

BEYOND EPISTEMIC PROVINCIALISM

De-provincializing Indigenous resistance

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Abstract

This article is part of a transnational collaboration between Indigenous scholars concerned about the provincialization of Indigenous struggles within modern metaphysics. This can be seen at work in notions of land as property, tribe as (modern) nation, and sovereignty as anthropocentric agency grounded on rational choice. Drawing on critiques of modernity articulated by Latin American scholars, as well as Indigenous scholars exploring the limits of current forms of political resistance, we argue that this modern metaphysics generates a form of politics that neglects an important existential dimension of Indigenous heritages. We use Indigenous education as an example to affirm that epistemic provincialization has been both necessary and problematic in the current context. We argue that the limitations of strategies for recognition, representation and redistribution need to be complemented by existential insights that can revitalize possibilities of existence based on ancestral wisdom and on the urgency of considering our shared fate in a finite planet facing unprecedented challenges.



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Introduction

The phrase “de-provincializing Indigenous struggles” was chosen deliberately to sound provocative if read from conventional beliefs in traditions of decolonization in political struggles of resistance. Therefore, it is crucial that it is explained. In this article, “de-provincialization” is defined as an enlargement of frames of reference that emphasizes broader connections and conceptualizations—not to substitute, but to counter-balance established practices in Indigenous and anti-oppressive struggles, particularly in education. In this sense, it is different from Chakrabarty’s (2009) use of the term in *Provincializing Europe*, in which he argues for a de-universalization of Western/European thought. Our argument in this article is that the universalization of Western/European thought through the mobilization of the phenomenon of modernity has created a context of epistemic provincialism that constrains responses to cognitive imperialism (Battiste & Henderson, 2000) by restricting possibilities of resistance and articulation. In other words, if we try to provincialize Western thought within the institutions (e.g. nation-states, universities, schooling, etc.) that were created to naturalize it, we will need to remain within its language, epistemology and ontology, even when we claim to be doing the opposite.

Drawing on decolonial studies (see Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 1999) we refer to epistemic provincialism as “modernity’s epistemic trap” and identify some of its mechanisms to capture struggles of resistance in a “grammar” of modernity that is

bound by specific metaphysical choices. Deloria (2001) indigenizes the concept of metaphysics, presenting it as basic principles of sense-making. However, different from conscious principles, metaphysical principles are not articulated in everyday vocabularies: they are taken for granted. They work more like a grammar that systematically structures what can and cannot be said, hiding their choices about what is real, normal and good, and presenting its sentences as objective, natural and transparent.

We argue that the grammar of modernity involves the inculcation and normalization of three particular desires. This refers to desires for: 1) modern teleologies (based on a seamless notion of progress as social engineering achieved through science and technology); 2) innocent heroic protagonism (anthropocentric agency grounded on Cartesian subjectivities, i.e. being solely defined by “thinking”); and 3) totalizing forms of knowledge production (i.e. knowing/naming the world to control it, which takes us back to 1) (Andreotti, in press). We argue that these desires still ground resistance struggles for inclusion (i.e. survival) within modern settler states, and that the elision of viable alternatives to modern ways of being and knowing needs to be revisited. This becomes even more urgent if we take into account the unsustainable and violent nature and history of the system we struggle for inclusion into. In this sense, we speak of modernity in the singular (rather than the plural), as a global design (Mignolo, 2011) tied to the expansion of capitalism, to epistemic racism, and to a specific bio- and geopolitics of knowledge production (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2010; Quijano, 1999).



Our transnational collaboration and positionality

This collaborative article is the third of a series of three publications (see Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011, 2012). Our transnational collaboration in writing this article was motivated by questions we share with/as Indigenous teachers, learners, parents, children and grandchildren. These questions include: How can we imagine a future and consciousness where we can freely experience the wisdom of sacred places that emanate from all four directions (Cajete, 1999)? How can we do this beyond political configurations based on experiences of oppression that reify dichotomies of colonized/colonizers or settler/Indigenous? How can we be guided by our ancestors by means of a balanced movement of thoughts that are not restricted by what is possible in existing political struggles based on regional, representational and epistemological claims?

Part of our answer points to a different reading of our ancestral heritage. We believe that the gift of our ancestors is both in the content of the stories they have passed down and, more importantly, in how these stories were told before cognitive imperialism, based on a distinct conceptualization of reality, language, time, and being. We argue that this different telling of stories creates a relationship between being and knowing that does not rely on totalizing, teleological, universalizing, logocentric, anthropocentric, dialectical or essentializing forms of knowledge production (Andreotti et al., 2011, 2012) and that this has major implications for how we conceptualize the self (including what people perceive as “Indigenous identities” today), our relationships and place with(in) the world, and “who the land is”.

