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Incomplete Autonomy at the Limits of (Neo)liberalism: Mapping Indigenous Ungovernability Within the Global Uncommons in Jharkhand, India, and Oaxaca, Mexico

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in Global Studies

by

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In keeping with the violent contradictions of US settler-colonial and capitalist modernity, I completed the bulk of this project on Indigenous struggles for autonomy in Jharkhand and Oaxaca while residing on unceded, illegally occupied Chumash territory in so-called Santa Barbara, an occupation in which the University of California, Santa Barbara is very much complicit. I am extremely lucky to have met a number of Chumash activists—especially Mia Lopez, Marcus Lopez, Sr., Marcus Lopez, Jr., and Kasmali Lopez—who are attending to the unfinished business of decolonization in a region that has, for so long, denied and denigrated their community's presence, history, and culture. I can only reciprocate their kindness by continuing to support their fight, as well as the struggles of all Native and Indigenous peoples for self-determination across Turtle Island.

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ABSTRACT

Incomplete Autonomy at the Limits of (Neo)liberalism: Mapping Indigenous Ungovernability Within the Global Uncommons in Jharkhand, India, and Oaxaca, Mexico

by

Pratik Raghu

As the crises of neoliberal capitalist globalization come to a head, long-standing liberal fictions are coming apart at the seams. From India to Mexico and beyond, the liberal democratic state is increasingly an instrument of extreme repression to defend its ruling class clientele rather than any semblance of a representative or redistributive mechanism. The nation is increasingly an incubator for nativism, religious fundamentalism, and proto-fascism rather than an imagined community of plural subjects. And the much-vaunted domain of civil society, which was supposed to guarantee stability with its rationality and openness, is increasingly incapable of confronting these mounting threats. The alternative globalization movement that once underpinned “global civil society” now seems like a distant echo. Is another world, then, still possible? And, if it is, where can we find its building blocks?

My dissertation addresses these imperative questions by analyzing Indigenous mobilizations against neoliberal dispossession and state violence in Jharkhand, India and Oaxaca, Mexico. As historic centers of Indigenous politics subjected to intensive and violent neoliberalization over the past three decades, Jharkhand and Oaxaca are ideal sites for understanding ubiquitous patterns of neoliberal dislocation and the complex modalities of insubordination that they can generate, wherein entanglements with the state and capital do

not inhibit the cultivation of autonomous political horizons. I propose the interlinking analytical frames of quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society to explain the strategies of dis/simulation and minimal, strategic engagement with the state, capital, and civil society through which the Pathalgadi Movement of Jharkhand has created openings for communal autonomy. Similarly, I propose the concept of inverted civil society to illuminate how Oaxacan Indigenous communities have striven to protect their already existing autonomy from various forms of extractivism underwritten by state and paramilitary violence. Quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society and inverted civil society constitute repertoires of ungovernability, which I understand as collective maneuvers to reject, elide, and escape regimes of sovereignty, governmentality, and coercion. These inevitably partial and contradictory repertoires nonetheless retain the potential to renew, reimagine, and realize "another world" by subverting the ontological discontinuity between human and other-than-human beings and forging alliances based on mutually constitutive heterogeneity, thereby contributing to the proliferation of the global "uncommons."

My dissertation draws upon twenty-four in-depth semi-structured interviews and five participant observation sessions conducted with organizers, intellectuals, journalists, and non-profit professionals working among Indigenous communities in Jharkhand and Oaxaca between 2018 and 2021. It is also grounded in an extensive literature review focusing on the past and present dynamics of colonial and postcolonial state-building; capitalist dispossession, displacement, and accumulation; and Indigenous collectivities and mobilizations across these overlapping time periods. My project is theoretically situated in the wake of postcolonial and subaltern studies and at the interstices of Indigenous, decolonial, and alter-globalization studies, reconfiguring key conceptual instruments and

subverting romanticizing tendencies from these fields to understand the multifaceted dynamics of ungovernability among many Indigenous communities.

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Introduction:

Unruly Subalterns and Ungovernable Futures in the Crucible of Postcolonial Neoliberal Violence

The old world is dying, and the new one struggles to be born.

- *Antonio Gramsci, The Prison Notebooks*

Now a dam to hold back the welling tears,

Now a dam to contain the seething rage.

These dams shall burst one day for sure,

When the boughs of sakua

From the hilltops in rebellion roar,

Sweeping out powers that destroy and displace.

And once again in the breeze will sway

The ears of paddy in their majesty,

Enclosed by mud mounds, no more by dams.

- *Oraon adivasi poet Jacinta Kerketta, "Ears of Paddy Tied Bound by the Dam"*

"La rebeldía es la vida." ("Rebellion is life.")

- *Graffiti seen in Oaxaca City on September 22, 2021*

I was standing in a remote field in the southwestern Mexican state of Oaxaca in the summer of 2014 when I first witnessed communal autonomy in action.

Having come to the state for the first time to work on my undergraduate thesis, I found myself in the company of several women running the Universidad de la Tierra ("University of the Earth" or Unitierra) radical learning initiative and community organizing hub's base of operations in the rural town of Huitzo on a sunny July afternoon. In the course

of my brief visit, they showed me a range of facilities and technologies that they had constructed and maintained for themselves: a medical herb garden, a *temazcal* or traditional sweat lodge, a solar-powered water heating system, and even a row of ecologically friendly toilets for communal use. Having only recently begun my politicization into anti-authoritarian, abolitionist, and autonomist theory and praxis, I was captivated by these concrete attempts at communal self-reliance and self-determination. The women of Unitierra-Huitzo and other activist-intellectuals and community leaders I encountered in Oaxaca City and Teotitlán del Valle helped me understand the overarching motivations behind their communal initiatives: even as neoliberal capitalist globalization was infiltrating education, agriculture, infrastructure, and virtually every other sphere of life in the state through privatization, enclosure, and extractivism, oppressed communities continued carving out dynamic and robust spaces of autonomy, though this autonomy could only ever be incomplete as long as state power and capitalist accumulation persisted.

Harassment, extrajudicial detention, and outright assassinations, to name but three prominent forms of state violence, enforced these economic changes at the expense of virtually anyone standing in the way of "development." The ubiquity of neoliberal dispossession through state violence had spurred a range of actors—Indigenous people, women, environmentalists, artists, and human rights activists, among others—to reclaim their political, economic, and social power from the state and its corporate backers. The most explosive example of this reclamation to date was the Oaxacan Insurrection, a five-month-long experiment with communal autonomy in 2006: from June to December of that year, thousands of Oaxacans across the state had converted a mass demonstration against a brutal crackdown on striking teachers into a reoccupation of public space that autonomized food

distribution, garbage collection, and public safety, drawing upon long-standing regional Indigenous self-governance traditions known as *usos y costumbres* ("uses and customs"). Despite its eventual suppression, the Insurrection had permanently altered the state's political landscape. Unitierra - Huitzo joins numerous autonomous communities in Oaxaca's Sierra Norte mountainous region and other parts of the state in extending the Insurrection's legacy in accordance with long-standing traditions of Indigenous-led regional social mobilizations.

The preoccupation with communal autonomy sparked by my time in Oaxaca brought me to the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand in 2018, where I heard echoes of Oaxaca's discontents and the alternative modes of sociopolitical life put forward by its marginalized agitators even though I was almost 10,000 miles away from southwestern Mexico. On one of my first nights in Khunti—a one-street rural town about forty minutes outside of Jharkhand's capital city of Ranchi—I heard the rhythmic beating of drums in the distance. When I mentioned this drumming to my host the following morning, he informed me that the residents of a local adivasi village were announcing their participation in the Pathalgadi Movement for communal autonomy.[1] Since early 2017, huge stone slabs known as "pathals" in the Mundari language had appeared at the entrances to hundreds of primarily Indigenous villages across Jharkhand and its neighboring states. Adivasi communities had used pathals, which displayed key constitutional and legal protections guaranteed to the country's Scheduled Tribes, to blockade state authorities and establish their own schools, security

[1] The term "adivasi" means "inhabitant since the beginning" in Hindi, and it is the collective name commonly used by many Indian and more broadly South Asian Indigenous communities. Though Indigenous peoples in India are officially recognized as "Scheduled Tribes," as described below, this is a legal and constitutional term imposed upon the populations at hand; the term "adivasi" contrarily emerged from political mobilizations to form a sense of pan-Indigenous identity in the 1930s, in no small part by affirming Indigenous claims to land and land-based self-governance systems (Minority Rights Group International, 2022).

patrols, and banks. [2] Like many of their Oaxacan counterparts, movement participants were responding to the threats of dispossession and displacement posed by the repressive neoliberal[3] state apparatus that has dominated the region ever since it achieved independent statehood in 2000. Pathalgadi Movement agitators were drawing upon similarly long histories of Indigenous rebellion to articulate these responses.

To a certain extent, collectivities like Unitierra - Huitzo and mobilizations like the Oaxacan Insurrection of 2006 and the Pathalgadi Movement lend themselves to romanticization. Many Indigenous, decolonial, anarchist, and otherwise critical scholars, activists, and scholar-activists might instinctively celebrate them as examples of militant autonomism and specifically Indigenous resurgence, arguing that they present bold political possibilities for a world rendered increasingly precarious by relentless neoliberal dispossession and mounting state violence. These possibilities may be all the more appealing in light of the rampant neoliberalization of civil society in recent decades. The depoliticizing effects of the neoliberal capture of civil society have left numerous marginalized populations, particularly in the Global South, at the mercy of increasingly autocratic regimes committed to protecting the transnational capitalist class from the mounting fallout of neoliberal hegemony. This dissertation reckons with how many of these populations have subsequently shifted away from civil society to protect their lives, livelihoods, lands, and cultures.

[2] Indigenous peoples in India are officially recognized by the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which accounts for the terminology used here.

[3] Drawing upon the work of David Harvey (2020) and Noam Chomsky (1999), among many others, I understand neoliberalism as an economic doctrine that broadly calls for the deregulation of business activity, the privatization of public goods, the imposition of austerity measures, the suppression of organized labor, the minimal taxation of the wealthy, and the facilitation of free trade and international finance, all in the name of allowing market forces to reign with minimal interferences. Arguably pioneered under the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and inaugurated in the Global North by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, it spread to most corners of the globe following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Despite having been formed in broad opposition to the neoliberal global order, the global alternative globalization or global justice movement that dominated headlines from the late 1990s until the early 2010s has itself arguably undergone a not-insignificant degree of neoliberalization: its most visible and influential arenas, such as the World Social Forum, are now dominated by nongovernmental organizations, a number of which are actually associated with major corporations and many of which are entirely amenable to state cooperation (Choudhury, 2010). True to its name, the NGO-industrial complex is a vehicle for the continuation of business as usual in a very literal sense. As such, the seeds of "other worlds" defined by autonomy, dignity, equity, justice, and resilience may now well lie beyond the typically respectable, professionalized, and hierarchically organized domain denoted by civil society. The Zapatista rebels of Chiapas, Mexico (one of Oaxaca's neighboring states) originally proposed "another world, a world in which many worlds can fit" at the start of their uprising against neoliberalism and the Mexican state in 1994. The alter-globalization "movement of movements" subsequently adopted this slogan to frame the tremendous diversity of mobilizations and agendas within its purview. As the movement has declined and anti-globalization has become a rallying cry for conservative and right-wing political actors worldwide, the possibility of another world containing many other worlds has come into question. In this dissertation, I contend that this prospect is as yet not extinguished, although the terrain for its realization may well have shifted: under the conditions of late capitalist crises, the seeds of this transformation may lie among unruly, unauthorized experiments in incomplete autonomy that contain an array of contradictions.

