


Indigenous Women’s Activism, Ecofeminism, and Extractivism: Partial Connections in the Ecuadorian Amazon

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Over the last two decades, Latin America has witnessed a massive expansion of resource extraction. One of the most significant countermovements to emerge out of this context in Ecuador features a strong base and leadership of indigenous women from the Amazon. In their collective effort to resist extractivism, Amazonian women have drawn from elements of ecofeminist discourse and, in the process, situated their own claims within the broader indigenous territorial struggle. Ecofeminism has been transformed through this allyship as well, becoming more inclusive of indigenous women’s perspectives. To shed light on these complex relationships, this article applies the framework of “partial connection” from feminist anthropology. It shows how postcolonial encounters between the state, missionaries, environmental activists, and indigenous communities in the Amazon carved out unique spaces for indigenous self-organization and politics. The historical analysis of such spaces, I argue, is crucial for grasping the allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminists today. Rooted in a combination of positions that are partially, asymmetrically, and ambiguously connected, the allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminists is best understood as a form of partially connected relationship.

Keywords: Indigenous women, ecofeminism, state extractivism, environmental movements, indigenous politics, Ecuadorian Amazon

I would like to thank William Callison for feedback that immensely improved this article.

Published by Cambridge University Press 1743-923X/19 \$30.00 for The Women and Politics Research Section of the American Political Science Association.

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doi:10.1017/S1743923X19000023

Ecuadorian indigenous leader Patricia Gualinga gave a speech at the 2017 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany, opposing extractivism and advocating for indigenous proposals as the real solution to climate change.¹ This was not Gualinga's first participation at an international climate change conference. A member of the Kichwa Pueblo of Ecuador's Sarayaku territory, Gualinga has become a leading voice in Sarayaku's struggle against the Argentine oil company Compañía General de Combustibles (CGC) since 2003, partaking in several international and climate change forums, such as the 2015 Climate Change Conference in Paris. However, in 2017, she was invited to Bonn not only as a representative of Sarayaku but also as a member of the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN), a climate justice initiative working globally with women activists and ecofeminist advocates such as Vandana Shiva. Moreover, Gualinga also participated as a leading figure in the Amazonian women's struggle against oil extraction in Ecuador. Her participation to articulate indigenous proposals at environmental and ecofeminist forums, which WECAN facilitates, reveals an important transformation in the kinds of allyship in which indigenous women are willing to engage.

Given that several women active in the Ecuadorian indigenous movement reject the hegemonic and ethnocentric agenda of Western feminism and thus refuse to self-identify as "feminists," such a transformation is worth careful attention.² To explain these developments, this article focuses on the complex allyships of Amazonian women with ecofeminist groups — especially the organization *Acción Ecológica* (Ecological Action) and the collective *Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo*

1. "Our peoples resist and fight for Mother Earth. Governments and the private sector only distract from the reality of climate change with their false solutions. Climate change is not a business! . . . We, the grassroots communities and indigenous peoples of the world, we have the real solutions . . . We demand a profound transformation of the energy system and no more extraction . . . We demand an end to financing fossil fuels and false solutions." Patricia Gualinga at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bonn, November 17, 2017, <https://wecaninternational.wordpress.com/2017/11/17/patricia-gualinga-of-sarayaku-ecuador-delivers-high-level-intervention-at-cop23-bonn/> (accessed January 14, 2019).

2. Communitarian feminists, who advocate for a situated feminism that uncovers the historic conditions of women's oppressions in indigenous communities in order to change that oppression, have addressed how indigenous movements across Latin America have rejected Western feminism (see Cabnal 2012). Among Amazonian women active in the indigenous movement's Amazonian organization represented CONFENIAE, some leaders reject calling themselves "feminists." For example, Elvia Dagua, CONFENIAE's representative of women's and family issues, told me that she stopped considering herself a feminist after "participating at a feminist event" that she "did not like." Interview, August 23, 2017, Puyo.

(Feminist Critical Views of Territory) – in the context of their shared struggle against the expansion of oil extraction projects in the Ecuadorian Amazon.³ Specifically, this article asks: How and why have Amazonian women and ecofeminist activists collaborated in Ecuador? How have such allyships transformed the respective groups' politics and self-representation?

The broad historical dynamics underlying the complex relationships between environmental activists and indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon are worth examining in order to understand the solidarity ties between ecofeminists and Amazonian women today. Yet these allyships, as anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena (2010) reminds us, are more nuanced than “unified systems of activism.” We should recognize the allyships as partial and contextualize them by the voices they illuminate and the political proposals they enable. In the case of Amazonian women's anti-extractive struggle in Ecuador, their adoption of certain elements of the feminist discourse in order to reveal the territorial displacement they confront characterizes their allyship with ecofeminists. Furthermore, as Gualinga's speech shows, international environmentalist and ecofeminist forums are becoming spaces to articulate indigenous proposals that, in Gualinga's words, “could contribute to combating climate change while at the same time recognizing new forms of conservation that are born from indigenous peoples.”⁴ In this process, ecofeminists have also been transformed, becoming more inclusive of Amazonian women's perspectives and advocating for proposals to create partial and mutual recognition for claims such as the “Body-Territory” proposal, which links how the body and territory have both been subjugated.

This article adopts feminist anthropology's “partial connection” framework to analyze the allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminist groups in Ecuador. While Marilyn Strathern (2004) describes partial connection as a way of conceiving how entities made

3. I use the term “Amazon” to refer to the Amazonian region in Ecuador and “Amazonian women” to refer to the indigenous women's collectives organizing against oil extraction in the Amazon since 2013. While Amazon (*Amazonía*) is a widely used term in the Ecuadorian population and academy to refer to the rainforest region (e.g., Muratorio 1994; A.-C. Taylor 1994; Pineda and Krainer 2012), “Amazonian women” has only recently crystalized as a denominator for indigenous women activists from the Ecuadorian rainforest. The activists have called themselves “Amazonian women” in their declarations and public announcements (see *Mujeres Amazónicas del Centro Sur* 2013a, 2016), and recent academic publications have adopted this description to refer to their mobilization (see García-Torres 2017; Vallejo and García-Torres 2017; Walsh 2015).

4. Interview, August 8, 2017, Puyo.

and reproduced in different ways work together, Donna Haraway exemplifies this framework through the figure of a cyborg, a nonholistic organism that is part animal and part machine (cited in Strathern 2004, 37). This conception of relational convergences and disjunctions is a useful tool for analyzing complex relationships between entities that do not form closed units but respond to and may even incorporate each other's positions in complex ways.