In this sense our transnational Indigenous research has never been about describing and comparing the knowledges of local communities, but about creating generative spaces where alternative relationships between knowing and being can emerge and intervene in our lived

realities, potentially creating new possibilities of signification, new relationships, and new strategies of political and existential forms of resistance. Thus, rather than focusing on specificities, our connections to the land have driven us to connect with each other and explore “inter-knowing” beyond modern reasoning and artificially created boundaries. In our collaborations, we have prioritized ontological and metaphysical claims of an un-narrativizable reality not articulable by the Cartesian subject over epistemological and political claims focusing on authentic (and often essentializing) representations of communities (Andreotti et al., 2011, 2012).

We recognize that, within Indigenous studies and struggles, different individuals and groups will prioritize different strategies and goals, and will articulate different colonial experiences; we recognize that there is no single consensual unanimous Indigenous voice, not even within local communities (i.e. communities are heterogeneous). These different priorities and goals combine different strategies and visions, including speaking truth to power; revitalizing traditional practices in their original places of emergence; creating alternative educational spaces for the affirmation of Indigenous identities; integrating traditional practices in non-Indigenous institutions; working against the pathologization of Indigenous communities by focusing on community strengths; creating therapeutic spaces of support for those aspiring for social mobility; putting Western tools at the service of Indigenous communities; asserting social and economic sovereignty; defending knowledge and identity from appropriation; protecting sacred places; empowering young people; and enacting Indigenous wisdom in environmental and social activism. In this article, our priority is to continue to (re)think the contradictions and paradoxes of survival within modern global capitalism. We recognize the importance of engagement with capitalist modes of production to secure means of subsistence. We also recognize that, in the long

term, human life cannot be sustained in this over-exploitative system. Our contribution is related to a difficult choice facing Indigenous communities: the choice of seeking inclusion (for survival) into a system that is inherently destructive while *at the same time* keeping alive possibilities of alternatives. In the next section, we explore the concepts of modernity's "shine", "shadow" and "grammar" in order to identify some of the intellectual restrictions that provincialize us in modern forms of existence by trapping and arresting resistance and by preventing us from experiencing (k)new knowledge.

Modernity's trap: The dialectical dynamics of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces

We start with a brief comparison of different responses to subjugation in order to examine how the same problem (of subjugation) may generate collective responses that unavoidably reproduce aspects of precisely what it intends to oppose. The European Enlightenment, for example, was a response to forms of subjugation created by the Church through communal forms of coercion. The counter-hegemonic response of Enlightenment thinkers relied on the concept of rationality and the emphasis on individuality as a safeguard against communal coercion. What followed this basic motivation was the assumption that man needed to be lifted from his "natural state" of embeddedness in nature which made him vulnerable to the control of the Church (as a hierarchical institution) and prevented him from using his intellect to create things. The new understanding was that man was a rational being capable of mastering his environment, controlling his fate, and engineering his future. It is important to note that Indigenous peoples were used as the example against which the "rational man" was constructed. It was because of the belief that Indigenous peoples were in a childlike,

creatively sterile and worthless state that Western thinkers could think of themselves as divinely designed to embody the opposite characteristics. This divine design was tied to a divine mandate to invade, own and dominate (Bhabha, 2004; Deloria, 1992, 2001, 2003; Mignolo, 2000; and many others).

Mignolo (2000, 2011) provides a useful account of the implications of the Enlightenment as a counter-hegemonic strategy in the construction of modernity. He argues that modernity's "shine" (what needed to be emphasized in opposition to that which was being contested at the time, i.e. the Church) is often expressed in a "grammar" of linear time, teleological progress, and anthropocentric, Cartesian, dialectical and universal reasoning, reflected in modern institutions and forms of organization such as nation-states and democracy that normalize and naturalize these ways of thinking. However, modernity's shine cannot be detached from its "shadow" of expansionist control of lands, racism and epistemic violence (i.e. coloniality). Thus, the rhetoric of modernity's shine becomes a civic and religious justification for violence (see Andreotti, 2011, 2012). With the destructive expansion of capitalism and its transition from industrial to financial modes of operation, the darker side of modernity is expanding and becoming more visible to populations formerly exposed only to its shine. The dystopia of modernity is overtaking its utopic promise, which mobilizes new violent forms of racist othering, surveillance and control.