While the transformative potentialities of these experiments can by no means be ignored, romanticization in this vein risks overlooking how the populations at hand are

intricately entangled with the political unit of the corresponding state. While they may aspire to achieve total autonomy, they may count on their respective state mechanisms such as civic services and welfare benefits for survival in certain ways and be unable to completely escape the purview of these mechanisms in others, both of which may necessitate strategies for dealing with the state in ways that supplement or even complement confrontation and disengagement. At the same time, these entanglements in and of themselves do not nullify whatever emancipatory potential might lie among these populations and the mobilizations that they mount. Contemporary civil society, under the influence of neoliberalism, might offer scant hope for resolving the interlocking systemic political, economic, and social crises plaguing the world today, but this does not necessarily mean that all hopes of resolution and transformation should be vested solely in spectacular acts of defiance or full-fledged autonomous projects. Incomplete autonomy draws attention to the processuality of grassroots struggle: it should inspire neither liberal fatalism nor leftist oversimplification but rather careful consideration on its own terms, within the specific social, political, and economic contexts in which it emerges.

Recognizing the promise of alternative globalization among the most vulnerable populations within the neoliberal world-system requires attending to the often-vexed positionalities inhabited by these subaltern actors. This dissertation takes on the task of mapping these positionalities and their corresponding mobilizations within the comparative contexts of Jharkhand and Oaxaca. It examines how Indigenous peoples in both states can exceed the terms of the state and statist civil society at the same time as they re-engage these dominant institutions out of necessity; in the process, they form zones of political mobilization that offer often unruly, partial, and contradictory but nonetheless potentially

liberatory alternatives to neoliberal state repression and exploitation. To effectively reckon with these alternatives, global studies scholars must subvert the methodological statist tendencies within the field, which stand to obscure the agency of marginalized actors whose entanglements in statist mechanisms by no means constitute consent to state authority.

Interrogating Neoliberal Civility and Its Constituent Others

My dissertation takes on a series of interrelated questions about civil and political society, neoliberal and alternative globalization, and state authority and its discontents.

As a starting point for my analysis, I consider how neoliberal globalization has consolidated repressive and exploitative state regimes in regions riven by the legacies and continuities of colonialism, both external and internal. How have these regimes, in turn, narrowed, co-opted, or otherwise transformed the terms of political contestation under their purview? I particularly attend to neoliberalization's impacts upon "the rule of law" and the promise of welfare in each of the states under consideration. How have these impacts galvanized campaigns demanding transparency, accountability, and efficiency from state authorities while at the same time driving numerous marginalized actors even further away from the state? How might these two courses of political action paradoxically intersect with each other?

In analyzing Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous mobilizations against neoliberal state repression and exploitation, I attempt to situate the actors at hand in relation to civil society as it has developed in each state and the larger society within which it is located. What did civil society entail before, during, and after European colonization, national independence, and statehood in Jharkhand and Oaxaca? How did the gradual consolidation of state mechanisms shape the composition and orientation of Jharkhandi and Oaxacan civil

societies? To what extent have the Indigenous populations of each state been incorporated into civil society, and, if they are not fully incorporated, what alternative modalities of political mobilization have they articulated alongside or apart from their interventions into the state and civil society?

In investigating these alternative modalities of political mobilization, I further explore if and how the Indigenous peoples of Jharkhand and Oaxaca have formulated alternatives to neoliberal capitalist modernity in the course of their recent political mobilizations. The worldwide alternative globalization or global justice movement emerged in the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s, right as neoliberal capitalism achieved hegemonic status within the world-system following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Does this movement's bold declaration that, "Another world is possible" still ring true after more than two decades of mounting interlocking crises wrought by neoliberal globalization? If so, does its promise continue to rest with large civil society gatherings like the World Social Forum or well-established international organizations like La Vía Campesina, or has it shifted to less visible, legible, and accredited environs? What does the construction of alternatives to neoliberal globalization entail for marginalized actors who are constantly confronted by neoliberal dispossession and state violence while remaining intimately entangled in state mechanisms?

A primary impetus for these questions is to contemplate why the emancipatory potentialities offered by mobilizations of the kind examined in Jharkhand and Oaxaca have remained relatively unacknowledged by scholars in global studies and its intersecting fields and subfields. While the field of global studies espouses a foundational critique of political and methodological nationalism, it has yet to exhaustively interrogate the legitimacy of the state as a governing mechanism or a unit of social organization. This lacuna is compounded

by the field's broad conceptualization of civil society as the most legitimate domain of subaltern resistance and critique, not least of all because actors within the latter are more likely to negotiate with the state. How do these analytical categories and preferences potentially obscure the agency of subaltern actors largely excluded by and opposed to state-oriented civil society, even as they cannot completely escape the ambit of the latter?

Redefining Alter-globalization through the Ungovernable Uncommons

This dissertation begins from the premise that civil society in Jharkhand and Oaxaca—and across India, Mexico, and the Global South—is a limited and limiting arena of political engagement. With its bourgeois and petite-bourgeois orientation reinforced by neoliberal globalization, civil society functions in these regions as an extension of the state and capital, alienating Indigenous and other oppressed populations. This alienation deepens the tendencies toward autonomy among Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous communities with long traditions of anti-authoritarian rebellion and self-governance.

However, these communities are intimately entangled with their respective states and statist civil societies, often counting on their welfare redistribution mechanisms, legal institutions, and organizational capacities for survival at the same time as they are excluded, marginalized, and even attacked by these very statist instruments. Occupying these vexed positionalities, Indigenous populations in Jharkhand and Oaxaca have articulated modalities of political mobilization that exceed the terms of the statist mechanisms in which they are entangled at the same time as they re-engage these mechanisms in significant ways. More specifically, I propose the interlinking analytical frames of quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society to explain the strategies of dis/simulation and minimal, strategic engagement with the state, capital, and civil society through which the Pathalgadi Movement of Jharkhand has

created openings for communal autonomy. Similarly, I propose the concept of inverted civil society to illuminate how to Oaxacan Indigenous communities have striven to protect their already existing autonomy from various forms of extractivism underwritten by state and paramilitary violence.

Quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society and inverted civil society constitute repertoires[4] of ungovernability, which I understand as collective maneuvers to reject, elide, and escape regimes of sovereignty, governmentality, and coercion. These partial and contradictory repertoires nonetheless retain the potential to renew, reimagine, and more fully realize the promise of "another world" promulgated by the alter-globalization movement. This potential stems, to a significant extent, from the ways in which these repertoires of ungovernability subvert the ontological discontinuity between human and other-than-human beings that underpinned the aforementioned movement's call for a reclamation of the commons. In contrast, these repertoires propose non-anthropocentric ontologies of rebellion and social transformation that contribute to a global "uncommons," which constitutes an increasingly pervasive but as yet largely illegible form of alternative globalization. In all of these ways, this dissertation seeks to render visible novel political subjectivities and modalities of mobilization galvanized by the crises of liberal democratic governance under the conditions of neoliberalization, which have deliberately vied to render themselves invisible, illegible, and unintelligible to the state and capital to the fullest extent possible.

[4] I draw upon Diana Taylor's (2020) definition of repertoires as embodied practices—such as dances, sports, rituals, or, for that matter, certain forms of collective mobilization and organization—that circumvent erasure by the archival strategies of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and statecraft. These practices enable knowledge to be transferred between members of oppressed communities without typically raising the suspicions of their oppressors.

Mapping Exemplar Sites of Indigenous Rebellion Against Neoliberalization

Despite their separation by almost 10,000 miles and their distinct geopolitical and geocultural contexts, Jharkhand and Oaxaca offer prime opportunities to study how Indigenous populations confronting neoliberal state repression and exploitation reconcile their long-standing aspirations for autonomy with their entanglements in statist mechanisms. Both regions have been home to sizable Indigenous populations for extended periods of time, even prior to their incorporation into the Indian and Mexican nation-states and their achievement of subnational statehood. These populations have indelibly shaped the political cultures of these regions and the states formed out of them, primarily through their efforts to maintain communal autonomy in the face of successive colonial or neocolonial incursions. Revolts such as Jharkhand's late-nineteenth century Birsa Ulgulan—an uprising against British rule led by iconic tribal leader Birsa Munda—and self-governance practices such as the centuries-old *usos y costumbres* that prevail in numerous Oaxacan municipalities continue to set the bar for Indigenous popular struggles in these states, combining with the exigencies of neoliberalism to formulate novel modalities of rebellion and self-governance.

Jharkhand and Oaxaca's strong traditions of Indigenous rebellion and self-determination offer decisive benchmarks for assessing the imposition of neoliberal statist agendas; foregrounding contestations with these agendas precisely in states where Indigenous peoples have powerful historical and contemporary compulsions to resist them stands to throw the complexities of articulating autonomous alternatives to neoliberal modernity into sharp relief. Both states have been subjected to intensive neoliberalization in recent decades; this trend has forced various forms of precarity upon Jharkhand and Oaxaca's Indigenous and other marginalized populations at the same time as it has directly or indirectly expanded,

captured, and otherwise reconfigured the civil societies of both states. The sites at hand epitomize the largely irresolvable tension between hegemonic civil society and the multifaceted crises generated or exacerbated by neoliberal state domination, pointing towards the need to explore alternative strategies of mobilization.

Jharkhand and Oaxaca are partial microcosms of the neoliberalized social dynamics of India and Mexico, as well as many other parts of the Global South; in that sense, contemporary Indigenous mobilizations in these two states warrant close study and comparison precisely because they are not isolated, incommensurable instances of ungovernability. Their repertoires resonate with maneuvers carried out by sizeable Indigenous and peasant communities in their respective neighboring states, other regions of their respective countries, and in many other parts of the world. In a broader sense, quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society as well as inverted civil society could prove to be valuable frameworks for understanding rapidly proliferating instances of anti-authoritarian rebellion and community-building promulgated by neoliberal dispossession and state violence in locales as varied as Chile, Lebanon, and even the imperial core of the United States. Insofar as it disrupts hegemonic spatialities to enable dynamic alliances between human and other-than-human actors in divergent contexts, the global uncommons imbues my analysis with an even wider relevance.

a. Jharkhand

Jharkhand (which roughly translates to “forest tract” or “the land of forests”) is a landlocked state located on the eastern Indian Chota Nagpur plateau, forming part of India’s “tribal belt” along with its neighboring states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and West Bengal. It had a total population of approximately 33 million people as of 2011, with 75.95%

living in rural areas. 26.21% of this population belongs to scheduled tribes, while 11.8% belongs to scheduled castes. Jharkhand is richly endowed with natural resources such as iron ore, coal, mica, bauxite, uranium, and limestone, accounting for nearly 40% of India's mineral production (Singh, 2018).