The partial connection framework allows de la Cadena (2010, 2015) to think about Andean indigeneity in the Peruvian context. Her thoughtful analysis demonstrates connections between indigenous and hegemonic practices (de la Cadena 2010, 348). Similar to de la Cadena, I adopt partial connection to contest a view of indigenous identities as simply separate from or alien to hegemonic identities in Ecuador. Rather, hegemonic identities have partly constituted indigenous identities, with the latter even adopting elements of dominant discourses in their own political interventions, for instance, by combining their demands with those of human rights or environmental activists. The careful treatment of indigenous discourses, strategies, and allyships in transformation that the framework of partial connection offers make the methodology a useful approach to examine the allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminists more accurately than through the simple dichotomy of complete "cooperation" or "antagonism."

By deploying partial connection, this article distances itself from the state-centered approaches still dominating political science. These approaches tend to explain indigenous identities and the rise of indigenous movements as resulting from the constitutional state's recognition of multicultural rights or, in the Latin American context, from processes related to the so-called decentralization of the state (Kymlicka 1995; Montero and Samuels 2004; C. Taylor 1994; Van Cott 2000). The analysis offered here instead situates itself on a wide spectrum of human and social sciences that understand indigenous identities as embedded in complex historical dynamics, and indigenous peoples as active political agents (e.g., Muratorio 1994; Prieto 2015; Sawyer 2004; Ulloa 2004). My article contributes to these analyses of indigenous identity in two ways. First, it explains how the encounters between indigenous and hegemonic identities — that is, the state, missionaries, and environmentalists — transformed indigenous practices in complex ways. Second, the article examines how the recent allyship between Amazonian and ecofeminist activists in Ecuador has shaped each's positions and politics. In this way, this piece contributes to

feminist and leftist approaches that have tended to understand identities as simple or closed units.

In the next section, an ethnographic and theoretical introduction of partial connection offers valuable motivations for the study of politics and the political while expanding human and social sciences' methodologies for analyzing political identities. I also situate in more detail this framework's contribution to indigeneity studies and to recent studies of Amazonian women's activism in Ecuador.

Then I apply the framework of partial connection to particular postcolonial histories in the Ecuadorian Amazon. My historical analysis draws from several authors who have provided complex analyses of Amazonian indigeneity in order to examine the ambivalent role of the state, missionaries, and urban activists in the rainforest, especially focusing on the multifaceted relationship between environmentalists and Amazonian indigenous organizations. This historical analysis is important for contextualizing the complex roots underlying Amazonian women's allyship with ecofeminists.

The third and fourth sections turn to the contemporary relationship between Amazonian and ecofeminist activists. These two sections analyze material I have gathered in the past five years related to ecofeminist and Amazonian women's activism (online videos, testimonies, news articles, public declarations, and publications) and two ethnographic research stays in Ecuador. This fieldwork took place in March 2016 and July–September 2017. The 2016 research primarily comprises one participant observation moment during the Amazonian women's march in Puyo. The 2017 research comprises nine semistructured interviews with the leading figures of the Amazonian women's collective and information from participant observation on three occasions: the sixth Confederation of Ecuadorian Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) congress in Zamora, an Acción Ecológica workshop with Amazonian women in Lago Agrio, and a visit that the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) organized to the Shuar community of Tsuntsuin.

While the third section answers how and why Amazonian women and ecofeminist activists have joined forces in the Ecuadorian context by describing ecofeminist involvement in environmental collectives active in the last decade, the final section answers this article's second question about how the allyship between ecofeminists and Amazonian women transformed the politics and self-representation of each. I focus my analysis on two proposals: the Amazonian women's Kawsak Sacha or

“Living Forest” proposal and the “Body-Territory” proposal launched by the feminist collective *Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo*. Similar to Strathern’s understanding of relations extending participants’ positions, I show these two proposals as extensions of ecofeminists’ and Amazonian women’s identities (Strathern 2004, 39). These two proposals mirror the connections and existing dialogue between ecofeminists and Amazonian women, even if these connections remain partial and their ongoing dialogue is difficult at times.

THE POLITICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF PARTIAL CONNECTION

More than 100 women from seven indigenous nations — Achuar, Shuar, Zapara, Kichwa, Shiwiar, Andoa, and Waorani — from the southeastern Amazon started the “March for Life” in October 2013. The first march in Ecuador organized and led entirely by women, it proceeded from the edge of the Amazon through the steep hills of the highlands and into the capital city, Quito. The symbolic and arduous march totaling 250 kilometers was a response to the 11th oil licensing round and oil extraction in Yasuní National Park.⁵ Three years later, more than 500 women of the same indigenous nationalities assembled in the city of Puyo to protest the state’s decision to sell three oil blocks in the Amazon to the Chinese company Andes Petroleum.

While the motto of the 2013 march centered on the rights of indigenous women “to protect life, our territories, and speak out with our own voice,” the next major mobilization, on International Women’s Day 2016, consolidated the Amazonian women’s agenda, which was focused on “strengthening ties between various organizations involved in defending territory.”⁶ In fact, as the 2016 demonstration commenced, Amazonian women showed their ties with ecofeminist and environmental activists

5. This group of Amazonian women organized in 2013 after the Ecuadorian government started licensing the 11th oil licensing round, and after former president Rafael Correa decided not to renew the Yasuní-ITT (Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini) Initiative. The 11th oil licensing round sought to expand oil extraction in the southeastern Ecuadorian Amazon, dividing approximately two-thirds of the Amazon into blocks for oil exploration and affecting seven indigenous nations (Secretaría de Hidrocarburos 2013). The Yasuní-ITT Initiative would have indefinitely left oil reserves under the ground in Yasuní National Park, a protected area with substantial biodiversity inhabited by Waorani communities and indigenous groups living in voluntary isolation. Rafael Correa’s August 2013 decree for the extraction of crude oil in the Park overthrew the initiative (Yasunidos, “Chronology since the Cancellation of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative,” <https://sitio.yasunidos.org/es/yasunidos/cronologia-de-hechos> (accessed June 19, 2018)).

6. See *Mujeres Amazónicas del Centro Sur* 2013a, 2016.

who came to support their struggle and spoke at the opening forum. These activists represented groups ranging from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from Quito, such as Acción Ecológica and Terra Mater, to U.S.-based NGOs such as WECAN and Amazon Watch. Casey Camp-Horinek, a WECAN member and leader from the Ponca Nation in the United States, was even honored with leading the spiritual ceremony to begin the march.