If we recognize the Enlightenment as a counter-hegemony of its time and place, the limits of the dynamics of dialectical opposition can be examined. Such an examination reveals the fact that the Enlightenment is still grounded in the grammar of the hegemony it was trying to counter. In trying to negate religious forms of knowledge production, proponents of the Enlightenment foreclosed the fact that their assumptions were still implicitly and deeply Christian, even in their secular disguise (see Deloria 1999, 2003; Mignolo, 2000). Mignolo

(interviewed in Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014), borrowing from Dussel (1984), has recently referred to this phenomenon as a pattern of “dialectical negation” as opposed to “analectic negation”. Dialectical negation is a response within the dominant metaphysical or onto-epistemic frame that aims at transcending or overcoming a specific object of negation that does not realize the reproduction of traces of this object in its repudiation. Conversely, analectic negation exposes the metaphysical choice that grounds the production of intelligible possibilities within the dominant frame. Mignolo explains:

The analectic negation comes from memories, sensibilities, skills, knowledge, that were “there” before the imperial contact with European education. Once European education intervened, whatever creation and conceptualization of creativity was there became trapped in the category of, for example, art and folklore. The analectic negation tells you first that art and folklore are two Western concepts, not two differentiated ontologies. Once you accept this, you can use the label philosopher or artist for an Aymara amauta; or you can call amauta a Western philosopher or artists. Such thinking doesn’t need permission of the IEF [International Epistemic Fund]; creativity doesn’t need to get in debt with the IAF [International Artistic Fund]. (Mignolo interviewed by Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014, p. 202)

Implications for Indigenous education

If the analysis of counter-hegemonies is shifted towards Indigenous subjugation and resistance, what we observe, particularly in Indigenous education, is that counter-hegemonic strategies tend to focus on possibilities of “inclusion” of Indigenous ways of knowing into a predefined normalized order of schooling (e.g. the Aotearoa New Zealand [hereafter referred to as

New Zealand] policy documents *Ka Hikitia—Accelerating Success* published in 2012 and *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners* published in 2011). The aim of inclusion is achieved through the development of teachers’ cultural competencies, which are perceived to help teachers relate better to Indigenous students by identifying individual problematic assumptions and adopting a moral stance in support of Indigenous success (Bishop, O’Sullivan, & Berryman, 2010). These strategies also promote the affirmation of Indigenous students’ identities at school in the hope that this will improve social integration, reduce rates of attrition, and enhance attainment of credentials and skills for more economically productive lives.

While we recognize the contingent importance of this strategy, we believe that, as a dialectic response, it positions Indigenous knowledge as a means to an end. This utilitarian view subordinates “local” knowledge and places it at the service of the pursuit of (school) knowledge perceived to be “universal” (Cooper, 2008, 2012). In the same way, local literacies are only valued when they support the development of alphabetic literacy. Very rarely Indigenous knowing is represented as invaluable in and of itself. When this happens, representations are often superficial, stereotypical and based on desires for redemption and re-centring of the Western subject. When Indigenous ways of being are (problematically) represented as alternatives to metropolitan consumerist forms of subjectivity, they are criticized in educational literature as romantic, unrealistic and detrimental to the success of Indigenous children in the “mainstream” (Dion, 2007), which is a critique that creates further problems.

Dion (2007) calls for a recognition of Indigenous children’s agency in the construction of their multiple and fluid identities, without problematizing the dominant forces and grammar that limit the existential options available to Indigenous children. In this sense, modern conceptualizations of “fixed”

identity are perceived to be progressively and unproblematically surpassed by postmodernist conceptualizations of fluidity and multiplicity. In what Weaver, Womack and Warrior (2006) have called a “postmodern boarding school” (p. 30), Christianity is replaced with the cult of narcissistic individualism. This (neo)colonial machinery continues to impose existential indenture as assimilation, while making it look like this is a natural and rational choice of intelligent individuals. Indigenous children are promised a more fulfilling life within modern and postmodern societies that are inherently discriminatory and already in crisis—even the promise of jobs for non-Indigenous high-achieving individuals who finish higher education is no longer guaranteed. However, in Indigenous education, the only counter-hegemonic strategies considered to be legitimate seem to be those that reaffirm a single narrative of socioeconomic progress and human evolution, and schooling as a means to achieve it.

Social justice educational activists who adopt this stance have mostly relied on critical pedagogy (e.g. Freire, 2000) to imagine the ends and means of Indigenous education. Their oppositional stance to the status quo relies on constructs that are intelligible to that order. This is what we call the provincialization of resistance within the landscape of modernity itself. The integration and valorization of Indigenous knowledges within this context becomes selective, tokenistic and utilitarian. In this context, Indigenous counter-hegemonic strategies that are vocalized in institutional politics are necessarily conditioned by the (post) modernist grammar that structures modern institutions.

This necessary, but limited, form of resistance based on dialectical negation tends to maintain a relational (cognitive) and valuational (moral) imbalance, as the politics of “inclusion” continues to define possibilities for existence and metaphysical choices remain the same. We argue that this form of counter-hegemonic resistance has been necessary in Indigenous

people’s struggles for survival within cognitive imperialism. However, it is also insufficient, particularly if over-emphasized at the expense of other strategies of resistance. It restricts possibilities for existence that can pluralize the future by challenging modern teleologies and subjectivities (Cooper, 2012). Recognizing the gifts, but also the unsustainable nature of the dominant system, its institutions and ways of being, may be necessary for us to identify why ancestral existential approaches might offer [k]new thinking.

