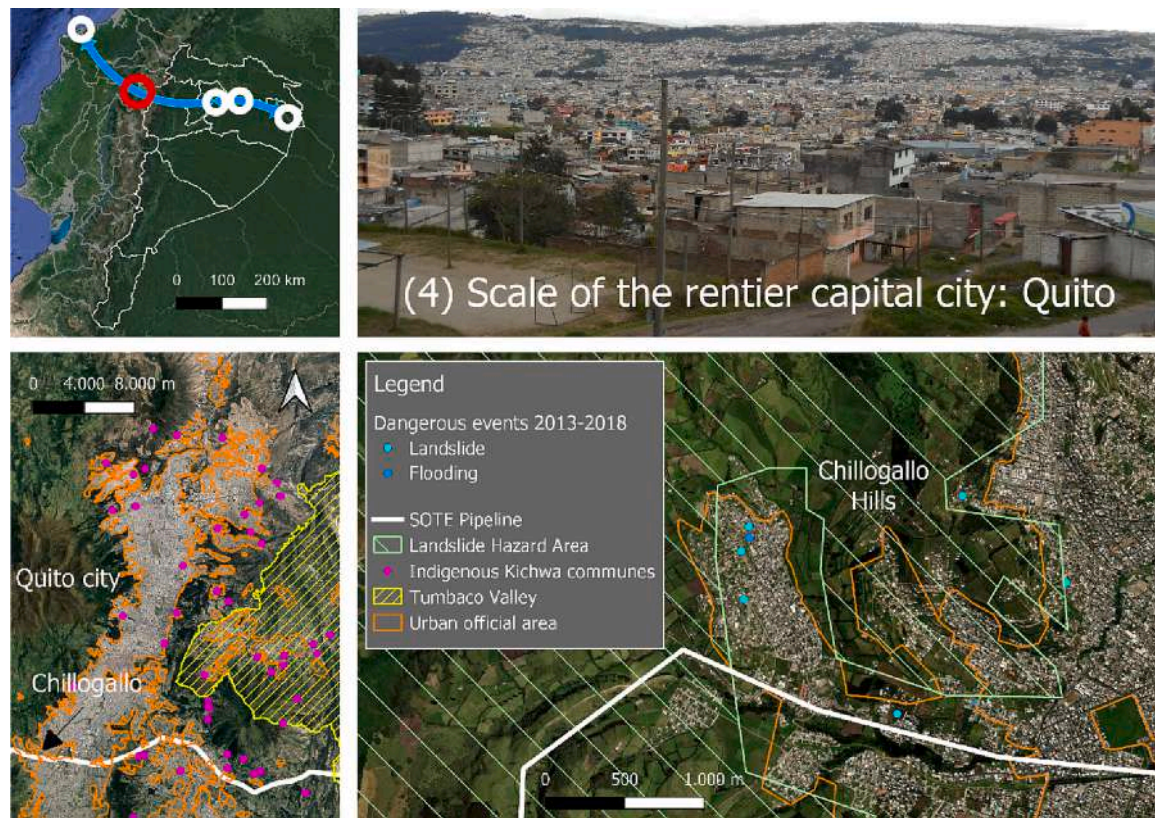
Fig. 5. Quito, with Chillogallo, communes, and neighbourhoods around the pipeline. Prepared by the authors based IGM data (2020) and fieldwork.

pipeline passes, with risks of landslides and floods (D'Ercole & Metzger, 2009). This pattern corresponds to what is described in the literature as urban inequalities and climate injustices as can be seen in Fig. 5: the map shows that the pipeline does not pass through upper class areas, but was planned in the same areas where impoverished migrant families face natural risks, and the picture shows that the urban habitat has no public investment. However, in this analysis, the disparities in environmental quality and racial and class segregation, as well as their contestations, must be understood in interrelation with the previous Amazonian scales developed, as well as linking the appropriation of extractive rent by the upper and white classes, while the popular classes in the south of Quito or the communes of the valleys experience the onslaught of the segregating city model, fuelled by oil extraction.

4.5. Scale of the export refinery

The oil pipeline finally arrives in the city of Esmeraldas, of a majority Afro-Ecuadorian population, where the refinery and the port for the export of crude oil were built as a promise of development to reduce the historical gap between this region and the rest of the country. Once built, the refinery attracted immigration from the countryside to the city, leading to new neighbourhoods around the new industrial pole (Valdivia, 2018). At present, the refinery is a continuous source of pollution, with several tragic explosions and continuous gas emissions and spills that aggravate the generalised contamination of soil, air and water, with a total absence of policies to improve the environmental quality.[12] The city has also been affected by periodic floods, that has killed around 600 people in recent years, and which are phenomena that are expected to increase with climate change (Mena et al., 2022). The south of the city

near the refinery and in the flood zone is the most affected part of the city, where more and more displaced internal migrants are arriving because it is one of the places with the cheapest land.[13] From Esmeraldas, Ecuadorian oil will reach California, where it will promote processes of implosion and economic growth in the United States. The neighbourhoods surrounding the Esmeraldas refinery are opposed to the opulence of the neighbourhoods of California, where the Ecuadorian crude oil arrives, as can be seen in the local map and photo of the Fig. 6. Ecuadorian oil will have left behind its externalities on its way through the country and have produced a rentier urbanisation packed with inequalities and climate injustices, from Tiputini, passing through the Napo River, Coca and the south of Quito to Esmeraldas.

5. Discussion: A multi-scalar approach that reconfigures the relationship between urbanisation and disputes over climate injustices

The comparative analysis conducted allows us to uncover that the driving force of urbanisation in the different scales analysed has different moments within the process of production of the extractive site. Our aim to position two critiques of the analysis embedded in the mainstream logic of urban studies of climate injustices is shown through the journey. Firstly, this perspective of climate injustices in the context of extended urbanization makes possible to analyse each scale interrelated with the others, showing that the effects of spatial segregation by class and ethnicity is both an urban mechanism of rentier capital, triggering struggles in response. As we assessed, literature on environmental justice and urbanization in the global South prioritizes the scale of a self-contained city, mainly considering internal inequalities, which implies

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[12] Information obtained from ethnographic observation in Esmeraldas in December 2019.

[13] Information obtained from face-to-face interview with Vice-Major of Esmeraldas in June 2019.
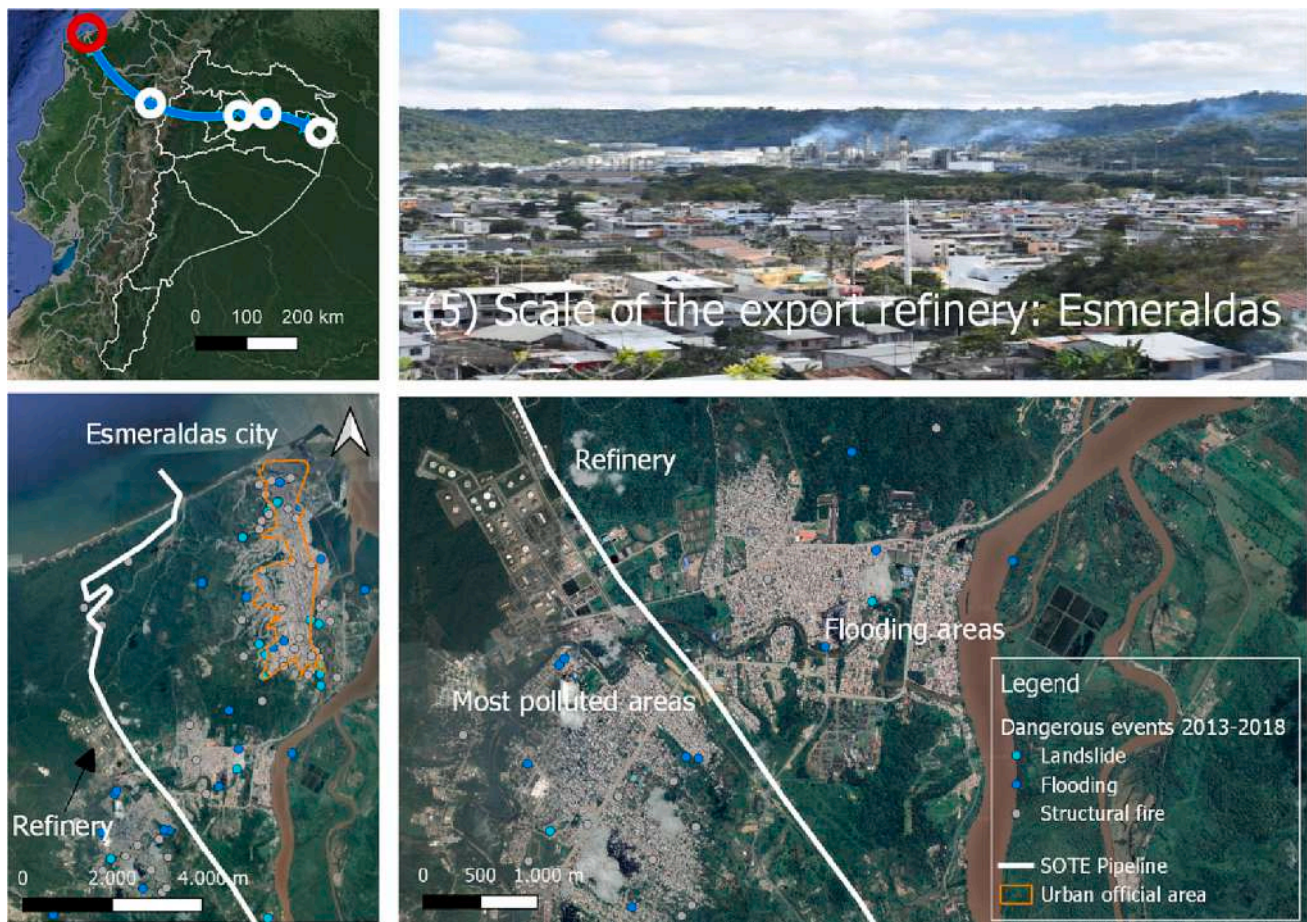
Fig. 6. Location of the refinery and the port of Esmeraldas, with its surrounding neighbourhoods. Prepared by the authors based IGM data (2020) and fieldwork. Foto from LaHora: https://www.lahora.com.ec/noticias/esmeraldas-demanda-de-compensacion-petrolera/.

conceptual limitations regarding the complexity of the connections between urbanization and climate injustices that operate at more than one scale.(Anguelovski et al., 2019; Chu & Michael, 2019). Aiming to fill this gap, in our research we used a set of scales in order to show such interconnectedness. The arrival of the oil extraction generates segregation between workers and officials and indigenous communities in Tiputini, similarly than in river ports such as Providencia, promoting a racialized distribution of oil pollution and struggles for urbanization in the same Kichwa communities. Likewise, an oil-boosted peripheral urbanization in the Amazon lured migrants who build Coca neighbourhoods, who have come to participate in the oil economy and end up living in areas with serious lack of services. At the same time, the classist and racist structure of the country's capital, Quito, is reinforced by old and new urban developments through the absorption of rents, whose elites are responsible for the historical abandonment of the mainly Afro city of Esmeraldas, while the racialized popular classes of both cities claim for their place. This vision assumes an empirical urban enlargement of the new geographies of climate injustices through the uneven development of the explosion-implosion dynamics urbanization, and the struggles and migrations that constitute these spaces.

Second, the multiscale approach allows us to see that oil extraction, the burning of which is one of the main sources of GHG emissions and climate injustices, produces the process of extended urbanization as part of the uneven geographic development of capitalism. That is, the flow of oil from the Amazon to California depicted in our analysis simultaneously reproduces the centre-periphery arrangements and dependency while obstructing the possibility of cities in the south to transition to more just and sustainable modes of urbanization. So, while literature on climate injustices privileges the global and national scale, without

further questions on the production of cities (Golubchikov & O'Sullivan, 2020; Porter et al., 2020; Rice, Long, & Levenda, 2022), in this paper, urbanization becomes a consequence of the progressive growth of oil exploitation networks and the super-exploitation of human labour and nature. This occurs unevenly at the 5 scales analysed, in a country crossed by a pipeline that allows the extraction and export of oil to the global north and that leaves in its wake a series of forms of urbanization. Therefore, analysing the spatial relations between the different urbanization processes at different scales allows us to overcome a static vision of the city, in which inequalities and actions to overcome them are framed on an insufficient scale, which prevents us from seeing the need to look at the centre-periphery relations that are reproduced in space. Just as Quito is a centre of power and peripheralizes the cities of Esmeraldas and Coca, Coca in turn becomes a centre for Providencia or Tiputini, which are centres with respect to the surrounding communities. At the same time, all the analysed spaces are peripheries with respect to the processing of Ecuadorian crude oil, which is done in California, USA. Therefore, an uneven development approach, combined with dependency theory, is a contribution to the debates on *ecological* unequal exchange and climate justice struggles, both with respect to the studies carried out in the Ecuadorian oil axis, as well as in the Latin American discussions that have taken place.

6. Conclusions: Theoretical and methodological contributions for new climate geographies of urbanisation

In this paper we propose a theoretical framework to extend the global urban studies through the provincialisation knowledge and decolonial perspectives. Locating the analysis in the global south,

particularly on the oil axis that crosses the country from the Amazon to the coast, allows us to rethink the premises taken for granted in other analyses on the intersection between climate injustices and cities. This is an exercise that, far from invalidating the existing literature, proposes a comparative perspective to dislocate urban studies, an invitation to explore urbanisation as a process, and urban climate injustices in a multi-scalar fashion. Indeed, another contribution of the paper is the organization of the analysis in a multi-scalar journey that permitted us to generate a series of comparative reflections at each node of the oil pipeline route, revealing uneven geographical development and dependency as constitutive of the climate injustices associated with urbanisation. The limitations of this research are, on the one hand, the absence of funds that would have allowed for more in-depth fieldwork in Ecuador, which would have revealed a more complex set of matryoshkas, with new scales that would complement those indicated in this study, along with an analysis that includes the gendered production of the space, intersected with class and race. On the other hand, the look from the Ecuadorian national space prevents us from seeing how the unequal development continues in the place of processing and utilization of oil in the USA, and therefore the question arises as to what are the scales that relate this process to the global north.

We have considered that cities are not a given segregated element, but a specific moment in the configuration of inequalities that are produced through disputes in which climate injustices are very present. This paper therefore proposed to reconsider the very notion of the city by highlighting the effects that the implosion in the global north entails for the processes of explosion-implosion in the global south, through a chain of climate injustices fuelled by oil extraction that starts in areas such Yasuní, in the heart of the Amazon (Monte-Mor, 2014). Considering climate injustices from this perspective allows urbanisation processes to be incorporated into climate thinking. Not only by bearing in mind how cities will transition towards sustainable models as independent units, but also by considering the process of urbanisation itself as a result of the voracity of capital accumulation addicted to fossil fuels, which is currently leading to the constant creation of new infrastructural axes that lead to the emergence of increasingly remote and populated cities. Thus, we believe that speaking of city transitions diverts the focus away from the ongoing processes of uneven development that drives to more and more dispossession and pushes popular and racialised people to precarious urban peripheries across the globe.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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4.2. Article 2: Decolonizing Urban Studies in the Amazon: Indigenous Practices for Contesting Planetary Urbanization.

This article is part of a special issue of the Revista INVI (Instituto Nacional de Vivienda de Chile, SJR 2024 Q1 0.448), published in 2023, focused on critical approaches to decoloniality and urban studies in Latin America and the Caribbean. The article was developed with Gustavo Durán, a FLACSO-Ecuador professor and member of the Red Contested Territories, who has studied Amazonian urbanization. The first author handled the theoretical conceptualization, overall argument, systematization, and synthesis of findings, while the second author designed the fieldwork strategy and provided conceptual proposals based on empirical work. Fieldwork was conducted jointly.

The article challenges the separation between cities and Indigenous peoples, showcasing various forms of resistance and reinvention of urban spaces. It expands on extended urbanization and uneven geographical development, focusing on Indigenous contestations. The article examines situated contributions and how Latin American and Caribbean decolonial theories provincialize global urbanism in dialogue with postcolonial critiques. These critiques have become increasingly prominent in Anglo-Saxon debates, particularly in the context of planetary urbanization. They demonstrate how Indigenous contestations of Amazonian urbanization confront colonial epistemic erasure and the assumption of urbanizing annihilation, producing diverse and original strategies for remaining in central spaces of the region through ontologically grounded political proposals.

The article employs an inductive-deductive comparative method. It outlines the colonial processes resisted by Indigenous peoples, emphasizing the disparity between northern Ecuador's networked urbanization and the linear patterns in central and southern regions. A comprehensive examination of Indigenous disputes over urbanization led to four typologies: (1) Adaptations to urbanization, (2) Indigenous social housing, (3) Settlements to halt colonization, and (4) Re-occupations to assert Indigenous territory. Two cases exemplifying each strategy were selected, and variables were defined for each typology to showcase the territorialization linked to Indigenous-urban processes and common indicators challenging everyday rights. This suggests Indigenous spatial practices manifest in all eight cases,

asserting urban rights alongside the region's popular sectors. By examining different spatial and temporal scales, the article contests the concept of planetary urbanization, proposing an alternative vision altered by Indigenous conflicts. This perspective is crucial for understanding uneven development through a decolonial lens aimed at provincializing global urbanism.

The eight selected cases varied in relational depth. Providencia and Pañacocha have been connected to the author's work since 2015 via CENEDET. The other six cases were engaged through FLACSO-Ecuador. Connections with Sapo Rumi and CCIPNA were established at the start of doctoral research in 2019, facilitated by a faculty member's ties to a Kichwa commune and a formal collaboration request from CCIPNA. The four additional cases—Ikiam, Santa Clara, Sevilla Don Bosco, and 31 de Agosto—were included after a FLACSO field visit in 2021. Field visits informing this article occurred during two campaigns in 2021 and 2022. In these eight sites, primary fieldwork methods included mapping recent spatial changes through satellite imagery and drone surveys, analyzing public services, and conducting interviews with current and former leaders to reconstruct histories of territorial disputes. The research team and community leaders conducted field visits, enabling evaluations of daily life. Document reviews for each site addressed informational gaps and illuminated different dimensions of space occupation histories. Data processing for this article focused on characterizing the four defined groupings and providing an in-depth explanation of local and everyday scales.

Dossier

Decolonizar los estudios urbanos desde la Amazonía: prácticas indígenas para disputar la urbanización planetaria

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Decolonizar los estudios urbanos desde la Amazonía: prácticas indígenas para disputar la urbanización planetaria

Resumen

Este artículo propone un ejercicio de conceptualización para abrir caminos decoloniales en los debates de urbanización planetaria desde la Amazonía. El análisis de las disputas indígenas de este proceso muestra que los espacios urbanos son residuales desde una perspectiva infraestructural, así como en su plasmación, sentido y cotidianidad. A través del análisis de ocho espacios urbanos de la Amazonía ecuatoriana en los que hay visibles prácticas indígenas, se ha realizado una metodología mixta cualitativa-espacial durante 2021 y 2022 mediante el estudio histórico de la conformación del territorio, entrevistas a dirigencias y observación etnográfica. En los resultados de este estudio emergen cuatro categorías diferentes de disputa de los nuevos lugares de urbanización, que muestran nítidamente formas en las que es contenido el proceso de colonización, al mismo tiempo que son contestadas las lógicas coloniales en sus lugares centrales desde saberes propios, permitiendo contrarrestar las narrativas dominantes de la urbanización planetaria en las que el capital avanza de forma omnipotente sobre los territorios indígenas. Por ello, el análisis contenido en este artículo permite concluir que las disputas indígenas hacen que la urbanización sea residual en la Amazonía, permitiendo una revisión crítica decolonial de sus bases de teorización.

Decolonizing Urban Studies from the Amazon: Indigenous Practices to Contest Planetary Urbanization

Abstract

This article proposes a conceptualization exercise to open up decolonial paths to the debates on planetary urbanization from the Amazon. The analysis of indigenous disputes in this process shows that urban spaces are residual from an infrastructural perspective, as well as in their embodiment, meaning and everyday life. Through the analysis of eight different urban spaces in the Ecuadorian Amazon where indigenous practices are visible, a mixed qualitative-spatial methodology has been carried out during 2021 and 2022 through the historical study of the conformation of the territory, interviews with families and ethnographic observation. In the results of this study, four different categories of dispute of the new places of urbanization emerge, which clearly show the ways in which the process of colonization is contained, while at the same time the colonial logics are contested in their central places from their own knowledge, making it possible to counteract the dominant narratives of planetary urbanization in which capital advances omnipotently over indigenous territories. Therefore, the analysis contained in this article allows us to conclude that indigenous disputes make urbanization residual in the Amazon, allowing for a critical decolonial revision of its theorizing bases.

Introduction: Towards an Urban Decolonial Theory of the Amazonia

When speaking about Amazonian urbanization, we normally overlook the fact that different civilizations in the region built important cities already before colonization. A pre-colonial urban area was discovered in the last decade between Bolivia and Brazil, with a population ranging between five-hundred thousand and a million people in interconnected cities, thus revolutionizing the perception of Amazonas and urbanization (de Souza *et al.*, 2018). Interconnected settlements in the east of the Brazilian Amazonia, and more recently in the central Bolivian Amazon are also being investigated (Prümers *et al.*, 2022).

The dominant approach in literature about an urbanization of the Amazonia, linked only to colonization, capitalism, or extractivism, is consistent with the main processes of territorial change of the last decades, without any doubt (Féliz & Melón, 2020; Kanai, 2014). However, to make of this fact the totality of the process implies denying the resistances, re-existences, disputes, resignifications, or adaptations that have been ongoing through the contestations that the Amazonian peoples are raising in the face of this process. To counterpose urbanization to the "real Amazonia" supposes a process of usurpation of its people's own urban history and of their precolonial social complexity, as well as a negation of their relation with the urban centers of capitalist colonization, which has implied processes of tension, material and symbolic disputes, and the occupation of spaces in the cities themselves, with constant mobilizations related to the flows of urbanization (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Whitten & Whitten, 2008).

In this research we draw on the legacy of different South-North dialogues that have been able to contribute from Latin American critical geographies to the understanding of urban critical theory and its decolonization, generating at the same time a contribution to postcolonial studies on urbanization carried out from the global South (Carroza-Athens, 2020; Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Wu, 2020). The question that guides this article is how the indigenous disputes of the Amazonian urban processes allow to formulate the dominant theories of the planetary urbanization in the region? To answer it, the Amazonian peoples are analyzed as main actors in the limitation of the colonizing urbanization, and at the same time as fundamental actors in the dispute over the meaning and the concrete form of the production of urban space.

In this analysis, a mixed multiscale methodology is implemented combining the historical analysis of this dispute, the spatial effects of the installation of colonization infrastructure, and the spatial ethnography of the way in which urban-Amazonian spaces are inhabited. This methodological strategy allows to explore how the indigenous disputes result in the urbanization becoming marginal, this being explored at three scales: 1) the regional scale, guided by the limitation of infrastructures; 2) the local scale, linked to the conformation of their own neighborhoods; and 3) the everyday scale, in which urban habitation is exercised from indigenous logics. The following sections provide a theoretical overview of the dominant formulations in the study of planetary and Amazonian urbanization, explaining the multiscale methodological strategy and exposing the results under the logic of scales; all of the above, in order to generate a discussion about residual urbanization that allows us to conclude with the main theoretical contributions of this methodological-theoretical proposal.

Conceptual Dialogues: Towards Residual Urbanization

The growth of Amazonian megacities like Belem, Manaus, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, or Iquitos at rates that exceed their respective national averages for the last decades, the emergence of numerous intermediate cities in the region, or the construction of mega-infrastructures sheltered under the *Iniciativa de Integración Regional Sudamericana* (IIRSA) [Initiative for Regional South American Integration], during the last cycle of commodities boom, have resulted in Amazonian urbanization attracting relevant academic attention (Cabrera-Barona *et al.*, 2020; Dijck, 2013). Due to the enormous spatial transformations brought about by these processes linked to the circuits of global capital accumulation, critical urban theory has had significant preeminence in its analysis under the predominant perspective of planetary urbanization.

The predominant framework during the seventies and eighties regarding peri-urbanization, rural-urbanization, and the configuration of urban networks, was clearly insufficient to explain the processes of capital accumulation flows and the generation of new urban centers in Amazonia (Allen, 2003). However, through the compared study of different states in the Brazilian Amazonia, Monte-Mor formulated the concept of extensive urbanization to provide an account of the predominant processes in the region (Monte-Mor, 1994). In his formulation, Monte-Mor situates the countryside-city contraposition as a moment in capitalist development linked to the industrial revolution, a time when the city is given hierarchy over the countryside, projecting itself to the regional and national scales in a phenomenon of implosion-explosion. In the explosion, the city becomes an urban fabric -guided by the infrastructures of capital- while at the same time the process of implosion promotes megacities in the national and international space as well as new centers in the Amazonian region along its infrastructures (Monte-Mor, 1994). Based on this conceptualization, Neil Brenner formulated his 11 theses on planetary urbanization, which propose replacing the usual interest in the typology of settlements by an analysis of the socio-spatial processes, which he calls nominal essences. He also re-characterizes the urban in a continuous way, beyond the rigid categories of countryside or city (Brenner, 2013). This perspective has had a greater capacity for positioning itself in the global debates than Monte-Mor's proposal (Castriota & Tonucci, 2018), but it has finally returned to Amazonia with a multitude of views that have analyzed the region through this prism of planetary urbanization (Arboleda, 2016; Kanai, 2014).

However, the planetary urbanization proposal has also met postcolonial criticism, which we summarize in three levels. Firstly, regarding its pretensions of configuring a totality without considering the multiplicity of spaces and responses that are located in cities of the global South or denying the embodied experiences of diverse bodies in the face of urbanization (McLean, 2018). In this first question, there is an interweaving with the framework of modernity, coloniality, and decoloniality (MCD) and the relations between nation State and urbanization (Quijano, 2000) since this totalizing razing implies an epistemic violence by assuming that the multiplicity of experiences will submit unequivocally to the processes of planetary urbanization. From this point of view, to assume the urbanization of the Amazonia without an MCD perspective may help continue to naturalize urban spaces as whitewashed (Carmo Cruz & Araújo de Oliveira, 2017).

Secondly, regarding the need to deconstruct and denaturalize the concepts of urbanization and city and pay attention to the struggles in the city and to its subjects, so that the interest for extended urbanization does not overrun the other realms (Khatam & Haas, 2018; Reddy, 2018). Within this question, attention is paid to the absence of an "ontology of the everyday", and the omission or occlusion of subjects and subjectivity as a major limitation of the planetary urbanization perspective (Ruddick *et al.*, 2018). Drawing once again a parallel with Latin American decolonial studies, it could be argued that these ontologies of the everyday need views from the indigenous cosmovisions, in which the relational ontologies imply a specific prism from whence to analyze the complexity of Amazonian subjectivities (Escobar, 2015), and which is legally recognized, as is multinationalism in Ecuador's constitution (Walsh, 2008).

These arguments have yet to make their way back to Amazonia, and their discussion is something we wish to promote with this article, provincializing global knowledge, and observing the processes from a planetarity of subaltern urbanism (Sheppard *et al.*, 2013). For this, our contribution to the decolonization of urban studies is centered around disputing the narratives of planetary urbanization through the analysis of the configuration of urban-Amazonian subjects that will demand to interweave the perspective of political economy and decolonial studies. For this end, we propose an exercise of multiscale and multitemporal analysis situated in the Ecuadorian Amazonia, in which we may oppose these visions of planetary urbanization through the centrality of the actors who produce the spaces and who are key in understanding how the large flows of capital interact with the relational ontologies and the subjectivities of subjects in constant mobility and reinvention to cope with the dispossessions (Escobar, 2015; Ruddick *et al.*, 2018).

The urbanization of the Ecuadorian Amazonia is enunciated as residual based on a sequence. On a macro scale, the processes of urbanization through infrastructures on the regional Amazonian scale are confronted by the actors present in the territory and their ways of conceiving the future; on a meso scale, the same sense of urbanization is different for different actors, who in this way dispute what the process implies in the Amazonian context on a local scale, which also entails disputes in the more everyday contexts of the urban Amazonian peripheries, and which result in the appropriation of urban space from a multiplicity of perspectives; on a micro scale, the different relational ontologies will be set in motion, and an everyday scale of dispute will unfold. For this reason, the urbanization processes in the Amazonia will be a product of historical multiscale disputes, and a residue insofar as it will be consolidated wherever and however these disputes stipulate from the perspective of these three scales.

For the regional scale of the infrastructure implementation processes, the residual urbanization process is observed as a product of unequal geographic development, of its dynamics of differentiation and equalization (Smith, 1984). Just as Monte-Mor provincialized Lefebvre's thought on implosion-explosion for Amazonia, we propose a view of the subjects that contest the penetration of capital, considering as essential the social disputes and resistances to colonization in the Amazonian space, fundamental in understanding the still limited differentiation of capital in the region, for most of its projects end up still today in resounding failures (Makaran, 2020; Wilson & Bayón, 2017a). For this, a historical-spatial analysis is necessary, to consider how the existence of actors and subjectivities in the space are determinant in the capacity of space urbanization capital and end up being residual to their infrastructural logics (Little, 2003).