Toward the close of the march, various leaders and women from Amazonian community bases took the stage. Their multilingual interventions illustrated a complex relationship with the urban activists. The Amazonian women's interventions subsumed the climate change agenda that the Ecuadorian and U.S. NGOs represented under the indigenous struggle for territory. In fact, one Amazonian woman asked urban supporters to join "our struggle for the defense of our territories, the Pacha Mama [Mother Earth], since this is not only for us but for the rest of the world ... Amazonian women will defend the whole world from climate change."⁷ Further, the gratitude that Amazonian activists displayed toward the domestic activists in the audience became ambivalent. In their respective speeches, two Amazonian women from the Kichwa and Zapara nations referred to urban activists as *colonas*, a term translatable as "colonialists" (supporters of the colonial system) or as "colonists" (settlers). The Zapara representative asked the *colonas* not to refer to Amazonian women as "these lazy women who are just yelling in the streets; we are screaming for everyone and defending nature."⁸

While the first translation of the word *colonas* carries a clear negative connotation referring to a historical system of oppression, the second term is not more neutral, since it also refers, in the Ecuadorian context, to the majority of *mestizos* (racially mixed people) who migrated to and "colonized" rural areas including the Amazonian region after the 1964 Agrarian Reform (Gondard and Mazurek 2001, 15). Either usage, given the discursive ambiguity of *colonas*, could indicate the Amazonian women's awareness of asymmetrical power relations between indigenous and urban activists, a relation with deep roots in colonial history and the mestizo population's racist practices of exclusion. Beyond the reminder that asymmetrical power relations permeate any encounters with ecofeminist and environmental activists, this moment also revealed the kind of open-ended negotiation that characterizes their relationship.

7. Representative of the Kawsak Sacha community, public intervention, March 8, 2016, Puyo.

8. Public intervention, March 8, 2016, Puyo.

Such a ceaseless negotiation process does not prevent ecofeminists and Amazonian women from co-laboring, though invoking colonas necessarily troubles their allyship.

To examine the contradictory aspects of their allyship evident in the previous ethnographic moment, the following sections deploy a partial connection framework in order to analyze the relationship between Amazonian women and ecofeminist activists in Ecuador. In a similar spirit to de la Cadena, who uses partial connection as an “analytical-political tool” to reflect about indigenous politics in Peru, I adopt partial connection as a political and methodological framework to understand and examine ecofeminists’ and Amazonian women’s joint activism (de la Cadena 2015, 31). Their activism, I argue, is embedded in a complex combination of partially, asymmetrically, and ambiguously connected positions.

Understanding partial connection as a political framework requires acknowledging its contribution to reflections on “the political.” This framework enables a thoughtful analysis of politics beyond liberal-deliberative (Habermas 1975) or adversarial (Mouffe 2000) conceptualizations that tend to anchor political theory, specifically the field of democratic theory. Partial connection serves as a useful tool for understanding politics generated by marginalized collectives that politically powerful actors have accepted neither as equal partners in conversation nor as legitimate adversaries in colonial or postcolonial times. In fact, this framework reveals new forms of “doing politics” that not only reshuffle hegemonic antagonisms but also challenge “politics as usual” (de la Cadena 2010, 345).

Strathern’s and Haraway’s introduction of partial connection in feminist and anthropological debates could even be interpreted as a relevant political intervention with methodological implications. Drawing on James Gleick’s chaos theory, Strathern uses partial connection to describe compatible and incompatible relations without reproducing the idea of wholes or parts (Strathern 2004, 35). Rather, she engages Haraway’s critique of leftist and feminist rhetoric that has “tried to overcome the idea of a dichotomous or divided world with . . . visions of totality” to portray the figure of the cyborg (an animal-machine hybrid) as an alternative that can provoke different ways of thinking about relations (Strathern 2004, 37).

Haraway’s cyborg exemplifies partial connections: “partial in all its guises . . . always constructed and stitched together imperfectly . . . able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another” (1991, 193). This metaphor allows an understanding of identities as “contradictory, partial,

and strategic” (Haraway 1991, 155). On a methodological level, this understanding challenges a conception of identities as simple, closed, generalizable, and comparable units. In contrast to the common use of the tool of “comparison” in human and social sciences (e.g., anthropology and political science), which, accordingly to Strathern, ends up reproducing examples of the same — that is, of our society — the framework of partial connection describes extensions of certain positions and realizes partial connections between disparate collaborative alignments (Strathern 1988, 340). This understanding of identities does not preclude the possibility of seeing analogies and compatibilities between disparate entities, however, human and social scientists must deploy the analogies and compatibilities for the sake of understanding identities as eventful expressions of connections rather than as cohesive units.

In the Ecuadorian context, several social scientists have provided complex analyses of indigenous identities, practices, and politics, notably, Blanca Muratorio (1994), Anne-Christine Taylor (1994), Victor Breton Solo de Zaldivar (2000), Suzana Sawyer (2004), Pablo Ospina (2009), and Mercedes Prieto (2015). From their various disciplines and perspectives, they have traced the indigenous movement’s historical constitution and development, revealing important aspects of indigenous identity. Without ignoring the asymmetrical co-constitution of indigeneity vis-à-vis the state, these analyses have portrayed indigenous peoples as relevant historical subjects negotiating their identities and claims beyond the limits that state power imposes.

While the analysis in this article relates to most work these scholars produce, the next historical section seeks to understand Amazonian Ecuadorian indigeneity as always exceeding the historical relations that produce it. In fact, ways of living that colonial and postcolonial processes of otherness production conceal also constitute indigenous practices. Indigenous politics, practices, and identities are only *partially* connected to the dominant discourses and practices the state, missionaries, and environmental activists generate. This partial connection is what makes indigenous politics modern, but *not only* modern.

The partial connection framework has also several implications for examining the allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminist activists. Recent publications have effectively documented and analyzed Amazonian women’s activism from a decolonial feminist perspective (Walsh 2015), from feminist political ecology (García-Torres 2017), and from political ecology (Vallejo and García-Torres 2017). However,

Amazonian women's allyship with feminist and environmental collectives, if mentioned, has mostly been interpreted as something enabling Amazonian women's activism.