Beyond provincialism

An Indigenous counter-hegemonic strategy beyond the limitations of this narrow modernity/coloniality context would seek to change the universalization of the grammar of modernity *without rejecting modernity wholesale*. Part of this project is the resurrection of a balanced relationship that Cartesian thinking would conceptualize as “mind and soul”. This process in turn would open up possibilities for future generations to access and contribute to the wisdom and revelation of different sacred places and traditions in ways that are not restricted to political struggles based on representational and epistemological claims. An epistemological *delink* from this modernity/coloniality dichotomy and a *relink* to ancient metaphysical principles of relationality (e.g. the Earth *is* my Mother, the Sky *is* my Father, I am a younger sibling of *all* my relations on Earth) opens up possibilities for (k)new ways of thinking about being, thinking, morality, politics and economics (Edwards, 2009). For example, knowledge in the rhetoric of both modernity and coloniality continues to be a human endeavour; that is, reproductions of Indigenous knowledge follow the processes and practices of Western knowledge production (see Mika, 2012). This is not the same as Indigenous/ancient practices of knowing. Indigenous knowing comes from “Being”, an

intimate visceral and psychic relationship with specific places, spaces, sounds and faces on Earth (and beyond). This kind of knowing cannot be institutionalized as it does not focus on what is evident or on fixing things (Mika, 2012), nor does it follow a purely linear rational logic.

Although human knowledge may be necessary to prepare people for the process of knowing, in the ancestral metaphysics we emphasize in this article, knowing itself literally comes from the ground, above, and beyond, from the wisdoms of continuous metaphysical engagements and familiarity with “all our relations”. Perhaps, this is what our ancestors have known and tried to pass down, but we are yet to fully appreciate that knowing is (k)new knowledge. Moral expectations and aspirations are determined not by normative knowledge, legislation and regulation prescribing protocols and practices, but rather by an unbounded awareness of the connectedness of all things. Thoughts, actions and behaviours are guided by a personal sense of care and responsibility (beyond individuality). “Morality” posed this way, then, determines a non-declarative politics of guardianship, which in turn manifests an economy of gift-giving and reciprocity (Kuokkanen, 2007). All things are interdependent to the point where modern/colonial conceptions of being, knowledge, morality, politics and economy become infused, inseparable and simultaneous (Aluli-Meyer, 2008). In this context, object/subject dichotomies become redundant, only subject–subject relationships remain: I am the river, and the river is me.

In other words, in order to interrupt the metaphysics of colonial rule, we need to constantly trouble the definition and management of indigeneity as a difference that makes no difference to the grammar of colonial rule (Coulthard, 2007). However, we argue that this needs to happen not only in relation to settlers’ “recognition” of indigeneity (as Coulthard proposes), but also in relation to the frames of our own definitions as Indigenous scholars.

Institutionalized Indigenous and decolonial political struggles are bound by the politics of recognition of settler states (Coulthard, 2007, 2010; Turner, 2006) and the grammar of modernity (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2010; Quijano, 1999) that are relatively effective in addressing material inequalities through strategies of inclusion in modern structures and imaginaries (e.g. property ownership, land exploitation, identities bounded by sameness, oppositional politics, schooling-as-education). However, as these strategies remain within the logic/grammar of that they desire inclusion in, they sacrifice the potential of creating real alternatives to a system in crisis, including political and existential alternatives of “self-determination” (Coulthard, 2010).

Let us clarify: we are not arguing here that we need to abandon these strategies—they are very important in many different dimensions and contexts. What we do argue is that they need to be complemented by other forms of thinking generated by other forms of being that have been part of our ancestral heritage and that may have an important role in establishing radically new possibilities for hospicing a system in crisis and midwifering something new in the future. We are not arguing for a return to a romanticized past, but for a careful and informed strategic weaving of the present into other possible futures. It would be naïve to abandon the political efforts for inclusion and recognition so far, or the claims of oppositional rejection that rely on material decolonization, but it seems to us it is equally naïve not to invest our hopes and futures in the metaphysical possibilities for being and knowing differently that we have inherited and that are currently overshadowed by political struggles.

Many of these possibilities offer ways of being in the world that take account of complexity, uncertainty, contingency and plurality in ways that differ significantly from the forms of modern existence we have been over-socialized into. A few illustrations of these possibilities from different Indigenous cosmo-visions are

presented in the next section. These stories are not offered as “universal Indigenous stories” that should substitute our scripts of reality. The very desire to find an “outside” of modernity and to apprehend this outside to transcend modernity, and the belief that it is possible to create new forms of existence through anthropocentric thinking alone are the very features of the problematic grammar of modernity we have tried to outline in this article.