Given that urbanization infrastructures are rejected in certain spaces, but implemented in others, the local scale is related to the forms of appropriation that different actors will make of the urbanization process where it is underway. At this scale, migrations from different regions occur, endogenous and exogenous, which demand looking at the critical geography of the mobilities that are part of unequal geographic development (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Sheller, 2018). There is also a component of appropriation of the urban and of the mobilities related to de-fixing subjects that have been traditionally considered as the opposite of the city, and we find the configuration of indigenous-urban subjects as protagonists of the processes of contestation to the forms in which urbanization is established in the Amazonia, with seasonal or permanent mobilities and strong variability by nationality (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016). For this reason, residual urbanization is also justified in the processes that will make of the Amazonian territory a process wrapped in differentiated mobilities, of multiple visions that will dispute the ways in which urban spaces are materialized (Campbell, 2015).

Once these large processes are open on a regional scale, a local scale, and an everyday one emerge, in which the different actors and subjectivities will dispute specific spaces in the urban peripheries, which will materialize the forms of appropriation through contestations also inserted in everyday life, where territorial strategies will be deployed to remain in the space once the mobilities have been produced (Haesbaert, 2005; Porto-Gonçalves, 2015). In this everyday scale, a myriad of forms of contestation will come together, where the differentiated historical process of the political subjects that are configured becomes an inescapable issue, just as the institutional forms of violence that are underway, or the infrastructural determinations that will limit the real possibilities of appropriation and their meaning (Lyall, 2020), with the relational ontologies emerging in various complexities.

Multiscale Methodological Strategy: Between the Geo-Historical Search for Infrastructure and Spatial Ethnography

Studying the spatial and historical multiscale of the indigenous disputes of Amazonian urbanization requires a strategy able to capture the main elements of each one while generating a body of thought through its local links (Lacoste, 1977). From the perspective of the regional scale implying long historical times, it becomes fundamental to understand how the territory has been structured, the way in which its actors have spatialized themselves throughout history, and the territorial powers that dispute it, to understand the way in which the present urban forms are being produced and contested (Haesbaert, 2005). This includes historical documentation, the statistical-territorial representation of quantitative and qualitative elements of the economic-social structures, and the actions and strategies of different subjects. At this scale, significant innovations have been introduced in the understanding of the main areas that have been historically and recently urbanized through a multivariant valuation of the new urban settlements around infrastructures (Cabrera-Barona *et al.*, 2020). From this geo-historical-statistical information at the macro scale of the main

urbanization axes, eight neighborhoods or communities were selected that better illustrate the main indigenous spatial proposals that allow valuing the territorialities active at the local scale (Porto-Gonçalves, 2015).

In each one of these spaces field work was carried out during the second half of 2021, with a total of 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). Through them, it was possible to learn about the ways in which different indigenous and mestizo actors are understanding the cities, their mobilities towards the new infrastructures, and the disputes they are posing to generate their own neighborhoods. On the everyday scale, participant observation was carried out in each of the eight neighborhoods with the purpose of understanding the forms of inhabiting from indigenous practices and the fundamental aspects of everyday life, considering the main dynamics of transport, access to basic services or housing situation, based on ethnographic research forms developed for Amazonia (Di Virgilio & Gil y de Anso, 2012). The systematization of these contents led to an interconnected reflection of the cases and to the definition of four typologies of dispute.

This methodologic strategy allows an approach based on multiscalarity, which will empirically contrast the main features of urbanization in the Ecuadorian Amazonia, while at the same time putting in tension some of the strongest postulates of the planetary urbanization approach to move towards our own proposal of residual urbanization. We wish to clarify that a better understanding of the current views on urbanization processes would require a deeper intercultural dialogue than the one offered in this pandemic-mediated process, with ethnographic methodologies capable of understanding the logics present in each one of the territories (Muratorio, 1998).

Results: A Multiscale Overview of the Multiplicity of Indigenous Strategies Facing Urbanization

THE REGIONAL SCALE

The flows of capital in the Ecuadorian Amazonia throughout the more than 500 years of colonization have been discontinuous and very limited with respect to the regions of the Sierra and the Coast of the country, combining moments of strong integration into the global markets and periods of grater isolation (Wilson & Bayón, 2017b). From very early on, there were expeditions and settlements in Ecuadorian Amazonia as part of the Spanish colonization process that resulted in the genocide of the Quijo people, barely consolidating the Baeza-Tena axis during the first three centuries (Gutiérrez Marín, 2002). In the southern part, the settlements erected by the Spanish colonists were razed to the ground by the Shuar people, the city of Macas being the only one that survived as the single outpost in the southern region for centuries (Lucena, 1993).

The rubber boom of the nineteenth century started in the eastern part of the Ecuadorian Amazonia and the rivers that communicate the region with Iquitos, so in infrastructural terms there was no incidence either. In the twentieth century a series of agriculture colonization outposts were established that in the present day form the main population centers of the center-south axis, from Puyo to Zamora, presently crossed by the road called Troncal Amazonia (Gondard & Mazurek, 2001). In the north of the Amazonia, a key factor was the arrival of oil exploitation in the seventies, bringing the road to the first enclave and currently largest city in the region, Lago Agrio, and to the second largest city in the region (mainly engaged in extraction services), Coca (Carrión & Cuvi, 1985).

However, in the preceding and following decades, it was impossible for transnational oil companies to achieve similar territorial oil-exploiting penetration in the center and southern parts of the Amazonia. On the one hand, the firm that intended to prospect for oil in central Amazonia left the country after the impossibility of carrying out the work due to the exodus of workers caused by the persistent attacks from indigenous peoples in isolation from the Waorani family. On the other hand, the limit was the strong opposition and organization of the Kichwa, Shuar, Achuar, or Andoa indigenous peoples in defense of their territories, with the emblematic 1992 uprising in the Amazonian city of Puyo (Cabodevilla & Aguirre, 2013; Cubillo-Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitán, 2015).
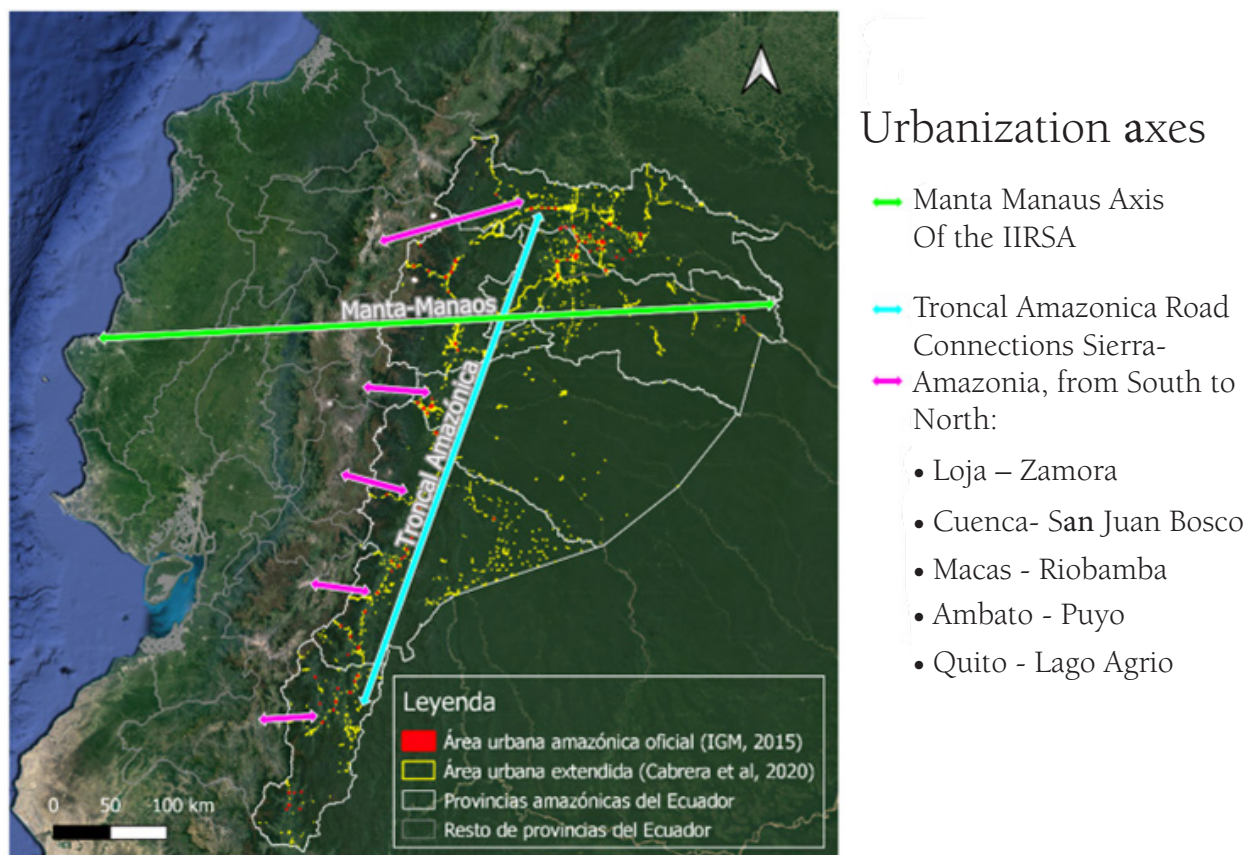
In recent decades, the largest mega-project for the insertion of the Ecuadorian Amazonia into planetary urbanization through infrastructures has been the Manta-Manaos project, part of the IIRSA, which implied different dimensions of coloniality and power in respect to the Amazonian space (Porto-Gonçalves & Quental, 2012). This axis, which has gathered a state investment of nearly two million dollars in the last decade, has not been able to transport goods and has been a resounding failure, showing the limitations of the automatisms of planetary urbanization. Meanwhile, due to the opposition of the Kichwa communities of the Napo, roads and river ports were only established where there was no community territory, (Wilson & Bayón, 2017b).

The results of these spatial macro-processes are quite evident: the infrastructures that were consolidated through the oil-related expansion in northern Amazonia, the roads connecting to the highlands in the migratory processes in five main axes, and the conformation of the *Troncal Amazonica* connecting the different centers from north to south, are the traces of different moments in colonization, as can be seen in Figure 1. In the historical process, the areas that have remained connected are relatively scarce in the region, and are based on the connections with the Sierra, configuring a foothill-type urbanization and the oil-related development in the north that brings together the most populated cities. The absence of other urban axes is defined by the disputes from the indigenous territorialities, which have set specific limits to the materialization of the urbanization, leaving it confined to the boundaries of the infrastructures.

The Local Scale

Once the infrastructures, the growing urban centers, and their peripheries have been established, another view emerges of residual urbanization on a scale that will allow us to see sharp internal differences, and the possibilities that different actors find of dominating the production of urban space. In total, we will typologize four different ways in which the meaning of urbanization is disputed from the different visions of the Amazonian peoples: (1) adaptations from the own territory in the face of urban dynamics; (2) the negotiation of social-interest housing in environments of extractivism; (3) indigenous urban settlements to avoid urban evictions; and (4) the reoccupation of peri-urban spaces to configure a sense of community in the city. The location of places can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 1.
Main axes of urbanization infrastructures.

Urbanization axes

— Manta Manaus Axis
Of the IIRSA

— Troncal Amazonica Road
Connections Sierra-
— Amazonia, from South to
North:

- Loja – Zamora
- Cuenca- San Juan Bosco
- Macas - Riobamba
- Ambato - Puyo
- Quito - Lago Agrio

Source: authors' own.

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Figure 2.
Location of investigations in the local and everyday scales.

Study cases

○ (1) Adaptations to urbanization: Ikiam and Sapo Rumi.

○ (2) Indigenous Social Housing: Pañacocha (Ciudad del Milenio) and Santa Clara (Casa para Todos).

○ (3) Settlements to stop colonization: Sevilla Don Bosco and Providencia

○ (4) Re-occupations to make the indigenous territory prevail: 31 de Agosto and CCIPNA

Source: authors' own.

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1. A first approach to refute the argument according to which urbanization is opposed to indigenous territoriality is that there are communities that have clearly managed to dispute their place in respect to the city, limiting its extension and readjusting their role in it. Tena is part of the corridor where the Quijo once lived, disappeared after the first Spanish colonization, and since then a space of ecclesial and colonial hacienda's power, with forced migrations from the Sierra as laborers for the Amazonian region. The city of Tena grew after becoming seat of the vicariate during the twentieth century and later provincial capital, with a Kichwa indigenous territoriality that has co-constituted numerous neighborhoods of the city (Tanguila Andy, 2018). There have been two logics of urban expansion in the last lustra that have taken their logics to the communities: the establishing of IKIAM University north of the city, and the logic of tourist resorts along the banks of the Pano river to the west, which are operating as urban expanders (Uzendoski & Saavedra, 2010; Wilson & Bayón, 2017c). Despite these dynamics having generated significant land dispossessions, the communities have accentuated a strategy of adaptation to these impositions. From this perspective, a rapid transition is taking place of these Kichwa subjects who seek the possible advantages of the arrival to the city: through setting up their own resorts with tourism and food services in the case of Sapo Rumi and other communities, or through venturing into catering or gardening services, as in the case of Atacapi, close to the university. These processes are full of tensions, negotiations, and agreements with local and national public institutions which are symbolically based on a common interest for an economic development that includes the communities. In this case an urban-indigenous subject is configured from the mobilities of other urban populations to their traditional spaces of life under a perspective that connects with their past as populations co-constitutive of spaces of tension between the urban and the community space.

2. When the more remote urbanization logics reach the indigenous territories, there are processes of opposition and negotiation with the different projects which has an extensive literature (Cielo & Coba, 2018). We shall focus here on those negotiations regarding extractivism where the communities achieve an investment in the form of urbanization. We consider here two cases of secondary outposts in the Amazonia, small villages that have received significant investment in social-interest housing associated to oil and hydroelectrical developments. In the community outposts of Pañacocha and Playas de Cuyabeno, an investment was generated in 2013 called Ciudades del Milenio with close to 100 dwellings, community halls, educational units, medical facilities, sports fields, etc., as part of the compensation for the expansion of the oil industry and a lengthy negotiation with the State (Wilson & Bayón, 2017d). This process shows how the Kichwa community subjects consider access to fundamental rights, such as education, health, and housing, a form of improving their conditions in relation to the national mestizo society and have been fighting for decades for their own form of urbanization (Lyall, 2020). Shortly after 2019, the first *Casa Para Todos* urbanization in the Amazonia was located in the outpost of Santa Clara, with a majority of the population belonging to the Kichwa communities, where a conflict was underway due to the installation of the Piatúa hydroelectrical project (Quito Cortés & Velázquez, 2019). The localization of more than 60 homes provisioned in the south of this small village was associated with a display of good intentions on the part of the State towards this Amazonian district. In both cases, there are small migrations from the more rural

property to the more urban house in the social housing projects, which are seasonal, weekly, or affecting only some members of the family. These two processes of social housing show how there is an assertion of the search for State's social housing under the logic of the historical dispute of the communities, which supports a logic of urban settlements as part of the rights of belonging to the Ecuadorian State.

3. In the cases where there is no State investment, but where communities face severe forms of dispossession due to colonization, strategies have also been deployed of an urbanization that is their own and consolidates the indigenous territoriality under threat. Emblematic of this historical strategy is the location of Sevilla Don Bosco, where one of the first sites of Spanish colonization was located over Shuar territory, called Sevilla de Oro, burnt down by a Shuar revolt in the sixteenth century. Later, a settlement of this nationality was installed, strategically perched facing the city of Macas, today capital of the Morona-Santiago province, serving until this day as their own urban center for the indigenous territoriality (Garzón Vera, 2013). As parish outpost, it has a strong indigenous majority and attracts the Shuar population from the interior of the territory demanding activities, services, and a presence in the urban, in countryside-city migrations within the same communitarian territory. Despite being an urban center, the ownership of the territory continues being communitarian, and the only way of accessing a plot for a house is to be part of the community. The other aspect of this form of territoriality is a small Kichwa urbanization carried out by the Sumak Ñambi community, in the outskirts of Providencia, the place selected by the Ecuadorian State to locate the multi-modal port of IIRSA's Manta-Manaos project (Wilson & Bayón, 2017b). In this case, the strategy of consolidating an urban space next to the port was perceived by the community as the most feasible option before the hegemony of the urban and the possibility that their rural properties be expropriated to establish an industrial plan around the port. After astute negotiations with local firms to carry out the topographic part of the urbanization, today family members who migrated to the Amazonian cities or to the capital of the country have built vacation residential homes that give an appearance of neighborhood. Due to the collapse of the multimodal corridor, the threat of eviction is deactivated. These examples of indigenous urbanization strategies as a form of avoiding colonization show an appropriation of the urban in defensive terms, and of interrelation with the dominant social processes in each territory.

4. Lastly, in this overview there are moments of re-constitution of the community's territory in the re-occupation of spaces that had been previously usurped. The most emblematic case that can be observed under this logic is the conformation of the Comunidad Ciudad Intercultural de Pueblos y Nacionalidades (CCIPNA) on the lands of the former "Té Zulay" estate, at the outskirts between the cities of Puyo and Shell. Indigenous territories were granted to foreign entities, displacing indigenous families in the thirties (Whitten & Whitten, 2008). On these lands, Kichwa descendant families, together with other indigenous families from the Amazonia and the Sierra, mestizo, afro, and coastal, decided more than 10 years ago to occupy the property and build an urban settlement under a logic of collective property (Bayón Jiménez *et al.*, 2021). Today, despite numerous offerings on the part of State institutions so that they can access land on an individual basis, the CCIPNA leadership insists on achieving a non-seizable global title under which they could live in a multinational logic. A similar process was produced 15 years ago in the city of Sucúa, a bor-

derline city between the highlands' colonist territoriality and the Shuar territoriality (Rubenstein, 2005). An embargo of the communal territory of the Shuar organization of Sucúa implied the municipalization of a property in the outskirts. In the face of the loss of territory, the Shuar organization assembled an association of indigenous and non-indigenous urban dwellers with the aim of reclaiming these properties. Once produced the occupation of lands, the municipality reached an agreement so that the neighborhood could legally integrate with single-family properties, and today it is inhabited as a neighborhood with Shuar identity within the city, and whose name, "31 de Agosto", celebrates the day in which the occupation was carried out. In this last typology, the subjects are constituted from the embodied experience of indigenous mobilities in the city and the coexistence with popular sectors that also suffer discrimination, racism, and lack of their own space. For this, they consolidate as multinational subjects, they start from the indigenous fact to make their reclamation more convincing, or even propose a form of collective government based on the multi-nationality recognized in Ecuador's Constitution.

THE EVERYDAY SCALE

The interviews and the field observations carried out allowed us to observe, in everyday life, a series of practices that are essential for the urban territorialization of the indigenous disputes. Access to adequate housing, basic services, the proximity to fundamental rights of health or education, or the perception of belonging to the city are main elements in the study of the popular habitat. But also emerging are categories pertaining to ontologies of the everyday, like self-government based on communal principles, the celebration of *minkas* that channel collective work, the establishing of festivities that are fundamental in the symbolic reproduction and appropriation of the urban space, and in some cases, the existence of titles of ownership of the communal land.

The most common strategy for acquiring a home is self-production, also in the State housing category of typology 2. The adjustment to these becomes a continuous task of everyday life, and the neighborhood's organizational cohesion is channeled towards getting the basic services of potable water and, subsequently, sewage system. In both of these adaptation cases in Tena, there are productive initiatives that do not have community characteristics in the rest. The occupation and defense of the inhabited urban space is an indispensable practice, with greater strength in typologies 3 and 4 of the previous section, of self-urbanization and reoccupation of spaces. In these, the indigenous neighborhoods are subject to harassment by the local powers, institutions, and the media as illegitimate encroachers in the Amazonian urbanization, with very clear components of racism and classism.

Facing this, there is a whole dimension of the festivity as an event in celebration of the existence of the neighborhoods and their diverse forms of inhabiting the Amazonian urbanization. The festivities are a fundamental part of each one of these spaces, where the indigenous component has a strong role: it is essential for CCIPNA in visibilizing the different cultures that inhabit it. The grievances of the Shuar in the festivities of

Sevilla Don Bosco retrace all the history of resistance and are an element of touristic attraction in the case of Tena. Other issues related to the ontologies of the everyday are the numerous food practices in these spaces, related to farming practices in non-built spaces next to the homes, which have even been considered in the designs of the new houses in Santa Clara, Spaces that are also indispensable for the gathering of clay for their ancestral pottery or for gathering medicinal plants to ensure the community's health.

Discussion Around Residual Urbanization

The indigenous disputes of the urbanization process in Amazonia leave behind a series of strategies and cultural practices that make possible to limit the violences in the colonization process in the Amazonia. At the regional scale, through the historical-spatial analysis, it is possible to assert that the historical resistances to the establishment of enclaves, first of the Spanish colony, and later to the attempts at extractive colonization, have been strongly contested through the burning of cities, the limitation of the construction of oil-related roads, or the legalization of community territories, which have been effective barriers in the materialization of infrastructures. Far from a totalizing process, the urban-colonizing process has had relatively scarce successes, with limited tendencies towards the equalization of the accumulation space's capital (Smith, 1984), acquiring a residual urbanization characteristic, as opposed to a planetary urbanization perspective.

At the local scale, we can see four different typologies of disputing its meaning, where indigenous territorialities are mobilized in the dispute of the central spaces in the colonial urbanization processes, to continue limiting this process of differentiation of the capital through mobilities. In typology 3, related to the establishment of the urbanization from a defensive point of view, and 4, which creates indigenous urbanization in peri-urban areas, the migrations to the outskirts of the cities allow the configuration of urban spaces under an indigenous logic. But also emerge in places where it is the State who produces the housing, as in typology 2, or in typology 1, where there is an adaptation to the arrival of the city logics. For this, the indigenous mobilities in dispute foster embodied experiences in which the modern-colonial city finds limits to its implantation (Reddy, 2018), so we can state again that planetary urbanization is not a steamroller, becoming again residual in its very process of materialization.

At the everyday scale, the analysis of the indigenous neighborhoods shows how the links are generated, which transcend the urban-popular organization to become spaces of historical reclamation regarding centrality, belonging to the non-interstitial spaces of the Amazonian space, resulting in a dispute of concretion of urban spaces in the Amazonia, as shown in Table 1. This allows to discuss the processes of planetary urbanization as a form of devastation, given that there is a dispute in the everyday that reformulates the urban from everyday and relational ontologies (Escobar, 2015; Ruddick *et al.*, 2018).

Table 1.

Summary of Access to Rights in the Neighborhoods Analyzed.

Local Type	Space of Analysis	Water	Electricity	Sewage system	Space Occupation	Home Adjustment	Risk of Eviction	School	Health	Entrepreneurship	Harassment	Festivities	Minka	Farming
1	Sapo Rumi (Turismo Tena)	x	x			x		x		x		x	x	x
	Atacapi (IKIAM Tena)	x	x			x		x		x		x	x	x
2	Pañacocha (C. del Milenio)	x	x	X		x		x	x			x	x	x
	Santa Clara (CPT)	x	x	X		x				x				x
3	Sevilla Don Bosco (Macas)	x	x	X	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Sumak Ñambi (Providencia)		x		x	x	x				x	x	x	x
4	CCIPNA (Puyo)		x		x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
	31 de Agosto (Sucúa)	x	x		x	x	x	x			x	x		x

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Conclusions: Rethinking Planetary Urbanization from a Decolonial Perspective

This research, which generates a dialogue between decolonial proposals and the postcolonial critique about planetary urbanization shows the possibilities offered by the analysis of the processes of dispute of coloniality based on indigenous-urban subjects, an analysis sparsely addressed in literature. Returning to the question that guides this research, the dispute itself of colonial urbanization by these subjects allows to question planetary urbanization as a process of uncontestable modernity, opening to numerous theoretical and methodological possibilities for decolonization of urban studies. The historicization and materialization of the failures and limits of this spatial and epistemic razer allows to resituate the multitude of indigenous strategies so that the relational ontologies continue being part of the logics of territorial habitat, including the urban territories of the Amazonia.

The dialogue between the critical theories on capitalism related to the production of space has had in the Amazon an important place for the formulation of thought, not only contributing to provincialize thought, but also to formulate, from the peripheries of knowledge, theories to rethink the central spaces of capital (Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Quijano, 2000; Sheppard *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, based on this study in the Amazonia, decolonization, from the perspective of planetary urbanization, opens roads to rethink the roles and spaces assigned by the global urban logics to indigenous relational ontologies, with the possibility emerging of rethinking multi-nationality and the multi-ethnic alliances based on the everyday experience of dispossession and discrimination inside the cities (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Bayón Jiménez *et al.*, 2021).

At the same time, this perspective also allows us to reconsider which territorialities are defined as indigenous, given that a more detailed historical analysis forces us to integrate the ancestral territories as part of the urbanization processes, already since precolonial and colonial times. To continue in the future with these reflections, we ask ourselves: what possibilities does this perspective open for the configuration of urban-indigenous subjects in a multinational State like Ecuador? To decolonize urban studies, it is indispensable to allow the emergence of a narrative that is confrontational with the confinement of the indigenous subjects to the remote, wild territories, in order to consider the possibilities that emerge out of an internal critique of planetary urbanization. This task is only possible paying attention to the more heterodox demands of concrete subjects that are disputing the sense and the materialization of urbanization.

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4.3. Article 3: Residual Urbanization and the Social Relations of Collective Struggle in an Amazonian Kichwa Commune from Ecuador

This article appeared in the Journal of Global South Studies (SJR Q4 2024 0.105), with the author listed as the second author. Gustavo Durán was the third author, and Michael Uzendoski the first. Born in the U.S., Uzendoski has lived with his Kichwa family in the Sapo Rumi community for almost thirty years and is recognized as a leading linguist of the Amazonian Kichwa language. He has conducted ethnography for 25 years, developing key insights related to the community's ontological proposals. The second author, a doctoral candidate, linked ethnographic findings with urban theories during spatial analysis. The third author contributed to the article conceptually and organized the fieldwork. The journal's contribution is in linking Amazonian and urban themes within a novel framework, analyzing the integration of an Indigenous community into urban dynamics.

The article illustrates residual urbanization in the Amazon through one of the eight cases from the previous article. It explains how the Kichwa commune embraces modernity by fostering a tourism relationship with a nearby city, where mining offers less territorial autonomy than tourism management. This overview of Articles 1 and 2, which responds to the research question regionally, provides a more in-depth answer on how a peri-urban community addresses urbanization than previous articles. At the same time, it will generate important elements related to the third secondary question of the thesis, specifically, political contributions. Theoretically, it explains how Indigenous worldviews shape urban adaptation. It enhances integration into modernity, strengthening community-based social relations and collective land ownership, while autonomously discarding elements of capitalist colonization. This perspective makes urbanization distinctly residual. The article deepens the critique of planetary urbanization presented in the previous piece, contributing to an understanding of relational ontologies in urban contexts. Methodologically, the case did not employ inductive-deductive exercises; instead, it emphasized affective site selection, influenced by the relationship between FLACSO's Amazonian team and Michael Uzendoski's community ties, as well as various work and leisure stays in Sapo Rumi, which fostered slow ethnography and sustained dialogue on intersecting themes. It forms an inductive exercise informed by prior cycles.

For the thesis's fieldwork, Sapo Rumi was visited eight times between 2021 and 2024, with each visit lasting several days. This facilitated in-depth conversations with three family members during community activities, including drinking guayusa, playing soccer, engaging in artistic interventions, exploring beyond the main settlement, and spending time in the new family-managed recreational area. The continuity allowed for observing changes discussed in the article, such as the establishment of the Tilapia farm, the construction of a new bridge to the recreational area, and the increasing threat of mining activities in the region. Systematizing field notes from Sapo Rumi and cartographic documentation of territorial changes helped develop a comprehensive understanding of the community's relationship with the city and its changing future expectations.

Residual Urbanization and the Social Relations of Collective Struggle in an Amazonian Kichwa Commune from Ecuador

Michael A. Uzendoski, Manuel Bayón Jiménez,
and Gustavo Durán Saavedra

In this article, we combine anthropological theory with an urban studies framework to analyze and understand the processes by which cities expand into rural areas and transform landscapes, ways of life, and social practices in uneven and complex ways. Looking at the Kichwa commune of Mulchi Yaku as a case study, we argue that local cultural practices not only make urbanization partial or even subordinate but also reproduce the social relations of struggle through political and social actions of defending territory, ecology, and rights to collective organization. While capitalistic urban processes penetrate indigenous territories, urbanization is transformed by the political control that people have within their territory to define indigenous life through local values and unique cultural modes of social reproduction. As such, urbanization becomes incomplete or "residual,"

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and communal forms of social reproduction predominate. Our analysis employs a variety of methods that include survey data, geographical information systems, satellite image data, and fine-grained ethnographic research to understand how local people adapt and transform the processes of urban expansion within their territories.