Prior to British colonization, adivasis on the Chota Nagpur plateau frequently rebelled against local and regional moneylenders, merchants, landlords, and other "dikus" or hostile outsiders. Jharkhand also witnessed some of the largest and fiercest anti-colonial revolts during British rule and the struggle for Indian independence, which inspired the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (CPTA) of 1908 and the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act (SPTA) of 1949. Both acts crucially prohibit the sale of adivasi land to non-adivasis, having become recent targets of reactionary legislative reform and grassroots pushback (Judicial Academy Jharkhand, n.d., 3-11). Primarily educated, urban, and Christian adivasi elites first put forward the demand for a separate adivasi state to the British Raj's Simon Commission in 1928 (Mullick and Munda, 2003, iv); in the process, they sowed the seeds of the Jharkhand Movement, which would become India's longest-running campaign for autonomy.

Indian independence in 1947 changed the official authorities presiding over Jharkhand without substantially improving the material conditions of its most vulnerable populations: state-driven quasi-socialist industrialization reinforced colonial capitalist natural resource appropriation and depletion, in turn reinforcing the casteist hierarchies technically abolished by the Indian Constitution. In response to the persistence of these conditions, the scope of the Jharkhandi Movement expanded beyond adivasis to students, miners and industrial laborers, and *sadans* (longtime non-adivasi residents of the area) (Ghosh, 1993; Munda and Mullick, 2003). From the 1980s onward, the now broad-based Jharkhand

Movement had to contend with the national and regional proliferation of Hindutva (Hindu nationalism), which seeks to replace constitutional secularism with the Hindu control of India's governing institutions, resources, citizenry, and borders, at the explicit expense of the country's sizeable marginalized populations. The rise of Hindutva coincided and ultimately dovetailed with the liberalization of India's economy in the 1990s, even though this process was initiated and has been just as much embraced by the centrist Indian National Congress (INC), the Hindu Right's primary political rival. The Bharatiya Janata (Indian People's) Party (BJP), the public-facing electoral organ of the Hindu nationalist umbrella, prioritized Jharkhandi statehood to court support among adivasis, proposing Hinduization alongside neoliberalization as the ultimate solutions to the innate "backwardness" of Indigenous populations (Shah, 2010).

Capitalizing on the heightened pan-tribal struggle for "jal, jangal, aur zameen" ("water, forest, and land") throughout the 1990s, India's BJP-led national government sanctioned the creation of Jharkhand from 18 districts of southern Bihar on November 15, 2000. Jharkhand as a separate state has reinforced India's neoliberal turn: it has prioritized economic growth maximization, courted foreign direct investment, and signed many memorandums of understanding with national and transnational corporations for uranium mining, dam construction, and other extractivist and infrastructural projects (Xaxa, 2018). As highlighted by adivasi feminist journalist and activist Dayamani Barla, neoliberal developmentalism has further impoverished, dispossessed, displaced, and starved Indigenous peoples, caste-oppressed groups, and other marginalized populations. These developmentalist crises have stimulated several mobilizations for prior and informed consent, economic compensation and redistribution, and a more sustainable economy (Basu, 2013).

In order to securitize valuable resources and lucrative investments, state-endorsed police and paramilitary repression has been a mainstay of the Jharkhandi state since its inception. Under previous BJP Chief Minister Raghubar Das, who presided over Jharkhand between 2014 and 2019, attacks on marginalized communities, intellectuals, journalists, activists, community organizers, and civil society professionals intensified, complementing BJP Prime Minister Narendra Modi's countrywide crackdown on virtually any oppositional politics. Taking advantage of this atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, the BJP-led government amended the SPTA and CNTA in 2016 and the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act in 2017 to expedite public and private land accumulation, stimulating fierce opposition in the process (Kiro, 2018).

One of the most militant challenges to the Jharkhandi neoliberal capitalist state in recent years has come from the Pathalgadi Movement briefly described above. The Pathalgadi Movement is a bridge between Jharkhand's colonial past, its neoliberal present, and adivasi assertions of self-determination across both of these eras. Having originally used pathals to commemorate their dead and reaffirm their autonomy in the face of British colonization (Xaxa, 2019), regional adivasis have redeployed the giant stone slabs to oppose gold, coal, and steel mining and other similarly extractive activities on their traditional lands. Activists and intellectuals associated with local Indigenous community organizations—such as Barla's Adivasi, Moolvasi, Astitva Raksha Manch (Forum for the Protection of Tribal and Indigenous People's Identity or AMARM for short)—were initially hesitant to extend their support to the Movement; however, they subsequently defended the civil liberties of movement participants arrested en masse by the Das regime without necessarily endorsing the movement's methods.

In late 2019, Hemant Soren and the nominally liberal Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Jharkhand Liberation Front or JMM for short) defeated Raghubar Das and the BJP in the state's Legislative Assembly Election. Soren promised to drop all legal cases filed against Pathalgadi Movement participants as part of his platform (Angad, 2020). While this move was meant to signify a changed climate for regional adivasi politics, Soren has yet to fulfill his promise: as of October of 2022, seven of the thirty cases lodged against more than 11,000 Pathalgadi Movement participants have still not been withdrawn (Dungdung, 2022). Soren has also by no means reversed the state's neoliberal developmentalist agenda, as he demonstrated by securing investment commitments worth over one billion US Dollars from various multinational corporations in August of 2021 (Achom, 2021). Together with the abuses carried out by virtually all governmental regimes that have presided over Jharkhand as well as the state's intricate Hindu nationalist and militarist infrastructure, this change in governing authorities has clearly not resolved adivasi concerns about neoliberal dispossession and state violence.

a. Oaxaca

Located approximately 300 miles south of Mexico City, Oaxaca (a reference to the *guaje* tree found around the capital city) encompasses a southern coastline shared with Guerrero, an isthmus bordering Veracruz and Chiapas, and a rugged mountainous interior. Oaxaca had a total population of approximately 3.5 million people as of 2015, with 53% living in rural areas; the state's eight regions are home to 571 municipalities, the highest number in the country. Oaxaca is Mexico's most Indigenous state, with persons of Indigenous descent accounting for 65.73% of its total population in 2015; Oaxaca's Indigenous peoples are ethnically and linguistically diverse, speaking sixteen languages

between them (Stephen, 2013).

Oaxaca is one of Mexico's poorest states, with some estimates indicating that much as 78% of its population may live in extreme poverty. This chronic economic marginalization is most immediately attributable to the systematic removal of farmer price supports and subsidies—particularly after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994—and to the destruction of communal livelihoods by ecologically unsound mining projects. All of these factors have fueled mass migration from Oaxaca to other parts of Mexico and to the United States (Denham, 2008).

Oaxaca's Indigenous populations distinguished themselves from their counterparts in other parts of modern-day Mexico and set a precedent for their later dis/engagements with statehood by largely maintaining control over their traditional lands throughout relatively indirect Spanish colonial rule between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Murphy and Stepick, 1991, 18). As a result of their relative autonomy, Oaxaca and its primarily rural and Indigenous residents were initially incubated from the consequences of independence from Spain, the Mexican Revolution, and the entry of foreign capital. However, once the Partido Revolucionario Intstitucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI) consolidated a de facto one-party system at both the national and state levels, Oaxacan political actors had to grapple with growing class stratification (Murphy and Stepick, 1991, 32-38). The PRI controlled the Mexican federal and state governments virtually unchallenged from 1929 to 2000; it has maintained a stranglehold on Oaxaca, where it has only not been in power between 2010 and 2016. Despite its tendencies toward social redistribution between the 1930s and 1980s, the PRI by and large ignored and underfunded Oaxaca as a result of the state's limited revenue-generating capacity, in turn stimulating popular mobilizations for

improved working conditions, land for urban squatters, and—crucially for understanding the 2006 uprising—public socialist education.

Oaxacan teachers have been mobilizing against the indoctrination and assimilation of rural Indigenous peoples into Mexico's mestizaje nation-building project[5] since the 1930s. In 1979, teachers from Oaxaca co-created the Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (National Council of Education Workers or CNTE), which has become one of the state's most powerful forums for grassroots mobilization; Indigenous teachers, especially women, have been essential to the CNTE in Oaxaca (Stephen, 2013, 39-45). In the 1980s, Oaxacan teachers began setting up a *plantón* or occupation in downtown Oaxaca City to pressure the state government to reverse its reactionary educational policies, a strategy that would form one of the cornerstones of the 2006 insurrection.

Recent constitutional and electoral reforms in Oaxaca have barely slowed the construction of forest plantations, mines, petroleum-related projects, and maquiladoras, especially in Oaxaca's Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Martin, 2005, 204). Coming to power under dubious circumstances in 2004, Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz quickly consolidated an openly undemocratic neoliberal regime intended to quell social mobilizations. On June 14, 2006, CNTE teachers were occupying the city center once again to protest neoliberal educational reform; Ruiz ordered local police to repress the plantón with physical violence. In the weeks and months that followed, the sit-in grew into a statewide movement of movements to wrest sociopolitical control away from Ruiz's corrupt administration. The Asamblea Popular de los

[5] Despite its depiction as a "cosmic mixing of races" that would reconcile Mexico's diverse populations and their heritages, mestizaje has historically entailed the denigration, erasure, and expulsion of Indigenous, Black, and other minority populations by white elites of primarily Spanish settler-colonial descent (Weltman-Cisneros & Tello, 2013, 142-143).

Pueblos de Oaxaca (Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca or APPO) formed spontaneously out of the growing protests, serving as a coordinating body for members of the Indigenous, environmentalist, feminist, human rights, and other movements. Guided by Indigenous *usos y costumbres*, APPO members blocked the movement of police and paramilitary forces; autonomized food distribution, garbage collection, and other social services; and occupied local radio stations to combat government propaganda. After holding out for more than five months, the APPO succumbed to an assault by the Mexican Federal Preventive Police in December of 2006 (Denham, 2008; Esteva, 2007).

La Universidad de la Tierra (The University of the Earth or Unitierra) is a grassroots alternative learning initiative and community organizing hub that draws upon the same Indigenous roots as the Oaxacan rebellion and expands upon the latter's legacy. Inspired by Indigenous ecological knowledges and epistemologies, Unitierra challenges the homogenizing, state-centered, neoliberal capitalist educational complex; it arranges apprenticeships and various political gatherings that teach participants how to contribute to communal, social, and political life (Esteva, 2006). Local women in Huitzo have set up their own “campus” that channels the insights and resources offered by its urban counterpart while addressing pressing local needs. When I began my dissertation research, I planned to make these organizing spaces in and of themselves the focal points of my analysis. However, I realized in the course of my interviews that these spaces are just nodes in larger, more intricate webs of rebellion and self-governance that span the length and breadth of Oaxaca and its proximal regions. I thus shifted my attention to these networks and the communities that constitute them more so than their involvement with Unitierra in Oaxaca City or Huitzo.