The stories in the next section have a different educational purpose. They offer a glimpse of ways of thinking that do not emanate from forms of existence based on the search for security in predictable progress, and for change based on consensual unanimity of belief, and self-righteous human agency. Although they illustrate non-anthropocentric, non-dialectical, non-teleological and non-Cartesian thinking, they cannot teach us to experience these things. If these stories are grounded on thinking that emanates from “Being” and our stories are grounded on thinking that emanates from knowing, when we read these stories we will reinterpret them as an (extra) epistemology translated into our own ontology. And if our ontology conceptualizes belief as something that engineers behaviour and knowledge as something that describes the world, we will read the stories very differently from ontologies that do not prioritize belief or a knowable reality. In this sense it might be useful to keep in mind that these stories point to a world that is not only different from what we imagine, but also different from what we can imagine.

If the stories cannot teach us another way of being through “thinking”, what can they do for those of us provincialized and over-socialized in modern grammars? Our tentative response is that the stories expose precisely that: the way we have been provincialized and over-socialized in modern metaphysics. They help “name” the invisible boundaries of this provincialization. They can support the use of modern reasoning

to take modern reasoning itself to its limits and foreclosures. When we reach the edge of the modern grammar through modern reasoning itself, we may have at least four options. If we hold on to our desires for progress, agency and knowledge: 1) we can get paralysed because we can no longer imagine scripts of action that will sustain our old emotional and psychic investments; 2) we can appropriate, domesticate and totalize Indigenous stories as a blueprint for a new predictable future through a re-inscription of human agency and protagonism; or 3) we can engage in a frustrating eternal, circular, navel gazing (and often self-victimizing) critique of modern reasoning still trapped in the modern grammar. If we can interrupt these desires, we may start to perceive the world around addressing us in ways we could not have imagined before, which may give us the courage to 4) take plunges into the unknown and experiment with other forms of being and relating to the world, without assurances or guarantees, and without *rejecting* or *being solely defined by* modern reasoning. In relation to the latter, we believe situated Indigenous stories and the ways they are told (see Andreotti et al., 2012; Archibald, 2008; Basso, 1996; Dion-Buffalo, 1990; Ermine, 1995; Jackson, 2010; Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996) may offer something unique. This could be metaphorically conceived as a star formation in the sky that can point to a North of de-centring the self through an aesthetic of lived (rather than declared) humility, disarmament, and courage. The star formation metaphor is very different from the metaphor of a map of the way to get there, especially a map chartered in attempts to know (in order) to control the territory being mapped. The star formation also demands different relationships with and experiences of knowledge, cycles, one’s senses, and place in the world, if compared with the experience of relating to the world through objects such as a map or a compass.

Other teachings

With reference to Māori cosmologies, Cooper (2008) argues that Indigenous critique could be framed in terms of Māori ancestors. He draws particular attention to the relationship between the ancestral relatives Tāwhaki and Māui in stories of some of the Māori groups in New Zealand. Tāwhaki, whose stories are associated with stability, tradition and preservation of culture, needs to be honoured alongside Māui, whose stories are associated with risk, newness and change. The two ancestors have opposing characteristics: one maintains continuity, the other introduces innovation; one is a settler, the other a nomad; one is conformist, the other a rebel; one is bound by collectivism, the other committed to self-expression. Both sacrifice what they value most (ultimately) for the greater good (even when the story starts as an individualist pursuit), and one's excess (e.g. Tāwhaki's stagnation or Māui's chaos) is dynamically balanced by the other's.

Cooper argues that Māori critique involves both ancestors to different degrees in different contexts. Tāwhaki and Māui cannot be separated. This can be illustrated in one of Māui's stories where he tries to steal the (fire) fingernails of his grandmother in order to gift fire to humankind. He fails in his first four attempts—one of which created a great forest fire, and he pays a price for that. One of the ways the story can be read is as a cautionary tale: the excesses of Māui can create an inferno in the forest and destroy a primary source of sustenance; conversely, the excesses of Tāwhaki may freeze the forest and also stop the cycles of renewal and abundance.

The conflict between Māui and Tāwhaki depends on human (and non-human) intervention to be productive: an expression of wisdom is to evoke the right ancestor to work in the right way, at the right place and at the right time. This represents a different form of dualism which is not hierarchical and that does not create a progressive dialectic, as opposing sides are

conceptualized as insufficient, complementary and interdependent. Neither side occupies the centre of the world. However, there will always be a form of conflict between the two. Their differences must never be eliminated as they are also their gift to each other (even if they cause conflict and pain).