While the third section of this article acknowledges the understanding of ecofeminist collectives as contributing to the visibility of Amazonian women's agendas and voices, the fourth section reflects the complexities and partiality behind their relationship. In fact, a complex combination of positions makes their allyship a ceaseless process of negotiation transforming each other's discourses. I analyze this mutual transformation at the discursive level and show how two of their most prominent proposals are extending both parties' agendas and demonstrating various capacities for accessing each other's worlds, even if "it is done from the position each occupies for herself" (Strathern 2004, 39). Thus, analyzing Amazonian women's and ecofeminists' allyship in Ecuador through the lens of partial connection is a contribution to the literature to generate thoughtful reflections on what Haraway (1991) calls "the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics" at a time of extractive occupation and environmental destruction.

PARTIALLY CONNECTED HISTORIES IN THE POSTCOLONIAL AMAZON

Adopting the framework of partial connection prioritizes relations in the Ecuadorian Amazon as the first object. "The Amazon," also called the Oriente in Ecuadorian parlance, historically evokes a mystical space of uncivilized prehistory or an invisible, allegedly empty area (Melo, Ortiz, and Lopez 2002, 5). While the dynamics driving Ecuador's political history revolve around the colonial cities of Quito, Cuenca, and Guayaquil, leaving the Oriente an unknown territory, the "forgotten" region has had constant interactions with the rest of the country and other actors since colonial times (Esvertit Cober 2005, 90). Such connections predominantly comprised violent and periodical interventions from colonial powers and later the Ecuadorian nation-state, missionaries, and oil companies, creating conflictive and complex relations with Amazonian inhabitants.

I offer a historical analysis of how the "partial absence" of the state and the "partial presence" of missionaries in the Amazonian region carved out unique spaces for indigenous self-organization and identity (trans)formation. I show how current indigenous politics and identities

arise not only as products of indigenous peoples' negotiation with the state, nor merely as outcomes of consensual cooperation with religious or environmental organizations. Amazonian indigenous politics are also rooted in unique spaces of self-organization and ways of living that are invisible to modern politics.

What I propose calling the "partial absence" of the state refers to its highly ambivalent role in the Amazonian region since Ecuador's independence in 1830. While the state presence has been largely limited to its economic, political, and military interests in the rainforest, its violent interventions have continuously ignored the existence of indigenous communities. From 1830 to 1860, for example, the Amazonian region played a marginal role in the country's economic, social, and political dynamics (A.-C. Taylor 1994, 37). In 1858, the Ecuadorian parliament officially declared the Amazon *tierras baldías* (barren wastelands) and sold off extensive pieces of land to repay foreign debt Ecuador contracted during the independence wars, signifying the invisibility of the Amazon's inhabitants in the state's view (Esvertit Cober 2005, 91).

This state marginalization of indigenous communities continued. With the 1970s oil boom, the northern Amazon provided almost half the state budget, yet those communities remained excluded from access to basic infrastructure, education, and health. Northern Amazonian communities were often displaced to more remote areas because of the immigration of low-skill laborers to work in the oil fields (Cielo, Coba, and Vallejo 2016, 127). Taking a "pastoral role," oil companies compensated for the state's relative absence in the area by assuming social responsibilities in order to avoid conflicts with local groups (Sawyer 2004, 9). While oil companies' pastoral role intensified indigenous communities' dependence on external monetary aid in the northern Amazon, the southeastern area remained excluded from oil exploitation, mostly because of conflicts between the state and various indigenous communities living there (Ruiz 1993, 97).

The state's marginalization of Amazonian indigenous communities did not destroy their ways of living. The partial absence of the state also opened up possibilities for practices of living that survived and emerged external to (not outside of) state power. Particularly in the southeastern Amazon, noncapitalist means of existence have survived along with local sources of mobilization and resistance, which have long confronted the extractive "invasion" of the state and other actors in their territories. These partly autonomous ways of living have also encouraged indigenous political

proposals that challenge modern understandings of nature and territory. These historical complexities are important to keep in mind when examining contemporary relationships between the state and indigenous communities in the Amazon, which remain partially connected relationships to this day.

An expression of partial connections between the state and indigenous peoples are the territorial negotiation talks that took place in the 1990s. CONFENIAE's 250-kilometer march from Ecuador's Pastaza Province in the central Amazon to the capital city of Quito in 1992 became a model for subsequent protests. Two main demands motivated the initial march: the communal titling of two million hectares of rainforest territory in Pastaza and a constitutional reform recognizing Ecuador as a plurinational state (Sawyer 2004, 27). Even if the march did not immediately lead to successful negotiations, it shifted the terms of debate around territory, nationhood, and sovereignty. The shift started when the Amazonian movement used certain elements of dominant discourses in the written proposal "Acuerdo Territorial" (Territorial Agreement). Indigenous peoples presented this proposal to the government after arriving in Quito, mixing indigenous memory and practices with language from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and with the idea that the state should recognize their communities as nationalities (not ethnicities), since they had been organizing their territories in autonomous ways (Sawyer 2004, 46). Extending indigenous positions by speaking in the idiom of human rights and nationality exemplifies how indigenous peoples used elements of dominant discourses in order to express and evince their claims. This "extension" exceeded the terms of the debate the state offered at that time, requiring the state to recognize indigenous territorial rights and the principle of plurinationality in the 1998 and 2008 Ecuadorian Constitutions.

In fact, the 2008 Constitution not only declared Ecuador a plurinational state but also adopted the indigenous notion of *sumak kawsay* or "good living" (Ospina 2009, 131). Although "good living" helped the Ecuadorian government retain its progressive and environmentalist image — at least until 2013 — despite its extractive agenda, indigenous peoples have been opposing the manipulation of this term. Many indigenous thinkers differentiate *sumak kawsay* from the governmental interpretation by combining it with an understanding of territory as living space and an ancestral site of indigenous sociality (Macas 2011). This differentiation reveals how indigenous movements are *both*

connected and disconnected from nation-state institutions and how their most central demands are included in *but cannot be reduced* to the terms imposed by modern politics (de la Cadena 2015, 33).