Theorizing Unruly Subalternity Beyond the Parameters of Liberal Democracy

My project is theoretically positioned in the wake of postcolonial and subaltern studies and at the intersections of Indigenous studies, social movement studies, and alternative globalization scholarship. To begin with, my project critically engages articulations of subalternity and civil and political society framed by the Subaltern Studies Collective and its postcolonial interlocutors. Subaltern studies scholars owe a significant debt to Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, and I take Gramsci's association of civil society with hegemony or "the "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" as a starting point for my analysis (1999, 145). John Beverley clarifies the ramifications of this understanding of civil society entails for political actors excluded and silenced by a given polity: "if in order to gain hegemony the subaltern classes or groups have to become essentially like that which is already hegemonic—that is, modern bourgeois culture and the existing forms of the state—then the ruling class will continue to win, even in defeat" (2001, 49).

To the extent that civil society mandates pacification by assimilation, it is little more than a trap for subaltern actors interested in transforming their social circumstances. Beverley does, however, suggest that the colonial state, in India and elsewhere, was incapable of producing civil society as understood by Gramsci because it was unwilling to recognize its colonized subjects as full citizens. As such, he postulates that a precolonial form of civil society emerged in these contexts that was "essentially homologous with community and could function therefore as a site of resistance to the colonial state, which could neither penetrate nor incorporate it." "In this, and only in this very precise historical sense,"

Beverley adds, "anti-colonial struggle is a struggle of civil society against the state (1998, 312-313). Jharkhand and Oaxaca's long traditions of Indigenous communality beg the question of how elements of precolonial civil societies in these states have evolved as the consolidation of state mechanisms has produced hegemonic contemporary civil societies along the lines envisioned by Gramsci. Because I am interested in examining conflicts between these hegemonic civil societies and alternative associational forms, I chronicle, critique, and build upon influential articulations of hegemonic and counterhegemonic civil society by a range of thinkers such as Charles Taylor, Craig Calhoun, and Karl Marx. Though they by no means capture the full spectrum of European civil society theorizing, these influential thinkers epitomize the liberal understanding of civil society, the partial reconfiguration of this concept to account for its bourgeois underpinnings, and its rejection on the same grounds, respectively. I then turn to prominent postcolonial and subaltern studies theorists to foreground the possibilities and limitations of civil society beyond the boundaries of the European and American societies that have accorded it such a pivotal role in politics.

Anthropologist and historian Partha Chatterjee's (2004, 2005) theorizations of contemporary civil and political society are pivotal to my dissertation: they chronicle vital subaltern strategies for reappropriating state-controlled resources in an era of ever-increasing global displacement and dispossession, welfare retraction, and NGO-ization. Chatterjee's conception of political society challenges the new liberal dogma of participation through civil society but still falls back upon the much older liberal dogma of state engagement, which does not cover the full spectrum of subaltern attitudes to the state. Deference to this persistent liberal dogma has become all the more tenuous as, to paraphrase political theorist Dilip Gaonkar (2014), the popular fictions of state sovereignty and responsibility have been laid

bare by the relentless advances of neoliberal capital. I thus take up the question of how heterogeneous and highly vulnerable subaltern populations can reconcile their opposition to the neoliberal postcolonial state and civil society with the imperative of survival. In doing so, I recontextualize postcolonial and subaltern studies scholar Ranajit Guha's (1983) influential analysis of the il/legibility and in/visibility of subaltern uprisings for an era of highly advanced surveillance and governmentality, in which escaping the purview of the state altogether might not only be difficult for highly vulnerable populations but also contrary to their chances of survival.

My dissertation contemplates how Indigenous political actors can retain their agency and continue to strive for autonomy even when they engage the state and civil society out of necessity. In this sense, I build upon Charles Hale's crucial clarification that Indigenous activists who occupy the category of the *indio permitido*—the "authorized Indian" hand-picked for collaboration with the state and capital—"rarely submit fully" to the constraints imposed upon them (2004, 18). I analyze how Indigenous actors in Jharkhand and Oaxaca can assume the roles of *indios permitidos* not merely to secure protections and resources from state authorities, as per Chatterjee's schema for political society, but to deceive and undermine these very authorities as they vie to build alternatives to hegemonic sociopolitical lifeways. To illustrate the dynamics of autonomy among primarily Indigenous communities in Oaxaca, I draw upon Jaime Martínez Luna, Floriberto Diaz, and Arturo Guerrero Osorio's analyses of *comunalidad*, an epistemological orientation and mode of being among the peoples of the Sierra Norte mountainous region and other areas of Oaxaca that resists the individualization of knowledge, power, and culture precipitated by past and present state and capitalist development projects. I further engage late Oaxacan activist-scholar and Unitierra

co-founder Gustavo Esteva's extensive writings on emergent practices of autonomy in Oaxaca, Mexico and Latin America.

To situate Jharkhandi and Oaxacan repertoires of Indigenous ungovernability within the global uncommons, I weigh them against divergence, domaining, and equivocation, three key components of the global uncommons identified by anthropologists Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser in their pioneering work on the subject. I then consider how the ungovernable uncommons embodied by the mobilizations and communities at hand articulate with the alternative globalization movement of movements, as foregrounded by key theorists and participants such as labor scholars Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, Brendan Smith, Marianne Maeckelbergh, and Naomi Klein. Here, I pay close attention to the calls for commoning as a means of combatting neoliberalization put forward by these thinkers, among many others; I also consider how ungovernable uncommoning as a novel form of alternative globalization stands to address and/or reproduce the alter-globalization's movements shortcomings, particularly its reliance upon global civil society. I contemplate the prospects of "other worlds" not only in the shadows of the state and civil society but beyond the domains of the spectacular, the respectable, and/or the utopian in which most studies of alternative globalization have been situated. I contrarily immerse myself in the embattled, imbalanced, and often unseen milieux in which many targets of neoliberal dispossession and state violence find themselves.

Meeting the Methodological Imperatives of Sensitivity and Rigor

My dissertation's qualitative methodological orientation has generated grounded theorizations of ungovernability, uncommoning, and alternative globalization from my

multilayered interactions with my Jharkhandi and Oaxacan interlocutors.[6] I have employed a dialogic decolonial method to place my interlocutors in conversation with each other, as opposed to carrying out a conventional comparative analysis of clear-cut case studies, which tends to assume pre-constituted units of analysis that are largely intelligible to the state and capital. Notwithstanding the comparable histories of neoliberalization and Indigenous rebellion across my research sites, I am interested in how Indigenous actors within these sites have developed resonant but distinct vernacular theories and embodied practices of ungovernability that point towards an emergent political modality under crisis-ridden neoliberal hegemony. Here, I seek to build and act upon the conceptualization of relationality put forward by influential decolonial theorists Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, who eschew universalizing frameworks for liberation in favor of considering "the ways that different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality… can enter into conversations and build understandings that both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences, and contest the totalizing claims and political-epistemic violence of modernity" (2018, 1). In keeping with this decolonial dialogic orientation, I have striven to co-produce knowledge with my interlocutors through accompaniment, collaboration, and collective and individual reflection.

Given that my work centers Indigenous people in accordance with its scholar-activist agenda, I have striven to remain cognizant of the violent legacies of research among

[6] I use this term to refer to both professional academics and grassroots movement participants that I have engaged in the course of this project. In keeping with my methodological orientation towards collaboration and accompaniment, I seek to decenter the university and academy as the only possible sites of knowledge production by "seeing/theorizing from other locations, environments, and contexts" and seriously engaging the viewpoints of those who lack the economic, cultural, and political capital afforded by academia (Taylor, 2020, 79).

Indigenous populations at large (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), seeking to subvert these legacies by developing theorizations that are respectful and useful to my interlocutors. Meeting this ethical imperative requires that I disclose and interrogate my own positionality relative to my interlocutors: throughout this project, I have reckoned with the privileges and power accorded to me as a middle-class, cisgender, able-bodied, English-speaking man, considering how they might have shaped the conversations I had.

My literature review for this dissertation encompasses monographs, academic journal articles, news reports and editorials, and governmental, intergovernmental, NGO, and social movement reports that document and analyze key historical and contemporary conditions, structures, and struggles in Jharkhand and Oaxaca, in addition to tracing the trajectories of the global alternative globalization movement and elucidating my chosen theoretical perspectives. However, my dissertation is primarily based upon twenty-four in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with activists, academics, journalists, nonprofit professionals, and community leaders in Jharkhand's capital city of Ranchi and its neighboring rural district of Khunti as well as Oaxaca's capital, Oaxaca City, and its neighboring rural town of Huitzo in the summers of 2018, 2019, and 2021. Many of these interviewees had engaged the Pathalgadi Movement in Jharkhand and been directly involved with mobilizations for communal autonomy involving Unitierra - Huitzo and Unitierra - Oaxaca City in Oaxaca; however, I have also included otherwise affiliated and unaffiliated interviewees so as to solicit a diversity of perspectives on these mobilizations and more effectively situate them within the broader sociopolitical landscapes of both states. I employed a snowball sampling approach to recruit interviewees: I was introduced to key figureheads involved in contemporary Jharkhandi and Oaxacan political organizing by my

undergraduate thesis advisor Leonardo Figueroa-Helland and dissertation committee chair Bishnupriya Ghosh, and I constructed lateral networks of contacts in both states through my correspondence with these figureheads.

My interviewees are demographically heterogeneous: even within each of their geocultural contexts, they claim diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities and languages as well as diverse areas of expertise and arenas of contestation; their ages range from the early twenties to over eighty; and, due in no small part to these differences, they offer a variety of perspectives on the issues raised by my dissertation. For the most part, they are bound together by their opposition to neoliberal dispossession and state violence as well as their commitment to Indigenous self-determination, as dissimilarly as they might interpret both of these political imperatives. I conducted my interviews in English and Spanish at my interviewees' workplaces, homes, and political organizational hubs, so as to not overly disrupt their busy schedules; one of my Jharkhandi interviewees could only speak to me in Hindi, and so I required the assistance of a translator. I digitally recorded my interviews when circumstances allowed and took notes when they did not, subsequently transcribing and coding these interviews myself. In addition to interviewing my interlocutors, I also had the opportunity to participate in a range of activities with them, from homestays to meals to community gatherings, and my observations of these activities inform my analyses as well.

I first visited Jharkhand in the August of 2018 and conducted preliminary interviews with eleven local nonprofit professionals, community organizers, and academics. I built upon these initial conversations in the August of 2019, when I returned to the state to record the testimonies of a veteran Jharkhandi documentary filmmaker, four longtime activists, and a lawyer representing persons involved with the Pathalgadi Movement. The COVID-19

pandemic severely impeded my ability to continue my fieldwork, and so I only visited Oaxaca in September of 2021, whereupon I conducted seven in-depth interviews and three participant-observation sessions at Unitierra – Oaxaca City, Unitierra – Huitzo, and various public spaces around the city. My teaching commitments, financial limitations, and logistical constraints only allowed me to spend two weeks per visit at each of my research sites.