This non-dialectical honouring of interdependence and difference as essential for survival is also at work in non-anthropocentric stories of Indigenous people in Latin America. One of the (many) creation stories told in that context is that at the beginning of time humans could shape-shift into specific animals, plants or other natural elements. However, after a cataclysm, we were frozen in the forms and states we were in when it happened. Families were torn apart and this was the start of a big confusion as we, humans, started to believe we were “the (only) people”, and the same happened for others as well: trees believed they were “the people” and we were “the plants”, and so on. Because this happened so long ago, we have forgotten the cataclysmic moment of change, however, some of us (humans, trees, animals, etc.) *remember*, and therefore communication is possible in certain circumstances.

What Viveiros de Castro (2010) calls “Amazonian perspectivism”, drawing on different creation stories, presents a similar grammar of interdependence grounded on subject–subject relationships, the situatedness of vision, and the desirability and indispensability of difference for survival. The basic logic is that, if what the jaguar calls “beer” we call “blood”, it is necessary to acquire the sight of the jaguar in order to increase our chances of survival. However, given that the jaguar is a relative and our survival is dependent on his, the predation of the jaguar's difference does not imply the jaguar's inferiority or (need for) elimination; on the contrary, the jaguar becomes an important teacher of something that escapes one's situated vision (Souza, 2002, 2011). Nevertheless, the jaguar's vision needs to be “earned”—one can only be taught by the jaguar with the permission

of the jaguar herself. This cosmology poses problems for the popular political notion of “self-determination” by problematizing both the notion of “self” (as something situated, incomplete and insufficient rather than universal, self-sufficient and autonomous) and the notion of determination (as something leading to a fixed/complete point of stasis) (see also Souza & Andreotti, 2009).

This non-anthropocentric emphasis on the complementarity of different forms of existence and of “seeing” can be identified in North American traditions too. For example, Cajete (1999) describes the medicine wheel as a metaphor for non-anthropocentric exploration where each direction represents a different and insufficient way of looking at the world and understanding reality, which highlights the productively conflictual indispensability of each partial perspective connected by a sacred ineffable dimension:

The four or more directions generally serve as allegories for sacred orientations to places in Indigenous traditions. Each has associated plants, animals and natural phenomena. And each of the plants and animals represent a perspective, a way of looking at something in the center that humans are trying to know. The idea of moving around to look from a different perspective, from the north, the south, the east and the west, and from above, below or within, is contained in the creative process ... Indigenous logic moves between relationships, revisiting, moving to where it is necessary to learn or to bring understandings together. This might be called the sacred dimension of Indigenous science. Western science has struggled mightily to remove the role of spirit from understanding the world. Indigenous science works from the other side, continually infusing relationships with spirit through its discovery and rediscovery. (pp. 210–211)

This elusive and equivocal relationship (Andreotti et al., 2012) with spirit as something

dynamic and not completely graspable may be what creates the conditions for a relational ethics that does not depend on factual cognition to be practised, nor does it depend on a suppression of reason to exist. Cajete (1999) distinguishes between rational and metaphoric minds that need to be in dynamic balance to grasp both what can be learned through factual observation and what exceeds the boundaries of the temporal self.

In our conversations during the development of this article we started to call this type of ethics “kuia/kokum ethics” (the Māori and Cree words for “grandmother” respectively). We tried to articulate the principles of such an ethics, fully aware that the very articulation of it goes against its practice. This is an ethics that emerges from being, rather than knowledge, thus ethical principles are lived, not talked about. These principles are not based on the Cartesian premise that thinking can engineer predictable behaviour, which requires the repeated declaration of belief in moral principles and engenders a normative morality. In contrast, kuia/kokum ethics is based on an ontology that de-centres the (anthropocentric and Cartesian) self, engendering a practice of attention and observance in terms of nurturing balance and allowing the world to teach. In some North American traditions, this is framed as principles of non-judgement, non-interference, and acknowledgement of everyone’s wisdom and right to learn with/from every relation and experience in life (Charter, 1994). Educationally, this implies the nurturing of states of mind oriented towards resilience, steadiness, calmness and focus (Basso, 1996) to observe one’s context and to hear the guidance of ancestors scripted in the wider dynamic landscape of external and internal physical and ethereal realities (Ermine, 1995; Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996). This depth of connection and balance is necessary for both keeping emotional turbulence at bay and developing hindsight, insight and foresight in addressing contemporary challenges. This educational

approach can be contrasted to practices of intervention that privilege (enforced) consensus, planning, management and control of (educational) processes and outcomes within modern metaphysics.