KEYWORDS: *Amazonía; urbanization; Ecuador; indigenous peoples; Kichwa*

INTRODUCTION

Using the Naporuna commune Mulchi Yaku as a case study—Kichwa speakers of Napo Province, Ecuador—we set out to show how local processes make urbanization partial or even subordinate to other social logics or, in other terms, "residual." Residual urbanization is an approach that looks at how cities expand into rural areas and transform landscapes, ways of life, and social "meshworks" in uneven and contradictory ways.[1] This approach of the "residual" questions the notion that cities are inevitable forces of capitalist expansion and looks at the complex and multiple relations that define urbanization processes in a contested and conflictual world system.

While Amazonian regions, especially those in Ecuador, do not typically attract scholars interested in urbanization, today's globalized world has left very few places without a connection to urban life. This connectedness is more thoroughly understood using collaborative techniques of analysis, including ethnographic fieldwork, to analyze urbanization as a holistic and multidimensional process. When we entered the field some twenty-five-plus years ago, life in Amazonian Kichwa communities was dominated by activities like hunting, fishing, farming manioc, kinship, and ritual practices. However, people also made frequent trips to the city. Weekly or biweekly, people would go to the city to sell a crop like cocoa or corn and to buy stable items like salt, gasoline, soap, or liquor for a party. The city also was and continues to be a place of migration or temporary residence for many communities where people work, study, or seek other benefits of urban habitation.

Indeed, the city and urban influences have always been part of Amazonian life, no matter how remote or culturally distinct people may seem from their portrayal in the ethnographic record. From archaeology, we know that the notion of the isolated Amazonian resident, living only in and off the forest

isolated from other settlements, is a distortion, as there is substantial evidence for pre-Hispanic Amazonian cities,[2] not just in Brazil but also in Ecuador.[3] As current research has shown,[4] ancient Amazonian peoples lived in settlements with dense populations and urban dynamics such as roads, plazas, and complex agriculture, but Amazonian urbanity forces us to rethink many issues such as egalitarian values and a more amicable relationship with "nature." The Amazonian city, for example, is a form of organization where forests, gardens, and rivers are part of the cultural dynamics of the social world what William Baleé has referred to as "cultural forests,"[5] social spaces where ecological niches—and the living beings within such spaces—are symbiotic with human habitation. A recent article by a team of archaeologists working in Ecuador, for example, contends that the Amazonian model of urbanism, which dates back at least 2,000 years, was defined as "garden urbanism."[6]

We document the spatial and social dynamics of urban expansion of the city of Tena, the capital of Napo Province. Tena is an urban area, with a population of approximately 30,000 inhabitants, of which 65 percent identify as indigenous.[7] The city of Tena is surrounded by indigenous communities and populations that dominate the rural areas, and they are interconnected with urban life in diverse and complex ways. In the Tena area, there are four main axes of urban expansion: North, Northwest, South, and Southwest, each with its own particular dynamics. Our focus, however, is on the Southwest axis, which is a zone where tourism is the main economic activity fueling urban expansion. Within this area, we analyze an indigenous commune (Mulchi Yaku) that has intensified its touristic activities by participating in the building of a bridge and several roads, within their territory, to create access to various local tourist projects near the headwaters of the Achi Yaku and Pano Rivers. These initiatives are owned and operated by families of the commune.

Using Mulchi Yaku as a case study, our argument is that local cultural processes not only make capitalistic urbanization partial or even subordinate but also reproduce the social relations of struggle in which indigenous peoples seek to subordinate urbanization processes to their own sociocultural values and modes of life.[8] Through collective forms of social and political organization, as well as labor (*minga or* collective work parties), people strive for self-determination in how they produce, consume, and circulate people and things within their territories according to the logic of mutuality, sharing, and gift exchange. As we will show, although contact with the outside world and

commodity flows creates tensions and contradictions, people still maintain local values and unique cultural modes of social reproduction. Urbanization thus becomes incomplete or residual, and communal forms of social reproduction predominate.

As we will show, the morality of communal life permeates and shapes all aspects of production, consumption, and circulation,[9] and people maintain control over territory and their living labor within the commune under study.[10] However, maintaining communal control over such processes of life requires political action that is regionally as well as locally organized.[11] Two examples are discussed, the recent national uprisings of 2019 and 2022 and the court case (action of protection) of the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo (FOIN) against mining companies and government ministries (2023).

For the research in this article, we used a variety of methods to understand urbanization as a complex process of nonlinear relations whereby pure "urban" and "rural" are intertwined rather than linearly related. First, to establish a larger context of geographical relations, we employed a territorial survey method to track urbanization as a general process throughout the Amazonian region.[12] The focus was on the main urban regions of Amazonian Ecuador, and specifically, the main drivers of urbanization were identified: road infrastructures, state mega-projects, and the concentration of services in the new periurban areas.[13] Also, we used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and satellite imagery to study landscapes and territorial characteristics. Ethnographic research methods, however, such as participant observation, interviews, landscape walking, and experience, were central to this project, as these methods allowed for understanding how local values and collective sociopolitical actions contested and transformed urban penetrations.[14] Since 1996, we have studied, walked, and formed part of this landscape of complex interwoven social relations, and our intersubjective approach is an open-ended process of relating to communities by forming multiple, holistic, and collaborative relationships with people and their communities.

The implications of residual urbanization are many. While the advance of urban sprawl upon rural areas in the Amazonian region creates the real danger that capitalist forms of dispossession may penetrate and disrupt indigenous territories, our research shows that local actors are not necessarily steamrolled or easily subjected to such external forays into their regional systems. Indigenous communities and their political actions, in this sense, call into question

the conventional pattern of urban expansion being synonymous with the capitalistic disarticulation of rural and collective modes of life. Let us now look at different approaches to understanding urban expansion before we move on to the case study.

Residual Urbanization

The predominant framework in urban studies has been the notion of peri-urbanization, a spatially oriented "cause–effect" approach that looks at how city centers take over outlying areas to expand urbanization. The term "peri-urbanization" was initially conceptualized by Bauer and Roux in 1976,[15] and the term refers to the process of creating new urban settlements that are generally close to large cities or major communication routes with a rather diffuse morphology. It has been described as a kind of urban sprawl without real centers.[16] These are not new nuclei for the formation of cities but areas where inhabitants continue to be connected through production and consumption that is directed through the nearby city. In the subsequent decades, these peri-urban spaces sometimes become new cities, but more commonly, these new formations take on the character of a satellite to the larger urban area that remains the nucleus.[17]

Spaces defined by this new urban sprawl have been analyzed from different ecological, socioeconomic, and institutional perspectives, to consider the disputes and divisions of peri-urbanization processes.[18] For example, the main social actors in peri-urbanization are those who are eminently city dwellers: tenants, real estate agents, owners, builders, financial institutions, and government institutions.[19] From this perspective, the urbanization process is conceptualized as continuous and inevitable; it is hegemonic and imposed upon rural peoples being engulfed.[20] The peri-urban model thus works well to explain urban expansion for large cities in aggressive expansion, where one finds consolidated social classes and capital flows that are imposed with little resistance.

However, in spaces where there are small cities surrounded by indigenous territories or rural modes of life, as is the case with many Amazonian cities of Ecuador and throughout Latin America, the extended urbanization approach is more relevant since it proposes to break down the barrier between "rural" and "urban." Extended urbanization was first formulated by Monte-Mor as an

Amazonian spatial model of urban expansion.[21] In his formulation, Monte-Mor placed the countryside–city contrast as a moment of capitalist development linked to the Industrial Revolution, in which the city became hierarchized over the countryside, thus projecting itself as a scalar model of implosion and explosion as defined by Lefebvre.[22] Extended urbanization thus was a concept designed to track capitalistic flows by looking at the processes of spatial transformation.

Residual urbanization, however, is a more radical approach in that it takes spatial expansion into consideration but focuses on the specific interconnections that tie rural communities to urban zones and the world economy. The focus here is not urban expansion but rather the agency of local people to reproduce themselves in articulation with the flows of things, people, and capital that connect people to the city. As such, in a later section, we will detail forms and processes of "mediation," the ways that local people and their labor become integrated into capitalistic valorization.[23] This approach of looking at micro-processes of mediation and social reproduction allows for the multidimensional study of urban processes and gives agency to social actors not normally taken into consideration by urban studies.

These dynamics of Amazonian habitation are rooted in complex cultural values and practices of movement, meaning, and social reproduction.[24] Amazonian modes of life can be understood as "alternative modernities," or ways of reading modernity from the perspective of alterity.[25] Within indigenous territories, the processes of extended urbanization are weakly developed, and people are able to reproduce life within their own territories according to living labor, as well as their own cultural values and practices.[26] Such spaces of residual urbanization, however, are areas and arenas of political contestation, as local actors continue to defend their rights to self-determination, healthy ecologies, and collective social organization within their sovereign territories.[27] These modes of life and geographical habitation force the rethinking of modernity and urban processes as they have been naturalized by the dominant centers of the North as "peripheries." However, as we will show, from the subaltern perspective developed here, the capitalist world system—not the community—is peripheral.[28]

The Meshwork of Amazonian Life

What are these alternative processes that define indigenous Amazonian life, and how are they related to urbanization? Indigenous lifeways, situated within

geographical areas recognized as "territories," are based on a mutual coexistence with other species and interconnectedness with the landscape. Tim Ingold has developed the theoretical concept of the "meshwork" to describe such modes of living.[29] As Ingold's work has demonstrated, indigenous populations define their world through "lines" of interrelation that connect people to their landscape, other beings, trees, trails, plants, and sacred spaces, as well as the stories of the past, present, and future. This tangled web of conceptual and social relations, the "meshwork," is a relational world of diverse textual forms (non-alphabetic) that come into being through making and remaking the landscape, which is in constant growth and transformation. As Ingold writes, the "meshwork" is

> the entangled lines of life, growth, and movement. This is the world we inhabit. My contention, throughout, is that what is commonly known as the 'web of life' is precisely that: not a network of connected points, but a meshwork of interwoven lines. . . . This contention is not far removed from the understanding of the lifeworld professed by peoples commonly characterized in ethnographic literature as animists.[30]

In other words, indigenous Amazonian lifeways, instead of being characterized by modern notions of sedentary existence defined by capitalistic forms of "interest" and individualism, live out their social worlds through constant movement and entanglements with their local ecologies and social worlds.

In rural Kichwa life, for example, settlements are defined by four major and interconnected places that are sites that mesh production, consumption, and circulation: the house (*wasi*), the garden (*chagra*), the forest (*sacha*), and the river (*yaku*).[31] The production of life requires that people combine activities from these different places to produce food and cultural reproduction. Communities thus are not just concentrations of houses but interspecies communities that extend outward for kilometers, by way of trails or other routes, into the deep forest.[32]

These cultural spaces of rich ecologies of life are defined by the social action of production, consumption, and circulation—but all activities are mediated by values of gender complementarity. Women are regarded as the "owners" of the gardens where the main crop is yuca or manioc, and women are the primary producers of this primordial tuber. In addition to manioc, *chagras* or

gardens are spaces where hundreds of other species are cultivated, which also include fruit trees, nuts, hot peppers, and even grubs. A garden is a multispecies world that is in constant growth and reorganization, and when the yuca has all been harvested and replanted so that the soil is "tired," women move on to cultivate another nearby space. Fruit trees, especially peach palms (*Bactris gasipaes*), however, remain, and so the forest takes on an increasingly prolific character over time whereby diversity is increased and animals, as well as humans, benefit.[33]

Men, by contrast, are dedicated to hunting and fishing, and their relationships with the forests and rivers require walking and observing the timing of fruits and the movements of animals throughout the larger territory. Hunters ascribe their successes in obtaining game to the favorable way that the protectors of these animals, spirits, called *sacha runa*, regard them. Their stories involve dreams and specific experiences in the landscape, by trees, or on trails that they have walked over again and again. A successful hunt is a cycle where generations of humans and animals coexist and grow, die, and reproduce in the same ecological spaces. The relationship is social and spiritual, and people conceptualize their world as an interspecies community that is defined by constant textual creation by humans and nonhumans.

Taken as a whole, the values of social reproduction define the forest—rather than the market—as the main provider of life,[34] and food exchanges are used to produce people and the social relations that define kinship. Money and purchased foods such as rice, oil, tilapia fish, and potatoes are integrated into the system, but they have not displaced the local philosophy of kinship, a philosophy of life that emphasizes the conversion of things into people and social relations. As we will show, people have been able to integrate new forms into the system without displacing these core values of Napo Runa life. Let us now look at the dynamics and spatial details of urban expansion in the region.

Territorial Context: Urbanization of the Ecuadorian Amazon

The Amazonian region of Ecuador was "colonized"[35] in the early twentieth century, and the migration of highland peoples seeking lands and work was made possible by the construction of roads, which began to connect Amazonian cities into larger global transport networks. Migration and roads created

a dual Amazon, one defined by urbanization processes and another defined by indigenous territories and protected areas. Behind the expansion of infrastructure and migration were new economic opportunities, specifically oil exploitation, which transformed the Amazonian region into a primary source of wealth. In the past three decades, the transformation of Amazonian regions into sources of extractive wealth has fueled the expansion of cities. In Ecuador, Amazonian cities have had the most accelerated demographic growth compared to other regions.[36]

Under the paradigm of systemic competitiveness promoted by the United Nations Economic Council on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in the past two decades, Latin American countries have turned their economies toward satisfying the growing demand for raw materials by the countries of the Global North. New actors such as Brazil and China have emerged as powerful players in foreign policy and as consumers of resources. Consequently, to satisfy this growing need for raw materials, the countries of Latin America are intensifying exports of oil, minerals, agriculture, and other food products.[37] This expansion of exports has been accompanied by a spatial explosion of capital mega-projects of all kinds, especially in mining, petroleum exploitation, and industrial farming.[38] The increase in mining and oil concessions in countries through nationalized (state) and private transnational companies, as well as the expansion of agricultural activities, are causing land rent and land acquisition to be the basis for continued economic growth.[39]

From the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Tena was founded as a city that could connect the highlands of Ecuador to the Napo River basin through the pre-Hispanic Quito-Baeza Road, a road once used by ancient peoples to exchange highland products for lowland coca, feathers, and medicines.[40] Tena's process of territorial expansion continued throughout the twentieth century as part of the connection to the larger Amazonian cities via the Napo River and as a hub of exchange with the capital city of Quito. In recent years, Tena has experienced intense migration and urban mega-projects that have created a boom in tourism and the founding of a university mega-project. In the past decade, the city has grown exponentially, doubling its size in less than a decade. The region has also been the site of extraction projects involving heavy petroleum and mining (both legal and illegal), with a mega-mining project currently under way. This contradiction between tourism and more destructive forms of capitalist accumulation, such as mining and petroleum extraction,
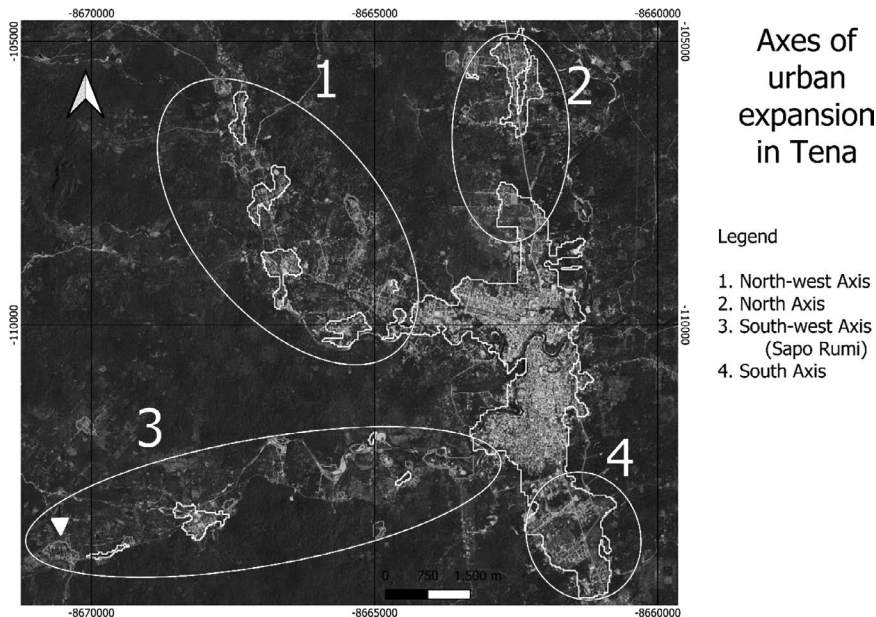
Figure 1. The four main axes of urban expansion in Tena. Our focus in this article is zone 3.

now defines the constant political battles and court cases that will have a major impact on the future of the city.

The growth of Tena is defined by four main spatial axes of urbanization (figure 1). First, the proximity to the north with the city of Archidona has generated an urban corridor of services, such as schools, hotels, mechanic and welding shops, and small businesses. Over the past thirty years, the road to Archidona has progressively become urbanized so that Archidona and Tena are no longer separate urban areas. These rapid transformations were facilitated by the absence of indigenous communities in the area, which allowed for migration and the acquisition of land without resistance.

Second, the city of Tena has spread to the south, practically reaching Puerto Napo, with a logic of formal and informal commerce along the route connecting these two cities. Over the past fifteen years, people have sought to develop this corridor by constructing residences combined with small businesses like restaurants, stores, and services like auto-repair shops. Like the northern area, the southern area has been fueled by urban social actors and migrants.

Third, urban growth of the northwestern axis of Tena has been fueled by the presence of a national university (IKIAM), recently founded in 2013. This university was founded by the government of Rafael Correa as a mega-project of the central government to spur entrepreneurial activities in the region, as well as train specialists and technicians who would support mining, petroleum, and biocommerce projects. The building of IKIAM energized an entire area and transformed nearby communities, some of which were forced to relocate. These communities, which are now partners in services and research with the university, now have defined urban centers and have allowed "colonos" and investors to acquire land. These new actors have built businesses as well as dorms to rent to students.

In the southwestern part, where our research has been concentrated, there is a conglomeration of indigenous communities that have worked for decades in tourism, and these communities are intensifying their tourism initiatives as more national and international tourists visit Tena. These activities to accommodate tourists have fueled some infrastructure development, like roads, bridges, and cabañas, but outsiders have not been able to dispossess indigenous peoples of their lands. Unlike the other axes, expansion in the southwestern area is not being fueled by exclusively capitalistic interests but rather by community agencies and communes.

Lastly, we must discuss the failed heavy petroleum project. The city of Tena sits atop the world's largest heavy petroleum fields (Pungarayaku or Block 20) and has vast resources of gold. Ivanhoe Energy, from 2008 to 2014, tried to exploit the heavy petroleum field. Although the project was a failure, and the company did not produce a single barrel of oil for sale, millions of dollars were invested in the urbanization of the Tena area. Roads and bridges were built in remote areas thought to be good for future exploitation, and mega-projects such as the previously mentioned IKIAM university were implemented to support a growing need for engineers.[41]

Tena is the site of extensive gold-mining concessions toward the southwest areas (Arosemena Tola), and the protected areas toward the northwest and southwest highlands, the Llanganates and Colonso-Chalupas reserves, are within the targeted regions. Also, the zones of Yutzupino, Jatunyaku, and Napo are sites of extensive illegal mining, with the site of Yutzupino having reached an intensive and massive scale of using hundreds of heavy machine tractors

and mining equipment. Recently, this illegal mega-mining site was decommissioned by authorities, and the heavy machinery was confiscated.

Mulchi Yaku/Sapo Rumi: The Commune under Study

The micro-processes of urbanization thus are complex and involve different actors and dynamics. This article focuses on the southwestern region, specifically the parish of Pano and one of its communes, Mulchi Yaku. In Mulchi Yaku, urban processes have been slowed because of the collective ownership of the land and the commune's bylaws, which do not allow for members to transfer land to outsiders. As such, in contrast to other regions of extended urbanization in Tena, "investors" and other outside agents have had limited agency to acquire land for development. However, several generations ago, a family of colonists was able to expropriate a large piece of land from the community before the commune was founded. Today, this land has been privatized and is the site of an industrial-scale fish farm. The fish farmers, who are *mestizos*, have an interesting and complex relationship with indigenous commune members.

The Kichwa commune of Mulchi Yaku is one of the base indigenous organizations that belong to the parish of Pano. Pano officially has around 1,500 inhabitants within a territory of 79,000 hectares, a region that includes eight "territorial organizations" that belong to the parish as a whole. The commune of Mulchi Yaku is a small organization of fifty-five families that was created in the context of the larger struggle of indigenous peoples to claim territory from the hacienda model of colonial domination. However, with the help of indigenous federations, it became legal in 2001 and is the base organization that defends the land and political interests of its members in the region.

Mulchi Yaku was formed out of two old haciendas and encompasses several communities—Uchuculin, Sapo Rumi, Las Palmas, and Lagarto Cocha. In all, there are approximately 500 inhabitants. The organization is part of the larger indigenous legal system of "mother" organizations like FOIN (Federation of Indigenous Organization of Napo), CONFENIAE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Amazonian Ecuador), CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), and COICA (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Amazonia Basin). Mulchi Yaku is, first and foremost, an organization founded on the defense of indigenous territory.
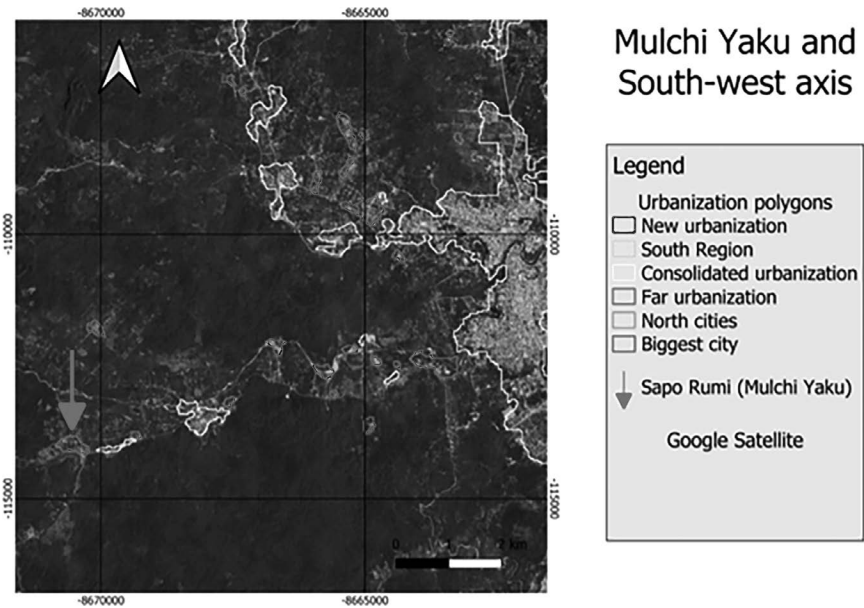
Figure 2. Map showing urbanization processes extending into Mulchiyaku–Sapo Rumi territory. The red arrow points to the area of the commune that is the case study of this article. The city of Tena is to the east.

Images created using Google Earth and GIS technologies of the Mulchi Yaku region show that the parish of Pano is the urban node of the region, which is defined by schools, a health center, churches, and community centers (figure 2). Roads enter from the east, and these roads connect the communities to the capital city of Tena. From Pano, two more roads extend toward other concentrations of communities toward the north and south. Along the main road that extends from Tena to the west, one can observe indigenous communities, infrastructure and constructions related to tourism, tilapia ponds, small restaurants and bars, and institutions like schools, health centers, and police stations.

The colonists who expropriated the communal lands some twenty years ago began as cattle ranchers. This family sold the land to an entrepreneur who converted the lands into an experimental tilapia fish farm. Over the next ten years, the fish farm became successful and attracted more investors. The new investors transformed the fish farm into several connected operations and rapidly expanded up to the limits of the commune. Now home to several families

and their businesses, the area has over thirty large-scale ponds and produces approximately 30 percent of the tilapia consumed by people in the city of Tena.

The tilapia operation is complex and involves the use of machines, vehicles, commercial feed and chemicals, and heavy machinery to keep production high. The fish farmers are oriented toward production for the market, and they have little concern for the health of the rivers or forests. The fish farms, as one can see, represent a huge area of deforestation within the region, and the runoff from the ponds, full of thousands of fish-producing waste, contaminates the rivers.

However, the environmental impact of fish farming is only one of many dynamics that define the community's relationship with the fish farmers. In 2022, the tilapia farmers and the commune agreed that new roads and a bridge to cross the Achi Yaku River were needed, so that the fish farmers could transport their product more easily. Commune members liked the idea that the road would attract more tourists. Despite ethnic differences and tensions over the runoff going into the river, the commune decided to collaborate with the fish farmers. Two new roads were built, later followed by a large bridge in 2023. The construction was also supported by the local government of Tena and the provincial authorities of Napo, institutions that provided the funding for the construction of the bridge and extension of services like electricity and internet along the new roads. These new roads are used by both the fish farmers and commune members, as well as tourists.

As stated earlier, the commune members of Mulchi Yaku mainly earn money through tourism. Three main tourist cabañas within the region are run by indigenous community members, Sapo Rumi, Laguna Verde, and Pikitsa Cocha (figure 3). Other cabañas also exist in the area, but they are within the territories of neighboring communes, such as Alto Pano and Pumayaku.

The transportation infrastructure connects people and the lands to urban nodes and the flows of global capitalism, yet the indigenous communities continue to defend and inhabit their lands according to their own social and cultural practices. For example, the fish farmers, who would like to expand operations, are limited by the commune's legal ownership of their territory. Tourism, however, has connected indigenous peoples to the capitalistic valorization process, and many of the tourists who arrive are people from Quito, Tena, the United States, or Europe. Indigenous people from other communities also arrive, and people from Mulchi Yaku also consume and enjoy their cabañas by having fun, socializing, and consuming beer while they work.
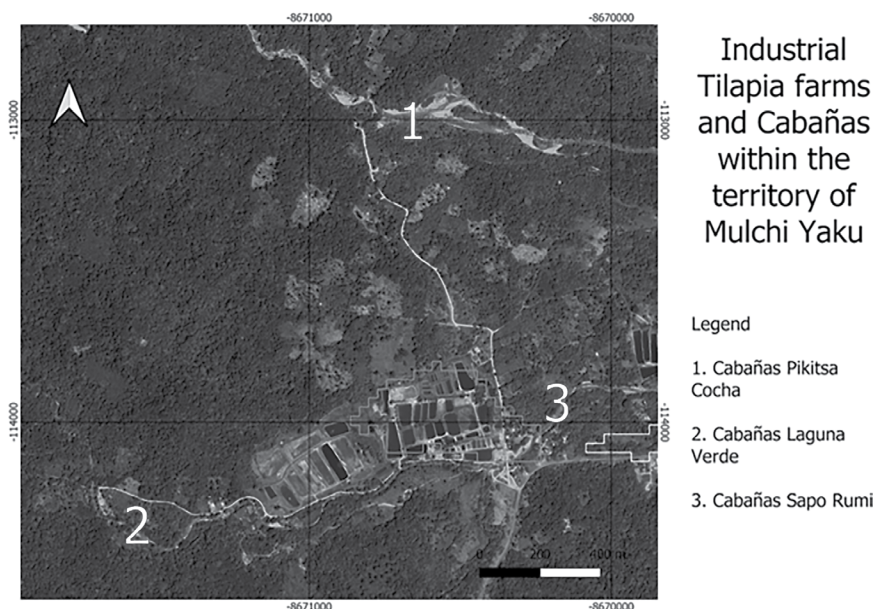
Figure 3. Industrial tilapia fish farms and cabañas within the territory of Mulchi Yaku. The figure shows the location of Sapo Rumi and the two new roads that go to cabañas Laguna Verde and Pikitsa Cocha. Notice massive deforestation caused by fish farming. The commune territory extends to the west, past Laguna Verde, into a protected area (Llanganates) with healthy forests.

To better understand the micro-processes by which Mulchi Yaku is connected to capitalistic valorization and commodity flows, let us examine the mediators.[42] In Mulchi Yaku, for example, the main agents of mediation are (1) Tilapia fish farmers, (2) the president and other authorities of the comuna, (3) tourists, (4) politicians, (5) construction workers, and (6) community members who work for salaries or hourly in jobs outside the community. Coincidently, many community members work in the police force and the military, and their earnings are used to invest in family projects and for the consumption of food and beer on the weekends in tourist areas.

Objects of mediation also connect people to capitalistic flows (table 1). The main objects of mediation are (1) the roads, (2) the bridge, (3) vehicles and motorcycles, (4) heavy machinery, (5) electricity, (6) refrigerators and cooking equipment, and (7) the internet. To this, we would also add the thousands of tilapia fish in the ponds and the cases of beer that are transported to the tourist areas and consumed by locals as well as tourists.