I transcribed my interview data with the aid of Sonix, a subscription-based online transcription program. I further coded my interview data using Delve, a subscription-based online qualitative analysis software. I constructed my codes by combining key concepts articulated by my interlocutors, such as *defensa de la tierra* ("defense of the Earth / land") in Oaxaca, and key theoretical references from my literature review, such as autonomy, Indigeneity, and neoliberalism. I have made my interview recordings and transcripts available to all of my interlocutors upon request.

Uncivilizing Global Studies

My project embraces the core tenets of the still-emerging field of global studies, insofar as it is interdisciplinary, multi-sited, postcolonial, and critical (McCarty, 2014). It addresses a set of interrelated lacunae within the field vis-à-vis alternatives to neoliberal globalization, which has arguably been global studies' primary preoccupation thus far.

As the global justice movement has declined, global studies scholars have become somewhat skeptical that, "Another world is possible." Instead of embracing grassroots alternatives to the neoliberal status quo in both form and content, many have doggedly and rather uncritically defended liberal institutional solutions to mounting political, economic, ecological, and social crises, even though these solutions are less and less likely to be implemented as neoliberal authoritarianism gains traction across the world. I demonstrate

that bottom-up alternatives to neoliberal modernity are far from extinguished, though uncovering requires a shift in theoretical, analytical, and spatial focus.

Overcoming methodological statist tendencies within global studies is an essential part of this necessary shift. While global studies has challenged methodological nationalism (Juergensmeyer, 2013) and critiqued the construction of nation-states in the Global South under colonial and imperial rule, it has by and large not interrogated the legitimacy of contemporary liberal democratic states as governing mechanisms and units of social organization, let alone whether they are capable of fully meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations under their purview. To the extent that global studies remains dogmatically invested in liberalism, it risks beginning from a position of defeat whenever it purports to support popular struggles for progressive social and global transformation. As the interlocking crises of neoliberal modernity intensify, global studies must adopt a more critical posture towards the state if it is to make sense of the contestations increasingly produced by these crises. Extrapolating Marxist sociologist William I. Robinson's proposals for critical globalization studies, critical global studies should reject the assumption that liberal democracy within the global capitalist system demarcates the "end of history" and thus the limits of political possibility, contrarily "questioning everything, deconstructing everything," and locating, foregrounding, and supporting emancipatory alternatives articulated by the "subordinate majorities" (and minorities) of this system (2005, 12-15).

Furthermore, if global studies is to more effectively provide a platform for populations and perspectives at the margins of the neoliberal world system, it must reckon with the limitations of civil society at the same time as it develops a comprehensive critique of the state. Numerous scholars in the field have disproportionately favored civil society

organizations like Amnesty International or the Human Rights Watch and international forums like the United Nations or, at most, the World Social Forum as the pre-eminent venues for the resolution of pressing global issues (Stiglitz, 2007; Juergensmeyer, 2013; Steger and Wahlrab, 2016; Gunn, 2018). While these organizations and forums certainly cannot be dismissed out of hand, their limited capacity to reign in neoliberal dispossession and state violence also cannot be ignored, nor can their own neoliberalization in numerous respects. If global studies is to avoid becoming "the handmaiden of neoliberalism" (Darian-Smith, 2014), it must be willing to recognize and nurture the seeds of alterity in less-than-civil environs. More specifically, global studies risks not recognizing an increasingly pervasive but thus far largely illegible form of alter-globalization if it ignores repertoires of ungovernability articulated within the uncommons of the kind analyzed in this dissertation.

Chapter Descriptions

My first chapter, "Civil Containment: Chronicling Liberal Civil Society's War of Attrition Against Its Ungovernable Others," demonstrates how liberal civil society in the metropole, colony, and postcolony has been defined by its foundational ties to the state and capital, which have undermined its promises of associational independence, rational-critical deliberation, and progressive social transformation. Throughout its various expansions and reconfigurations, liberal civil society has ultimately been at odds with its ungovernable others—that is, insubordinate oppressed communities that reject its hegemonic mandates, whom it has been unable to fully incorporate or eradicate. By engaging influential liberal, Marxist, and postcolonial conceptualizations and critiques of civil society, this chapter lays the theoretical foundation for my analysis of Jharkhandi and Oaxacan repertoires of ungovernability in the rest of my dissertation.

My second chapter, “Stoning the State: Tracking Quasi, Pseudo, and Anti-Political Society in the Pathalgadi Movement of Jharkhand, India,” provides an in-depth account of the Pathalgadi Movement that emerged in Jharkhand in early 2017. Developing the insights of Partha Chatterjee, I argue that the Pathalgadi Movement's sociopolitical exit and the deliberate obfuscation of its orientation, intentions, and operations from the Indian and Jharkhandi state apparatuses demands a nested vocabulary that fits the dynamic and multidimensional strategies of political insubordination articulated by movements like Pathalgadi. The Pathalgadi Movement’s repertoire of ungovernability consists of i) quasi-political society, a zone beyond the reach of governmentality that maintains minimal points of engagement with the state for the sake of survival; ii) pseudo-political society, a dis/simulation of political society intended to bypass civil society and leverage the state's obligations to entitlement-bearers; and iii) anti-political society, a zone of subaltern existence detached to the fullest extent possible from the state and civil society that actively eschews participation therein.

My third chapter, “The Makings of “Ungovernable Oaxaca”: Grappling with the Communal Inversion of Civil Society in Southwestern Mexico,” maps the rich forms of everyday autonomy that prevail among Indigenous-led communities and collective spaces in Oaxaca, which draw upon traditions of *comunalidad* to invert civil society altogether rather than operating at or just beyond its borders. In this chapter, I show how Oaxacan practitioners of communal autonomy have inverted the tenets of modern civil society along four main axes: the pseudo-autonomy promulgated by the Mexican and Oaxacan states; nationalist, statist, and populist fictions revolving around independence, Indigeneity, and representative democracy; conventional left-right political divisions; and the centrality of

individual rights. I then acknowledge how these actors embody certain contradictions in their relationships with the state and capital at the same time as these contradictions do not invalidate the counter-hegemonic potential of their interventions.

My fourth chapter, "Another World is (Still) Possible: Understanding the Ungovernable Uncommons as Incipient Alternative Globalization," brings together my research sites to consider how repertoires of ungovernability in Jharkhand and Oaxaca articulate with the concept of the uncommons and, in doing so, constitute an increasingly pervasive but thus far largely illegible form of alter-globalization. In the first half of this chapter, I highlight the resonances of the uncommons within these repertoires, focusing on refusals of human / other-than-human discontinuity and key instances of domaining, equivocation, and divergence. In the second half, I examine how ungovernable uncommoning in Jharkhand and Oaxaca recontextualizes, reinvents, and/or transcends key facets of the alter-globalization movement—namely, the latter's calls for diversity, global civil society unity, and participatory democracy. Throughout these analyses, I consider how the ungovernable uncommons addresses some of the past weaknesses of the alter-globalization movement while potentially reproducing others.

In the conclusion to my dissertation, I consider the broader resonances of both ungovernability as an analytic and the repertoires of ungovernability examined within the contexts of Jharkhand and Oaxaca in this dissertation, seeking to open up avenues for both further investigation and solidarious political engagement. I contemplate the portability of the particular repertoires in focus, the variability of ungovernability across different contexts of struggle, and the distinctions between ungovernability and other subaltern practices of rioting, refusal, and simply "making do," in addition to addressing the potential for

ungovernability to serve politically reactionary ends. I further consider the prospects for collaboration and coordination between ungovernable communities and other practitioners of emancipatory politics, such leftist insurgents and political parties, before outlining the importance of ungovernability to the development of a truly critical global studies that contributes to progressive social transformation at the grassroots level.

Chapter One:

Civil Containment:

Chronicling Liberal Civil Society's War of Attrition Against Its Ungovernable Others

My first trip to Jharkhand in the summer of 2018 forced a reckoning with civil society: its definitions, its contradictions, and the root causes of those contradictions.

On my first morning in Khunti, a one-street town surrounded by agricultural villages about twenty miles outside the state capital of Ranchi, I realized that I was essentially in an NGO colony. I was surrounded by the offices of local, state-level, national, and international nongovernmental organizations, all of them purportedly dedicated to improving the lives of the area's overwhelmingly adivasi population. On the recommendation of my host, who is himself a nonprofit professional, I spoke to several NGO representatives over the following days. Addressing issues from education to hygiene to women's empowerment, many of them—some Indigenous, others non-Indigenous—perhaps unintentionally revealed certain tensions within their work and, by extension, the population they engage and the sociopolitical playing field to which they both belong.

On the one hand, these representatives described adivasis as invaluable "community partners," whose political and cultural autonomy must be respected at all costs. On the other hand, they reaffirmed their commitment to the priorities stipulated by the state authorities sanctioning their work and the transnational corporations often directly or indirectly financing it. In other words, they reinforced the authority of the very political and economic actors who arguably pose the greatest threat to their Indigenous "community partners." A number of my NGO interviewees went so far as to denounce any and all "parallel institutions" existing among adivasis, suggesting that the latter are barriers to the work their

organizations often carry out in collaboration with the state and capital. This denouncement's dubious historical accuracy—given that the "parallel institutions" in question long predate the Jharkhandi state and even its colonial and postcolonial predecessors— promulgates a hoary neo-colonial notion of tribal "backwardness." As multiple interviewees said to illustrate the need for their organizational interventions, many adivasis "don't even know how to use a toilet properly."

These encounters warrant more than a simplistic defense of adivasi traditionalism and isolationism in opposition to the modernizing agenda advanced by state authorities, private and public corporations, and NGOs. They also warrant more than either a totalizing renunciation of all NGOs or, on the contrary, a simpering defense of this entire sector grounded in the supposedly inevitable supremacy of the state and capital. In fact, NGOs are not the focus of my analysis. They simply epitomize how hegemonic civil society is, by and large, a project of statist and capitalist governance that subjugates subaltern populations even when it claims to aid and empower them. While NGOization has been a significant feature of the neoliberalization of numerous polities, economies, and cultures since the decline of state socialism and the consolidation of global neoliberal hegemony in the early 1990s, it resonates with the much longer history of civil society as a social domain that has disproportionately empowered political and economic elites wherever it has developed, in spite of fierce contestations over its definition, boundaries, and constitution spearheaded by an array of subaltern actors.

Hegemonic civil society has successfully incorporated many oppressed communities into its ambit in part or in their entirety, as demonstrated by the willingness of numerous Jharkhandi adivasi communities to collaborate with the NGOs I visited in Khunti. However,

precisely because of its elitist and collaborationist tendencies, it has inadvertently incentivized other communities to protect and/or develop their own, often oppositional modes of self-governance, which they have frequently enacted through various repertoires of ungovernability. The NGO representatives I met during the first phase of my fieldwork, as well as a number of other local civil society actors, such as intellectuals, journalists, and activists, were visibly uncomfortable when I inquired about the Pathalgadi Movement for communal autonomy, one of the epicenters of which was Khunti. I analyze their critiques or outright repudiations of the Movement in greater depth in Chapter Two; suffice to say at this point, they were generally alarmed not only by the Movement's promulgation of "parallel institutions" such as banks and schools but by its concomitant delegitimization of the Indian and Jharkhandi states and their associated civil societies. Corporatist unions and social forums in Oaxaca have been similarly hostile towards independent mass mobilizations and organizations in their state, reserving a particular vitriol for Indigenous communities that have defied state and corporate development mandates.