The partial absence of the state also allows other actors, especially religious missionaries and then environmental organizations, to project imaginary representations and desires onto the space and peoples of the Amazon. Missionaries, especially, have played a significant role in the Amazon since colonial times, an influence that I propose calling the partial but effective presence of religious missions.⁹ The presence of missionaries is partial because it was never consistent, long term, or effective, because missionary interventions had an important historical function in producing indigenous peoples as an “Other” in the colonial imaginary by representing them as cannibals and allies of the devil (Cabodevilla 1999, 66). The representation of the indigenous “Other” as dangerous, uncivilized, or vulnerable has played a role in attempts to “modernize” the Amazonian region and its inhabitants (Prieto 2015; see also Breton Solo de Zaldivar 2000). These representations have additionally created hierarchical binaries (civilized versus savage) that have been crucial for the state to justify the subordinate role of the *indio* in mestizo notions of the Ecuadorian nation. Even commonplace racist sayings such as *muestra su patria, mate un indio* (show your patriotism, kill an indio) suggest that indigenous peoples must modernize and renounce their “uncivilized” ways of living in order to join the modern mestizo nation-state (Sawyer 2004, 35).

The civilized/savage divide has also marked the relationship between indigenous peoples and environmental organizations that have exported an image of indigenous activists as “noble savages” and “guardians of the Amazon” in international discourse (Muratorio 1994; Ulloa 2004). With the extraction and recurrent oil spills in the northeastern Amazon since the 1970s, various national and international environmental organizations — such as Oxfam, Amazon Watch, Pachamama Foundation, and Acción Ecológica — have entered the Amazon (Melo, Ortiz, and Lopez 2002, 5). They came with the intention of helping affected indigenous communities in the northern Amazon, guided by conservationist discourses about the rainforest. It is within these environmentalist narratives that various indigenous groups seeking territorial autonomy in the southeastern

9. The power of religious missionaries was especially prominent after the conservative President García Moreno gave Jesuit missionaries the religious jurisdiction over the entire Oriente in 1862 (A.-C. Taylor 1994, 49).

Amazon found a channel for political organizing, articulating their demands, and pressuring the state. These political expressions are strategic rather than “truthful” examples of indigenous politics; indigenous identity and struggle are not simply the products of this interaction with environmental groups. As is the case of relationships with the state, indigenous identities and resistance strategies are just *partially* connected to environmental narratives.

An example of how religious and environmentalist groups have contributed to indigenous self-organizing is the first indigenous organization in the Amazon, the Interprovincial Federation of Shuar and Achuar Centers (FICSH). Without the support of Salesian priests influenced by liberation theology and the collaboration of environmental organizations, FICSH would not have been possible (Sawyer 2004, 42). The Shuar and Achuar people primarily organized against the government’s colonization policies, which, according to a 1964 law, identified the territory as a “wasteland” under state patrimony (Gondard and Mazurek 2001). Ten years later, the Shuar Federation joined CONFENIAE and cooperated with environmental organizations to oppose petroleum projects in their territories.

These new modes of cooperation between indigenous communities, missionaries, and environmentalists allowed for the establishment of the so-called *candado social* (“social blockade”) in the southeastern Amazon. As the president of the public oil company Petroecuador observed, the *candado social* is the pact between social, religious, and indigenous movements that successfully blocked the expansion of oil blocks in the southeastern Amazon (Melo, Ortiz, and Lopez 2002, 57). From the perspective of partial connection, the *candado social* exemplifies a complex network of positions that are partially, asymmetrically, and even ambiguously connected. In the Ecuadorian Amazon, such allyships between indigenous communities, missionaries, and environmentalists are marked by increasing economic dependence and environmentalists representing indigenous communities as “guardians” of the forest (Descola 2004, 25). The image of indigenous peoples as guardians results not only from environmental organizations’ unwillingness to recognize indigenous peoples on their own terms but also from hegemonic discourses shaping knowledge about these peoples, “making some ideas thinkable while at the same time cancelling the possibility of notions that defy the hegemonic habits of thought” (de la Cadena 2015, 76).

The *candado social*’s complicated modus of cooperation thus underlies the partially connected relations of cooperation between indigenous

peoples and environmental organizations. An example of this partial cooperation is the making of the Yasuní-ITT (Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini) Initiative, an initiative to leave indefinitely the oil reserves under the ground in Yasuní National Park. The result of collaborative work between indigenous communities, environmental organizations such as Acción Ecológica, and academics since the 1990s, the Ecuadorian government adopted this proposal in 2007 (Acosta 2012, 99). The initiative strongly values Yasuní National Park in terms of its great biodiversity; however, the collaboration of academics with indigenous communities also permeated the former's notions of nature. Like other Ecuadorian anthropologists, Kati Álvarez supports understanding the Amazonian territory in terms other than those established by Western science, which values nature only for its biodiversity. Álvarez underscores how indigenous practices and knowledge have been crucial to the distribution of vegetation in Yasuní National Park, making the territory a lively space of affective encounters between humans, animals, and nature.¹⁰

Likewise, the partially connected relationships between indigenous communities and environmental organizations have impacted conservationist discourses, who also value "nature" not only for its biodiversity. In a recent online publication of Acción Ecológica, the environmental organization commemorates the 10-year anniversary of the constitutional adoption of the Rights of Nature. While they strongly criticize the extractive governmental agenda, the activists adopt the indigenous concept of Pacha Mama as crucial for rethinking our relationship with nature and for recognizing how "Pacha Mama ... is vital to our existence."¹¹

The partial cooperation with environmental organizations has also facilitated indigenous peoples' adoption or intensification of certain narratives about their activism in the language of conservationist discourses in order to be heard. For example, some Amazonian women embrace the image of themselves as "guardians of their territory." In the visual testimonials that Ecuadorian photographer Felipe Jácome captures in "*Amazonas: Guardians of Life*," Amazonian activists see themselves as the ones who "take care" and "defend our land, our jungle, the rivers,

10. Álvarez Kati, "Territorialidad y Territorios Ancestrales" [Territoriality and ancestral territories], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRxsB9McReM> (accessed January 14, 2019).

11. Acción Ecológica, "2018, a Diez Años de los Derechos de la Naturaleza" [2018: Ten-year anniversary of the Rights of Nature], March 2, 2018, <http://www.accioneologica.org/editoriales/2250-2018-01-02-21-59-16> (accessed January 14, 2019).

the mountains and the trees that house the spirits of the jungle.”¹² Given that Amazonian women are often responsible for reproduction and care work involving their relations with nature, this self-understanding is not only the product of fictional self-representation and has resonated in the international environmental media covering their mobilization (see Cielo, Coba, and Vallejo 2016).¹³

The framework of partial connection analyzes indigenous politics beyond antagonistic divisions between indigenous and nonindigenous practices. The Amazonian indigenous movement has challenged these divisions through complex processes of political identity formation. These identities are partially constituted in contradistinction to the Other (the missionary, the environmentalist, and the state) or, in Stuart Hall’s words, in “relation to what it is not” (1996, 5). At the same time, their identities are partially constituted from within — that is, from indigenous people’s daily realities and practices that the state constantly renders invisible. This constitution from “within” does not designate aboriginal cultures accidentally living in a “pure outside, untouched by the modern” (Escobar 2008, 218). It refers to realities of living that, despite being rendered invisible, marginal, and exterior to modernity, have challenged the normative power of the One (the missionary, the environmentalist, and the state) and permeated its institutions, discourses, and practices (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez and Tate 2015, 8).