Table 1. Agents and Objects of Mediation That Define the Community's Connection to the City and Capitalistic Valorization Processes

Agents of Mediation	Objects of Mediation
Tilapia farmers	Roads
President and authorities of the commune	Bridge
Community members who work outside jobs/police or military	Vehicles and motorcycles
Tourists	Heavy machinery
Politicians	Electricity
Construction workers	Refrigerators and cooking equipment
	Internet
	Tilapia fish
	Bottled beer

Each cabaña site is managed by different *ayllus* or extended-family groups, and kinship is what defines each site. Laguna Verde, for example, located at the Achi Yaku river site toward the Llaganates, is managed by the extended family Tapuy. Cabañas Pikitsa Cocha, which is located at the headwaters of the Pano River, is actually two businesses, with one on each side of the river. The site on the north side is managed by another Tapuy family, and the one on the south side is managed by the commune and is known as "community tourism." In this model, several families participate (mainly the Grefa and Calapucha families) in the project, and everyone has a place to sell food, beer, and other consumer products like colas, water, chicha, and sweets. Cabañas Sapo Rumi is managed by the Calapucha family and has operated for over ten years, but Sapo Rumi's river is now partially contaminated from runoff of the fish ponds, which are unfortunately located upriver from the cabaña. The contamination has caused tourists to seek out the other cabañas that are located in rivers that are clean, like Laguna Verde and Pikitsa Cocha.

Within each node of cabaña activity, many family members participate in their own commercial initiatives. For example, one family member will sell beer, another water, and others will prepare grilled fish lunches and/or chicken soup. The outcome of this business model is one of collective dispersion, with almost all commune members earning something but without the concentration of wealth into a single "owner" or manager. Kinship and equality, the main values of indigenous life, are dominant, and the capitalist logic of individual

gain and self-interest are mediated by the collective ethos. Let us now dive into local cultural dynamics and values.

The Coevality of the Commune with Global Capitalism

The indigenous commune is sustained by large areas of territory that are only accessible by foot and where forests, rivers, and gardens are located. Mulchi Yaku, in other words, is defined by the communal stewardship of these life-giving spaces—the forests, rivers, and gardens that define cultural values and social reproduction. The community is sustained socially and symbolically by storytelling and ritual practices, as well as practices by which past time-space is interconnected with the present and future by way of sacred spaces like petroglyphs, rocks, and caves. Furthermore, the staple food of yuca or manioc grows in gardens that complement the diversity of the forest and do not require deforestation, only swidden rotating gardens. The fish farms, by contrast, exist under a model of urbanization that results in massive deforestation and eco-logical contamination.

Within the indigenous territory, close to 70 percent of the forest remains intact, although this forest is, by all standards, being used for its resources. People use the forest for many activities, including timber, but the forest as a whole is not at much risk. Commune members practice a kind of controlled deforestation that is combined with reforestation and conservation. These practices reflect the values of indigenous life whereby people realize their interdependence with the ecology and the reality that life is impossible with-out trees and other species as internal to the human condition. Figure 4, for example, was drawn by a community member, and the image shows the trails, rivers, and sacred sites that form principal nodes of human–landscape rela-tions in the region. The drawing includes walking trails, waterfalls, caves, petroglyphs, houses, and giant trees. It also contains rivers, which serve as important lines of relation by which people conceptualize and move about the landscape. The drawing, however, is incomplete in that it does not show the gardens and all the houses where people live, but the main features of the "meshwork" are represented. This image shows how local notions of the region as a readable and experienced "text" vary greatly with the imagery of satellite photos, as such images lack the social information and meanings of the land-scape not detected by satellite and GIS methods. What the urban studies data
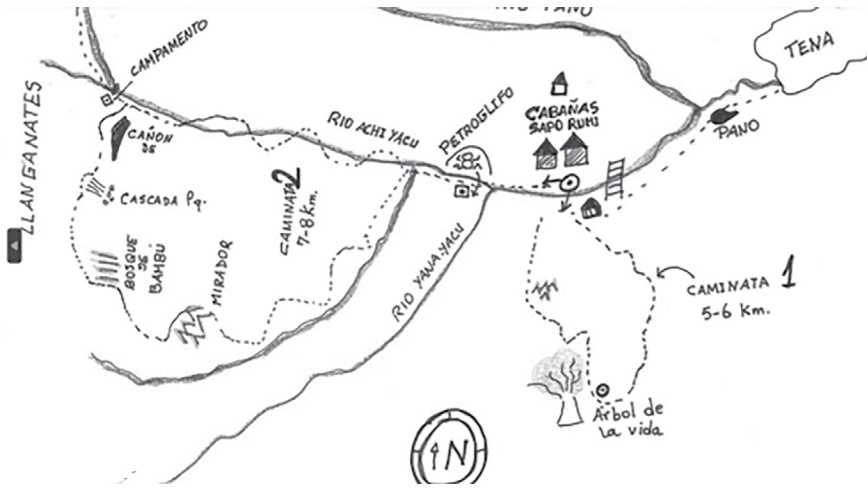
Figure 4. Local community member's drawing of the Mulchi Yaku area. Notice how the drawing indicates sacred places and trails that define how community members conceptualize their territory as a living meshwork of human–ecological relations.

do show, however, is the geographical extension of transport infrastructure like roads, structures, and areas of deforestation. To some extent, rivers are visible, but even these features are difficult to discern clearly due to tree cover.

During the week, commune members move about their forests and gardens and partake in activities of social reproduction like weeding, planting, fishing, raising chickens, making manioc beer, and preparing their traditional foods. People spend a lot of time walking to and from the gardens or fruit trees to harvest and/or weed productive areas, and as they walk, they tell stories, laugh, and observe how things grow and change in the forest. The landscape, as well, is a living text linked to Napo Runa mythology, and each sacred site, as a petroglyph, for example, invokes a story or a memory.

During different seasons, as well, people gather a wide variety of fruits, nuts, or other foods. The peach palm season is when the Napo Runa makes a special kind of beer from a peach palm that is regarded as the most valued and nutritious variant of *aswa* or *chicha*. During the time of the peach palm, animals like peccaries, agoutis, and monkeys migrate into the region to consume the nutritious fruits of this palm, and these migrations offer many opportunities for hunting and trapping animals for food.

On the weekends, however, the rhythms of the meshwork are interrupted as commune members focus their activities on tourism, and tourism provides people opportunities to earn money selling typical foods, beer, and/or other bottled beverages. The most important dish, prepared in all the cabañas, is the "*maytu* of tilapia," which is a whole tilapia fish roasted in leaves on the fire. The *maytu* is served with a portion of manioc, a salad, and chile sauce. The dish is usually accompanied by a glass of *ways*, a flavorful tea made from the leaf of a local tree (*Ilex guayusa*), or the commercial beer Pilsener. People from town and far-away cities such as Quito search out *maytus* on the weekend because it is a unique dish not easily prepared at home and typical of Amazonian cuisine. The leaves used to roast the fish, for example, must be gathered fresh and the process of roasting the packets on the fire takes hours.

As one tourist noted, "We live in the city, and on the weekends, we want to take a bath in a nice river. We get to eat some *maytus* and drink beer and just relax. It is so beautiful out here and we are tired of eating rice and potatoes." The cabañas where tourists arrive are run by local families, and these families offer tourists (and other community members) products from their gardens: yuca, plantains, chili peppers, guayusa, and chicha. Tourism integrates new values like earning money, offering services and products, and business thinking; however, these values only penetrate partially into Napo Runa life, and they have not displaced communal values of sharing, generosity, and reciprocity. Tourism, however, has brought changes to the Napo Runa way of life and their system of cultural values through the salience of farm-raised tilapia and commercial beer as foods that are not only bought to be sold but also bought to be consumed and shared.

Beer, as well, has also become incorporated into local patterns of production, consumption, and circulation. Although commercial beers are produced in factories in Quito, large trucks transport huge quantities of bottled beer to Tena, and then local distributors transport beer to even the most remote communities. As a result, commercial beer has become a ubiquitous prestige beverage to anyone with money to buy it. Many young people, for example, prefer to drink commercial beer rather than homemade manioc beer. The consumption of beer requires dependence upon money, and a large amount of the money earned working in tourism (or in other jobs) is spent on the local consumption of commercial beer. Thus, the reliance upon tilapia and commercial

beer for catering to tourists has altered Napo Runa forms of consumption and status. These new commodity foods have become integrated into local notions of value.

Tourism, thus, is not just about production. It is also a strategy for community members to participate in consumption because people earn and spend money on food and beer, selling and buying these products and sharing them among themselves; like manioc beer, commercial beer is part of sociality and social relations. We have already discussed mediation, but many technological mediators have made these changes possible. The transport infrastructure is what allows for trucks to bring beer to the different cabañas. Also, since electricity has been around for about fifteen years, all cabañas have refrigerators to keep beer cold, as well as preserve foods. But people still value, produce, and consume their "traditional" foods. Commercial beer and tilapia, although newly introduced consumer items of prestige consumption, have not displaced but rather complemented the value process by which people and social relations are produced (figure 5). Taken as a whole, the commune's territory works as an informal and locally managed zone of conservation, as in this territory the rainforest remains largely intact, and indigenous peoples continue to exercise their way of life with remarkable success and self-determination. The indigenous model of life, for example, has always been compatible and overlapping with protected areas.
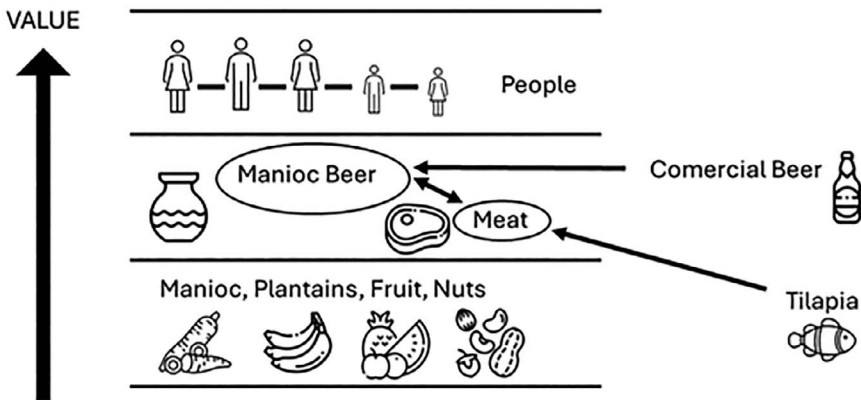

Figure 5. Diagram showing Napo Runa value system and spheres of exchange. Notice how beer and tilapia have made their way into the sphere of prestige food items, complementing manioc beer and hunted food.

However, the territory of Mulchi Yaku and surrounding communities is threatened by a future mega-mining project, which could devastate the delicate balance that the commune has created with capitalism. Local federations and other "mother" organizations are helping to contest these processes legally and politically. Indeed, as Amazonian communities are increasingly the sites of extraction projects like petroleum exploitation and mining, the communal territories and organizations of indigenous communities become sites of political and social struggle.

The Political Struggle behind Residual Urbanization

Urbanization, fueled by capitalist expansion, continues to extend processes of capital accumulation, extraction, dispossession, and commodification into rural and remote areas once defined by local and relational modes of existence. However, as roads and projects move into such remote areas, local people and communities have not simply been steamrolled by such processes. As we mentioned earlier, residual urbanization is a process whereby the social relations of struggle are also reproduced, as local communities must fight to defend their territories, values, and right to self-determination. On the one hand, we have shown how the indigenous commune has mediated complex micro-processes of adaptation to the larger markets and networks of commerce. On the other hand, however, we have also discussed how the commune also acts as a social organization for the defense of indigenous territory, values, and ways of life.

Recently, the struggle in Napo has been focused on challenging the previously mentioned mining concessions given to transnational companies by the Ecuadorian government. However, illegal mining, which is widespread and part of the political system, is also actively destroying ecosystems and rivers. Johanna Ruiz, an environmental engineer, contends that this expansion has occurred "without controls, under a cloak of corruption and, in many cases, hand in hand with other crimes such as drug trafficking, smuggling, among others."[43] In town, people comment that the narcotraffickers, investors, and politicians work together to finance buying lands and heavy machinery and that illegal mining is highly lucrative. The newspaper *La Hora* published information alleging that at least five officials of the Agency for the Regulation and Control of Energy and Non-Renewable Natural Resources were involved in acts of corruption involving illegal mining.[44]

In the past seven years, between 2015 and 2021, mining activities have increased by 855 hectares, a figure that represents a 300 percent increase.[45] In total, the government has granted 288 mining concessions in the province, mainly concentrated in the regions of Tena and Arosemena Tola, but illegal mining is even more widespread. In the past few years, illegal mining has increased by 300 percent and has affected at least 145 hectares in Napo.[46] The main rivers such as Anzu, Jatunyacu, Napo, and others contain dangerous heavy metals such as mercury, toxic by-products of gold exploration and extraction, that are over 350 times acceptable levels.[47]

In 2021, the indigenous organizations of the region, led by FOIN, brought a lawsuit against the Ecuadorian government to suspend all mining activities in the province through a figure called "Protected Action" (case 15571202100685). On March 24, 2023, the judge ruled in favor of the indigenous litigants and found numerous government institutions and officials to be neglecting their duties to protect the environment and the people living dependent upon the water from the rivers. This ruling represented a huge victory for indigenous peoples, as the struggle for self-determination and the environment is a constant legal battle. As Federico Tapuy, the president of FOIN, said, "We cannot be satisfied with just this ruling . . . today we won one battle and tomorrow we will have even greater numbers . . . we do not want mining in our communities nor do we tolerate abuse."[48] Tapuy, who is a member of the Pano area, also denounced the violence and threats suffered by leaders and activists trying to resist the mining interests.

Also, CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) and other social organizations led two massive national strikes, in 2019 and more recently in 2022, and these strikes completely shut down the country. People from the "base" communities, such as Mulchi Yaku, traveled to Quito and joined forces with indigenous people from all over the country. As food and supplies began to grow short in the major cities of Ecuador, the government was forced into long and painful negotiations with the social movements and was not able to impose their desired political projects of neoliberal intensification.[49] The indigenous organizations demanded the defense of their rights to self-determination, as well as improvements of state-funded services in communities, such as education, health care, subsidized gasoline and cooking gas, and access to loans for starting businesses. After the 2022 strike, the indigenous organizations and the government participated in dialogues that

resulted in 218 agreements that were designed to make Ecuador a more egalitarian country. Unfortunately, the government did not follow through and implement most of these very detailed agreements,[50] as political attention shifted toward problems of security and combating the drug cartels. However, this larger political context of struggle, briefly mentioned here, shows the effectiveness of indigenous political actions in defending their rights and collective sovereignty over their territories. In short, political action in the public and national contexts is a way of protecting the modes of life and values that define the meshwork and living in the territory. Without political interventions from the indigenous peoples, social movements, and the participation of thousands of base communities such as Mulchi Yaku, the government and state would have simply caved into the capitalist interests and further intensification of the extractivist economy.

Conclusion

In this article, we have applied anthropological notions of cultural and social analysis to analyze the dynamics of "residual urbanization"—the processes by which cities expand into rural areas and transform landscapes, ways of life, and social dynamics in uneven and contradictory ways. We discussed residual urbanization as a spatial process whereby capitalistic valorization penetrates into indigenous communities. Yet, residual urbanization involves communities that have control over their territory and living labor, as well as produce their own food and consume it according to local values. As such, using the example of an indigenous commune from Amazonian Ecuador, we showed how people have maintained control of many aspects of their social reproduction—and living life as defined by unique cultural values and the Kichwa social philosophy of community living and kinship. By detailing the objects and agents of mediation, we showed the micro-processes of interconnectedness that define how the people of Mulchi Yaku, through tourism, can earn money and participate in the consumption economy on the weekends.

We also discussed the reality that indigenous communities such as Mulchi Yaku are under threat by more destructive forms of capital, such as petroleum and mining activities. As such, people realize that they must participate actively in politics and defend their territories. In coordination with regional and national organizations, people are ready to combat those social actors that

seek to disenfranchise or exploit them. In this sense, the major threat to communities in the region of Napo and the area of Mulchi Yaku, as we discussed, is mining, which involves many powerful political and economic interests. However, the struggle against mining, as we showed, can result in favorable outcomes such as the winning of the "Protected Action" case in 2023.

This study of the micro-processes of urbanization in the territory of Mulchi Yaku shows that the local case study reproduces the larger social relations of struggle that have defined indigenous political action since the conquest. The dynamics of the case study examined here are similar to other struggles occurring throughout Amazonia and the Global South, struggles whereby local people are not simply external actors to the penetrating processes of urban extension. Indigenous and other "rural" populations (people with lands and territory) embrace and depend on the city, as the city gives them access to benefits like education, health care, travel, and opportunities for commerce. As we showed, cities can be articulated with, and complement, indigenous or other local forms of life while also introducing them to possible external threats, such as mining companies or other transnational interests. Debate and analysis on the micro- and macro-processes of residual urbanization, we hope, allow for a fruitful rethinking of what it means to live in, or near to, an urban area—and the fascinating possibilities of combining local knowledge of living in the forest with the benefits the city. The struggle, we contend, is far from over.

Acknowledgements

NOTES

1. Following Ingold, we define the meshwork as the flowing and interconnected relations of life that move among people, their landscape, and different nonhuman entities like plants, rivers, trees, trails, and animals. The meshwork, which defines rural indigenous life, differs from a network in that the latter reflects the principles by which moderns connect things in

the world, as in a city and connections among cities. But in a social meshwork, relations are fluid and dynamic, and the lines of relation loop and connect multiply. In a conversation between Vinzent and Ingold, for example, Ingold defines the social dynamics of the meshwork as distinct from modern conceptualizations of networks: "I've already mentioned the distinction between network and meshwork. It seems very obvious now, but it took a long time for me to work it out. I think the distinction is critical. I have wanted to get away from network thinking, which collapses everything there is into points and sees relations as always between one point and another, A and B. The lines of the meshwork have no beginning-points or end-points. They are always in-between, as are the waters of a flowing river between its banks." Jutta Vinzent and Tim Ingold, "From Lines as Geometrical Form to Lines as Meshwork Rather Than Network," in *SpatioTemporalities on the Line*, ed. Sebastian Dorsch and Jutta Vinzent (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), 13–20. These contrasting kinds of thought and practice as coevally existing in tension are part of residual urbanization.

2. Michael Heckenberger and Eduardo Góes Neves, "Amazonian Archaeology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 38 (2009): 251–66.

3. Stéphen Rostain et al., "Two Thousand Years of Garden Urbanism in the Upper Amazon," *Science* 383, no. 6679 (2024): 183–89.

4. Michael Heckenberger, "Tropical Garden Cities: Cultural Values and Sustainability in the Amazon's Arc of Deforestation," in *Proceedings of the 2nd World Sustainability Forum* (Basel, Switzerland: MDPI, 2012); Evan Killick, "Rubber, *Terra Preta*, and Soy: A Study of Visible and Invisible Amazonian Modernities," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 74, no. 1 (2018): 32–53.

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4.4. Article 4: Extractive Frontiers of Extended Urbanization: Everyday Practices of Resistance Against Displacement and Dispossession in the Ecuadorian Amazon

This was accepted for a special issue of Urban Geography (SJR Q1 2024 1.419) on global urban frontiers, to be published between 2025 and 2026. Co-authored by Michael Janoschka, a notable expert in urban geography and gentrification in Europe and Latin America, and dissertation supervisor and professor at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, the first author conceptualized the article and conducted the fieldwork. Both authors refined the theory and methodology, wrote, and drew conclusions under the supervision of a guide aligned with the thesis development. The article demonstrates how indigenous practices counter the widening of urban spatial limits of capital, preserving autonomy in the forest and reshaping Amazonian peri-urban areas to sustain indigenous life amid urbanization.

The article begins with the Rent Gap Theory, a key concept in Anglo-American Marxist geography that explains the phenomenon of gentrification. It examines perspectives related to decolonial thought, reframing it from an Amazonian viewpoint. These include the concept of territory from Brazilian critical geography, Latin American rentism, Amazonian relational ontologies, and the mobility turn. The article proposes the Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap (APRG), showing how cycles of valorization and devalorization in extractive urbanization incorporate new Amazonian spaces. The struggles against the formation, consolidation, and rent gaps are waged through class alliances based on collective goods and territorial rights, powerfully articulated with territorial mobility from forested areas and marked by an anti-racist political orientation. Expanding on the debates outlined in Articles 2 and 3, this approach illustrates how ontological and anti-racist struggles in the city become open confrontations against spaces of capital. This article addresses the general research question and contributes theoretically to the thesis by offering insights related to the first secondary question. This will be demonstrated through a practical exercise in theoretical construction, highlighting the main research gap identified in the thesis.

This article employs a different comparative exercise using a deductive approach. It focuses on three sites facing intense eviction threats due to capitalist dispossession in extractive contexts, where the thesis has developed strong ties. Ongoing collaborations underscore the

pressing need for support, facilitating more nuanced approaches such as ontological counter-mapping and ethnographic tools. Insights from Rent Gap Theory help identify key variables: (1) Valorization cycles in extractive rents, (2) Class struggle's implications for rent gaps, (3) Territorial mobility across space, and (4) Forms of resistance in organizational and daily life contexts. The analysis depth revealed nuances within each category and identified common elements. In the first dimension, struggles focus not on urbanization and extractivism itself but on consolidating life projects that require participation in urbanization for access to essential rights. The second section illustrates struggles against exclusion through popular-urban alliances in extended urbanization, where class and ethnicity intersect. Migration due to rent gaps arises not from capital's triumph but as a proactive movement toward peri-urban spaces to resist capitalist encroachment. Lastly, reproducing indigenous practices is crucial, both materially and symbolically. Across the three cases, the reconstitution of collective indigenous ownership and land collectivization are vital, further explored in Article 5. This case exemplifies a deductive-inductive exercise that merges Marxist and decolonial theories, revealing new analytical dimensions.

For the fieldwork methodology, extensive interviews were conducted with community leaders, alongside thorough mapping. This involved walking interviews, mobile ethnographies, and relational mapping, detailed in the methodological chapter. Mappings occurred in 2019 for Sumak Ñambi during eviction threats and the construction of relatives' second homes; in 2021 for CCIPNA amid eviction risks; and in 2022 for Sapo Rumi, which faced mining pressures while developing tourism. As noted, despite varying origins of engagement, strong political trust and a commitment to indigenous rights facilitated collaboration across these sites. The systematization of mapping exercises, field notes, photographs, GPS data, and interviews enabled a detailed characterization of struggles against the imposition of value law on their peri-urban spaces, which demonstrate dynamism through territorial mobility and indigenous-urban organizing, contesting urban habitation rights.

Urban Geography

Extractive frontiers of extended urbanisation: Everyday practices of resistance against displacement and dispossession in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

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Extractive frontiers of extended urbanisation: Everyday practices of resistance against displacement and dispossession in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Contemporary postcolonial urban geographies pursue moving the hegemonic knowledge production towards providing better understandings of and from the frontiers of capital reproduction. This article engages in analysing extractive frontiers in the Amazon through the lens of Rent Gap Theory. Accordingly, it develops the notion of the *Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap* (APRG) as a conceptual tool to integrate political economy with post-colonial thought. In a comparative approach, the APRG is empirically elaborated on three cases of extended urbanisation in the Ecuadorian Amazon, with different trajectories and intersections of extractive economies, disputes over urbanisation and the constitution of indigenous subjects. The analysis combines spatial-historical and ethnographic methods to understand how rent gaps are produced but also contested at the frontiers of capital accumulation. It allows for an exercise that reformulates dominant urban theories through postcolonial critique, while extending the conceptual frames of urban frontiers through discourses on indigenous urban territorialisation.

Keywords: Rent Gap Theory; postcolonial theory; extended urbanisation; urban frontiers; Amazon; Ecuador

An Amazonian contribution to critical theories: Introduction

Recent years have witnessed intense, increasingly distant and apparently irreconcilable discussions between Marxist and post-colonial thought (Dabashi & Mignolo, 2015; Kapoor, 2018). For instance, post-colonial critique considers Marxist theories originated in the Global North as totalising, and eroding epistemic diversity. Allegedly, the study of phenomena such as gentrification or planetary urbanisation replicate, in the field of urban geographies, a marginalisation of theoretical approaches from the Global South (Liu et al., 2021; Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Similarly, Marxist positions often see the

construction of post-colonial approaches as functional to a multicultural neoliberalism that integrates relational ontologies and pluriversalism as antagonistic to class struggles at the frontiers of capital (Swyngedouw & Ernstson, 2018; Wilson, 2022).

Drawing on evolving discussions within critical urban theory and intersecting political economy with post-colonial theories (Horn, 2018; Hart, 2018; Wyly, 2020), this article generates a theoretical framework contributing to the decolonisation of urban geography. This will be pursued by interrogating how relational ontologies may contribute to better understand the frontiers of capitalist urbanisation, while connecting with approaches on extractive land rent, developed in Latin America. Simultaneously, we explore how the perspective of class struggle may provide new insights for post-colonial thought, especially if territorial mobility and the resulting ontological disputes are considered.

The analysis of three contrasting cases from IIRSA-induced urbanisation in the Ecuadorian Amazon[1] will contribute to the development of the notion of the *Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap* (APRG) as our main conceptual tool, as exercise of 'historical difference' to develop the dialogue purposed in a postcolonial context (Roy, 2016). The APRG allows a better, deeper and more complex understanding of how the concrete dynamics of uneven development and extended urbanisation generate specific contestations to the dispossessions experienced by local populations. More precisely, the Providencia case study provides nuanced comprehension of how a new multi-modal port as part of a transnational planned infrastructure hub generates urban land incorporation through extended urbanisation, with imaginative indigenous strategies

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[1] IIRSA is the Spanish abbreviation of the "Initiative for Regional Integration in South America", an emblematic infrastructure project, which was launched in the late 2000s.

that avoid the formation of a rent gap. The case study of Puyo shows how urban

planning to attract middle-class investment in the Amazon tries to erase a plurinational

peri-urban neighbourhood, triggering demands for the right to exercise indigenous

forms of territoriality under collective ownership that negates the law of the private land

market. Finally, the case of Tena shows how extractive mining concessions jeopardise

the social and economic integration of peri-urban indigenous communities through

recreational spa tourism from the city, provoking the response of strengthening

community territory in the face of the mining rent-gap, as well as political action as

urban indigenous people. More precisely, the Providencia case study provides nuanced

comprehension of how a new multi-modal port as part of a transnational planned

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extractive mining concessions jeopardise the social and economic integration of peri-

urban indigenous communities through recreational spa tourism from the city,

provoking the response of strengthening community territory in the face of the mining

rent-gap, as well as political action as urban indigenous people. However, analytically,

the aim is to move from a case study analysis to comparisons generatinge insights

through critical dialogue (Lancione & McFarlane, 2016; Nijman, 2015). This purpose

avoids looking into localist particularities that have been suspect of being non-

theoretical, but also pursuing global -and potentially- colonialist generalisations.

The theoretical discussion allows us to consider Neil Smith's Rent Gap Theory (Smith, 1979, 1987) along with the challenges of studying planetary rent gaps (Slater, 2017), while generating a provincialisation of urban studies through the study of effects and disputes of rent gaps at extractive frontiers in the Ecuadorian Amazon (Sheppard et al., 2013). In this vein, the subsequent comparison will transcend the way how we habitually interpret struggles against the realization of the rent gap, in the sense of Harvey and Marx, in which the cycle of capital is closed through the conversion of the commodity into money (Harvey, 2010). At the same time, we look at the ontological contestations against the formation and closure of the rent gap, avoiding the realization of capital in its frontiers, promoting "portals into multidimensional transformations of space and time produced through diverse, competing moral claims to the benefits of urban life" (Wyly, 2023).

Dialogues between political economy and post-colonial thought – A theoretical framework for understanding rent from the frontiers of capital

Rent Gap Theory remains an important and versatile theoretical approach to contemporary critical urban studies (Amore et al., 2020; Christophers, 2022; Risager, 2022). There has been continuous discussion and actualisation over time, and this has also included active engagement with debates on planetary urbanisation, one recent paradigmatic shift in urban studies (Brenner, 2014; Slater, 2017). However, while Rent Gap Theory and class analysis may trigger critique from postcolonial theorists, is has now been extended as an analytical tool better understand processes occurring in cities in many countries of the Global South (Lees et al., 2016; Ghertner, 2014; Gillespie, 2020), at the same time, recent contributions try to de-fossilise Smith's theoretical proposal in order to rescue its spirit and consider the contemporary challenges and contributions that lie ahead (Wyly, 2023). As such, this may expand theory in situations

with an *a-priori* contradiction of classical perspectives. Taking this into broader

consideration, our framework aims at further broadening the theoretical scope of Rent

Gap Theory, by elaborating on four main elements composing what we define as the

Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap (APRG): *(i)* the specific constitution of rent in

extractive mechanisms; *(ii)* the configuration of the commons based on discourses and

practices in and across territories; *(iii)* migrations and territorial mobility as an integral

element of class struggles; and *(iv)* the resource of relational ontologies to understand

the limits to the realization of rent gaps.