In Jharkhand, Oaxaca, and beyond, hegemonic civil society has had to constantly grapple with its ungovernable others, at the same time as the latter have had to navigate their inevitable entanglements in the mechanisms of the state, capital, and civil society as they articulate their modalities of self-governance. In this chapter, I attempt to historicize these dynamics of contestation by tracing the elitist currents that have dominated, if not entirely defined, civil society across its major manifestations, from the metropole to the colony and postcolony and from the inception of industrial capitalism to the present neoliberal era. In the process, I show how these various iterations of civil society have dealt with ungovernable populations, emphasizing that modern civil society's consistent connections to the state and

capital have inhibited its full incorporation of these insubordinate others. Drawing upon my research sites, I emphasize that Indigenous communities claiming autonomy have presented a particular challenge for civil society, not least of all because their alleged atavism puts them at odds with liberal democratic modernity. This chapter thus provides the historical and theoretical foundation for my analysis of specific repertoires of ungovernability in Jharkhand and Oaxaca in Chapters Two, Three, and Four.

I begin this chapter by showing how the elitist idealism that underpins liberal civil society belies its bourgeois orientation and its reliance on the state's monopoly of legitimate violence; attempts to address liberal civil society's shortcomings through rational-critical discourse in the public sphere fail to reckon with the state's powers of compulsion, while attempts to distinguish this domain from "uncivil society" risk inadvertently reinforcing the power of reactionary political actors while undermining their progressive but unruly counterparts. I then turn to Marxist critiques of civil society that highlight how this domain is the locus of hegemony and call for its abolition on these grounds. I finally make the case for investigating ungovernability as a distinct analytic by synthesizing these critiques with postcolonial accounts of civil society, which frequently idealize community, tradition, and difference while remaining situated within the boundaries of the liberal democratic state.

Understandably for "one of the most enduring and confusing concepts in social science" (Edwards, 2011, 3), civil society has spawned a vast and diverse body of scholarly literature that is impossible to fully survey in a single chapter. For the purposes of my analysis, I have focused on syntheses of civil society history and theory from compendiums that strive to provide authoritative, expert-authored accounts of the subjects at hand, such as *The International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*, *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social*

Theory, *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, and *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*. I also draw upon influential commentaries on the social, political, and economic dimensions of this domain by foundational thinkers on the liberal-to-left spectrum, such as Charles Taylor, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Partha Chatterjee. This list of theoretical interlocutors is not exhaustive by any measure, but it allows me to map the broad contours of civil society by engaging precedent-setting accounts of its possibilities and limitations.

The Dark Side of Elitist Idealism

""Civil society" as a panacea for almost all global problems," reflects historian Arnd Bauerkämper, "has assumed almost utopian qualities" (2010, 370). Liberal idealism has been the ideological foundation of this utopianism throughout the conceptual history of modern civil society, which is inextricably intertwined with the emergence of the capitalist world-system in Europe and later the United States. Both classical and contemporary liberal theorists have promoted civil society as a domain for the generation and dissemination of high-minded ideals to the benefit of society at large. However, the persistently elite makeup and orientation of liberal civil society not only belie its claim to embody and advance the public good but shed a light on the insubordinate oppressed populations that it has attempted to exclude, absorb, or otherwise manage throughout its history.

a. From Exclusion to Incorporation

Liberal civil society is a distinctly modern phenomenon, but its proponents commonly trace its roots to European antiquity as part of reaffirming this domain's importance to democratic politics as they understand it. By these accounts, the term "civil society" originates from Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero's notion of *societas civilis*, which

translates to “political community or partnership” (Molnár, 2010, 342). While the composition and functions of Greco-Roman civil society are beyond the scope of my analysis, philosophy scholar Gábor Molnár suggests one key commonality between ancient conceptions of civil society and their modern liberal counterparts: “the civic responsibility and courage to stand up for liberty against powers whatsoever endangering it,” be that other states, the citizens’ own state that has become alienated from them either in a representative democracy or in a dictatorship, or any other authorities and vested interests. This responsibility is further fulfilled by self-motivated individuals striving partly for common goals (Molnár, 2010, 343).

At first glance, this formulation of civil society appears to contain elements of ungovernability in itself, insofar as it constantly threatens established authorities with upheaval. However, the anti-authoritarian sheen of this obligation is dimmed by the historical exclusivity of ancient civil society, which, in its Greco-Roman formulation, was conceived and constructed in opposition to the involvement of subaltern actors such as women, migrants, and slaves (Molnár, 2010, 342). This specific form of exclusivity might be a relic of the past, but it nonetheless begs the question of who assumes civic responsibility and enjoys liberty in a modern liberal democratic society and what political, economic, and social interests they might defend. As such, the circumscription of civil society to societal elites is not just a matter of exclusion but of domination: to the extent that the power brokers inhabiting this domain can impose their will on the oppressed populations deemed unworthy of entering it, civil society can promulgate the governance of the many by the few even when it seems to promote self-governance for all. At the same time, excluding the oppressed masses from civil society inadvertently runs the risk of allowing ungovernability to

proliferate among their ranks in the face of their subjugation. Civil society has struggled to address this unintended consequence of its delimitation throughout its history.

The Renaissance revitalized republican civil society ideals promoted by ancient thinkers like Cicero that had been subsumed by the dominance of the Church during the Middle Ages. As the incipient bourgeoisie readied its assault on feudal structures and systems of power, wealth was a precondition for the development of civil society institutions across Europe (Sarles, 2010, 350). The development of civil society institutions based on the accumulation of wealth outside of absolutist monarchies culminated in the birth of "economic man" during the Enlightenment. The forefathers of modern liberal thought, John Locke and Adam Smith, identified civil society's primary agent as the self-interested individual who engages in economic acquisition and accumulation under the protection of the state (Ehrenberg, 2011, 19 – 21). Civil society was supposed to transform the self-interested exchanges of free men into a civilized life for all through the operations of an "invisible hand" (Ehrenberg, 2011, 21). The promise of a beneficent "invisible hand" was arguably a pre-emptive maneuver to shield the emergent bourgeoisie from the potentially explosive fallout of its consolidation of power. In this sense, bourgeois civil society has been haunted by the specter of the unruly and potentially ungovernable masses since its inception, long before it was haunted by the specter of communism in the nineteenth century.

In situating economic activity within this modern reconfiguration of civil society, Locke and Smith disembedded the state and the economy from wider society and placed these two domains at loggerheads with each other, in contrast to their philosophical predecessor Thomas Hobbes (Ehrenberg, 2011, 20). Under this schema, the economy—or, more specifically, the market—was supposed to become a domain of relative non-

interference by the state and, in turn, of self-regulation by rational economic actors. Needless to say, this proposition camouflaged the tremendous sociopolitical clout wielded by the bourgeoisie by virtue of its ever-increasing economic control. Depoliticizing economic activity and, in turn, civil society paradoxically advanced bourgeois governance. This is evident from the protection that early bourgeois power brokers demanded from the state at the same time as they sought to keep it at a distance from their commerce: Locke and Smith might have turned Hobbes' concept of a civil society coterminous with the state on its head, but they by no means rejected his call for a sovereign state possessing ultimate coercive power that allows "economic man" to "live his life free of mortal danger" (Ehrenberg, 2011, 18). Notwithstanding intra-bourgeois conflict, the "mortal danger" in question stemmed primarily from the class conflicts that erupted as the bourgeoisie's power grew across Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The apolitical façade of early modern civil society was insufficient to mask the material consequences of bourgeois rule for the restive masses beyond its boundaries, forcing calculated concessions to the latter. Liberal advocates of civil society proposed civic institutions, a vigorous public life, creative leadership, and good laws to mitigate class conflict (Ehrenberg, 2011, 18). These practices and forums built up a public sphere in which citizens could, in principle, associate freely with each other. In spite of the historically progressive character of these changes, they marginalized the influence of the poor and working classes to the fullest extent possible. As *homo economicus* reaped the fruits of deliberative democracy, his economically disempowered counterpart became an object for management by bourgeois liberal states (Powell, 2010, 355 – 356). Civil society retained its primarily bourgeois orientation if not its exclusively bourgeois composition. However,

concessions to the masses were a double-edged sword, simultaneously allowing for the pacification of popular struggles through the incorporation of their figureheads and for the infiltration of dominant liberal institutions by other struggles who remain loyal to these struggles and seek to leverage their institutional positions for at least partly emancipatory ends. Classical liberal civil society was thus incapable of dissipating its ungovernable others through conditional expansion; if anything, it provided them with a few more tools and openings to advance their goals, compromised as the latter may have been.

b. The Ever-present Threat of Coercion

Bourgeois concessions to popular pressure continued to expand the scope and heterogeneity of civil society throughout the nineteenth century (Bauerkämper, 2010, 360). This expansion continued beyond Europe's borders in the early twentieth century, which saw the proliferation of liberal democratic politics across the world, including in European colonies claimed over the preceding centuries. This proliferation was partly driven by the adoption of associational forms that had originated in Europe, such as trade unions, political parties, and cultural organizations; these associations were typically overseen by social elites educated in Europe, though they could not viably function as mere facsimiles of their European predecessors or, for that matter, exercise full control over their corresponding colonized masses. I examine the particularities of these dynamics in the context of the postcolony later in this chapter. In the second half of the twentieth century, the institutionalization of international non-governmental organizations precipitated by the creation of the United Nations accelerated the globalization of civil society. Combined with grassroots mobilizations around a variety of issues and the "global associational revolution" after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the globalization of civil society has given rise to

densely interconnected networks typically peopled by the relatively highly educated middle classes (Bauerkämper, 2010, 367). Mary Kaldor, among others, speaks of the emergence of a truly global civil society, in which various actors, from activists to NGOs to advocates of neoliberalism, debate and formulate transnational principles and agreements intended to regulate the conduct of nation-states and intergovernmental organizations (2003, 590).