A NEW ERA OF EXTRACTIVISM: ALLYSHIPS BETWEEN ECOFEMINISM AND AMAZONIAN WOMEN

The partially connected relations between Amazonian indigenous communities and the state, missionaries, and environmental activists are crucial for historically contextualizing the allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminists today. Partial connections reveal not only complex and ambivalent roots underlying the collaborations that indigenous peoples have engaged in to make their claims visible but also how these collaborations — especially with environmental groups — have been important in effectively blocking the expansion of oil extractive projects in the southeastern Amazon.

12. Felipe Jácome, “Visual Testimonials ‘Amazonas: Guardians of Life,’” <http://www.felipejacome.com/visual-testimonies/the-last-amazonas/> (accessed January 14, 2019).

13. See, e.g., Bennett Caroline, “Amazonas: Guardians of Life,” Amazon Watch, March 8, 2014, <http://amazonwatch.org/news/2014/0308-amazonas-guardians-of-life> (accessed January 14, 2019).

The inclusion of new extractive sectors such as mining evidences the expansion of extractivism beyond the 11th oil licensing round (Lang 2016, 13). The Citizens' Revolution left-wing government advanced this expansion, initiated in 2006, reversing the Ecuadorian state's absence from the Amazon and dramatically changing the government's extractive discourse and intervention strategies. For example, the Amazon is now strategically and explicitly integrated into the government's developmental plans and antipoverty discourse (Cielo, Coba, and Vallejo 2016, 125).

In this context, environmental and ecofeminist positions intersect and indeed become mutually engrained. The intersections with ecofeminism — which encompass a broad spectrum of feminist approaches whose central goal is to make the intersectional oppression of nature and women visible (e.g., Warren 1996) — shape the *candado social* in the southeastern Amazon and the strategic claims of environmental groups in Ecuador. A prime example of these crossroads of positions is the influential environmental group *Acción Ecológica*, whose agenda and claims have become more “ecofeminist” in the last six years. In this section, I show how the intersection between environmental and ecofeminist positions, the fact that Amazonian women have long been at the front lines fighting against extractivism, and parallel processes of allyship building between urban activists and indigenous women have enabled the allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminist groups such as *Acción Ecológica* and the *Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* collective.

Even had *Acción Ecológica* not publicly declared itself an ecofeminist organization, it is widely considered regionally representative of an ecofeminist perspective (Walsh 2015, 122). Its oldest members — such as Esperanza Martínez — have played crucial roles in reshaping and reformulating certain concerns, goals, and allyships of the group in ecofeminist terms. Martínez coauthored the 2012 book *Ecofeminism from the Perspective of the Rights of Nature*, which recognizes the parallel but separate development of Ecuador's feminist and environmental movements and illustrates how extractive occupation affects and oppresses women and nature, revealing women's crucial role in territorial struggles (Shiva, Flores, and Martínez 2012, 1). Ivonne Yáñez, another active member of *Acción Ecológica*, wrote in a 2014 online article about women's key role in resisting the extractive model in

Ecuador; she uses an ecofeminist analytical framework to discuss how capital accumulation subjugates both women and nature.¹⁴

This discursive reformulation of Acción Ecológica's concerns in ecofeminist terms is also a product of the organization's collaboration with younger generations of feminist academics and activists from the Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo collective. Their collaboration on the publication "La Vida en el Centro y el Crudo bajo Tierra: El Yasuní en Clave Feminista" (2014) places in dialogue the voices of various indigenous, environmental, and feminist academics and activists who reflect about oil extraction and resistance in Yasuní National Park and the southeastern Amazon. This important intergenerational dialogue contributed to the meeting of feminist multivocal reflections on the impacts of extractivism in the lives of various women.

The intersection between environmental and ecofeminist positions through these two collectives has been crucial for denouncing extractivism's negative impacts on women's bodies, as problems such as alcoholism, domestic violence, and prostitution evidence, and for revealing their resistance against the expansion of oil extraction projects since 2012 (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2014; Shiva, Flores, and Martínez 2012). The evidence of negative impacts should not imply that indigenous women were passive victims of extractivism before the 2013 Amazonian women's march. Acción Ecológica's contribution in documenting women's anti-extractive resistance started almost two decades ago. The environmental organization collaborated in the mid-1990s with the Kichwa people of Sarayaku, who led and organized anti-extractive resistance, with Amazonian women taking a leading role (Shiva, Flores, and Martínez 2012).

As Prieto notes, throughout the twentieth century, the world beyond the Amazon knew little about indigenous women, "what they felt, how they lived or how they have changed" (2015, 2). Persistent coloniality and patriarchy in Ecuadorian society, which portray indigenous women as nonpolitical subjects linked to the natural life, helps explain this ignorance according to Prieto, which is not restricted to broader societal structures but also affects dynamics within indigenous organizations. As

14. Yáñez Ivonne, "Why Are Women Fighting against Extractivism and Climate Change?," World Rainforest Movement, December 9, 2014, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section/1/why-are-women-fighting-against-extractivism-and-climate-change/> (accessed January 14, 2019).

indigenous leader and former CONAIE representative Norma Mayo expressed, “women are the first to join *mingas*, meetings or community work. However, we do not have the power to make decisions within our organizations. Our male colleagues always decide” (2009, 139).

