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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Earth-Making Resistance in a World on Fire

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I begin where Temin's book does, with the #NODAPL movement. The movement emerged in 2016 as Standing Rock Sioux citizens organized to stop the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) across their ancestral lands. As Sioux scholar-activist Nick Estes argues, the #NODAPL movement is part of a longer history of Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism in the US.[1] It is also part of a history of 500 years of Indigenous resistance in the Americas/Abya Yala, one that has intensified with the contemporary expansion of extractive industries. Indigenous resistance in extractive hot zones such as the Amazon has in recent years included pipeline takeovers, blockades, and legal activism to halt land concessions to companies by the state. The response to this activism has been increased violence against protesters and their criminalization.[2]

Of course, all of this is beyond Temin's book, which centers on the US and Canada and on the political thought of Indigenous figures in this context. But I raise it because *Remapping sovereignty* is one of those works that invites expanded conversation. I appreciate the invitation to begin this conversation with scholars like myself whose work centers on Indigenous movements and political thought in Latin America, especially since, while there are historical specificities, the flows of imperialism, natural resource extraction, and settler colonialism have historically and to this day defied nation-state boundaries.

A connective knot for conversation is the book's provocative framework of "remapping sovereignty." This framework beautifully captures Indigenous activism beyond the recognition model by framing it as "diverse anticolonial efforts to reconfigure sovereignty for decolonization" (3). The concept of "reconfigure" is key to understanding sovereignty's relationship to colonization and decolonization for Indigenous peoples. Like contemporary "resurgence,"

[1] Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London: Verso, 2019).

[2] Angélica María Bernal and Joshua Holst. "Post Protest, Government in Ecuador Strikes Out Against Indigenous Leaders," NACLA, August 4, 2022.

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these concepts seek to theorize the problematic of settler colonialism and its resistance, mainly of conceptualizing action within a world irrevocably transformed and defined by colonial power and state sovereignty. To think otherwise would be to seek a return to a past that can no longer be. But to envision resistance only as negation or recognition is to think state sovereignty in totalizing terms.

*Remapping sovereignty* threads this problematic by way of an interpretative framework that centers two intertwined dimensions of Indigenous projects of decolonization. The first is Indigenous activism as critique and unsettlement of sovereignty which problematizes the state's accumulated powers, its legitimacy and authority over a territory, and "the validity of the hegemonic order" as a whole (4). Why does the state get to legitimately wield its power and authority when Indigenous peoples rightfully exercised power and authority first, and when state power is for their territorial dispossession and annihilation? The second connects critique with creation through Temin's concept of earthmaking.

Temin's framework of remapping sovereignty focuses on Indigenous decolonization defined as projects "fundamentally reshaping these colonial systemic architectures through restitution, repair, and radical transformation—with the aim of transfiguring and replacing those architectures entirely" (3). One example is the work of George Manuel (Secwépmec), one of the founders of the modern First Nations Movement in Canada and a key figure of Indigenous internationalism.

As Temin writes, Manuel's concept of the "Fourth World" aimed to engender an anticolonial internationalism of Indigenous societies distinct from the 'Third World'" by turning away from projects of nation-state building, thereby, in the language of decolonial theory, delinking self-determination from state sovereignty and creating a space for it within Indigenous practices through their resurgence and building links of solidarity with other Indigenous nations. Manuel frames resurgence as the development of self-determination within and against colonial structures, something that also entailed transfiguring state territorial architectures of land as a commodity and its significance as property. Indigenous decolonization for Manuel situated this transfiguration in the resurgence of Indigenous conceptions of land redefined on relational and care-based terms. Temin sees this as exemplifying earthmaking, a model of anticolonial critique and activism, as "the defense and fulfillment of both placed-based and universal relations of care and responsibility ... with other-than-human beings" (16).

The counter Temin presents to this is Indigenous rights. As he rightly notes, the focus of much scholarship since the 1990s has been national and international struggles around the creation, recognition, defense, and application of Indigenous rights. For Temin, this focus on rights misses this earthmaking. It casts Indigenous activism as securing from the state a litany of rights and entitlements, rather than as attempts to unsettle, question, and transform state authority and its hegemonic principles.