Contemporary liberal theorizations of global civil society place a premium on its separation from the state and its capacity to influence the state in accordance with the popular will; however, probing these definitions further reveals that this separation by no means entails autonomy, and the terms of the influence in question are set by the state itself to a significant extent. Civil society scholar Michael Edwards, for instance, reaffirms political theorist Michael Walzer's general definition of the domain at hand as "the sphere of uncoerced human association between the individual and the state, in which people undertake collective action for normative and substantive purposes, *relatively* [emphasis added] independent of government and the market" (2011, 4). Notwithstanding its fixation on free individual choice, this definition's emphasis upon the absence, and perhaps even the rejection, of coercion would suggest that collective action within civil society can assume a wide range of forms, from protests to acts of civil disobedience to outright insurrections. However, Walzer's admission of the relative rather than complete independence of civil society actors from the state and market qualifies the supposedly uncoerced nature of their association. If the underlying liberal assumptions of the net benevolence of the state and the amorality of the market are challenged—if state power contrarily stands in a relationship of war with society (Newman, 2012, 41-42) and capitalism entails "naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation" (Marx & Engels, [1888] 2002, 222)—the potential for these social

institutions to be fundamentally coercive becomes clearer. Civil society actors "relatively independent" of these institutions are still subjected to some degree of coercion. If they refuse to abide by state mandates and protocols—that is, if their conduct contains elements of ungovernability from the state's perspective—they can be expelled from civil society. For instance, the Indian Home Ministry suspended the licenses of several Jharkhandi NGOs on the dubious grounds of political subversion and religious conversion, when, in actuality, it sought to suppress their critiques of its national and regional neoliberal development initiatives (The Wire Staff, 2020). The relative independence at hand is thus a conditional one that, in opposition to liberal doctrine once again, shows that civil society actors are ultimately the subordinates of state and capitalist power rather than its counterweights. Just as the terms of this independence are largely set by the state and capital, they can be changed to maintain, increase, or defend the power of both.

Economic historian Huri Islamoglu further clarifies Walzer's diagnosis of civil society's relative independence. She explains that collective associations within civil society such as trade unions, corporations, voluntary and charitable associations, and families, while technically independent of the state, have remained within the bounds of its administrative-legal vision (2015, 710). In these stipulations, the limits imposed upon civil society by the state and capital become clearer: the normative purposes for which civil society actors may undertake collective action cannot contravene the state mandate for lawful, civil, and essentially nonthreatening conduct. The proximity of civil associations to the market furthermore begs the question of how these contingent inhabitants of civil society relate or are supposed to relate to each other. For trade unions, voluntary and charitable associations, families, and other associative bodies to coexist with corporations and individual capitalists

in civil society, the former cannot, for the most part, threaten the latter's ability to accumulate capital through exploitation, dispossession, and displacement. If they do pose a threat in this vein, the state reserves the right to not only delegitimize them but wield the monopoly on legitimate violence that underpins its administrative-legal power as it sees fit, including through extralegal measures. Oaxacan anti-mining activist Tomás Martínez Pinacho, for example, was gunned down by a paramilitary commando widely suspected of acting under orders from state authorities in August of 2020 (Navarro, 2020). Extrajudicial violence is not uncommonly the punishment meted out by the state and capital to ungovernable actors, providing civil society actors with a powerful incentive to stay in line.

Philosopher Charles Taylor inadvertently speaks to the bourgeois liberal state's hostility to ungovernability, if not when he describes civil society as the ensemble of associations that can significantly determine or inflect the course of state policy (1990, 98). While civil society can exist in the minimal form of free associations outside of state tutelage and in a stronger form when its actors can structure themselves and coordinate their actions, its true political capacity is measured, to no small extent, by its ability to engage and leverage state power. At first glance, anti-state insurgencies and other manifestations of ungovernability would appear to nominally fall under this understanding of civil society, given that they can potentially force state authorities to reconfigure their laws and law enforcement mechanisms. However, Taylor's concomitant conviction that "too much is at stake to allow government and society to coexist without coordination" (1990, 97) insinuates that civil society actors should *willingly* turn towards the state in their efforts to enact the changes they desire. They must concomitantly count on the state's willingness to recognize them and their appeals as legitimate. In other words, they must not only render themselves

governable but aid and abet the state's governance over them and, by extension, the oppressed constituencies they represent.

Taylor admittedly expresses concern over what he conceives as the state capture of civil society: he concedes that there has been a tendency for autonomous associations in Western societies to become integrated into the state, "the tendency towards what has been called (often in a slightly sneering tone, because of the origins of this term in Fascist Italy) 'corporatism'" (1990, 96). When the state and the large, powerful associations it consults with form a unity, according to Taylor, they tend towards elite control and growing distance from the constituencies they claim to speak for, in addition to being committed to bureaucratic control over more and more aspects of human life in the name of technological efficacy (1990, 99). However, Taylor overlooks the fact that the state and civil society do not need to form a unity for the latter to come under elite, bureaucratic, and/or technocratic control. Civil society actors commonly self-regulate their own activities in order to remain within the parameters set by the state, capital, and prevailing social hierarchies because they are aware of the potentially dire consequences of doing otherwise. Adivasi Lives Matter—India's largest media platform for adivasi voices, which has extensively covered Indigenous communities in Jharkhand—has repeatedly insisted that it is not a vehicle for political activism, in spite of the numerous politically charged issues affecting adivasis. This apolitical self-positioning is understandable in light of the relentless crackdown on civil society led by Narendra Modi and the BJP over the past several years (Mohan, 2017), but it nonetheless reinforces the division between acceptable and unacceptable civic action, implicitly condoning the repression of the latter.

c. The Limits of Rational-critical Discourse in the Public Sphere

Sociologist Craig Calhoun acknowledges how civil society has been overdetermined by its bourgeois origins and the individual, acquisitive notion of freedom that it has consequently advanced, making it a powerful weapon for defenders of free market economics in the contemporary era ([2001] 2015, 703 – 705). Under the influence of nationalism, it can also repress internal difference and thus inhibit democratic self-government (Calhoun, 1993, 276), as proven by the ways in which mestizaje and Hindu chauvinism subtend many civil society organizations in Mexico and India, respectively. For these reasons, along with the need to offer a more specific account of collective decision-making within civil society, Calhoun presents the public sphere as a partial antidote to the modern state's powerful administrative apparatus and the modern capitalist economy (2011, 311). Drawing upon the widely influential work of Jürgen Habermas, Calhoun defines the public sphere as "an arena of deliberative exchange in which rational-critical arguments rather than mere inherited ideas or personal statuses could determine agreements and actions" (1993, 273). The public sphere supposedly connects civil society to the state "through the principle that public understanding could inform the design and administration of state institutions to serve the interests of all citizens" (Calhoun, 2011, 312).

Calhoun does not idealize the public sphere. He contends that the liberal model of the public sphere flattens differences among the actors who operate in this domain, often in the name of considering rational-critical arguments on their own merits rather than on the basis of identity. As such, even though openness is foundational to the public sphere, various forms of exclusion on the grounds of class, gender, religion, race, and nationality are entrenched within actually existing publics. Needless to say, Indigenous peoples in India and Mexico have been relegated to among the lowest rungs of their respective countries' social

hierarchies on the grounds of their purportedly ingrained backwardness. They might be citizens in an administrative sense, but they have, to a significant extent, been stripped of substantive social, political, and economic citizenship, begging the question of whether many would even try to inform the design and administration of state institutions that have historically worked against their interests. Exclusions in this vein can not only fuel the creation of passive, conformist, and atomized mass publics, as Calhoun notes (2011, 318 – 320), but also bigoted and bellicose publics that participate in state repression, such as the Hindu fundamentalist mobs that have attacked adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, and other minoritized populations in Jharkhand and across India (Sabrang India, 2018).

Calhoun's nuanced account of the public sphere cannot be dismissed out of hand, but it does beg the question of the extent to which public discourse can hold the state accountable. In promoting rational-critical discourse for the resolution of political disputes within the public sphere, Calhoun seems to presume that the bourgeois liberal state is a primarily rational actor that will thus engage the public sphere in a spirit of goodwill. However, the cold rationality of self-interest at the heart of state and capitalist power could very well leave the appeals of the public sphere unheard and/or unmet. As capitalist exploitation galvanizes and possibly even radicalizes the public sphere, this passive dismissal could turn into an active suppression of demands for accountability. The most eloquent, incisive, and well-supported rational-critical arguments cannot, in and of themselves, hold up against the brute force of the state. Jharkhandi and Oaxacan civil society organizations that have engaged state authorities in good faith have been unable to prevent or even significantly slow down police, military, and paramilitary violence against Indigenous activists and communities, as tragically exemplified by the assassination of adivasi journalist Amit

Topno—who had extensively covered the Pathalgadi Movement in Khunti—in December of 2018 or the disappearance of Mixtec forest rights activist Irma Galindo in November of 2021 (Kiro, 2018; Agren, 2021). The state can shift the terms of rational-critical discourse in accordance with its priorities, justifying its violence against ungovernable populations by branding them as irrational, dangerous, and/or subversive. Jharkhandi state authorities, for instance, have categorized adivasi activists opposing their neoliberal developmentalist agenda as Maoist "anti-nationals" deserving of the harshest punishment (Swamy, 2018).

d. The False—and Dangerous—Dichotomy between Civil and Uncivil Society

If the public sphere is meant to more fully realize civil society's status as a domain for the advancement of the progressive popular will, "uncivil society" is meant to encapsulate everything this domain should not be. Liberal proponents of uncivil society tend to associate it with reactionary social, political, and/or cultural elements within various societies; for example, civil society scholar Neera Chandhoke assigns this label to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organization or RSS), the paramilitary grassroots organization that serves as the central coordinating body of India's Hindu Right (2011, 178 – 179). Civil society contrarily embodies the liberal values of the "good society," such as freedom, democracy, respect, tolerance, and cooperation. However, political scientist Clifford Bob attests that the notion of uncivil society "mixes a pretense at rigor with an overwhelming dose of obloquy" in designating organizations, goals, or tactics beyond the political pale (2011, 209). Bob illustrates how many undesirable elements within uncivil society from the liberal perspective actually fall within the boundaries of civil society. Many of the most robust past and present civic associations, NGOs, and social movements across the world have not embodied core liberal virtues and, in a number of cases, have explicitly eschewed

them. Civil society organizing, in other words, “is not exclusively or even primarily a progressive political project” (Bob, 2011, 213-214).

The RSS is a prime example here: despite having been modelled after Hitler’s Brownshirts and Mussolini’s Blackshirts, the RSS presents itself as an apolitical cultural organization that provides education, healthcare, and other essential social services to millions of marginalized people across India, much like various other NGOs (Chidambaram, 2020). The Hindu chauvinist ideals embedded within these programs cannot in and of themselves invalidate the legitimacy accorded to the RSS by the Indian state, numerous other civil society organizations, and a considerable segment of the Indian populace. As such, uncivil society actors can easily emulate the initiatives and rhetoric of their civil society counterparts to mask their true regressive purposes, making the civil / uncivil society distinction more of an obfuscation than a clarification. The case of the RSS further shows how claiming that civil society organizations, unlike their uncivil equivalents, distance themselves from the political and economic spheres is not only inaccurate but potentially dangerous: this depoliticization of civil society not only incentivizes self-censorship and self-regulation, as previously discussed, but actually serves as a smokescreen for the very reactionary actors that the notion of uncivil society is meant to censure.