In the case of Amazonian indigenous women, the state and indigenous leaders have largely ignored the women's *lucha histórica* (historical struggle) for their territories and their voices. The most recent example of disregard for their voices is their complete exclusion from negotiations between the state and indigenous male leaders preceding the licensing of the 11th oil licensing round and ITT oil blocks in Yasuní National Park in 2012 and 2013 (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2014, 84). Nevertheless, they have been on the front lines fighting against extractivism, as with their leading role in Sarayaku's resistance against the CGC since 1996. Sarayaku women were the first to take the initiative to resist the oil company and seize the military's weapons after CGC illegally entered their territory with the support of local police and the military in 2002.¹⁵ According to Patricia Gualinga, where “men doubted, women said ‘no’ from the beginning.”¹⁶

Members of Acción Ecológica, peasant women, and indigenous women have made other joint attempts to broadcast their voices, for example creating the Samaranta Warmikuna (Corn Daughters) in 2012. This collective emerged in the context of the 2012 mobilization to defend water against the Mirador mining project, after mestiza, peasant, and indigenous women from various communities shared their experiences and problems related to extractive projects in their territories (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2014, 51). This discussion resulted in a manifesto which declared women “defenders of the Pacha Mama.”¹⁷

Acción Ecológica, Samaranta Warmikuna, and the Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo collective have been variously supporting the anti-extractive struggle of Amazonian women. All of these collectives actively assisted and documented their mobilization during the 2013 March for Life. Two years later, members of these three collectives supported and joined Amazonian women in their *yakuchaski* (*yaku* means “water,” *chaski*, messenger, and *yakuchaski*, river messenger in

15. Sarayaku, “Caso Sarayaku,” http://sarayaku.org/?page_id=521 (accessed January 14, 2019).

16. Martín Cuneo and Emma Gascó, “Los Guardianes de la Selva” [The guardians of the forest], Público, August 12, 2011, <http://www.publico.es/internacional/guardianes-selva.html> (accessed January 14, 2019).

17. Samaranta Warmikuna, “Mujeres en Resistencia frente a la Destrucción de la Naturaleza” [Women in resistance against nature's destruction], March 25, 2012, <http://www.samaranta.org/?p=493> (accessed January 14, 2019).

Kichwa). While the initiative's purpose was to visit Amazonian communities living on the riverbanks to talk about the impacts of oil extraction, the idea to organize the *yakuchaski* came from conversations between Amazonian and Andean women from Samaranta Warmikuna (Vallejo and García-Torres 2017, 17). Amazonian women adapted the Andean notion of *chaski*, a form of communication for highland indigenous peoples, to the specificities of riverside communication routes in the Amazon (Vallejo and García-Torres 2017, 17).

Various factors are crucial for understanding the emergence of Amazonian women as important subjects in the indigenous territorial struggle in Ecuador, such as historical male leaders' loss of legitimacy as a result of their co-optation by the state. Ecofeminist collectives have been particularly important in generating organizational channels and spaces of dialogue for and with Amazonian activists (Vallejo and García-Torres 2017, 13). Furthermore, as I have presented in this section, Acción Ecológica's recent ecofeminist analyses of the impacts of extractivism on women's bodies and nature, and the emergence of younger generations of activists such as the *Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* collective have been crucial in revealing Amazonian women's concerns and claims in relation to extractive projects. While the anti-extractive struggle of Amazonian women started long before 2013, these factors have recently contributed to the visibility of their struggle, consequently enabling their allyship with ecofeminist collectives, even when the Amazonian women's collective does not publicly identify as a feminist group.

EXTENDING POSITIONS: THE "LIVING FOREST" AND "BODY-TERRITORY" PROPOSALS

Ecofeminist groups' contributions to making Amazonian women's struggles visible do not mean that their allyship has been without conflict. As discussed earlier, Amazonian women's use of the word *colonas* in the 2016 march to refer to Ecuadorian activists reflects contradictory and conflicting aspects of the allyship. As the second section of this article illustrated, these complexities are rooted in the partially connected relationships between indigenous communities and environmental organizations in the Amazon, marked by the civilized/savage divide that has reduced indigenous populations to their role as "guardians of the Amazon."

Even if some Amazonian women embrace their representation as guardians of their territory, several activists are also critical of how environmentalists benefit from “using” their voices. In an interview I conducted with a Kichwa woman, she complained that Ecuadorian NGOs use Amazonian women to legitimize the organization’s agenda and “earn money by just sitting down . . . while we are the ones who talk, defending the territory . . . and women’s rights!”¹⁸ This criticism mirrors the material disparities and power asymmetries that permeate their allyship and trouble their cooperation as “equal partners.” Moreover, as Miriam García-Torres explains, the organizations contributing to Amazonian women’s activism have also prioritized economically and logistically supporting some indigenous nationalities — Kichwa, Waorani, and Zapara — and certain Amazonian women leaders. These forms of environmental organizations’ selection and prioritization of certain relations condition and debilitate Amazonian women’s own processes of community organizing (García-Torres 2017, 103).

These examples show how allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminist organizations is embedded in a combination of positions that are partially, asymmetrically, and ambiguously connected. “Allyship” thus arises from webs of positions that — even when marked by histories of domination, colonization, and imperialism — become “able to join with [one] another” and collaborate (Haraway 1991, 193). This account of “allyship” differentiates it from “alliance,” which describes an agreement between various parts working together toward a common goal. In contrast, allyship is composed not of separate “parts” but of positions that partially merge into one other without creating unitary identities. This description of allyship makes it a suitable concept for describing the conflictive relationship between Amazonian women and ecofeminists. While this description does not mean that scholars and activists should stop addressing the power hierarchies that Amazonian women confront and denounce in their relationship with urban activists it does suggest that they are better understood as composed by “partial identities and contradictory standpoints” (Haraway 1985, 72).

This understanding of allyship does not mean that Amazonian activists are unwilling to foster solidarity ties with their urban partners. Activists from both sides asserted this call for collaboration among women during the 2013 and 2016 mobilizations. In 2013, Amazonian and mestiza women collaboratively announced the launch of the March for Life

18. Interview, September 4, 2017, Puyo.

through a public statement proclaiming unity among “women from diverse spaces who see themselves as part of Amazonian women, whose struggles reflect multiple forms of resistance in the cities” (Mujeres Amazónicas del Centro Sur 2013b). As mentioned earlier, the 2016 mobilization took place on International Women’s Day, highlighting the necessity of “raising awareness among indigenous, peasant, and *mestiza* women . . . with the aim of emphasizing women’s firm rejection of extractive projects” (Mujeres Amazónicas del Centro Sur 2016).