I want to push back on this dichotomization of Indigenous rights and earthmaking by way of something the chapter on Manuel alludes to at the end: the need for "institutionalized recognition of a nonanthropocentric right of Indigenous self-determination that nullifies sovereign-state supremacy" (139).

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In 2008, Ecuador became the first country in the world to establish such a right, termed the Rights of Nature, in its Constitution. Constitutions are foundational tools for state authority. They are also, in the Latin American context, vehicles for social movement struggles to unsettle and reconfigure political authority.[3] In Ecuador, the Rights of Nature are the fruit of decades of activism by the country's Indigenous movements and unsettle state authority by grounding the notion of "rights" in nature and upon Indigenous cosmovisions such as *Pachamama* (Kichwa for mother of time and space, Mother Earth) and *sumak kawsay* (Kichwa for "living well," a life lived in harmony between humans and other-than-humans).[4]

Establishing the rights of nature did not mean a rejection of state authority as they were predicated on recognition by the state, something that remains a vexed issue. On the one hand, the state recognized the Rights of Nature in cases that favored paradoxically the protection of its own rights to subsoil sovereignty and hence to the expansion of large-scale mining. On the other, it failed to recognize rights claims in defense of Pachamama brought by Indigenous communities that sought to halt state-sponsored mining efforts, auctioning of their lands to petroleum communities, and nullified contracts by recognizing Indigenous peoples' right to free, prior, and informed consent. Yet, in other cases, Rights of Nature claims were successful. The state, as Thea Riofrancos notes, is a multivocal entity.[5] And many officers of the state that included the People's Defender Office and a progressive new slate of Supreme Court justices began to affirm and expand Rights of Nature jurisprudence as bulwarks in the fight against corporate and state authority.

The unsettlement of state authority can occur through and within rights because the state and its authority is itself in competition with other sources of authority, including interpretative authority by civil society and other popular sectors, jurists, courts, and state bureaucrats. Cases like Ecuador and its Constitutional reform raise further questions about the framework of remapping sovereignty: what is the conception of authority that is the target of sovereignty's remapping? Are transformations that come from and through institutional organs and spaces of the state not decolonial? Is the state's sovereignty totalizing? Can there be strategic or pragmatic uses of state recognition as potential openings for radical transformation, resurgence, and earthmaking? Do historical specificities in settler colonial processes in different regions of the Americas (North vs. South) and state formation impact the scope and impact of practices of earthmaking and the remapping of sovereignty?

Another set of questions concerns the implications of Temin's remapping sovereignty framework: the effects and aftermath of sovereignty's unsettling.

[3] Donna Lee Van Cott, *The Friendly Liquidation of the Past: The Politics of Diversity in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Angélica María Bernal, *Beyond Origins: Rethinking Founding in a Time of Constitutional Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[4] Angélica María Bernal, "Ecuador's Dual Populisms: Neocolonial Extractivism, Violence, and Indigenous Resistance," *Thesis Eleven* 164, no. 1 (June 2021): 9–36.

[5] Thea Riofrancos, *Resource Radicals: From Petro Nationalism to Post-Extractivism in Ecuador* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

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His insights carry into contexts whereby efforts by Indigenous and environmental movements to resist extractive industries have been met with continued earth-destroying violence through climate change denial, the expansion of extraction despite escalating effects of global warming, and insufficient action by the state. How can the concepts of remapping sovereignty and earthmaking help us to better understand the unsettling of state authority and the effects of that unsettlement in the state's coercive, earth-destroying responses to earthmaking practices?

As climate crisis and military escalation grow as planetary existential problems, states around the world face intensified popular attacks against their authority to determine our futures. Temin's book provides an indispensable tool to enrich our thinking about continued resistance and future-making by centering the work of Indigenous actors and creating a much-needed bridge to transdisciplinary and hemispheric conversation.

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