Rent Gap Theory: A view from the Amazon

Our starting point is the significant contribution of Marxist theory to the study of

contemporary (neoliberal) urbanisation. In this regard, David Harvey's work on *Limits*

to Capital and, more generally speaking, widespread discussions on uneven

geographical development, alongside with Neil Smith's Rent Gap Theory, have

provided a solid framework for understanding the spatialisation of capital through its

internal dynamics, and also how urbanisation is a decisive part of these dynamics

(Harvey, 1982; Smith, 1984, 1987). Because of the implications they have for peri-

urban areas, we consider the simultaneous dynamics of differentiation and

homogenisation that trigger processes of devaluation and valorisation as crucial (Slater,

2017; Smith, 1979). In this context, suburban and extra-urban agricultural land becomes

a necessary spatial escape when central areas are devalued (Hammel, 1999; Porter,

2010). As widely acknowledged, the state plays a central role in promoting fixed capital

and investment in such a scenario, also in the Global South (Janoschka et al., 2014;

Krijnen, 2018; López-Morales et al., 2016). This is especially the case in a context

where global players and processes of financialisation are establishing a trend towards

homogenisation on a planetary scale (Bosma & van Doorn, 2022; Smith, 2002).

Considering the global scale of this homogenisation process has resulted in conceptualising planetary urbanisation, mainly as a tool to explain the ways in which the search of capital to find rent gaps has been affecting the entire planet (Brenner, 2014; Brenner & Schmid, 2014). The Amazon has been looked at in a similar way as expressions of planetary urbanisation, especially the advances of urbanisation and the resulting rent gaps (Arboleda, 2016; Kanai, 2014; Wilson & Bayón, 2015). From a perspective of the Global South, the new frontiers of urbanisation that conform rent gaps are inextricably linked to the dominant forms of capital accumulation through land rent from the export of commodities (Coronil, 1997; Echeverría, 2011). In the last two decades, Latin American extractivism orchestrated by states and transnational companies achieved to strongly reduce the obstacles to urbanisation in the Amazon. Consequently, an initial academic contribution to the discussions of planetary urbanisation was generated, aiming at reformulating rent gap arrangements (Burchardt & Dietz, 2014; Svampa, 2012; Veltmeyer & Petras, 2012). This perspective continues a specific path of looking from the Global South at the production of rent gaps. However, it is a first step towards provincialising urban theory, not by ceasing to analyse general processes, but by theorising from their historical differences as a central element of global urban transformation (Hart, 2018; Roy, 2016b; Sheppard et al., 2013).

Territorial subjects 'in movement' against the realization of the rent-gap

We may further argue that Latin American Marxist literature considers that class struggle generated in this sphere relates more to securing a share of the evolving rent than to subverting its logics, and that the contestation against the realization of rent gaps is embedded in a struggle to be part of the spaces that are being designed for this purpose (Bartra, 2014; Echeverría, 2000; Wilson & Bayón, 2017a). Within Rent Gap Theory, class struggle appears as immanent, as a contribution to the structural violence

of capital's urban transformations, focusing on the risk of displacement of the 'popular classes' from urban environments (Slater, 2017; Janoschka & Sequera, 2016). This is why struggles for housing and the right to the city are less associated to the sphere of production, but rather to the realization of capital, triggering contestations that relate to everyday practices, particularly in popular contexts of the Global South (Caldeira, 2017; Harvey, 2014; Zibechi, 2012). The contention is closely linked to an understanding of producing the 'commons' as an alternative project to the existing commodification of the livelihood. Hence, the management of housing and territories are two major milestones in practically producing everyday commons, and they are devised as objections to new enclosures and further privatisations (Dardot & Laval, 2019; Hardt & Negri, 2011). Across Latin America, this struggle for the commons strongly involves indigenous movements and other urban-popular subjects, who have established the reference to "territories" as their central political concept, and have created a specific institutionality for the defence and governance of the instituted spatial logics (Galafassi, 2018; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009; Sevilla-Buitrago, 2015).

In Latin American urban peripheries, the global reconfiguration of popular classes is produced by the cycles of financialisation that affect urban and agricultural land rents, leading also to significant rural-urban migrations (Schiavo et al., 2013; Walker, 2008). The relative impoverishment of popular neighbourhoods paired with the existing informality may situate this process as a defeat of the popular classes (Pradilla Cobos, 2002; Sassen, 2014). But it is also worthwhile to look at rural-urban migrations as specific forms of contestation and co-constitution of subjects who struggle and produce space by specific mobilities (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Sheller & Urry, 2016). In this regard, it might fall short to conceive the inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods only as subjects that are fixed in their boundaries, without considering

other migrations than those provoked by gentrification, or simply as people who have ancestrally inhabited these spaces (Albet & Benach, 2012; Haesbaert, 2005). This allows us to perceive indigenous subjects in spatial transition, pursuing multi-scalar relations in and across space. It also means to reflect on their migration to urban areas not only as a dispossession of the commons, but rather as a proactive stance of producing space, and of creating territories, while acting across multiple scales and territorialities (Bayón Jiménez et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2017). Furthermore, mobility creates a continuum between rural communities and the city. At times, migration may be a conscious community strategy, in order to guarantee access to different services, secure different temporalities, while providing essential links for the reproduction of communities (Galli, 2012; Peluso, 2015).

Ontological exercises against the realization of the APRG

In order to advance the decolonisation and provincialisation of critical urban studies by expanding Rent Gap Theory, it is further suggested to include an in-depth consideration of alternative knowledge systems in the Global South, and more precisely in the Amazon. In this regard, the production of urban space by indigenous populations may reconfigure processes of urbanisation, by challenging the existence of a single modernity for understanding spatial transformations (Blaser, 2010; Blaser & De la Cadena, 2009). While such relational ontologies intersect with dual ontologies (i.e., economy and nature, body and mind, or life and dead) they are part of continuous cosmogonies. In the Amazon, they rely on alternative ontologies for understanding the cosmos, the corresponding nature-society relationships, and the struggles for land and socially produced territories; triggering ways to reconceptualise alternative knowledges as expressed in migration processes and disputes for specific places and spaces (Descola, 1998; Escobar, 2014; Viveiros de Castro, 1998). Accordingly, in terms of Roy

(2016b), urban spaces are places of "ontological multiplicity" calling for a radically different body of knowledge. In Latin America, the struggle for the commons is led by indigenous movements and urban-popular subjects, who mainly demand territories as an element that synthesises the bases of their material and symbolic reproduction. Accordingly, this has generated an autonomous institutionality for the defence of the commons, and a self-governance with specific spatial logics (Galafassi, 2018; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009; Sevilla-Buitrago, 2015).

This inherent conflict paves the way for associating the realisation of rent gaps by capital with coloniality and racism as structural forms of urbanisation. In these accounts, the new colonisers have allegedly the legitimacy to transform a natural environment and spatially 'enclose' people who are symbolically racialised and culturally deprived (Gill, 2021). Therefore, an analysis of rent gaps in urbanisation processes should refer to the intrinsic, symbolical but at the same time racist power of "territorial stigma" (Wacquant, 2007). However, also the spaces that are incorporated to urban frontiers by road infrastructures and extractive activities will always contain a racial dimension that aims at disciplining indigenous ontologies. For instance, Cowen (2020) demonstrated this relation in historical research about the construction of railway infrastructures. Therefore, besides the mass mobilisation and exposure to the 'white' society, the resistance of subjects can be precisely encountered in everyday practices of reproducing ontologies in urban space. More precisely, this provides two dimensions: Firstly, the ways in which the neighbourhoods and communities inhabited are progressively co-constituted through incremental infrastructures (Silver, 2014). Secondly, the forms of collective action in indigenous spaces, such as common work ('minka' in Kichwa), the realisation of celebrations and festivities, and spatial planning activities triggering processes of urban 'ethnogenesis' (Mantel, 2017; Melucci &

Massolo, 1991). These spatial practices show in a very intense way the social relations and use values of territorial commons that confront the exchange values of capital when it tries to take over spaces with a larger rent-gap. At the same time, capital may be reluctant to invest in areas inhabited by indigenous people, since they are perceived as 'ungovernable', causing devaluation of investments (Liu et al., 2018), thus preventing the formation of rent-gaps.

Requirements for developing the APRG

The previous discussion illustrates that Rent Gap Theory requires conceptual broadening, which will be further assumed by articulating the concept of the *Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap* (APRG). By incorporating post-colonial approaches, the APRG allows to make conceptually more complex explorations into fundamental disputes over neoliberal urbanisation in the Amazonian region. Hence, our conceptualisation of the APRG contests and extends the perspective of Rent Gap Theory in four ways that guide the subsequent analysis of the case studies in the Ecuadorian Amazon. *Firstly*, different to perceiving rent gaps only as concrete expressions of de- and revalorisation inherent to territorial homogenisation and essential for attracting capital investment, the APRG allows us to better comprehend how extractive rents promoting extended urbanisation and the corresponding valorisation of space are practically contested. *Secondly*, Rent Gap Theory understands the realisation of rent gaps according to the correlation of forces between inhabitants of specific, often de-valorised places and neighbourhoods and the financial capital seeking valorisation. Beyond this, the conceptualisation of the APRG further focuses on collective subjects partaking in contestations considered class struggles. In this sense, the subjects argue over more than their properties or public infrastructures, claiming also the management of collective property territories that were historically coproduced and inhabited.

Thirdly, the APRG expands the view of urban subjects as entrenched in their

habitat while resisting displacement by the arrival of financial and real estate actors

from outside, as considered in Rent Gap Theory. In contrast, the APRG focuses also on

(strategic) migrations to peri-urban spaces where rents are captured by popular subjects.

Fourthly, while the Rent Gap Theory analyses spaces of resistance based on

neighbourhood organisations and everyday life routines through the lens of class

practices, the APRG also considers cultural contestations that challenge racism as co-

constitutive of the materialisation of the rent gap. This reconfigures the scope of

analysing everyday life in the context of multiple ontologies that intersect in, across and

beyond space. While these four aspects overlap in many ways, they will be successively

analysed separately in a dialectical exercise.

Table 1. Overview of the theoretical contributions of the APGR against traditional Rent
Gap Theory.

Category	Rent Gap Theory	Contribution of the APRG
Role of cycles of valorisation for extractive rents	Cycles of De- and re-valuation produce cycles of equalization-differentiation as dynamics for urban rent extraction	Cycles of valorisation differentiate by incorporating and exploring new urban spaces; extractive rents produce urban rents
Meaning of class struggle against the realisation of rent gaps	Crucial role of neighbourhood organisation, defence of public infrastructures and individual/private property	Focus on collective subjects, common management of goods like land or water (commons); constitution of social institutions
Mobility across space	Capital is mobile, triggering displacement of urban popular subjects to materialise rent gaps	Territorial mobility as a strategy to subvert the realization of rent gaps
Forms of resistance in organisation and everyday life	Neighbourhood organisation, routines and property	Consideration of multiple ontologies in contestation; subversion of urban racism

Methodological strategy for assessing the contribution of the APRG

This research applies a deductive approach, pursuing the elaboration of the APRG as a complementary tool for assessing rent gaps in urban frontiers in the Global South; chiefly aiming at expanding the scope of Rent Gap Theory. The comparison of three different geographical scenarios, with its specificities and variegated relationships at the frontiers of capital accumulation, is considered as useful to overcome particularities capable to generate further theoretical insights for bridging political economy with post-colonial thought (Nijman, 2015; Peck, 2015). The case studies have in common that they represent highly dynamic relations in the four analytical categories of the APRG, supporting our aim to rethink theory through comparative urbanism (Robinson, 2016). Following the relational comparison underlying the postcolonial Marxist dialectical approach of Hart (2018), such cases are understood as heterogeneous and contradictory processes that establish worlds of structures and events. Far from a positive comparison, this comparative approach seeks to rethink theory from new angles, aligned with more recent proposals for conjunctural analysis, as a less orthodox alternative to formalist methodologies, to delve into the contexts and relationships that emerge from their contradictions (Peck, 2023).

In methodological terms, such relational comparative approach focuses on combining critical collaborative cartographies as a mapping exercise with ethnographic research practice that also includes different types of interviews; allowing further exploration of the suggested analytical categories of the APRG. For instance, we applied community mapping and walking interviews with political subjects as an empirical tool (Pierce, 2015). In this vein, participatory cartography proves also relevant for supporting indigenous, peasant and urban subjects in concrete disputes and for co-creating meaningful visual representations (Bayón Jiménez et al., 2021; Porto-

Gonçalves, 2009). In this sense, community mapping is a vehicle establishing dialogues between the Cartesian visions of capitalist projects with relational ontologies (Oslender, 2021), but also between Marxist and post-colonial geographies (Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012; Maharawal & McElroy, 2018).

More precisely, community mapping was combined during the field work with walking interviews to elaborate Cartesian cartographies that actively support specific disputes of collective subjects with and against the national state. Beyond collecting empirical data like specific territorial practices, walking interviews support also ethnographic research and participant observation, bringing together the use value of territories with specific personal and subjective trajectories (Muratorio, 2013; Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). Further attention was also paid to self-representations in different events, especially in ceremonies and celebrations, as well as in local assemblies. Such practices can be considered as moments of subversion of colonial political practices that strategically place and negotiate the role of communities with respect to the mainstream 'mestizo' society (Bartra, 2014; Phipps, 2016).

Fieldwork for this research took place between 2019 and 2022, although partially obstructed by the restrictions to access to communities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Once restrictions were successively reduced and abolished, return to in-person relationships took place. In total, empirical research was conducted during 18 weeks in Amazonian territories, however, accompanied by close social media monitoring, as well as repeated visits of community leaders to the Ecuadorian capital Quito for further meetings, social and political activities. In total, 20 formal in-depth interviews were carried out, as well as three community mapping events and three group walking interviews that allowed cartographic representation of specific conflicts

in space. Finally, participation in at least one community event in each geographical area took place.

Research results – an analysis of three different approaches

The rise of global commodity prices has further consolidated the Latin American extractivist economic model, triggering a new wave of oil, mining and agro-industrial projects, requiring new infrastructures across the Amazon and significantly advancing the frontiers of urbanisation (Betancourt Santiago et al., 2015; Côrtes & Silva Júnior, 2021). In this sense, the most emblematic project was the Initiative for Regional Integration in South America (IIRSA in Spanish), articulating the common interests of private companies and states, though attracting significant political and academic attention (Arboleda, 2016; Monte-Mor, 2014). Despite the fact that some Ecuadorian infrastructures created under the frame of IIRSA were rather unsuccessful, the oil concession surface doubled, and large-scale mining activities expanded rapidly (van Teijlingen, 2019; Wilson & Bayón, 2015). Consequently, the colonisation of the Amazon accelerated significantly, with the Amazonian cities being the fastest growing in the country, implying widespread and diffuse urbanisation especially alongside linear infrastructures (Cabrera-Barona et al., 2020). Moreover, urbanisation processes in the Ecuadorian Amazon are a prime example for creating spaces that provide the conditions to emerging APRGs. As previously discussed, our analysis will focus on three cases (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Amazon Urbanisation Index and case studies.
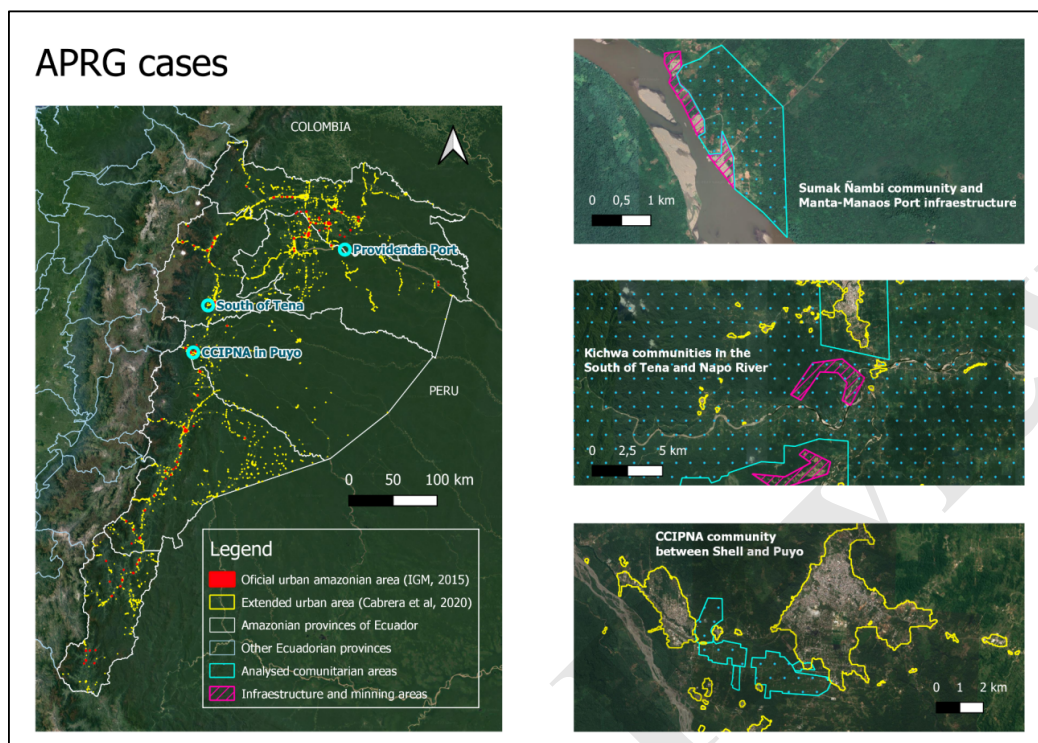
Source: Own elaboration.

Puerto Providencia: the dispute over the APRG against oil extraction dynamics in an IIRSA port

The first case study explores the consequences of the state planning and materialisation of the Providencia port and corresponding road connection as part of IIRSA's Ecuadorian-Amazonian axis linking Manta (Ecuador) and Manaus (Brazil) (Dávalos & Albuja, 2014). The Kichwa community of Providencia did not manage to register a collective territory in the third quarter of the 20th century, as the neighbouring communities did during the fall of the hacienda regime, because they were families evicted by a tourist lodge downstream, and were only able to obtain family farms. Following a perceived threat by the intended territorial transformation, the Kichwa community living on the banks of the Napo River created in 2010 the association "Sumak Ñambi" ('road of plenitude' in Amazonian Kichwa language), referring to the

potential transformation of the community into a biotechnological enclave that would benefit, amongst others, from public services and new employment opportunities (Del Hierro, 2014). However, the imagination of a positive socio-economic transformation did not materialise; i.e., no stable and better paid jobs were created, and no high-quality public services provided. In addition to this disillusion, the numerous oil companies choose Providencia as a transport hub for their facilities, forming a rent-gap area.. Moreover, the Municipality of Shushufindi was initiating procedures to evict the community in the face of the land speculation craze provided by the oil port boom, seeking to facilitate the closure of the rent gap. Such eventuality triggered a strategy of transforming the community strategically into a 'neighbourhood'/ barrio: In a barter with a boat company, new access roads were built on land belonging to one of the involved families, and the individual family plot became collective neighbourhood (Wilson & Bayón, 2017b). Subsequently, the area received newly constructed housing facilities to allocate the second home of family members who had previously migrated to urban centres, as a strategy to transform easily seizable rural land into a consolidated neighbourhood with higher expropriation costs.. This allows relatives to spend more time with their families, develop plans for a permanent return to their homeland, i.e., after retirement, and providing family members living in other communities connected only by fluvial transport with a place of arrival and stopover for further road travelling. Despite the change of daily life that the construction of the oil port and the road has triggered, traditional Kichwa practice in and with space remain prominent, for instance regarding the relationship with the Napo River, the use of traditional construction material, ancestral knowledge for treating illnesses, the cultivation of yucca and the preparation of the traditional beverage 'chicha'. Additionally, the celebration of annual assemblies allows to select community leaders and take decisions about their own

territory, and recreate social bonds in celebrations reproducing the reciprocity between families.

In this sense, the logics of uneven development stemming from the new road and the port caused a notable land valuation; and the corresponding state action and spatial planning logics exacerbated displacement pressures upon the indigenous communities. As a response, the communities began to actively disputing the spaces inherent to the rent gap, by reclaiming urban space during the urbanisation process. The successful materialisation of this strategy was possible because of different alliances that transcend the material space of the community, acting in multi-scalar relations constituted by kinship with other communities with relatives and those who migrated to cities. However, the adaptation to the urbanisation and the explicit claim to be part of it, did not suppress any relational ontological practices. Contrary to this, they have integrated to innovative understandings of the communalisation of space, the importance of life around water in the Kichwa cosmovision. In other words, the community deploys different, and particularly innovative strategies to organise indigenous resistance to the IIRSA; effectively frustrating the realization of rent gap. Faced with the transformation of Sumak Ñambi from a rural farm to a populated neighbourhood, the Municipality of Shushufindi preferred to abandon its eviction plan, and the rent gap could not materialise.

Puyo: the dispute over the real estate APRG through the strategic creation of a pluri-ontological neighbourhood

Puyo was formally founded in 1899, and it developed successively as a place of exchange between the mestizo colonisation connecting the Amazon with the rest of Ecuador, and a conglomerate of indigenous nationalities that lived in the area as a result of multiple migrations, with agents linked to catholic church, oil extraction, the

Ecuadorian army and agricultural land-takers arriving in subsequent decades (Whitten & Whitten, 2008). The historic migration has produced strongly hierarchical social relations; with social, economic and political powers in the hands of the white-mestizo population, while indigenous populations, and their spaces and demands are strongly marginalised and stigmatised (Coba Mejía, 2021). Nowadays, the city of Puyo is a relevant point of connection for IIRSA, as a crossroad between the north-south linear Amazonian development axis with the Andean highlands; by means of road access, and an airport that provides access to the Amazon region.

Since the year 2010, an abandoned tea farm that had been established in 1934 on indigenous territories was progressively occupied by poor families in need of land plots on which to live (Castillo Izurieta, 2022). Subsequent land occupations by indigenous organisations fuelled political demands for the creation of the Intercultural City Community of People and Nationalities (CCIPNA), which unified the claims of approximately 3,000 families belonging to 16 different nationalities, including 14 indigenous nationalities from the Amazon and the Ecuadorian mountains, mestizo and Afro-Ecuadorian communities, from indigenous communities and other neighbourhoods in the city, living on more than 380 hectares of land adjoining the road linking Puyo and the Ecuadorian highlands. Reflecting upon the detrimental historical consequences of debt mechanisms that were long exercised by the mestizo society in the city, CCIPNA has rejected for more than a decade the offers from state authorities to grant individual titles to the housing plots; demanding instead a single collective plot for the 3,000 families. Since the area is desired by powerful real estate actors demanding the creation of middle-class condominiums and gated communities, CCIPNA is the target of important stigmatisation campaigns. Police and military forces have repeatedly attempted to evict the dwellers, and the private company that took the legal ownership

of the previous tea farm has been harassing the community for years. Despite these threats, CCIPNA achieved developing collective ideas for effectively achieving a cohabitation of the 16 nationalities, recognising the historical marginalisation, while implementing indigenous organisational principles such as plurinationality and interculturality. In community urbanisation plans, explicit reference to indigenous uses of space, including housing facilities with sufficient areas for traditional agricultural uses, and the cultivation of animals and medicinal plants as well as the preservation of communal spaces such as waterfalls and forests, have been deployed. Moreover, CCIPNA's annual community celebrations built a space for political claims and the exercise of ontological multiplicity; demonstrating the strength to contest the organisational framework of the dominant mestizo society. As a result, CCIPNA has transformed into a place of shelter for mobile indigenous subjects and other migrants, and community leaders explicitly claim the right to migrate and to contest the central places of mestizo colonisation in the region, as well as their job opportunities, educational facilities and health services.

In this case, the rent gap was formed by the abandonment of an agro-extractivist space and its planning designation as an area of city expansion thus valorisation. However, the rent gap cannot be realized because of the constitution of an urban-indigenous-popular subject that defies the logic of commodified individual ownership of land and housing. By constituting collective territorial structures as commons, it creates sufficient political capacity to successfully contest the violence of evictions intended to be reinforced by public authorities. Such collective action constitutes a political subject that is aware of its reality as an impoverished class, however, weaving alliances through an explicit indigenous pluriculturality capable to prevent powerful actors to realize rent gaps. By invading public space for ancestral celebrations, CCIPNA

shows its symbolic position in the city, highlighting also the different indigenous

cosmovisions as identities expressed in and through space. In this regard, the struggles

actually move the frontier of contestation from an imaginary of indigenous territories

associated to the rainforest to partake actively in the urbanisation of the Amazon, thus

transforming periurban territories according to indigenous value systems. The APRG is

hence formed through the recovery of ancestral space yet originating intensive

dialogues with the contemporary urban frontiers. The case study demonstrates that

indigenous populations claim their inclusion in the ongoing urbanisation processes, but

preserving the Amazonian logic as expressed by a powerful plurinational class alliance.

Tena: disputes about the mining APRG in confluence with tourism and indigenous youth mobilisation

The third case study is located in Tena, a city in which the accumulation strategies of

indigenous subjects relying on a combination of agrarian activities and tourist

economies are challenged by extensive urbanisation plans. Similar to Puyo, Tena is also

linked by Amazon-Highlands roads and characterised by white-mestizo dominance

related to the Catholic church. However, Kichwa organisations achieved greater

political capacities, including strong representation and leadership in local and

provincial governments. This has diminished the institutional practices of urban racism,

promoting also well-established indigenous community-neighbourhoods, and a better

access to public services (Gutiérrez Marín, 2002; Tanguila Andy, 2018). For instance,

during the infrastructure boom of the early 2010s linked to IIRSA expansion, Tena's

peri-urban area was connected with a new airport, a new university, and paved roads

allowing touristic flows to access indigenous communities (Uzendoski & Saavedra,

2010), promoting valorisation cycles around new infrastructures. These infrastructural

improvements pursued Kichwa communities to further integrate into the urban logics of

the city; providing easier access to educational and health services, and more generally speaking, establishing themselves as protagonists in fluid socio-spatial dynamics. This translates into mutual economic support between urban indigenous family members and those who live in ancestral communities. Interestingly enough is that tourist activities have triggered additional links between the two spheres.

The communal territories of Tena provide people with strong links to relational ontologies, especially since there is a historically continuous and contingent occupation of the mountains and rivers, including worship at countless spiritual places, hunting, cultivation, and bathing, with decades' long community organisation and the celebration of ritual festivities. However, the deregulation of the control over the mining sector has motivated in the last five years an exponential growth of gold mining activities, taking advantage of newly opened roads. This has triggered strong spatial transformations, for instance by using large-scale drilling machines, attempting to divert rivers and contaminating surfaces, soil and water sources with heavy metals (Geografía Crítica, 2021). This mining rent-gap has a high potential to transform peasant properties into mining extraction areas, which are enormously raising the value of the land, triggering a cycle of appreciation that was unthinkable a few years ago. Faced with this generation of an extractive (urban) frontier, the local indigenous organisations unified their struggles to achieve limits to mining activities. As in the periruban area of Tena families normally only titled cultivation areas due to historical colonization, processes of legalising collective deeds for more remote areas of common use are being intensified in order to prevent mining from exploiting legal loopholes. Moreover, they have simultaneously configured as a new actor, resulting from the interaction of communities and urban activist under the umbrella of the initiative "Napo Resiste"; strongly driving

also non-indigenous young people and women into leading roles. The court victories

that this coalition has won are trying to stop the opening of the urban-mining rent-gap.

In this case, the public infrastructure plays a double-edged role: It allows a

process of differentiation and valorisation of space that has the potential to benefit

different activities, from sustainable tourism to mining. In this sense, the rent gap for

mining-related activities cannot be fully realized in many areas due to local and urban

struggles and the diverging imaginaries of how the area should be further developed.

For instance, tourism is considered as a less aggressive land use in comparison to

mining due to increased community control of use rules and retaining land ownership.

This subjective construction refers to spatial commons, the ancestral territories; and its

current enlargement is used to protect these territories from further mining concessions.

Moreover, the exercise of racism, harassment or violence are less pertinent in the

community spaces. With regard to migration and mobility, it is important to state that

permanent migrations take place less frequently, while there is a continuum of daily,

weekly and seasonal mobilities between ancestral territories and the city. Eventually,

this triggered interesting processes of cultural mixture; especially, if the collective

subject of young female 'millennials' is considered as a group that achieved substantial

capacities to advocate for different political agendas. In this sense, the corresponding

demonstrations in Tena reclaim at the same time indigenous identities and display in the

city innovative repertoires of ontological practices that succeed in halting the formation

of the urban-mining rent-gap.