Kuia/kokum ethics is dependent on a very close relationship with the unknown and the mysteries and vicissitudes of life. Accordingly, it holds that 1) the children, the vulnerable, and the sick will be looked after and protected, no matter what they have done; 2) kuia/kokum presence in a space creates a sanctuary, it does not matter who is right or wrong, the dignity of all will be upheld; 3) you will not be told what to do (i.e. principle of non-interference), but you may sometimes be indirectly or directly reminded of what not to do, if kuia/kokums think you can be taught like that; 4) accumulation of resources goes against the natural flow of life, therefore distribution is mandatory; 5) everyone will have a share of joy and pain and these are both important for growth, learning and teaching; 6) your life only makes sense when integrated into a collectivity and you can only be useful in a collectivity if you are balanced, strong and well; 7) your first responsibility is to bring yourself to balance and help others do the same—imbalance breeds imbalance; 8) kuia/kokums have lived longer, but they will learn until they die, so do not transfer to them the responsibility for your own learning; and 9) in the same vein, kuia/kokums will curse, use harsh words and be contradictory sometimes—it is also your responsibility to distinguish their wisdom (which could come in trickster form) from the complexities and limitations of their humanity.

In Andean stories the relationship between the existential, the political and the metaphysical realms is theorized in a very interesting and productive way. These stories (with multiple versions across communities) present three different realms of existence: 1) the realm of the serpent, representing internal visceral connections to the earth's cycles (perhaps comparable to the psyche or embodied existence); 2) the

realm of the puma, representing the material/social/political world where relationships with human and non-human beings are established through languages; and 3) the realm of the condor, representing a non-material, metaphysical world that connects everything in ways that cannot be apprehended by mind or language (personal communication, October 8, 2006).

Each realm requires a different way of being/knowing and knowing emanates from being, but most importantly, the knowing of highest value is not generated by human beings. Access to human and non-human being/knowing is also differentiated: there is knowledge that can be known and talked about; there is knowledge that can be known, but not talked about; and there is knowledge that can neither be known nor talked about. In the realm of the serpent, knowledge is visceral; in the realm of the puma, knowledge is articulated in words, thinking, intentions and actions in situated and equivocal ways; in the realm of the condor, knowledge is metaphorical and elusive.

The alignment of the three realms creates the conditions for new possibilities of being/knowing. Imbalances in any of the realms block the flows of life and abundance, and interrupt relationality, severing connections. Scarcity, rejection, insecurity, fear, loneliness, depression, aggression, cruelty, shame, guilt, mistrust, self-harm, self-termination, arrogance, hopelessness, helplessness, self-righteousness, tyranny and social/spiritual dismemberment are perceived to be the effects of imbalances in different realms, rather than errors of “thinking”. Therefore, tackling these ailments does not focus on the correction of thinking/belief, but on the re-establishment of balance within and between realms through both gift giving (i.e. offerings) and different forms of interventions between physical and non-physical realities.

Each realm requires ceremonies that restore subject–subject relations of reciprocity (including non-human subjects) that involves the appropriate being/knowing of each realm. This being/knowing comes from knowledge-revelations

that are place-based, but that do not distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous political status. Indeed the categorical affirmation of “bordered” identities is perceived as something foreign. Current systemic crises are perceived to be caused by the amplification of the realm of the puma and neglect of the serpent and the condor. The problem is worsened by the fact that more puma is often deployed to sort out the problems that the amplification of puma itself has created (e.g. categorical identities), when it is only the deflation of the realm of the puma and its alignment with the serpent and the condor that can bring balance and new insights to address new challenges with wisdom and responsibility. In other words, to address social/political issues effectively, we would need to be balanced in our embodied existence (healed from our traumas), in our capacity for reasoning (being aware of its limits) and in our openness to welcome the (metaphorical, equivocal and elusive) gifts of that which is not the ego-logical self.

The ethical demand for sustenance/life (in the realm of the serpent); the ethical demand for justice (in the realm of the puma); and the ethical demand for unconditional radical relationality (in the realm of the condor) give us a glimpse of ways of being where interdependence is grounded on humility and indispensability. In the realm of the serpent, we are all dependent on the same organic and energetic sources; in the realm of the puma, we offer and receive different, insufficient and indispensable gifts in different contexts; in the realm of the condor, we are a fractal of a universe in motion.

When asked who should be cited as an author in this communication, the response from both an elder (D. Maria) and her daughter (Noemi) sharing this story was that this was not human knowledge, therefore it could not be attributed to humans. This was knowledge passed down from teachers including specific plants and mountains. Their small Quechua community has just started an educational project for an experiential centre of global education (located

between Cuzco and Pisac) for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in partnership with Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups (including two of the authors of this article). There were several discussions about whether or not a “declared” educational philosophy for this centre was necessary (if knowing does not emanate from thinking, there is no real need for written manifestos or commandments). In a collaborative exercise, the community articulated a vision for the centre with the needs of non-Indigenous visitors in mind:

1. The entire planet Earth (i.e. Pachamama) is my home and country; my country is my mother and my mother knows no borders. We are her caretakers, not her owners.
2. We are all brothers and sisters: humans, rocks, plants, animals and all others.
3. Pachamama is a mother pregnant with another generation of non-predatory children who can cultivate, nurse, and balance forces and flows, and who know that any harm done to the planet is harm done to oneself. This generation needs support.
4. The answers are in each one of us, but it is difficult to listen when we are not in balance and are hearing too many other voices.
5. The priority for life and education is balance: to act with wisdom; to balance material consumption; to learn to focus on sacred spiritual relationships; to work together with the different gifts of each one of us, with a sense of oneness. Our purpose is to learn, learn and learn again (in many lives) to become better beings.
6. There is no complete knowledge; we all teach, learn and keep changing: it is a path without an end. There is knowledge that can be known and described; there is knowledge that can be known, but not described; and there is knowledge that cannot be known or described.