The allyship of Amazonian women and ecofeminist activists has permeated the politics and discourses of each. The Amazonian women’s “Living Forest” proposal (Kawsak Sacha, publicly presented to the Ecuadorian National Assembly in October 2013) adopts elements of the ecofeminist condemnation of extractivism (Mujeres Amazónicas del Centro Sur 2013a).¹⁹ With the main objectives of declaring the Amazon a “living forest” and “recognizing indigenous peoples’ world view in terms of the interrelationship between human beings and nature,” this document recognizes women as the “major victims” of “the serious socio-environmental impacts of oil operations,” suffering from “diverse forms of direct and structural violence” (Mujeres Amazónicas del Centro Sur 2013a). Furthermore, Amazonian women not only bring women into their argumentation about the negative impacts of extractivism but also directly denounce extractive activities as generating “machismo and socio-cultural problems, such as alcoholism and domestic violence” (Mujeres Amazónicas del Centro Sur 2013a).

The Kawsak Sacha proposal can be understood as an extension of the broader indigenous condemnation of extractivism as an economic model that violates territorial rights and disrupts the population’s ways of relating to nature; it denounces extractivism as fostering machismo and structural violence against women’s bodies. This extension shows how, instead of replacing the broader indigenous condemnation of extractivism with an ecofeminist stance, Amazonian women are using elements of an ecofeminist view of extractivism as patriarchal and capitalist in order to situate and disseminate their claims within the indigenous struggle. The ecofeminist extension does not designate the “Living Forest” proposal as

19. While the Kichwa people of Sarayaku initiated the “Living Forest” proposal, Amazonian women embraced it by “adapting it to the reality and particularities of each community” (Mujeres Amazónicas del Centro Sur 2013a). After several conversations with various women leaders who were present at the adoption of this proposal, I recognized that this process was an important achievement, signifying unity among Amazonian women who come from different indigenous nationalities, with different languages, histories, and organizational forms.

ecofeminist. However, without the collaboration and exchange between Amazonian and ecofeminist activists, certain elements of this document would have been framed differently.

Ecofeminist activists have also extended their positions. As Catherine Walsh describes, *Acción Ecológica* has been in constant conversation with various women activists from popular sectors who are actively contributing to a “pluriversal” understanding of feminism (2015, 122). As mentioned before, collaborations between Amazonian and Andean activists have transformed the organization’s understanding of nature beyond traditional Western explanations in biodiversity term, as evidenced in their adoption of *Pacha Mama*.

An especially telling feminist extension is the *Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* collective’s self-representation as more than an ecofeminist group. Even if this collective officially declared itself ecofeminist in a 2014 publication, a recent exchange I had with its activists made clear that their collaborative relations with Amazonian and other women from the Global South have transformed this self-representation. Echoing their analysis of how women from various Caribbean and Latin American contexts are “redefining feminism from their own practices,” they no longer completely identify as ecofeminists (*Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* 2014, 15). Rather, they feel closer to feminist positions that prioritize the situatedness of the lived experiences of urban, peasant, and indigenous women from the Global South, with whom they have been working.

Recently, the collective launched the methodological guide “*Mapeando el Cuerpo-Territorio*” (Mapping the body-territory), describing the body as “our first territory,” claiming to “recognize the territory in our bodies” (*Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* 2017, 7). Indigenous feminists initially developed the “Body-Land Territory” notion to link the ways in which the body and territory have both been historically and structurally expropriated (Cabnal 2012). Latin American feminists gathering at the 2014 Feminist Encounter for Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the concept of “Body as Territory.”²⁰ The organizers of this feminist encounter authored a “Body as Territory Manifesto,” an attempt to engender dialogue between an established feminist “understanding of the body as a political category” and

20. XIII Feminist Encounter for Latin America and the Caribbean, “A Political Manifesto: For the Emancipation of Our Bodies,” 2014, <http://www.13eflac.org/index.php/noticias/19-portada/59-el-manifiesto-del-xiii-eflac-esta-circulando-ya> (accessed January 14, 2019).

marginalized perspectives within Latin American feminisms that see “our individual and collective bodies as part of a community and constituent part of territories.” While this manifesto deploys the “Body as Territory” as a proposal to agglutinate various feminist perspectives on the body, the methodological proposal of *mapeando el cuerpo-territorio* (mapping the body-territory) situates itself closer to Cabnal’s thinking, since women’s territorial struggles resisting extractivism “from different territories” inspired the proposal (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017, 34).

The Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo collective has developed and shared this methodology with urban, peasant, and indigenous women resisting extractivism from their respective “territories.” The collective practiced their methodology at the Meeting for Women Fighting Extractivism and Climate Change in 2014, where several Amazonian women participated (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017). Many of the indigenous voices are quoted by the activists from the collective as testimonies evidencing how Amazonian activists understand the affectation of their territories in their own bodies (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017, 35). In fact, Amazonian women have emphasized several times how their bodies feel the affectation of their territories, as in a statement from the 2013 March for Life, in which Amazonian women describe how they “feel from the deepness of our wombs, the threats of extractivism” (quoted and translated by Walsh 2015, 119).

The collective’s adoption of “Body-Territory” can thus be read as an attempt to extend feminist views of the body as a site of political struggle to perspectives that recognize the body as embedded in a multiplicity of territories. In the case of the allyship between ecofeminist collectives and Amazonian women, to paraphrase Haraway, this proposal has the potential to create a network of connections partially translating experiences and knowledge “among very different- and power-differentiated-communities” (Haraway 1988, 580). In fact, this potential is what turns the proposal into an internal dialogue of *partially* connected positions.

CONCLUSION

This article deployed the framework of partial connection to examine the complex allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminist collectives.

The first step showed how the “partial absence” of the state and “partial presence” of missionaries and environmental organizations in the Ecuadorian Amazon shaped the emergence of Amazonian indigeneity. These dynamics developed complicated modes of cooperation that led indigenous peoples to include elements of dominant discourses without completely assimilating them; these dynamics still mark the allyship between Amazonian women and ecofeminist activists in Ecuador today. Second, I analyzed the elements making ecofeminist-Amazonian allyship possible. I argued that ecofeminist positions have been crucial in generating organizational channels and spaces of dialogue for and with Amazonian activists while revealing Amazonian women’s concerns and claims regarding extractive projects. In the last section, I illustrated how the allyship between ecofeminists and Amazonian women has included conflict and is a combination of positions that are partially, asymmetrically, and ambiguously connected. Finally, I analyzed the “Living Forest” and “Body-Territory” proposals as examples of how Amazonian women and ecofeminists have extended their positions in their mutual encounters.

This analysis contributes to scholarship on how feminist encounters between diverse activists permeate broader notions and strategies of indigenous and feminist politics. Today, these permeations between indigenous activism and Latin American ecofeminism are engendering creative strategies for resisting extractivism and re-existing amidst the manifest consequences of climate change.

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