**Contributions of the APRG for a nuanced understanding of contestation at
the frontiers of urbanisation – a relational comparison.**

The previous analysis of the case studies from Puerto Providencia, Puyo and Tena has

demonstrated that both the state-led extractive capital extending the frontiers of

urbanisation in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and the relational engagement and contestation of indigenous communities with these frontiers are highly differentiated across space and scale. Subsequently, the conceptualisation of the APRG presents also a nuanced endeavour including inconsistencies, disruptions and generalisations required to constitute

territorial commons. For instance, the discussion of the cases allows in-depth insights into the question of how land rent valorisation practically unfolds: capital does not necessarily require a prior devaluation, and there are processes of valorisation and formation of rent gaps that compel to differentiations, which may be promoted by extractive capital. Puerto Providencia and Tena stand exemplarily for these processes of valorisation without previous devaluation: the construction of new roads and extractive frontiers digging into indigenous territories creates rent gaps allowing for immediate valorisation of spaces previously at the margins of land price logics. In the case of Puyo there is only a relative devaluation of the agrarian ex-hacienda, which had been located in indigenous territories. Consequently, our analysis widens the scope of how rent gaps are analysed, without a prerequisite of previous capital investment.

In all three cases, the construction of roads and other public infrastructure that was encouraged by the extractive boom leads to very specific ways and procedures to negotiate the realisation of rent gaps in a conflictive social, political and economic panorama. For instance, *Sumak Ñambi* changed its denomination to symbolically embrace the new road connecting the port construction; CCIPNA incorporates the name of the city as part of its claims for the right to the city; and for the Kichwa communes, tourism and other services are fundamentally related to the process of urbanisation. Following conceptualisations of Latin American Marxism, the predominance of land rent generates disputes among social and community actors over the rent as such. More

precisely, these actors engage actively in attempting to avert the realization of rent gaps stemming from capital investment.

The three case studies represent different ways of how attempts to realize rent gaps were initially orchestrated; i.e., displacing communities for the construction of ports, real estate projects and mining enclaves. The resulting violence exercised by extractive circuits does not only contrast the configuration of lived spaces for housing and leisure activities, but especially opposes historical configurations of territories as commons that allow the material and symbolic reproduction of communities. This is why the meaning ascribed to class struggle is changing: different subaltern populations create alliances against planned transformation and (creative) destruction by capital to defend spaces suitable for living. In the case of Puerto Providencia, this occurs by reinforcing class and ethnic alliances based on family ties to struggle against displacement; CCIPNA configures a pluricultural class alliance with very different experiences and backgrounds capable to produce territories collectively; finally, in Tena, the constitution of a formalised pluricultural actor achieves cross-cutting class and inter-territorial alliances to sustain the commons linked to water, in a shared vision to dispute mining by engaging actively in specific urban spaces and social media. In addition, in all three places there are specific processes of land collectivisation against private property: the family farm that becomes a community neighbourhood in Providencia, the exhacienda that becomes a collective neighbourhood, and the untitled areas in Tena that are incorporated into the legal ownership of the communities. Consequently, the resource of creating territorial commons is fundamental to successfully restrict the realization of rent gaps, and it is also a crucial to conceptualise the APRG.

In this regard, out findings demonstrate that such defence of the commons may occur in dynamic territories relying on migrations, mobilities and multi-scalar appropriations as concrete and essential strategies against the realization of rent gaps and in favour of producing spaces and territorialities. In the case of Puerto Providencia, the migrations to the cities and other places along the banks of the Napo River are essential to transform the community neighbourhood space into a territorial reality, especially for families living far away. Puyo stands for a case in which the mobility and migration from Amazonian communities to the city provide the framework for the constitution of an urban-indigenous social and political subject, settling in peri-urban areas with a higher potential for configuring communal territories. Moreover, in Tena, daily and seasonal mobilities are part of the strategies to dispute the right to the city especially for peri-urban communities targeting sustainable tourism as an alternative to the destructive forces of mining activities. This is why the conceptualisation of the APRG focuses on the processes of constituting and co-constructing communities under a scenario of migration and territorial mobility.

However, the configuration of peri-urban spaces as a result of class alliances, migration and mobilities, and the constitution of territorial commons requires an additional focus on community practices relating to alternative logics of appropriating and using space on the base of indigenous ontologies. Essential components of the resulting ontological multiplicity within the spaces of urbanisation are, amongst others: the self-governance of territories, collective ownership of land, collective management of and caring practices regarding water resources, the specific relation with forest both as a medicinal resource and in a symbolic-spiritual dimension, the presence of the 'chacra' as way to care for food in nutritional and cultural terms, family relations and cultural reciprocity, but also ritual celebrations. In Puerto Providencia, it is evident that

the neighbourhood, the agricultural land, and -despite the contamination- also the riverbank areas are maintained for different cultural practices. In the case of Puyo, the large territorial extension of the community makes possible differentiated spaces providing capacities for symbolic and cultural reproduction for the cohabitation of, at least, 16 different "ontological multiplicities" (Roy, 2016). And in Tena, communal territories allowing widespread activities including, amongst others, also farming and hunting, is combined with a soft touristic exploitation introducing to some extent a re-signification of space and place. Ontological practices like these defy the experiences of structural racism that habitually negate the appropriation of urban space to indigenous subjects, with institutional and capitalist actors deploying different mechanisms of territorial stigmatisation. Consequently, these struggles containing disruptive community proposals actively dispute the realisation of rent gaps by capital instead of tackling their original formation.

Table 2. A diagnostic grid of the APRG analysis.

Case	Role of extractive rent	Meaning of class struggle	Territorial mobility as a strategy	Ontological everyday practices
Case 1: Sumak Ñambi in Puerto Providencia	Proximity to public infrastructure for obtention of jobs and services	New urban settlements to avert eviction and defend collective territories	Mobility of relatives from other communities and cities to constitute and claim space and territoriality	Maintenance of forest areas, agricultural activity, meaning of the river, and reciprocal relationships
Case 2: CCIPNA in Puyo	Proximity to road access and the city for obtention of jobs and services	Pluricultural class alliance against eviction	Arrival of 3,000 families from across the city and other indigenous Amazon communities	Agricultural activity, meaning waterfalls and forest, cultural activities and ritual celebrations
Case 3: Anti Minning kichwa comunas in Tena	Establishment of urban-community networks allowing insertion in road touristic activities	Inter-ethnic struggle against mining concessions devaluating touristic activities	Continuum between indigenous dynamics in the city and peri-urban areas	Commoning practices to recreate identities, medicinal practice, recreation, ecological/sports tourism
APRG	**Fight *for* Extended**	**Alliances of the popular classes against exclusion *in***	**Migrations *to* the extended**	**Reproducing community practices *in* new urban areas**

Urbanisation and rents	extended urbanisation	urbanisation areas essential

Resuming the previous discussion of our research results, we may acknowledge that the conceptualisation of the APRG allows for four crucial expansions of debates rooted in Rent Gap Theory. *Firstly*, APRG provides a nuanced understanding about how the frontiers of urbanisation linked to extractive rents may be observed through the struggles of different ontological subjects to create affective territories that derive and appropriate an important fraction of the rent gap. *Secondly*, we have witnessed that urban-indigenous subjects successfully form class alliances with other popular subjects to dispute collectively the meaning of urbanisation, especially when threatened by displacement. *Thirdly*, migrations and territorial mobility are essential factors to confront the attempts to consolidate the rent gap, and they support the constitution of contested territories. *Fourthly*, by making indigenous territorial commons more visible for the mainstream society, the positionality and embeddedness of state-orchestrated racism changes, allowing a material and symbolic reproduction based upon indigenous ontological meaning and practice. These four aspects justify our efforts to construct conceptually the APRG as a tool to better reflect on how Marxist theory directly relates to the frontiers of capital and urbanisation. They also demonstrate the validity of Rent Gap Theory in the Amazonian context, with its associated terminology allowing a better understanding of the role that space and territories play for capital accumulation and the corresponding contestation.

Conclusions

As Wyly explains, Rent Gap Theory conceptually channelled widespread outrage about how corporate power and financial capitalism were taking control of the way cities are produced (Wyly, 2023). To provincialise this outrage in urban studies, it

is important to consider how such outrage is produced at the frontiers of capital (Roy, 2016b; Sheppard et al., 2013). Where processes of spatial dispossession of community practices combine with extractivism and the drive of racist powers, this outrage clearly takes on other perspectives and forms of collective action. At the same time, the dynamics of capital and its forms of appropriation of spaces where rent gaps open up are still there (Slater, 2017; Gillespie, 2020). These theoretical tensions, far from turning debates into a boxing ring, allow for conceptual dialogues. In this article around the formulation of the APRG it can be seen that different theoretical matrices, Marxist and post-colonial in this ongoing dialogue (Horn, 2018; Wyly, 2020), can be part of the same indignation regarding the existing dynamics of dispossession in the Amazon.

The Amazon region has been commonly treated from its particularism, due to the particular ways in which its position as a frontier is situated in social sciences in general, and urban studies in particular (Descola, 1998; Aleixades & Peluso 2015). Therefore, the exercise of relational comparison between different spaces with linked but different historical contexts allows us to construct a reflection beyond the cases, and to generate theoretical proposals from the frontiers of capital, which can transcend the peripheralisation of Amazonian knowledge (Monte-Mor, 2014). In this sense, the APRG proposal allows us to rethink how we understand the general dynamics of capital from other spaces, and why we need new angles and an increase in complexity that positions the responses to the general indignation in a situated way in specific conjunctures (Liu et al., 2018; Parnell & Robinson, 2012).

The APRG is not a blueprint for other frontiers of urbanisation, it is not executable for other spaces as if it were a positivist experiment, but shows the power of disruptive deductive exercises to expand the field of critical urban theory (Robinson, 2016). Given the recently framed need to recapture the momentum of Rent Gap Theory

and transcend the limits from which it was conceived, the APRG allows for the incorporation of contributions from Latin American Marxism and postcolonial theories in a context of extended urbanisation. In this sense, the APRG may identify blind spots and counterexamples and pursue a widening of traditional theoretical approaches (Hart, 2018).

In political terms, the APRG positions specific ways of knowledge production by transcending beyond epistemic loopholes that appear to be redundant and often very distant from the perceived realities in concrete spaces at the frontiers of capitalist urbanisation. It visualises possible pathways to overcome debates that may be characterised to some extent as dishonest. In this regard, we refrain from simplifying political economy approaches by including the wide variety of contributions of Marxist thought from the Global South (Bartra, 2014, Coronil, 1997; Echeverría, 2000). At the same time, we also avoid denying the concrete and often contradictory experiences, experiments and political propositions and aspirations of indigenous populations to some extent present in postcolonial theorisation (Escobar, 2014, Porto-Gonçalves, 2009). The ability to re-imagine the collectivisation of private property, the development of ontologically powerful spatial practices in the peripheries of Amazonian cities, in the face of ongoing threats of eviction based on racism, is a powerful call to re-imagine the theoretical limits of critical urbanism.

Future research may continue generating such necessary dialogues between critical theories, allowing further addressing the constitution of social struggles facing the dramatic consequences of capital accumulation at the frontiers of urbanisation. At the same time, this formulation leaves a huge number of gaps not addressed by this article that need to be developed in the future. From this proposal, necessary insights emerge, such as a dialogue between rent theory and Amazonian historical conjunctures

or an in-depth analysis of how the sphere of reproduction operates from a feminist

perspective in Amazonian urban spaces. The emergence of the field of urban-

Amazonian studies is a possibility for rethinking the frontiers of capital from the places

where they are being produced.

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4.5. Article 5: The Amazonian Indigenous city against settler colonialism

This article is under review for a special issue of the Urban Studies Journal (SJR Q1 2024, 1.98) on Indigenous urban studies, exploring creative urban futures, histories of resistance, and Indigenous subjectivities. It is expected to be published between 2025 and 2026. As a sole-authored contribution, it focuses on the CCIPNA experience in the Ecuadorian Amazon, the most transgressive case of global urbanism analyzed within this context, discussed in Articles 2 and 4. The article examines CCIPNA's proposal for plurinational collective ownership through four key scenes revealing tensions with colonial and capitalist perspectives on Amazonian urban planning. It demonstrates how Indigenous contributions reshape urban theorization through the concept of plurinationality in Ecuador's Constitution.

Theoretically, the article constructs a different bridge, starting from Marxist theories and expanding with decolonial insights, it moves in the opposite direction. It departs from the Settler Colonialism Theory, which originated in cultural studies focused on genocide, and has, in recent years, become a vibrant field of debate enriched by contributions from diverse perspectives, including Marxist theory. Also, it examines theoretical intersections in an Amazonian dispute between individual capitalist property and collective ownership through a cross-analysis of gentrification from Black Geographies and urban ontological disputes. The critique of gentrification by Indigenous intellectuals in Ecuador serves as a key case in CCIPNA, offering insights for plurinational urban futures in the country.

Methodologically, the article builds on a deepened focus on the most emblematic case rather than through comparative inductive-deductive exercises. It seeks to expand upon the previous analysis where CCIPNA featured but was not the sole protagonist. The article explores the author's positionality and research trajectory through academia and NGOs, highlighting four scenes of settler colonialism influenced by CCIPNA: the Municipality versus community at a university planning event; the community's role in the Indigenous uprising; territory mapping; and the white-capitalist vision for the area's future. These scenes underscore the importance of reconstituting urban collective territory for advancing plurinationality. Fieldwork techniques are detailed in the final subsection of Article 3. Based on articles 1 to 4, this article addresses secondary questions 2 and 3 regarding methodological innovations and the political proposal, through the concept of plurinationality.

The Amazonian indigenous city against settler colonialism: four scenes for cities back.

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The Amazonian indigenous city against settler colonialism: four scenes for cities back.

Abstract:

This article aligns with studies on settler colonialism and urbanization, situating these themes within the urban environments of the Amazon. In this context, the indigenous contestation of urban spaces, emblematic of settler colonialism, becomes crucial. Here, the whitening discipline of space through market relations is more explicitly manifested. The Ecuadorian city of Puyo exemplifies the urban production of settler colonialism: founded by a Catholic order on indigenous territories, it progressively expanded into an agro-industrial frontier, commercial center, military regiment, oil camp, and administrative headquarters of the provincial capital. The segregation of the indigenous population finds its most emblematic response in the Intercultural City-Community of Peoples and Nationalities (CCIPNA in Spanish). It consists of three thousand families who reoccupied Kichwa territories, which had been designated as *terra nullius* a century ago and granted to a Brazilian diplomat for use as a sugar and tea hacienda. The plurinational composition of CIPPNA, where 16 different nationalities coexist, challenges the traditional white-mestizo power structure of the city. Simultaneously, its refusal to legalize properties as private property, instead proposing collective territory, challenges the common sense of capitalist colonization in the region. Therefore, CIPPNA is the largest urban exercise of plurinationality decreed in the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador. It simultaneously challenges capitalist, colonial, and racist urban structures. This research takes place in the midst of university institutional tensions to develop a position for the land back of indigenous territories, as well as the hierarchies that emanate from the universities, albeit through militant action.

Keywords: Amazonian urbanization, settler colonialism, indigenous struggles, plurinationality.

1. Introduction: contribution from Ecuadorian plurinationality.

Intercultural Community-City of Peoples and Nationalities (CCIPNA in Spanish) is situated in the peri-urban zone of Puyo, a city in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Since 2013, this social process has solidified across 381 hectares of the former Té Zulay hacienda. Its coat of arms features the 16 nationalities that constitute CCIPNA, including 9 Amazonian

indigenous groups, 5 from the Sierra region, as well as mestizo and Afro communities. The re-occupation of these 381 hectares came as a shock to municipal urban planning. CCIPNA's location in the area with the highest environmental quality of the city, previously earmarked by the ruling elites from the Sierra for urban expansion of Puyo, posed a significant challenge to existing plans. The families residing in CCIPNA had previously lived in Puyo and other urban areas but were displaced due to debt mechanisms, real estate market pressures, and the devaluation of indigenous urban living practices. This implies that their current proposal involves legalizing all land through a single collective ownership title, governed by rules that protect indigenous communities in Ecuador in an urban space.

In Ecuador, the indigenous movement has been the primary social force challenging neoliberalism since the 1980s, notably through uprisings in 1990, 1997, 2000, 2019, and 2022 (Da Silva Araujo & Reis Da Silva, 2022; Jameson, 2011). This historical buildup, coupled with successive declarations of indigenous rights such as the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 of 1989 and the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights of 2007, culminated in the constitutional recognition of rights in Ecuador. This recognition is evident in both Constitutions of 1998 and 2008, which acknowledge the interculturality and plurinationality of the State (Pacari et al., 2021; Schavelzon, 2018). This constitutional recognition, shared by Ecuador and Bolivia, does not automatically dismantle the historically entrenched structures of modern colonial states (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018; Silveira et al., 2017). However, the plurinationality and the reclamation of land by indigenous and peasant movements reflect a significant capacity to challenge the colonial-capitalist logic of the State, fostering popular community processes of contestation (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022a; Walsh, 2008). In Ecuador, the Constitution acknowledges the territorial rights of indigenous nationalities, as well as those of the Afro-Ecuadorian and Montubio peoples, predating the formation of the republic itself.

Unlike the new anti-racist sense of urban spaces implied by the political change in Bolivia, in Ecuador, the dispute over the plurinationality of its cities has remained in the background (Horn, 2018; Ravindran, 2019). CCIPNA process is a watershed in the conception of the indigenous territories of the Ecuadorian State, whose recognition is embedded in a framework of ancestry of each nationality in rural areas. On the contrary, CCIPNA advocates

for plurinationality through an urban practice, where various ethnic groups and nationalities come together in spaces where the colonial and modern states were established through private property. This form of recovery of indigenous lands is strongly linked to the "land back" proposals that have emerged from indigenous disputes in North America, specifically in what is now called Canada and the United States. These movements also reclaim urban spaces, challenging the traditional urban/rural dichotomy of indigenous territory and fighting against the racialization of access to urban space (Ramírez, 2020; Tomiak, 2023).

The field of Settler Colonialism Theory (SCT) has become a space for debate and discussion that is very conducive to understanding and deepening the proposals for 'land back' in urban spaces, and therefore, in theoretical terms, this article is situated in these debates (Dorries et al., 2019; McClintock & Guimont Marceau, 2023). This article seeks to open reflections on the construction of urban spaces as somehow non-Indigenous and the Indigenous contributions to theorizing urbanization. For that, CCIPNA proposal is novel in four ways: (1) it breaks with the colonial logic of whitening the city's space by introducing a plurinational urban neighborhood; (2) it involves a communal original project promoting collective ownership of land in response to experiences of dispossession in capitalist private property; (3) it allows for the claiming of space with urban services and indigenous principles in the face of policies of annulment, including the white-mestizo and Afro populations in an alliance of popular social classes; and (4) it involves contesting white-dominated spaces with high environmental quality, connectivity, and centrality, facilitating diverse mobilities across the Amazonian space.

Due to this approach, the article continues with a theoretical overview of the main contributions to the critique of the whitening of urban space from different critical currents, in dialogue with the SCT. A fundamental starting point for this contribution is its positionality, based on the partnerships that CCIPNA has sought with universities. For this reason, the article's contribution stems from a dialogue among the indigenous movement, environmental sectors, and dedicated academia, along with its limitations, which will be further examined in the third methodological section. The disruption of CCIPNA is evident in the Amazon, serving as a paradigm of Indigenous contributions to urban plurinationality. The accelerated colonization process in recent decades has sparked a significant dialectical

conflict with indigenous ontological practices. Therefore, the fourth section will present a series of significant scenes that elucidate the depth of the CCIPNA proposal and the territorial context in which it is situated. From this, the fifth section of discussion and conclusions aims to highlight the contributions generated by the disruption of CCIPNA, propose the lessons that this study implies for the SCT, and address the future challenges beyond the scope of this article.

2. Dialogue of critical currents surrounding settler colonialism theory.

The SCT was established at the turn of the century. It adopted a structural perspective on territorial processes of dispossession, where the outcome is the physical and cultural eradication of indigenous peoples. This is the culmination of a series of policies and practices implemented by colonial States, drawing initially from the histories and processes of the United States, Canada, South Africa or Australia (Barker, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). The founding authors of the SCT are situated within decolonial and post-colonial currents, associated with studies on the genocides of indigenous populations. The spatial dimension takes precedence, connecting with decolonial geographies and drawing on concepts (Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021). This starting point initiates a necessary dialogue with black geographies (Hawthorne, 2019; Noxolo, 2022), expanding the concept beyond indigenous populations and considering the spatial and physical dispossession processes in capitalist slavery (Pulido, 2018). Racialized capitalism is a fundamental concept for understanding the connection between the development of capitalist colonization and the consumption of racialized bodies and territories (Robinson, 2000). It views racism as a persistent condition of capital accumulation across various historical stages (Danewid, 2020; Legg, 2023). Nowadays, moving beyond grand narratives of planetary urbanization (Brenner & Schmid, 2014), it becomes crucial comprehend everyday realities and to uncover how capitalist oppressions, including colonial and racialized forms, manifest in the production of urban models such as gentrification, which entail a form of "racial banishment" (Baldwin & Crane, 2020). The historical usurpation of territories and bodies during slavery exemplifies how colonial conquest racialized power and land, facilitating the emergence of global capitalism through practices

like global triangular trade and the establishment of private property over both bodies and territories (Bosworth, 2021; Cowen, 2020).

The connection of the SCT with the prevalent anti-racist and territorial themes in Latin America has their own points of view. There is an emerging dialogue within the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality framework (Taylor & Lublin, 2021; Zaragocín & Bayón Jiménez, 2023). In Ecuador and Chile, some initiatives have connected indigenous territories and SCT, analyzing issues related to the geographies of elimination or the concept of *terra nullius* (Maxwell, 2025; Ugarte et al., 2021). In addition, a growing body of thought that connects the demands of black geographies with decolonial geographies, arguing that enslaved African populations in the Americas were also deprived of their original lands (Curley et al., 2022). Political ecology is an important framework in Latin America that intersects with the SCT mainly through the analysis of environmental racism, in which the absence of race analysis and the struggle for ancestral land is criticized, often displaced by the prioritization of struggles against pollution (Pulido, 2017). These debates are linked to the racialized production of extractivism since its inception during the Spanish-Portuguese colonial period, and its connections with the exploitation of bodies and the destruction of knowledge (Machado Araoz, 2012).

One of the main criticisms developed of the SCT is associated with the excessive focus on the analysis of elimination, overshadowing the exploitation of labor that accompanies the processes of settler colonialism. Numerous voices have participated in this critique, analyzing the exploitation of labor in emblematic contexts of settler colonialism such as Palestine (Kelley, 2017), South Africa (Englert, 2020), and Brazil (Poets, 2021). This literature is connected to the SCT through primitive accumulation and dispossession. It prompts to contemplate the processes of capital accumulation associated with the establishment of settler colonialism (Englert, 2020). Thus, the infrastructures of capitalism drive the dispossession of ancestral territories and the production of racist infrastructural urban spaces. This process also involved slave labor in the development of plantations in the Caribbean and the USA, mines in Latin America and Africa or ports in London and everywhere, and the construction of railways across the USA, Africa, or the Amazon, on ancestral lands (Davies, 2021; Legg, 2023). Nowadays, the development of infrastructures

worldwide reveals the contemporary aspect of modern-colonial states that perpetuate colonialisms, viewing racialized populations as threats to be countered to safeguard the construction and maintenance of capitalist infrastructures (Crosby, 2021; Féliz & Melón, 2020).

Urbanization resulting from these processes is emblematic in the study of settler colonialism, which varied across different colonial regimes. Examples of primitive accumulation and spatial racialization include extractive enclave cities like Potosí (Bolivia), plantations designed for slavery and the production of sugar or cotton, and port cities in America, all of which are emblematic of racialized urbanization for the extraction of raw materials (Davies, 2021; Machado Araoz, 2012). Currently, urban spaces characterized by strong racial segregation around pipelines, and urban expansion over indigenous territories are recent examples (Bayón Jiménez & Moreano Venegas, 2023; Bosworth, 2021). A key aspect to consider is the fight against the notion of cities as spaces where Afro-indigenous existences are "out of place" due to the whitening logic of urban space, despite their presence on ancestral territories (McClintock & Guimont Marceau, 2023). The dominant narratives of the colonizers regarding the exercises of indigenous self-government become exercises in stigmatizing the disputes of this whitening logic, either through lessening expressions of indigenous or Afro self-government, which recent contributions are helping to dismantle (Everson, 2023; Zaimi, 2020). In its most violent forms, the creation of the "black popular demon" (Meché, 2020), or the protests in white neighborhoods against growing Indigenous presences (Ravindran, 2019) exemplify attempts to remove racialized populations from "whitened" spaces. In peri-urban areas, the settler model of private property as white farmer-owner versus racialized collectivity is particularly violent in various regions (Bosworth, 2021; Cons & Eilenberg, 2024). Thus, political economy has deepened in the role of private property in the processes of racialized capitalism. In these perspectives, where class and race/ethnicity intersect in gentrification, the regulation and control of space through private property mechanisms are seen as central to settler colonialism: the "white picket fence" (Blomley, 2020). Gentrification thus becomes a mechanism of settler colonialism (Ellis-Young, 2022; McClintock, 2021).

Different scales of dispute emerge in response to these issues. The Indigenous planning of urban and peri-urban spaces has emerged as a methodology to challenge the processes of urban colonization. The Mapuche people of Chile have developed an insurgent planning practice, leading to successful indigenous re-territorializations in the city of Santiago, Chile (Ugarte et al., 2021). These practices are also documented in Brazil, with urban quilombola favelas and indigenous villages engaging in collective exercises in the cities (Poets, 2021). The struggle encompasses not just the physical land but also the peoples' worldviews and their long memory of colonization. For instance, in Canada, planting urban land is a way to re-harmonize colonial violence based on indigenous philosophies (Hatala et al., 2019), while in Mexico, street vending amid gentrification connects with the ancestral practice of "tianguis" trade (Denham, 2023). One of the greatest achievements of these spaces is challenging the state's unique role in providing rights and creating autonomous spaces where financialization and gentrification face barriers to global private property laws (Cahen et al., 2019). In urban spaces, this dispute with the state prompts a comprehensive rethinking of cities in terms of ethnic and racial hierarchies. This is evident in the role of El Alto in the reconfiguration and defense of the plurinational State of Bolivia (Ravindran, 2019), as well as in the debate surrounding the idea of modernity among various peoples who inhabit key capitalist centers, such as the Osage people in the USA (Dennison, 2017).

The scale of central urban spaces emerges as seen in the case of Cabot Square in Quebec, where Indigenous leaders assert the right to occupy public spaces in opposition to the area's conversion into a financial center (Léonard et al., 2023; Marceau et al., 2023). There is also a dimension in the protest, in which numerous Indigenous peoples make a presence in the city centers to make claims against the State (Dorries et al., 2019; Hanna et al., 2016). Artistic interventions in cities offer another arena for contesting the symbolism and memory of urban spaces, promoting indigenous geographies for the future that can reach the land-back situation (Barnd, 2023). At the same time, self-representation in racialized neighborhoods in gentrification is a fight against "folklorization" (Heitz, 2022). These disputes reclaim "cities back" as an integral part of the recovery of ancestral lands or "land back", proposing indigenous care infrastructures to challenge and disrupt colonial urbanism (Tomiak, 2023). In a more intimate dimension, the concept of "house back" involves the collective

appropriation of private property by black and Indigenous families, politicizing the need for maternal spaces in cities from non-white perspectives of land recovery (Ramírez, 2020).

3. Methodology and positionality: academic tensions for a contribution to plurinationality from critical geography.

This article is written by a geographer educated in mainstream science, born in the Iberian Peninsula, the origin of the colonialism that devastated the Amazon. At the same time, someone who has lived in Quito for 12 years, has been involved in the environmental and indigenous movements of the country, is part of the Critical Geography Collective of Ecuador, and works as a part-time teacher at two universities in the capital (FLACSO-Ecuador and the Simón Bolívar Andean University). This article stems from a 2019 meeting organized by the CCIPNA leadership in Quito, responding to the threat of eviction faced by 3,000 indigenous families in Puyo, in the Ecuadorian Amazon. During the meeting, indigenous leaders specifically requested that FLACSO-Ecuador conduct an anthropological-geographical study to support the community's resistance to eviction. This contribution emerges from a juxtaposition of academic and indigenous knowledge, highlighting the tensions arising from unequal power dynamics and the perpetuation of colonial logic within universities (Baldwin & Crane, 2020). There is a strong commitment to challenging white logic in the city to uphold the constitutional principle of plurinationality in urban spaces and to prevent state violence from enforcing evictions denying collective property rights. This approach counters the university's traditional role, often more aligned with settler colonialism than with the land-back proposal (Curley et al., 2022).