7. Our teachers are the Apus (the mountain ancestors), Pachamama, the plants, what we live day by day and what has been lived before, the animals, our children, our parents, the spirits, our history, our ancestors, the fire, the water, the wind, all the different beings around us.
8. The serpent, the puma and the condor are symbols of material and non-material dimensions, of that which can be known, of that which cannot be known or determined, and of the connections between all things.
9. The traditional teachings of generosity, of gratitude, and of living in balance that are being lost are very important for our children—it is necessary to recover them.
10. The world is changed through love, patience, enthusiasm, respect, courage, humility and living life in balance. The world cannot be changed through wars, conflicts, racism, anger, arrogance, divisions and borders. The world cannot be changed without sacred spiritual connections. (Personal communication, July 30, 2012, Apu)

Despite the paradox in its articulation (that may reinforce the idea that learning about this can happen through formal instruction), this Indigenous educational philosophy poses interesting challenges in terms of decolonization (as a counter-hegemonic political strategy) because it calls for a de-provincialization of knowing as a practice of radical relationality by placing open metaphysical questions (rather than anthropocentric “sovereign” identities) at the centre of education, a practice of re-arranging desires away from modern teleologies, innocent heroic protagonism and totalizing forms of knowledge production (Andreotti, in press). However, it is useful to emphasize that the stories themselves only illustrate the ways of being where they have emerged from—they cannot artificially reproduce these ways of being,

although they can direct our curiosity towards the edges of modern reasoning.

So what? Now what?

For us, one way to conclude this article is to say that the stories presented above suggest the need for different complementary strategies of Indigenous decolonization that explore the paradoxes at the edges of modern reasoning and that can take us beyond it. Given unprecedented crises that are global in scope and local in their effects, our interpretation is that it is necessary to de-provincialize the modern grammar of counter-hegemonic strategies that have been trapped by modern institutions and politics in relation to three significant dimensions.

First, there is a need to de-provincialize political narratives of place as property to be reclaimed towards a complementary conceptualization of place as metaphysical unbounded sacred source inhabited on loan, a place currently under threat precisely from the processes of territorialization and commodification happening as a result of capitalist forms of exchange and modern forms of organizing. Second, there is a need to de-provincialize notions of Indigenous identity that are too quickly reduced to experiences and categories of colonial oppression in order to emphasize different possibilities for conceptualizing the self grounded on ancestral visions and values. This would help to de-provincialize ideas of family and tribe in order to re-awaken the honouring of a generative and planetary form of sacred kinship, including “all our relations” in all their skin colours, shapes, and material/immaterial manifestations. This also involves the renewal of our sacred visceral and spiritual connections currently jeopardized by repeated patterns of political (mis)identity creation that lead to the reproduction of different forms of segregation, discrimination and fragmentation. Third, there is a need to de-provincialize narratives of de-colonization as political opposition and anthropocentric

sovereignty (Alfred, 2002) towards a concept of radical interdependence and responsible freedom as constant co-creation.

At a practical and more immediate level within the available (modern) grammar of thinking that has defined our politics, this requires two orientations. First, it requires a more complex and nuanced historicized understanding of subjugation that can make onto-epistemic entrapments visible and that can call to task both hegemonic strategies of (neo) colonization *and* counter-hegemonic strategies of decolonization. Second, it requires an orientation towards metaphysical transformations that ascribe agency and subjectivity to the land, displacing humans from the centre of the world. We also suggest that the concept of de-provincialization (e.g. in the stories of Māui, perspectivism, and the medicine wheel) is an inherent and often overlooked aspect of Indigenous being/knowing that can help us avoid both the deceptions of narcissistic individualisms driven by the rationalized ego or by the market and the deceptions of communalisms driven by conformist dogmatisms (of ideologies and/or identities) or by political and/or institutional elites. We intend to explore in depth each of these implications in our next transnational collaboration and we therefore warmly welcome feedback and dialogue around these ideas.

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Glossary

Cree	
kokum	grandmother
Māori	
kuia	grandmother
Māui	a demigod whose stories are associated with risk, newness and change
Tāwhaki	a demigod whose stories are associated with stability, tradition and preservation of culture
Quechua	
Apu	a mountain understood as a living and conscious entity/ mountain ancestor
Pachamama	the entire planet earth, “World Mother”

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