The methodology begins with a critique of colonial hegemonic geography (Ugarte et al., 2021). It does not aim to explain the multiplicity of logic that the writer cannot comprehend, which will be elucidated in the future by other Ecuadorian colleagues, likely indigenous or Afro-Ecuadorian, who will problematize my assertions (Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021). The article aims to prevent those external to the process, who do not embody Indigenous or Afro-racialization, from engaging in a ventriloquism exercise that reinforces colonial mechanisms of knowledge (Curley et al., 2022). It seeks to raise questions for the non-indigenous population of plurinational Ecuador (Medby, 2019), through a critique of whitening

emphasizing the need to challenge the colonial logic underlying urbanization in Ecuador and advocating for the restoration of indigenous lands and the collective initiatives outlined in the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022b; Ramírez, 2020).

At CCIPNA's request, the joint organization between FLACSO-Ecuador and the community of a national congress of urban studies continued in 2020. This collaboration enabled the community to participate for the first time in an event at the Amazonian State University in Puyo. They arrived with a delegation of 150 people and hosted a visit from the congress to the community, resulting in a significant plurinational event. The indigenous uprising at the national level in October 2019 and the 2020 pandemic reduced the threat of eviction. Consequently, the focus shifted towards creating their cartography. This was necessary because the only available map of CCIPNA was produced by the Ministry of Agriculture and carried a racist message that devalued the community's territoriality. This mapping exercise facilitated communication about how the co-elaboration would be understood, the categories to be included, what would be represented, what would be omitted, and the methodology for its development. At the same time, other universities were responsible for conducting a community census, tourism studies, and other research projects.

The alliance between CCIPNA and various universities elicited a response from the State at the local level, distancing CCIPNA from the universities. One of the groups associated with the State, which advocates for the allocation of private properties to individual families, sent a threatening letter to FLACSO-Ecuador, and the Government (under the Ministry of the Interior), demanding that the university cease its activities in the area. This action resulted in the termination of my institutional involvement in the community agreement. Therefore, the methodology of this research demonstrates the potential of an academy committed to land back processes, while also acknowledging the contradictions and limitations it faces. As a doctoral student at KIT and part of Critical Geography Collective, my collaboration with CCIPNA persisted through the provision of dedicated materials and backing of its initiatives, including participation in events like the Latin American Congress of Political Ecology, contributions to national-level publications that has been reviewed and commented on by the CCIPNA, as in this case. In the near future, these publications will be part of the intervention

of the writer of this article in trials as geographical expertise in defence of urban plurinational territoriality.

The initial objective of the methodology was countermapping as a tool of subversion, specifically in contexts of eviction (Maharawal & McElroy, 2018). It aimed to highlight spatial uses that are often overlooked in mainstream cartography to promote subaltern cartography and insurgent planning (Ugarte et al., 2021). Despite being a tool that does not resolve the contradictions of Cartesian representation and has also been problematized in contexts of settler colonialism (Tilley, 2020), the community adopts a position of strategic positivism (Wyly, 2009) to challenge the State's spatial narrative and establish its cartography in that dispute. From this initial commitment, a variety of ethnographic, geographical, and legal methods emerge, enabling critical geographies to contribute to CCIPNA by connecting collective mapping with the necessity for relational research (Atia & Doherty, 2021). When mapping tours could be developed in 2021, methods linked to mobile ethnographies were employed to create a transductive research design that combined cartography, historiography, and comparative analysis (Streule, 2020). This approach is in dialogue with decolonization proposals for mapping territories engaged in ontological disputes. By developing walking interviews (Lebowitz & Trudeau, 2017) adapted to the territory of Puyo (Oslender, 2021). The relationships with state actors and academics were explored through interviews along 2023 (15 with state actors and 10 with private actors from Puyo) and events, simultaneously creating an ethnography of my interactions (Adams et al., 2022). The state and church actors perceived me as someone who, in the exercise of my university role, could better understand racist and stigmatizing arguments of the Amazonian population (Zaragocín & Bayón Jiménez, 2023). Faced with this set of methodologies, I utilize the representative scene as a means of capturing the complexity of the process and the multiplicity it involves (Lafazani, 2021). In summary, this relational research will allow us to explore the disruptions that the CCIPNA experience represents for urban-white-capitalist settler colonialism and the opportunities that urban plurinationality opens up for reimagining Ecuador and beyond.

4. Disruptions arising from urban plurinationality in CCIPNA.

Scene 1: CCIPNA's presence at the State University.

The high Amazon region of Ecuador had urban settlements since approximately 500 BC (Rostain et al., 2024), the specific area of Puyo where CCIPNA is located has been inhabited almost since the 9th century with small mounds called "tolas" in the Andean-Amazonian worldviews (Rostain et al., 2014). This form of territorial occupation has not diminished over time. The rubber genocide in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries formed slave brigades along the navigable rivers of the Amazon. As a result, the highlands of the Amazon, particularly the area of Puyo, became a refuge for Saparas, Achuar, Shuar, and Kichwas peoples (Whitten, 1976). The city of Puyo was established by the religious order in 1899 where the Puyu Runa people lived. "Puyu Runa" means "people of the cloud" in the Kichwa language, reflecting their cultural legacy (Whitten & Whitten, 2008).

121 years later, the aforementioned National Congress on urban studies was held at the Amazonian State University, located in Puyo, the provincial capital of Pastaza. During the event, the Planning Director of the Municipality to which Puyo belongs explained the form of territorial administration under his direction. Despite all the historical legacy cited, he stated that his planning work only extends to land-connected spaces, forgetting the responsibility of intervention in the collective areas of indigenous communities. Behind the affirmation that opens this scene lies the ingrained belief within the official body in the Amazon that the State only encompasses areas where capitalist infrastructure is established, private property is recognized, and indigenous territorial development is disregarded due to the dominance of white-mestizo perspectives. The other territories continue to be spaces for the infrastructural conquest of the State, places to launder and promote private property in the future, where there is no obligation to comply with the rights outlined in the nation's Constitution (Little, 2002).

The next day, at the same event, the CCIPNA leadership had the floor. It was the first time that the State University in Puyo invited the community to voice their opinions at an event, and 150 people from the community attended. It was not just a form of burst in a space perceived as part of the white-mestizo power of Puyo and Ecuador, but it was above all an act of demonstration and presence in a prohibited area of the city, at an academic congress on urban studies. In their presentation, the CCIPNA leadership explained its principles,

which included the establishment of a 481-hectare area of collective territory on a former tea plantation that had been taken from the Puyu Runa people. As proof of this ancestry, CCIPNA demonstrates the recognition bestowed by the Ministry of Culture on the community as a living heritage, safeguarding the archaeological "tolas" from the 9th century, thus preserving the long memory of its territory. In this way, and in a very visual way, this irruption into the university demonstrates that the practice of the CCIPNA disrupts the hegemonic power of the state in the production of private property and white spaces, as well as the legitimate knowledge in its centres of knowledge production. The proposal for a plurinational collective space breaks with the logic of planning and conquest, in a clear land back exercise.

Scene 2: mapping to evade the institutional racism.

An eviction order remains in effect against CCIPNA that the State could activate at any time. The private property that the State usurped from the Puyo Runa people in the first half of the twentieth century was granted to a Brazilian diplomat, who passed it to an alcohol-producing settler and eventually transferred it to a tea company called Zulay. The company went bankrupt at the turn of the twentieth century and became entangled in a web of failed banks and elusive owners, typical of the neoliberal crisis that Ecuador entered at the beginning of the twenty-first century(Castillo Izurieta, 2022). Given the lack of ownership and the non-payment of workers, since 2007, families from various indigenous nationalities and individuals in need of housing in the city have been occupying the vacant properties. The Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador conducted a census in 2020, certifying that 3,865 people live in the sector, grouped into 1,497 families. More than two-thirds of the population are indigenous, representing different nationalities, primarily Amazonian, but also from the Sierra region, who reside in the Amazon. This information is detailed in the Census Execution Report and Mobility Study. The ongoing embargo trials persisted, resulting in the transfer of the exhaust system ownership to a Guayaquil-based company. This entity, in recent years, has resumed legal actions aimed at evicting the entire plurinational population.

In response, the community endeavors to extend the recognition of living heritage by the Ministry of Culture to include territorial acknowledgment by the Ministry of Agriculture

(MAGAP). This negotiation process culminated in a 2019 community tour where MAGAP established a series of agreements with the involved parties. However, the MAGAP does not assume ownership of the map but establishes an unusual box, in which it takes no responsibility for the content of the map itself, claiming that the information is 'according to the leaders' (of CCIPNA). Given this somewhat tenuous recognition for CCIPNA, the community has set its sights on developing its cartography to secure more formal recognition. During the mapping involving community members, the indigenous planning strategies implemented in the area garnered appreciation. These strategies included organized housing and cultivation areas aligned with the specific nationalities residing in each sector. Additionally, considerations were made for drinking water provisions, spaces for ancestral spirituality, tourism, and designated areas for the State to establish educational and healthcare facilities. Finding similar spaces within the rest of the city to accommodate the indigenous population and their unique daily needs would be inconceivable. CCIPNA serves as a refuge for families, particularly single-parent households headed by women, as indicated by the puce census data.

Concerning the form of ownership, they emphasised the challenges of inheriting urban private property to future generations because of everyday debts, emphasising the security of living in a collective area similar to indigenous communes in rural areas where they cannot be evicted by banks or creditors. However, there are two barriers to implementing collective ownership. On one side, the state's historical undervaluation of collective land tenure is apparent, seen in the limited provision of public services, as emphasized by the Director of Planning earlier, and in the restricted access to financing from both public and private banks. Typically, bank loans necessitate collateral in the form of private property land. On the flip side, despite the state's historical dispossession of indigenous and Afro-communal territories of private property, it claims a lack of mechanisms to reverse this process, leaving CCIPNA in legal limbo for now.

Scene 3: Indigenous-popular uprising in the neighborhoods of Puyo.

In June 2022, the national indigenous and popular uprising that took place led to state commitments in response to demands for territorial recognition in light of oil and mining extractivism, which particularly impacts indigenous nationalities. Additionally, debt relief

measures were secured for the entire country, along with the prevention of further fuel price increases that have contributed to inflation in the basic basket, disproportionately affecting urban and rural populations in the country. At the same time, the oligarchic sectors defended their position by stigmatizing the indigenous presence in the cities where the mobilizations occurred (Iza et al., 2021; Santillana Ortiz et al., 2024). Puyo became one of the epicenters of the country's paralysis, with CCIPNA halting traffic at a crucial point on the tracks, due to its location in the peri-urban area connecting Puyo with the Ecuadorian Sierra, and a large number of interviews with urban white actors recounted their unconscionable terror during the uprising fuelled by the country's oligarchic media.

In the Ecuadorian Amazon, there is a vivid memory of successfully legalizing indigenous territories despite opposition from oil interests, achieved through powerful uprisings (Coba Mejía, 2021). At the same time, the strikes in the Amazon have been a common strategy to attract investment and attention from the Ecuadorian government (Díaz-Combs, 2023; Widener, 2007). The state violence deployed in 2022 in Puyo was very severe, resulting in the police killing of Byron Guatatuca, a community member from San Jacinto de Pindo. This is the Kichwa community that was recognized after the settler colonialism process, once it had been territorially divided, among other lands, by Te Zulay, who displaced the Puyo Runa families that inhabited that area until the 1930s (Castillo Izurieta, 2022). The remaining part, still collectively, was legalized in 1947 initially as the "Indigenous Tribe of Puyo". This uprising highlights the community's demand for equitable access to state services, reflecting their broader struggle for recognition and inclusion within the urban fabric of the city. The protesters' assertion underscores their right to benefit from the state's resources and services, which they have long fought for, thereby challenging the state's neglect and marginalization of indigenous and popular communities.

During the weeks when the strike and negotiations were ongoing, interviews were conducted with the CCIPNA leadership in Quito. One of the leaders argued that previous indigenous uprisings have aimed to secure hospitals, roads, or universities from the State for the province of Pastaza, only to have them end up located in the city of Puyo. Subsequently, the indigenous population is denied access to these state services nearby. At the same time, there was a parallel between the indigenous movement's expansion to

include the demands of urban popular sectors in the country and the opening of CCIPNA to individuals from non-indigenous popular sectors, including Afro, Montubio, or mestizo peoples. "We acknowledge that landowners brought individuals to the Amazon to be exploited. In Te Zulay, they arrived in trucks, treated like animals. Indigenous people from the Sierra and peasants from the Coast were brought to work, so they also have the right to a space in CCIPNA". Since the negotiation with the State during the uprising, CCIPNA has attempted to propose new legislation in the National Assembly that enables the entire country to establish Indigenous territorial entities, including urban areas, where collective rights based on plurinationality can be exercised.

Scene 4: the real land traffickers do their lobbying.

On the opposite side of the city, represented by urban planners, real estate developers, and local priests along with higher ecclesiastical figures who were interviewed, there is disappointment regarding CCIPNA. According to planners, the existence of a space asserting collective ownership positions CCIPNA among those communities where the local government deems project initiation unnecessary, prioritizing "legalizing private property and transferring road and equipment spaces." Additionally, it highlights non-compliance with the Development and Territorial Planning Plan, designating the area as a residential segment for middle- and high-income families. For real estate developers, the occupation of private property without evicting leaves other peri-urban sectors without the legal security needed for investments in a city with high real estate potential. One investor note that recent urban development between Shell and Puyo commenced with numerous farms featuring large houses, depicting a new urban landscape. However, these properties have depreciated in value due to the influx of popular and indigenous communities. For the Catholic Church at different levels, there's a pressing need for the State to quickly grant legalization in family properties to prevent further "degradation" in the sector. In their view, the ecclesial city envisioned by the Dominican order during the city's founding contrasts sharply with CCIPNA. CCIPNA challenges the traditional role of the church, portraying indigenous people as passive and subordinate, rejects the notion of an Amazonian city as a tourist spectacle, and opposes the city's trend towards whitening through private property, as outlined in the PDOT.

CCIPNA occupies a space of high environmental quality, with water slopes and a stunning view of the Pastaza River, making it attractive for real estate development. However, its establishment is not rooted in a static ancestral past but rather embraces dynamic modern concepts of mobility, connectivity, and fundamental rights, breaking with the traditional environmental racism on which the indigenous and Afro presence in Amazonian cities is based (Bayón Jiménez & Moreano Venegas, 2023). During my time staying with families while conducting the mapping work, I encountered individuals with diverse life stories, reflecting a multisituated existence where CCIPNA serves as a bridge between rural community realities and urban activities. The strategic location of CCIPNA near the Puyo-Quito road and the Amazon Airport, facilitating connectivity with regional communities, challenges the traditional centrality of urban movements. Thus, the contrast between the disillusionment of the white-bourgeois-ecclesial-colonial city and the potential of the indigenous urban space symbolizes a broader shift in possibilities for the Ecuadorian Amazon region. Returning to the initial event at the Amazonian State University, its leader stated that.

> *We know that every individual has the right to migrate because, without migration, there is no pursuit of development. We have contended with the State, affirming the right to migrate. However, the majority of migrating nationalities have done so due to the dearth of opportunities within their territories, including in healthcare, education, and the overall life systems inherent to each community [...] This is why individuals from various nationalities and communities seek opportunities within the contemporary system* (CCIPNA Leader, 2020).

5. Concluding Remarks

This article delves into the pervasive mechanisms of settler colonialism in the Ecuadorian Amazon, intricately intertwined with mechanisms of urban whitening, where the hegemonies of racial capitalism have been entrenched for decades in the city of Puyo. Evident in the discourse of officials, investors and church members cited herein make references to *terra nullius* (Poets, 2021; Ugarte et al., 2021) and the racial state's

infrastructural framework (Crosby, 2021; Féliz & Melón, 2020). The physical manifestations of indigenous eradication by the Ecuadorian State (Mollett, 2021), as evidenced by the tragic events of the indigenous strike in 2022, underscore this stark reality. Local state powers thus contribute to placing "out of place" in the city non-whitewashed ways of inhabiting cities (McClintock & Guimont Marceau, 2023). This State approach prioritizes the legalization of land through private property as the sole solution, effectively "sanitizing" the collective space to prevent its entrenchment (Garmany & Richmond, 2020). Collective proposals rooted in plurinationality are dismissed, reinforcing the inferiority complex imposed by the State towards self-governance initiatives (Everson, 2023). The inability to legalize collective territories acts as a new "white picket fence" (Blomley, 2020), maintaining the status quo desired by developers envisioning Te Zulay as a hub for private developments, reinforcing racial and class hierarchies (Blomley, 2020).

However, amidst these challenges, there emerge acts of response across various spheres, reflecting a convergence seldom witnessed. The contributions of CCIPNA, as outlined in the introduction, reveal four approaches once developed in the scenes: (1) The proposal for a plurinational space challenges the city's whitewashing, revitalizing Ecuadorian indigenous movements' communal ethos for broader societal integration, especially in the Amazonian urban context (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022b), breaking the dichotomy between remote Indigenous territoriality and the sense of mestizo national centrality (Ravindran, 2019). (2) To stress and materialize the space, indigenous self-planning exercises are utilized (Ugarte et al., 2021). This proposal is rooted in lived urban experiences and the disvantages posed by private property in subsequent displacements (Blomley, 2020): creating an urban space where plurinational worldviews can coexist through heterodox proposals that engage in dialogue with modernity (Dennison, 2017; Wyly, 2023).

(3) Facing cancellation policies, the alliance between indigenous, Afro, and mestizo communities has effectively reclaimed land and secured a place in the city of quality, all under the perspective of plurinational principles throughout the urban landscape. To achieve this, street mobilization is initiated at both city and national levels to secure territorial improvements (Poets, 2021). (4) In this urban contest, the rejection of a subordinate role is made explicit through the (re)occupation of areas of high environmental

quality and robust connectivity, symbolizing a class struggle against the "racial banishment" driven by the real estate sectors in Puyo (Baldwin & Crane, 2020). This contestation over the most connected spaces enhances the dynamics of proximity to communities where family members reside and reimagining the indigenous-popular mobility logic for the region as a whole (Bayón Jiménez et al., 2021; Campos et al., 2023).

The contributions of this analysis underscore the significance of a diverse theoretical framework in comprehending the extensive reformulations of settler colonialism, alongside the myriad responses it encounters in processes like CCIPNA. This array of disputes, scales, and meanings regarding the presence of the plurinational-popular-urban community in the city enables us to envision a networked world, countering the fragmentation caused by privatization and hierarchical tendencies in academic research and theorization (Curley et al., 2022; Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021). It calls for a departure from theoretical comfort zones within critical thought, advocating for more interconnected perspectives to better grasp the complexities of anti-settler colonial struggles. Furthermore, it is necessary to problematize academic enunciation, urging a critical examination of universities' historical complicity in settler colonialism and gentrification, embracing the ethos of "land back," "cities back," and "houses back" echoes constitutional principles of plurinationality in countries like Ecuador and Bolivia. The significance and impact of movements like CCIPNA, with their capacity to transcend conventional boundaries and expand the realm of possibilities, call upon academia to align itself with such anti-colonial trajectories.

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5. Conclusions: The thematic, theoretical, methodological, and political contributions of the dissertation.

This chapter summarizes conclusions in three sections. The first recaps the thesis's main advancements: insights on Indigenous contestations of Amazonian urbanization and the sequence of articles. The second outlines its theoretical, methodological, and thematic contributions to critical studies, geographic methodologies, and urban and Amazonian studies. The third reviews the dissertation's limitations, potential complementary approaches, and future research questions regarding urbanization, the Amazon, and critical geographies.

5.1. Recapitulation of the thesis' argumentative thread in light of the results

First, an analysis will explore the central question and objectives of this dissertation. The question is: "How do Indigenous contestations reconfigure the frontiers of extended urbanization and rentier capitalism in the Amazon region?". The objective is: "To analyze comparatively the meanings of the relationship between the expansion of the frontiers of capitalism, extended urbanization, and the reconfiguration of colonialisms to understand how they manifest as subjects resisting class and ethnic hegemonies". This section summarizes the dissertation in relation to its central question and objective.

The thesis discusses the urbanization of rentier capitalism in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Historically, Article 2 notes that cities existed in the Amazon before colonization and that capitalist-colonial urbanization is residual due to uneven geographical development. The resistance of Amazonian peoples to Spanish colonization resulted in the consolidation of only one corridor from Quito to the Napo River over three centuries. In the early 20th century, the Republic of Ecuador began creating new settlement axes. Urbanization in the Amazon has mainly concentrated in the northern part due to the 1960s and 1970s petroleum boom. Indigenous organizations halted this model's southward expansion through street mobilizations. Therefore, urban development in the central and southern Amazon relies heavily on Sierra cities, lacking a distinct Amazonian urban structure. This situation illustrates that uneven geographical development is linked to the ability of territorial subjects to permit or resist capitalist infrastructures and state territoriality. Historically, Indigenous contestations redefine the boundaries of urbanization and rentier capitalism by limiting the

establishment of extractive infrastructures that would promote capitalist development and related urbanization. Thus, these contestations shape these boundaries across this spatiotemporal scale analysis.

Where extractive infrastructures have materialized, we can analyze the dynamics of differentiation and the logic of extended urbanization to which they are linked. Article 1 examines the logic of uneven geographical development under extended urbanization, focusing on a newly established oil corridor that reaches Yasuní National Park. This corridor, developed along the Napo River from 2010 to the present, has been a key area of interest. It illustrates how oil enclaves trigger a particular form of urbanization, which has contributed to the emergence of major cities in the Amazon today. Cities like Lago Agrio, Shushufindi, and Joya de los Sachas exemplify this dynamic, having begun as settlements adjacent to oil camps. The oil enclave has long-shaped urban spatial limits in the oil-producing Amazon and continues to catalyze extensive urbanization. Article 1 illustrates how extractive frontiers extend along a corridor, rather than emanating from a single point, creating new spaces that embody this growth. These include port locations, state compensation to communities through public housing and infrastructure development, and service centers such as provincial capitals. New urban areas emerge through minor implosions along the corridor, each influenced by its specific position in the broader oil axis.

This analysis demonstrates how class and race-based social segregation affects various spaces. The patterns of classist and racist urbanization from racial capitalism manifest along the oil corridor through enclaves and infrastructure in Indigenous territories; the multiethnic makeup of Amazonian cities; and the peri-urban margins of the capital and their disparities, including the refinery and export zone in Afro-Ecuadorian communities. Forms of whitening and spatial inequalities emerge, aligning class and race, as seen in the white-mestizo upper-middle-class enclaves with high environmental quality contrasting with racialized areas suffering from severe pollution due to oil extraction. This analysis reveals that environmental racism and urban frontiers through extractive expansion are key mechanisms behind capital and internal colonization in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Building on these insights, Article 2 examines how Indigenous contestations are reconfiguring urban spatial limits influenced by oil activity. It analyzes eight active sites of

contestation, identifying distinct Indigenous responses: (1) strategic adaptation to peri-urbanization; (2) culturally appropriate housing demands; (3) spatial interventions to prevent dispossession; and (4) reoccupations of urban areas. Illustrated by two case studies each, these categories reveal a pattern: Indigenous contestations towards extended urbanization in the Amazon constrain the expropriative potential of colonial capitalism.

Adaptation goes beyond accepting urbanization; it utilizes Indigenous community strengths to counteract mining's negative impacts. It promotes integrating less harmful elements like tourism and public infrastructure (e.g., universities) with community visions. Article 3 examines urbanization, tourism, and mining in Indigenous areas connected to nearby cities, showing how these dynamics affect Indigenous territories. Here, modernity meets extractive dispossession as Indigenous communities navigate urbanization. Article 2 highlights characteristics of urban Indigenous spaces, including efforts to improve communal areas, persistence of Indigenous spatial practices, and ongoing threats and inequalities. A key aspect is the demand for public investment in housing, altering urbanization and creating friction between colonial state frameworks and Indigenous goals for modern urban life. This process fails to satisfy as the state perpetuates classist and racist housing logics, while families gradually adapt their surroundings to reflect their livable space ideals.

Settlements resisting colonization and reoccupations reaffirming Indigenous territoriality show higher densities of frontier reconfiguration due to confrontations with state-capitalist urban planning. These urban-Indigenous territories—next to colonial cities, near oil infrastructures, or in areas designated for private urban expansion—are viewed as transgressive by the Ecuadorian state. Here, state power often seeks to evict Indigenous residents, leading to increased whitening and stigmatizing discourses. Yet, these four cases also provide concrete evidence of how Indigenous contestations generate spatial dynamics that disrupt capital's uneven development while challenging the internal colonialism exercised by the state in the Amazon. These spatial victories facilitate a rethinking of planetary urbanization—not as an unstoppable juggernaut but as a contested terrain, echoing other postcolonial critiques. Indigenous victories render extended urbanization residual through their struggles when viewed from the Amazonian peripheries. Even in areas where infrastructure and colonial expansion have made significant advances, there exist Indigenous

spaces that transform or repurpose these forces according to counter-hegemonic political-epistemic objectives.

These two articles establish a foundation for addressing the thesis's core question. Additionally, the dissertation includes three conceptually and thematically richer pieces focused on specific sites, aimed at better capturing how capital influences urban frontiers, how state and capital drive urban whitening, the importance of collective property in urbanization, and the role of relational ontologies in Indigenous contestations. Article 3 explicitly examines Indigenous ontologies, illustrating how visions of the future and modernity influence Indigenous communal spaces in their engagement with residual urbanization, drawing on one adaptation case from Article 2. In this context, the Indigenous subject prioritizes communal continuity, internal relations, and integration into the broader world through values and relationships that resonate with their sense of futurity while rejecting and limiting perceived threats. The existence of a community-rooted subject—territorialized, visionary, and grounded in a distinct cosmovision—effectively curbs the spatial limits of urbanization, as explored in Article 1. It also clarifies everyday practices and counter-hegemonic territorialities in Article 2, calling for a revised understanding of Andean-Amazonian perspectives, foundational to the ontological turn amid residual urbanization.

Article 4 examines how capital valorizes and appropriates urbanization in the Amazon, and how Indigenous communities contest these processes. Building on Article 1, this discussion examines urban rent production in newly urbanizing areas through the dynamics of land rent. It employs the Rent Gap Theory to explain these processes, accentuating the distinct characteristics of Amazonian peri-urban areas, where valorization and devalorization cycles intersect with colonialism, the agrarian privatization of Indigenous lands, and Indigenous re-territorialization. As outlined in Article 2, the historical absence of colonial and extractive infrastructure development in the central and southern Ecuadorian Amazon has resulted in weak valorization processes, unlike in areas where agrarian reform has converted more land into privatizable and valorizable property.

This thread presents the Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap, showing how Indigenous contestations against extended urbanization disrupt traditional rent gap realizations. First, extractive rents spark social struggles over the appropriation of urban spaces, as peri-urban

settlement becomes a means of social reproduction for Indigenous communities with dynamic mobility. Second, cross-class, pluricultural alliances challenge land ownership and use laws. By creating collective spaces based on Indigenous cosmovisions and practices, these alliances help prevent displacement in peri-urban areas. Capital initiates the Amazonian Peri-Urban Development, but the rent gap is ultimately obstructed by pluricultural strategies that resist colonial and capitalist forces. These strategies devalue, maintain the rent gap, and undermine the dominant class, racial, and ethnic hegemonies in Amazonian cities. This analysis compares three cases: the oil port along the Napo River, as described in Articles 1 and 2; the broader area shaped by tourism and mining, as outlined in Article 3; and a paradigmatic case from Article 2, involving city expansion through highway junctions and Indigenous land reoccupation. Although each context differs, all three face rapid changes influenced by extractive rent processes—namely, petroleum, mining, and their interconnections. This perspective on rent gaps complements the broader treatment of the research question from earlier articles by unpacking how capital-driven dispossession operates and is contested in Amazonian peri-urban areas.

Finally, Article 5 further analyzes the last case from Article 4—Indigenous reoccupation during urban expansion—by examining how racism fuels urbanization, a theme from Article 1. It links this racism to land ownership in antiracist struggles, reinforcing points from Article 4 and concluding the thesis on how Indigenous contestations reshape urbanization frontiers by challenging class, ethnic, and racial hegemonies. The article describes how Ecuador's Constitution's plurinational framework is being implemented in a community-city of 16 national groups—14 Indigenous, along with mestizo and Afro-Ecuadorian—in an Amazonian peri-urban area asserting collective land ownership over large, reoccupied territory governed by Indigenous autonomy. State and local capitalists' efforts to whiten this proposal include offering individual property titles, stigmatizing the community to sever ties with the broader Indigenous movement, and criminalizing leaders who advocate for collective landholding. However, the practical viability of this space for families and the Indigenous movement has made eviction unfeasible. Consequently, this experience has significantly disrupted the hegemonic ambitions of the city's capitalist, colonial, and whitening elites. Real estate developers and state officials who envisioned this territory for

upper-middle-class mestizo settlers from outside the Amazon now fear this community-city might inspire broader peri-urban replication.

This section consolidates the thesis's contributions to its core research question and objectives. It characterizes the frontiers of extended urbanization in the Amazon, driven by extractive capital that relies on global colonial mechanisms and domestic coloniality. This results in exogenous urbanization radiating from extractive infrastructure, reinforcing rent-seeking, privatized land ownership, and market logics, which worsen climate, racial, and class injustices, leading to displacement. However, Indigenous contestations have successfully halted, transformed, and reconfigured the urban spatial limits in this context. Through urban strategies focused on communal forms of city-making, Indigenous actors address spatial injustice, challenging historical capitalist, colonial, and racial hegemonies in Ecuador's urban Amazon, ultimately aligning with Ecuador's plurinational constitutional principles and opening pathways to more just urban futures.

5.2. Theoretical and methodological contributions of the thesis.

This section outlines the thesis's main theoretical and methodological contributions, building on the previous analysis that addressed the core research question. The secondary research questions guide this reflection, enabling an evaluation of the thesis's conceptual advances. Organized around three axes: first, contributions from the intersection of Marxist and decolonial perspectives; second, methodological innovations facilitated by this intersection through the thesis's positionality; and third, political-epistemic insights from analyzing relational ontologies and urban struggles led by Indigenous movements.

5.2.1. Contributions at the intersection of critical theories.

A central research question was: "What theoretical-conceptual contributions are found in the intersections between class and ethnicity in areas of extended urbanization of capitalism?" Additionally, a key objective was "to generate a theoretical breakthrough in neo-Marxist and decolonial intersections on responses to political subjectivities conflicting with extended urbanization promoted by infrastructural and extractive projects." The empirical work shows that using both Marxist and decolonial approaches to study extended urbanization in the Amazon—and their reconfiguration by Indigenous contestations—has opened inquiry to real-world processes. This openness enables the thesis to engage with various theoretical intersections, avoiding fragmentation of perspectives and proposals from different Indigenous actors. Consequently, the thesis provides a novel analysis of how territorial hegemonies operate and are contested in the Amazon.

Each article represents a distinct exercise that illuminates different possibilities. The theoretical contributions made throughout the thesis can be categorized into three main directions. First, they localize theories rooted in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as Black Marxism, which explores the intersections of class, race, and ethnicity, as well as Latin American Marxist traditions like dependency theory, in the Amazon. Second, they provide theoretical contributions by repositioning Marxist theories from an Amazonian perspective, thus engaging in the broader project of decolonizing theory in global academia. This involves extending concepts such as extended urbanization and residual urbanization in the Amazonian context, not to refute them, but to broaden their scope with multisituated

perspectives, opening new theoretical possibilities for the Global North as well. Third, as a reflection of this movement, the thesis offers anticapitalist insights by examining how the spatialities of capital can inform decolonial proposals for urban collectivization. In the Andean Amazon, this is evident in the enactment of plurinationality within urban spaces contested by capital.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation illustrates the strength of the theoretical combination. While the framework originated from two distinctly Marxist traditions and two distinctly decolonial ones, Figure XX shows how this thesis ultimately draws from five strands that bridge Marxist and decolonial perspectives. Interdependence among these critical theories is central to its contribution. This work shows that theoretical intersection can provide multiscalar insights—addressing Northern academic debates and Latin American social movements. Concepts like "Residual Urbanization," the "Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap," and Indigenous contestations reflect a synthesis that deepens the understanding of decolonial resistance to capital. The "Plurinational City against Amazon Settler Colonialism" provides a distinct proposition, envisioning the global contestation of urban space under racialized and capitalist dispossession.

Further developing these three ideas: first, the emancipatory legacies of anticolonial and antiracist Caribbean Marxisms and Indigenous Marxisms from the Andean region offer historical insights for rethinking critical theoretical intersections in Amazonian urbanization (Aguiar, 2018; Alimonda, 2015; Ávila-Rojas, 2021; Fanon, 1974; C. J. Robinson, 2000). Elevating these often-disconnected traditions is urgent, as they serve as bridges between Marxism and decolonialism (Antunes De Oliveira & Kvangraven, 2023; Hart, 2018; Vegliò, 2021). The violent expansion of capitalism through slavery, the establishment of a caste-based colonial order, and its current form via extractive projects in Indigenous territories, including those occupied by peoples in voluntary isolation, underscore the need to renew these political and theoretical alliances (Curley et al., 2022; Martínez, 2004; McKittrick, 2011; D. Ribeiro, 1986). This thesis recognizes the potential of Black geographies and dependency theory for analyzing Amazonian urbanization, focusing on hierarchies, inequalities, and environmental racism (Cortés, 2017; Hawthorne, 2019; Marini, 2022;

Pulido, 2017). It enhances geography and critical urban studies by incorporating diverse perspectives, particularly regarding the climate crisis (Sultana, 2021, 2022; Ulloa, 2015).

It provincializes global urban theories while globalizing insights from the Amazon, utilizing extended urbanization from Lefebvre's theory to explore the spatial limits of capital (Monte-Mor, 2004, 2014). The thesis reframes extended urbanization as "planetary urbanization," influencing global urbanism and knowledge production (Brenner, 2014b; Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Sheppard et al., 2013). It engages with recent postcolonial critiques of planetary urbanization (Khatam & Haas, 2018; McLean, 2018; Reddy, 2018), particularly regarding the Amazon (Arboleda, 2016; Kanai, 2014; Wilson & Bayón, 2015), advancing a decolonial perspective grounded in these experiences and introducing the concept of residual urbanization.

Residual urbanization builds upon the legacy of extended urbanization debate, centering indigenous contestations as both material and epistemic interruptions of colonial capitalism. It arises from uneven geographical development, where the dialectic of equalization and differentiation is shaped by political struggles surrounding urbanization (Smith, 1984). In the examined cases, such struggles led to marginal urban development. Where residual urbanization occurs, rent gaps form (Slater, 2017; Smith, 1987), but under dependent and racialized capital, a situated analytical lens is needed for new variables. This process articulates the Amazonian Periurban Rent Gap (APRG), capturing the specificities of contestation: extractive rents, community subjectivities, relational ontologies, and mobile territorialities generate a unique class struggle against capital. Grounded in Amazonian dynamics, the APRG also provides insights into contestations in other regions facing prolonged urbanization.

Thirdly, the thesis contributes to decolonial studies by engaging in debates about plurinationalism, a key aspect of indigenous urban contestation in the Amazon. Marxist frameworks offer critical tools for analyzing anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles. The field of settler colonial urban studies (Cowen, 2020; Poets, 2021; M. Ugarte et al., 2019) resonates in the Amazonian context, increasingly drawing on Marxist geography, Black geographies, and indigenous territorial proposals (Addie & Fraser, 2019; Milner, 2020; Pulido, 2018).

Suppose the APRG illustrates a plurinational class contesting capitalist spatialization. In that case, the "Plurinational City Against Amazonian Settler Colonialism" marks a theoretical contribution that crystallizes how plurinational class alliances are spatialized through collectively owned neighborhoods and reclaimed ancestral territories (Cahen et al., 2019; Ramírez, 2020a; Tomiak, 2023). This contribution shows how class and ethnic hegemonies discipline plurinational urban space through stigmatization and whitening tactics, like offering individualized property titles (Blomley, 2020; Garmany & Richmond, 2020). It highlights how class, ethnicity, and race intersect to contest the commodification of space via private property, forming a foundation for popular plurinationality that resists neoliberalism, and emphasizes rethinking land and territorial ownership against spatial whitening. These arguments call for reconsidering struggles framed as purely ethnic, anti-colonial, or anti-racist, and urge reconnection with Marxist theory.

These three conceptual threads—residual urbanization, the APRG, and the Plurinational City—synthesize the theoretical contributions of this work. While these concepts raise more questions than they resolve, the thesis demonstrates the analytical value of intersectional theory. It aids the deconstruction of the dispossession processes that characterize capitalist and colonial urbanization. Thus, it calls on critical urban theorists in the Global North to examine how racial capitalism shapes their contexts, how rent gaps are contested through anti-racist practices, and how different cosmovisions can inform alternative urban futures rooted in the commons. There is a call to reflect on enacting plurinationality amid deepening urbanization in Latin America. Meanwhile, capitalist market mechanisms underpin racialized dispossession and struggles against spatial whitening. Positioned between these two perspectives, the thesis promotes theoretical hybridization, intersection, and bastardization as a response and proposition.

5.2.2. Methodological contributions.

As anticipated in Chapter 1, this thesis also aims to explore a secondary question related to methodological contributions, focusing on how racialization and Indigenous territoriality are analyzed in urban contexts. The secondary question is: "How can we analyze the new forms

of territorial deployment produced by Indigenous struggles in extractivist booms in urban settings?". The objective is "To create theoretical and methodological innovations for the analysis of the racialization of urban space that fosters dialogue between critical theories that have limited previous interaction." This section first addresses the development of methodological innovations to bridge critical traditions through comparative work and then discusses field methods in novel social contexts.

As discussed in Chapter 3, urban comparative research has sparked significant debates on bridging Marxist and postcolonial approaches. This thesis engages with these discussions through a model of "deep analogies" comparison (Nijman, 2007), where the particularities of each case serve as a basis for inductive learning (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020). Additionally, comparative analysis explores relationships and differences (Peck, 2015; J. Robinson, 2016). The proposal to develop postcolonial Marxist geographies through relational comparison (Hart, 2018) and examine cases based on their contexts (Peck, 2023) forms two methodological pillars for this work. This approach challenges the dichotomy between generalizing theories and case studies. Marxist studies have historically favored global narratives where capital laws apply universally, treating empirical specifics as contributions to a global model analyzed deductively. This perspective has drawn strong critiques from decolonial scholarship (Roy & Ong, 2011; Yom, 2015). In contrast, decolonial studies often advocate for inductive approaches, where specificity interacts with broader theory, but from a standpoint that is difficult to generalize (J. Robinson, 2016; Schmid et al., 2018).

This thesis offers innovation through an iterative inductive–deductive method, where different research phases progress from inductive engagement with cases to deductive analysis of their interrelationships, as illustrated in Articles 1 and 2. These articles employ an inductive approach to cases and their spatial scales, complemented by a deductive process of categorization and comparison to highlight similarities and differences. The iterative nature of the method enabled a return to inductive work through illustrative case studies, as seen in articles 3 and 5, where specific examples were used to expand the theory. These theoretical expansions then informed new deductive comparisons, which facilitated the reformulation of categories and the development of new concepts, as demonstrated in Article

4. The spiral model presented in Figure 3.1 illustrates this methodological strategy, inspired by the Andean spiral of knowledge and temporal change.

This iterative inductive–deductive method serves as the methodological counterpart to the thesis's theoretical intersections, bridging key approaches in Marxist and decolonial studies. It is well-suited for analyzing contexts where theoretical multiplicity is vital. A linear method falls short in spatial and epistemic contexts like those in this thesis, especially in the Amazon. Navigating such complexity requires an openness to diverse scenarios and the ability to develop theory in tandem with evolving arguments. Only through this openness can one move beyond the theoretical–methodological comfort zone of working within a single intellectual tradition. For this reason, one of this dissertation's contributions to comparative studies lies in its ability to shift between case specificity and the construction of analytical categories in a more dialectical and continuous manner throughout the research process—acknowledging the transformation of the researcher's perspective over time and changes in the subjects of study through the insights generated in the process.

The second methodological contribution to critical studies is in the empirical field, where research emerged from geographical work and political engagement with subjects asserting territorial rights against capitalist-colonial dispossession. This approach enabled the comparison of perspectives, generating shared insights and new theoretical angles. In comparative design, each case underwent in-depth analysis based on intersecting Marxist and decolonial theories, allowing for relational comparisons defined within this theoretical framework. This thesis argues that exercises in "deep analogies" (Nijman, 2007) facilitate more profound insight and more meaningful contributions in trajectories and positionalities where comparative analysis seeks to engage spatial relationships through a dialectic shaped by struggle (Hart, 2018). In most urban comparison frameworks, researchers' trajectories within the spaces under study remain absent; case selection is typically guided by abstract concerns rooted in the logics of the social sciences (Pile, 2010). In contrast, this dissertation focuses on cases formed through political affinity, presenting a different starting point. This enables a more profound exploration through alternative frameworks and a comparative approach grounded in political-militant praxis and affective ties, extending beyond academic

research (Gago, 2017; Halvorsen, 2015). While many collectives and researchers adopt this orientation, it is rarely fully realized in doctoral studies.

This place of enunciation facilitated research methods in Indigenous territorial struggles, addressing the question of research methodology. A critical geographic perspective, combined with experiences in counter-mapping and community-based mapping, influenced the approach (Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012; Maharawal & McElroy, 2018; Van Teijlingen, 2023). The thesis expanded this tradition in geography by enhancing ethnographic practice through mobile ethnographies (Streule, 2020), ontological mapping (Oslender, 2021), and relational research (Atia & Doherty, 2021). Indigenous cartographies inspired the broader potential of this political practice (Melin et al., 2020; Schultz, 2018; M. Ugarte et al., 2021). This dissertation presents an intersectional approach to addressing the displacement of Indigenous peoples due to oil, mining, and real estate activities. A hybrid set of methods was developed, combining Marxist counter-mapping and postcolonial spatial ethnographies, aligning methodologically with the dissertation's broader strategy and theoretical goals. In three sustained field sites, self-directed mapping yielded profound insights, incorporating a wider spectrum of perspectives and fostering deep political and affective relationships. This effort resonates with various mapping initiatives by diverse collectives, reinforcing the commitment to militant geography, supporting actors who reimagine urban space against capital and the colonial-racist state (Halder & Kollektiv Orangotango, 2019; Monroy-Hernández et al., 2023). While the dissertation did not introduce new ethnographic or cartographic methods, it leveraged existing tools to facilitate a contemporary methodological dialogue among theoretical traditions, offering distinctive innovation for bridging frameworks and advancing a new comparative approach in the complex contexts explored in this study.

5.2.3. Political contributions.

This subsection concludes by addressing a secondary question regarding the thesis's social and political significance, particularly its role in debates within the Amazon region. The question is: "What contributions do relational ontologies make to the analysis of urban

violence in terms of segregation, racism, and exclusion brought about by extractive capitalist projects?" The objective is to examine the current political proposals for urban-Indigenous enclaves in Amazonian territories and the strategies employed by hegemonic forces to implement megaprojects. This reflection highlights two key contributions: the critical role of relational ontologies in shaping urban-popular spaces and the political significance of plurinationalism in fostering counter-hegemonies, a point already explored in terms of its theoretical relevance.

Relational ontologies, viewed through decolonial perspectives, present a strong theoretical proposition. This literature contrasts sharply with Western values, transcending Cartesian binaries by engaging with the world's complexity via cosmogonic interrelations (Blaser, 2010; Escobar, 2015). In discussions about Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in the Andean, Pacific, Chaco, or Amazonian regions, cities are frequently depicted as the opposite of relational ontologies. However, Settler Colonialism Theory highlights the visible ontological multiplicity and challenges to urban spaces by Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities (Marceau et al., 2023; McClintock & Guimont Marceau, 2023; Poets, 2021). This thesis contributes to the understanding of relational ontologies in the urban Amazon. Indigenous relational ontologies have been crucial in the contestations along the frontiers of Amazonian urbanization. Histories of capitalist-extractive dispossession, coupled with memories of discrimination and racism, have made forest-based community spaces the primary sites for realizing comprehensive ways of life and everyday enactments of cultural practices. Historically, Amazonian cities have been focal points of whitening and colonization (Alexiades & Peluso, 2016; Tanguila Andy, 2018; Whitten & Whitten, 2008). Therefore, reconstituting urban spaces for cultural practices is a collective necessity for all Amazonian nationalities (Galli, 2012; Sobreiro, 2015). Balancing modern amenities, such as higher education and employment (Arias-Gutierrez & Minoia, 2023; Steele, 2018), with spaces that support ontologically grounded ways of life is central to Indigenous contestations of extended urbanization.

These contestations have manifested in the daily lives of urban Amazonian communities. For instance, access to land for cultivation and fishing is crucial for subsistence, health, and food security, and signifies a deep connection to the land and cosmogony of each group. Gathering

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clay to create pottery or cultivating medicinal plants illustrates how urban life is fundamentally transformed. Designing spaces with urban forms that facilitate these interactions has long been an aspiration in Amazonian cities, alongside the desire to engage in these practices free from racist discrimination. Pluricultural urban communities, beyond family-oriented residences, foster care, safety, and peaceful living, expressing social ties through celebrations and collective work. When a capitalist-colonial eviction threatens to dismantle these hard-won spaces within extended urbanization, the resolve to resist is far greater than if the space were simply a dwelling defined by the Western model of urban habitation. Although social ties and a sense of belonging can form in non-Indigenous spaces, for Amazon Indigenous peoples, securing urban space carries profound cultural significance. This thesis shows how relational ontologies shape Indigenous contestations and amplify their impact.

This underscores one of the key political reasons why bringing plurinationality into urban spaces is so important. Recognized in Bolivia and Ecuador's constitutions—and in the rejected draft constitution of Chile, which was ultimately dismissed by referendum—plurinationality has been a central demand of Indigenous movements since the late twentieth century (Jameson, 2011; Schavelzon, 2018). In Ecuador, it has developed through Indigenous justice systems, territorial jurisdictions, and prior consultation rights, stemming from anti-extractive struggles and anti-neoliberal uprisings (Iza et al., 2021; Ortiz-T. et al., 2016; Pacari et al., 2021). Urban areas have not traditionally been focal points for plurinationality demands; however, during the June 2022 Indigenous-popular uprising, class, ethnicity, and race hegemonies framed urban spaces as sites for Indigenous removal. This framing heavily relied on cultural and class-based stigmatization from oligarchic and state-aligned media (Santillana Ortiz et al., 2024). Consequently, a public debate emerged regarding the Indigenous peoples' long-standing presence in Quito and other provincial capitals. Additionally, the Indigenous movement's urban–rural strategy proved particularly visible and effective during the uprising, highlighting the roles of family members in cities in supporting the national strike, especially in community-based areas such as Quito's Indigenous communes and Amazonian plurinational neighborhoods.

In this context, plurinationality is reimagined and revitalized by a new generation of

Indigenous leadership (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022b). This shift allows the long-standing Indigenous presence in Amazonian cities to be expressed and enacted more dynamically. Plurinational urban spaces invite the Indigenous movement to reconsider our urban interactions and relationships. It calls for a model rooted in de-commodification and communalism (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022a). For those in academia, this moment demands rethinking universities, education, and research to make plurinationality a lived reality (Arias-Gutierrez & Minoia, 2023; Melero & Manresa, 2022). This dissertation contributes thematically by challenging limits to plurinationality in the Amazon. These limits stem from externally imposed essentialisms that have historically stifled Indigenous urban struggles. This also enhances urban Amazonian studies, which are shifting towards exploring the possibilities of plurinationality for reimagining urban life in the region.

5.3. Limits and Future Paths of Inquiry

5.3.1. Positionality and the turbulent space-time of this thesis.

As previously outlined in Chapter 3, this dissertation acknowledges several limitations. These include the researcher's position (both personal and institutional), the geographically constrained area of research, and the broader context of the pandemic and militarization in which the research unfolded (Bourke, 2014). Regarding positionality, the author of this dissertation is neither immersed in nor representative of Amazonian cosmovisions. Arriving at 25, he has both emotional and professional ties to the region, yet lacks continuous residence, which lends him an external perspective. Additionally, he has not faced racial discrimination or cultural exclusion. While the work aims for deep empathy based on shared indignation over injustices in the Amazon, it does not fully embody the everyday experiences of class, ethnic, and racial hegemonies in this context, introducing limitations to understanding (Rahman & Kazmi, 2024; Valdivia, 2018). The research was conducted in Spanish, even though Kichwa, Shuar, or Wao Tededo speakers primarily inhabit many of the studied spaces. Consequently, the linguistic and cultural translation led to a dilution—or insufficient engagement—with numerous cultural codes and cosmogonic knowledge that deserved more attention.

The institutional framing of this thesis limits it. While it includes various affiliations, as outlined in Chapter 3, the dissertation primarily reflects the academic expectations of a German university. This structure imposes specific ways of thinking about knowledge, even if these frameworks were contested during the research (D. L. Baldwin & Crane, 2020; Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021; Medby, 2019). The author's position as an academic activist in the Ecuadorian environmental movement aids understanding but introduces biases that must be acknowledged. Idealized portrayals of social struggles can arise, making it essential to avoid using ecological frameworks universally to judge the legitimacy of any political subject's lifestyle. This avoidance is crucial (Curley et al., 2022; Moreano Venegas, 2017). These themes were selected for this doctoral project to encourage self-critique and explore the author's role in ecological movements. The thesis aims to challenge existing paradigms

and seriously consider Indigenous critiques of non-Indigenous ecological frameworks (Cabnal, 2010; Guzmán Arroyo, 2019).

The lack of a formal doctoral fellowship and limited funding restricted this project's geographic scope to the Ecuadorian Amazon. Financial support is provided by the Contested Territories project at the University of Leipzig and the Observatory on Amazonian Urbanization at FLACSO-Ecuador. This dissertation's grounding in Ecuador's context may have introduced biases linked to methodological nationalism (Beck, 2005; Wimmer & Schiller, 2003). Connecting diverse historical trajectories across urban Amazonia in Peru, Colombia, Brazil, or Bolivia would have offered a robust comparative framework. Additionally, analyzing the impact of oil corridors, dependency theory, or environmental racism outside the Amazon—especially in oil consumption and decision-making sites— could have deepened the thesis findings.

The temporal dimension of this research introduced constraints. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a revision of specific methodological and theoretical ambitions. Ethnographic depth was compromised, as early fieldwork shifted online, a format with significant opportunity costs (Méndez & Aguilar, 2015; Schulte-Römer & Gesing, 2022). Moreover, the political, economic, and security crises in Ecuador required caution during fieldwork. Several Amazonian cities became embroiled in violent narco-trafficking struggles. The rise of militarization in Ecuador limits the scope of this thesis, which hasn't fully addressed the complex issue. Additionally, recent geopolitical militarism has influenced this work, as it was conducted near Germany's warfronts in Ukraine and during the ongoing bombardment of the Gaza Strip, where Israel has intensified its genocide (Englert, 2020; Khatam & Haas, 2018; Lichinitzer & Snir, 2022). These conditions place the dissertation into a broader context of global turmoil and uncertainty over the past five years, closely tied to its content and development.

The pandemic and its violence constrained the intersection of Marxist, decolonial, and feminist theories envisioned for this research. Consequently, the analysis focused on the first two paradigms, ultimately leaving feminism. Building trust with men to explore patriarchal structures required significant fieldwork and political time, which the pandemic hindered.

Thus, this thesis lacks the analytical depth to address everyday life without the frameworks of feminism or the practices of decolonial and Latinx feminisms (Cruz Hernández, 2016; Palermo, 2016; Zaragocin, 2019).

5.3.2. Paths to pursue beyond this thesis.

The contributions made by this thesis, along with the limitations outlined in the previous section, allow it to conclude with several reflections on the avenues it opens. First, the thesis presents a pointed challenge to entrenched Marxist anti-decolonial and decolonial anti-Marxist positions. Its theoretical-methodological approach demonstrates that numerous productive possibilities can emerge from a deliberate intersection of critical theories. Future research may continue generating such necessary dialogues, enabling a more robust analysis of the constitution of social struggles confronting the dramatic consequences of capital accumulation at the frontiers of urbanization. This thesis leaves several questions unanswered, which future research should address. Critical insights emerge, such as the need to explore connections between rent theory and Amazonian historical conjunctures or to engage in deeper analysis of how the sphere of social reproduction functions in Amazonian urban settings through feminist lenses. The dawn of urban-Amazonian studies presents a significant opportunity to rethink the spatial limits of capital from the places where they are actively produced. Feminist Marxist, decolonial feminist, Black feminist, community feminist, and antiracist feminist approaches—among others—would all provide valuable contributions to the methodological directions proposed by this thesis.

Within the precise intersection of Marxist and decolonial theory, further paths remain to be explored. In Marxist geography and critical urban studies, despite diverse positions on postcolonial theory, there remains a pressing call to acknowledge the concrete spatial experiences shaped by colonialism and racial capitalism. Beyond what this thesis has analyzed, there is significant potential in considering how the concept of use-value could be expanded through Amazonian cosmogonies, or how the scale of the body might be theorized in relation to racialized and patriarchal labor exploitation, revisiting the body in Marx's work (Fox, 2015). And bringing it into dialogue with other critical perspectives. In the broader

project of provincializing Anglo-American Marxist geography, one could also inquire how rent gaps are configured differently across space, thereby contributing to ongoing decolonial analyses of the historic centers of Latin American megacities. Recently, efforts to historicize and spatially contextualize concepts like Smith's rent gap theory have shown great promise in opening new angles for anticapitalist urban struggles in the Global North (Wyly, 2023).

This thesis demonstrates the potential of integrating Neil Smith's theories with Amazonian realities. Similar explorations could engage with foundational texts in geography and critical urban theory to enhance their insights through theoretical engagement and critical inquiry. Lefebvre informs several theoretical formulations within the thesis: the concept of extended urbanization (Monte-Mor, 2004), contributions derived from Marxist geography (Lefebvre, 2003) in the sense of the appropriation carried out by Brazilian critical geographies (Haesbaert, 2005), the mobility turn's temporalities (Cresswell, 2006), and the blending of Marxist–postcolonial methodologies (Hart, 2018). Conversely, as this thesis has begun to suggest, decolonial and postcolonial studies, especially those connected to Settler Colonialism Theory, would benefit from more systematic engagement with the structural dynamics of capital that underpin epistemic dispossession and cultural erasure. Beyond what has been discussed here, future research might explore how financialization operates through colonial, racial, and cultural logics, or how spaces of whiteness are constructed and maintained by capitalist class formations, and identify clear avenues for extending these discussions through Marxist critiques of capital.

With Donald Trump's reelection in the U.S., Javier Milei's rise in Argentina, and Noboa's likely reelection in Ecuador amidst a broader fascist shift, the urgency of what critical theory and the Left can provide increases. Capitalist elites have seized political power, institutionalizing racism and colonialism, reinforcing repression, and dismantling welfare systems. Their attacks on Indigenous peoples are concrete and ongoing—from the criminalization of Mapuche resistance in Argentina to Bolsonaro's policies in the Amazon. Even Ecuador's plurinational framework is threatened, with Noboa promising a constituent assembly. Across the Atlantic, this political moment intersects with the far right's rise in Europe and the genocide in Palestine enabled by U.S. and EU imperial powers. Against this backdrop, fragmented leftist responses emerge: in Germany, parts of the Left embrace racist

rhetoric, failing to gain representation in elections; in the European Parliament, the far right and social democracy form anti-immigration governing coalitions, turning the Mediterranean Sea into a mass grave of racial capitalism.

For these reasons, reconstituting a democratic working class to confront fascism is as urgent today as it was a century ago. The resurgence of militarism and ultraliberalism is two sides of the same coin, modern manifestations of imperialism and colonialism. With global mobility in recent decades, racialized migrants are now scapegoats, facing extreme capitalist exploitation while denied citizenship. Calls for class unity can be hollow if they overlook racialized capital and the far right's rise. This thesis raises critical questions about analyzing capitalism's workings to form alliances against new oligarchic classes. The creation of popular-plurinational spaces in resistance to fascist racism, emerging from the Amazon, shows how we can reimagine urban living. This thesis urges us to move beyond commodifying our imagination and daily lives and discover the rich narratives of resistance to racial and colonial capitalism. In this spirit, these pages invite us to explore tangible spaces that are grounded in the interconnected utopian visions of critical urban theory.

The Amazonian and academic contexts of this thesis suggest future directions. The limitations outlined in the previous section underscore the need for further ethnographic research by Indigenous and urban movements. Despite an increase in the number of Indigenous scholars publishing (Grefa et al., 2024; Sirén et al., 2020; Ulloa, 2024), historical inequalities persist in universities. This situation indicates that we are still far from a reality in which Indigenous knowledge is genuinely welcomed and valued equally within academic institutions. Universities often overlook the transformative potential of bridging historical gaps and incorporating ontological multiplicity and diverse experiences into their teaching and research. This thesis raises essential questions for non-Indigenous members of Ecuador's plurinational society (Medby, 2019): How can we disrupt the colonial structures of Ecuador's universities? How can plurinationality be enacted within academic spaces and the production of knowledge? Can we create knowledge models that not only do not perpetuate colonial relationships but also strive to subvert them? These questions are crucial for dismantling the colonial logics underpinning urbanization in Ecuador, especially Amazonian urbanization, and advancing the recovery of Indigenous lands and proposals outlined in Ecuador's 2008

Constitution (Cartuche Vacacela, 2022b; Ramírez, 2020b; Tomiak, 2023). Ultimately, these reflections call for a dialogue that transcends the limitations of methodological nationalism. Only through exchange and interconnection—across other countries in the Amazon basin, other Indigenous territories in the Global South, and other urban sites contested in the face of racism and colonialism—can we walk more complex and far-reaching paths. Such interwoven experiences are vital if we aim to build a more livable world.

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