The liberal conception of uncivil society not only risks inadvertently strengthening reactionary actors and agendas but also suppressing their progressive counterparts in the name of respectability. Classifying “intolerance,” “disrespect,” “authoritarianism,” and “conflict” under the rubric of “uncivil society” fails to recognize how these categorizations have often been used by state authorities to suppress mobilizations by oppressed populations who pose a threat to the former's priorities, as has been the case with popular movements

opposing extractivism in Jharkhand and Oaxaca. Political violence frequently demarcates a hard, overarching boundary between civil and "uncivil" society; in doing so, it risks not only conflating different forms and degrees of violence among oppressed populations but obfuscating the state violence that often drives these populations to employ these tactics in the first place. Many political associations and most social movements include a variety of tactics in their repertoire, so much so that civil society scholars must acknowledge the possibility that violence "may, for better or worse, be an effective means of reaching political goals, even estimable ones" (Bob, 2011, 217).

Even if uncivility is detached from uncritical liberal understandings of "the good society" and violence, it remains a somewhat reductive framework for analyzing the politics of insubordinate oppressed populations. Uncivility only partially illuminates the agency of these populations by centering deviations from liberal democratic norms and protocols; it also implicitly suggests that the unruly conduct of these populations is an ephemeral phenomenon that will ultimately be followed by a return to statist and capitalist business as usual. Ungovernability contrarily recognizes how certain instances of insubordination exceed the terms of momentary disaffection: it links these instances to community and even world-building activities undertaken by the populations in question, with the intention of avoiding liberal democratic reincorporation to the fullest extent possible.

The Locus of Hegemony: Marxist Critiques of Liberal Civil Society

Marxists have long critiqued liberal civil society for fortifying bourgeois rule through the mechanisms of exclusion, incorporation, and coercion detailed in the previous section. Marx states in his *Theses on Feuerbach* that civil society only allows formal political emancipation while leaving economic exploitation untouched (1978, 145). Notwithstanding

the undeniable evolution of civil society since Marx's time to accommodate some actors and initiatives seeking to address economic inequality, Walzer, Taylor, and Calhoun's accounts of civil society reaffirm that it continues to protect liberal political institutions and processes while concomitantly inhibiting structural and systemic transformation. India's Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 was supposed to be "the first serious nail in the coffin of [internal] colonialism" by guaranteeing adivasi communities the right to self-governance, including and especially over resources located on their territories (Kothari, 2000, 459). An amendment to the Constitution of Oaxaca and the passage of the Law on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples and Communities of Oaxaca in 1998 were supposed to be similar landmarks for regional Indigenous communities and their struggles. All of these legal measures have not in and of themselves prevented or even significantly slowed extractivism and its deleterious consequences for Indigenous peoples across my research sites.

Antonio Gramsci significantly built upon Marx's investigation of civil society through his fragmentary but nonetheless incisive and provocative analysis of hegemony. Gramsci identifies two major superstructural levels within any given society:

> The one that can be called "civil society," that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private," and that of "political society" or "the State". These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government. (1999, 145)

Gramsci goes on to define hegemony as "the "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant

fundamental group," with this group's influence stemming from the prestige it enjoys as a result of its position and function in the world of production (1999, 145). The bourgeoisie is, by definition, the dominant fundamental group within a capitalist society, which in turn indicates the orientation of hegemony and thus civil society under capitalism. Direct domination works hand-in-hand with hegemony, disciplining non-compliant actors and maintaining bourgeois control in moments of crisis of command and direction where spontaneous consent falters (Gramsci, 1999, 145). Ungovernable actors who reject hegemony and are thus situated outside the boundaries of civil society may be far more exposed to direct domination on a quotidian basis.

While many liberal accounts of civil society claim to draw upon the theoretical foundations laid by Gramsci, literary scholar Joseph Buttigieg (1995) contends that these accounts crucially misunderstand Gramsci's attitude to the bourgeois liberal democratic state. "Civil society," Buttigieg explains, "is not some kind of benign or neutral zone where different elements of society operate and compete freely and on equal terms, regardless of who holds a predominance of power in government. That would be the liberal view, which misleadingly portrays the formal restraints imposed upon the use of force held in reserve by the governmental apparatus of the state as a boundary line that demarcates the separation between the state and civil society" (1995, 27). In opposition to this demarcation, Gramsci perceives political and civil society as "constitutive elements of a single, integral entity—the modern bourgeois-liberal state" (Buttigieg, 1995, 28). As such, "civil society, far from being inimical to the state, is, in fact, its most resilient constitutive element" (Buttigieg, 1995, 4). The enemies of the state—above all else its ungovernable others—naturally become the enemies of civil society as well.

Buttigieg reiterates Gramsci's pointed but all too often overlooked assertion that “the site of hegemony is civil society; in other words, civil society is the arena wherein the ruling class extends and reinforces its power by non-violent means” (1995, 26). Needless to say, the bourgeois liberal democratic state does not necessarily employ these non-violent means out of sincere goodwill towards its constituents but rather for the sake of self-preservation: “the flexible and often camouflaged apparatuses of hegemony provide the dominant groups in society with the most effective protection against a successful frontal attack from the subaltern classes” (Buttigieg, 1995, 27). This insidious strategy of control counter-intuitively allows for critiques of prevailing political, economic, and social arrangements up to a certain point, for, if these critiques were prohibited, the claim that the consent of the governed is freely given would be less credible (Buttigieg, 2005, 44). Aside from passively allowing dissent, the bourgeois liberal democratic state can and often does actively entertain the grievances and aspirations of oppressed populations within its sovereign borders, sometimes enacting concrete changes in response to these perspectives.

However vociferous and even subversive these dissenting voices might be in and of themselves, they nonetheless have to “compete for a greater share of influence and power *according to the established rules of the game* [emphasis added]” (Buttigieg, 1995, 13). This is to say that the bourgeois liberal democratic state induces the oppressed to pursue their goals in a manner that does not threaten the basic order of the state. The state-backed bourgeois hegemony that persists within civil society thus restricts the modes of political action that can be undertaken and the politico-economic possibilities that can be pursued therein. More specifically, civil society is primarily a realm of reform through negotiation, as opposed to a realm of revolt against prevailing economic and political structures and systems.

Furthermore, this negotiation between civil society actors and the state is far from a dialogue between equals; on the contrary, it can be little more than a sanctioned and respectable form of collective hand-wringing, as civil society actors will remain at the mercy of the state and its bourgeois patrons throughout the entire process.

From a Marxist perspective, truly democratizing civil society requires abolishing it—or, more specifically, its material basis in private property—and moving toward an associational mode that transcends the chaos, antagonism, inequality, and arbitrariness of market society (Ehrenberg, 2011, 23). The question of whether actors perceived as ungovernable by bourgeois liberal democracies can contribute to this abolition and transition is up for debate. Ungovernable communities are not inherently progressive: many rural Indian communities, for instance, are still steeped in feudalism, and they may well reject the advances of the state so that they can preserve inequitable relations of power between farmers and laborers. Even if these communities strive to enact a progressive vision of autonomy, they might come up against industrialist and extractivist projects put forward by the socialist state that many Marxists propose as the most appropriate associational mode for transcending bourgeois civil society, much as a number of Andean Indigenous communities have clashed with post-neoliberal governments associated with the Latin American Pink Tide. The repertoires of ungovernability that I examine in Jharkhand and Oaxaca have been articulated in opposition to highly repressive neoliberal states, but that does not mean that a socialist transition will automatically resolve the issues that inspired these repertoires. I return to these challenging questions in my concluding reflections.

Beyond Precolonial Community and Political Society: Postcolonial Correctives to Liberal Civil Society and Their Limitations

Marx and Engels famously wrote that, “The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe,” as it seeks to “create a world after its own image” ([1888] 2002, 223 - 224). Islamoglu highlights how crucial civil society has been to this image and its global propagation: she explains that positive images of civil society put forward by Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, the Baron de Montesquieu, and other classical liberal philosophers, “in the course of encounters with hitherto unknown regions of Asia and the Americas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, became part of Europe’s definition of itself as the domain of the ‘civilized’" (Islamoglu, 2015, 709). “The discourse of civilized Europe,” embodied in no small part by civil society, “created its opposite in images of an uncivilized non-Europe”; these images at once justified colonial and imperial violence against non-European populations and downplayed the economic, political, and social violence of European bourgeois society on its home soil (Islamoglu, 2015, 709). Ranajit Guha avers that colonialism in South Asia—and arguably in many other parts of the colonized world—entailed “dominance without hegemony,” insofar as British colonial authorities favored coercion over persuasion as a means of suppressing subjugated populaces within their purview (1997, x – xii). At the same time as ungovernable segments of subjugated populations often posed legitimate threats to colonial and imperial regimes, the latter also weaponized the specter of ungovernability against these populations as a whole. These regimes perceived a potential for ungovernable conduct among the majority of their colonial subjects, up to and including some of their collaborators; landmark events such as the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, during which Indian infantrymen employed by the British East Indian Company revolted against their superiors, only deepened these suspicions.

Colonial and imperial power brokers had to reconcile their desire to assert their sociopolitical supremacy by making civil society the sole purview of Europe with the more practical demands of subjugation, which, in many cases, necessitated establishing political, economic, and social institutions often peopled by compliant colonial subjects to protect their interests. As such, fragmentary civil societies dominated by members of nascent national bourgeoisies developed in many colonized societies, going on to play a significant role in subsequent independence movements. As revolutionary philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon famously highlighted, many native bourgeois actors wrested power away from their European colonial masters only to preserve and expand the institutions that the latter had put into place. Formal decolonization was thus a mass phenomenon that brought vast subaltern populations into the proximity but not necessarily the ambit of liberal democratic governance promulgated by the state and civil society (Ghosh, 2020, 2-3).

Postcolonial and subaltern studies theorists have extensively grappled with the legacies, continuities, and contradictions of colonialism and imperialism, paying close attention to how these phenomena have articulated with civil society in various postcolonial contexts. Partha Chatterjee's earlier work encapsulates both the keen insights offered by these overlapping bodies of scholarship into the incompleteness of liberal society-making in formerly colonized countries, at the same time as it showcases the tendencies within these fields to idealize the political independence and cultural traditionalism of past and present subaltern communities while rather paradoxically resituating these communities within the boundaries of the postcolonial liberal democratic state. Postcolonial literary scholar John Beverley's careful historicization of subaltern community serves as a corrective to Chatterjee's romanticization, though Beverley similarly romanticizes subaltern heterogeneity.

Ungovernability respects the weight of these postcolonial critiques while offering a sober yet dynamic lens for comprehending contemporary subaltern struggles among insubordinate populations.

a. The Postcolonial Idealization of Community and Tradition

Building upon Guha's notion of dominance without hegemony, Chatterjee strives to "send back the concept of civil society to where... it belongs—the provincialism of European social philosophy" (1990, 120). Responding to Taylor's previously cited analysis of civil society, Chatterjee posits that this "provincial" conceptualization and the histories that it shaped were universalized by "the moment of capital—capital that is global in its territorial reach and universal in its conceptual domain"; the narrative of capital and civil society's role therein turned the violence of mercantilist trade, war, genocide, conquest, and colonialism into a story of universal progress, development, modernization, and freedom (1990, 129). Crucially, civil society seeks to displace, suppress, and extinguish independent narratives of community among subjugated populations, which become "the universal prehistory of progress, identified with medievalism in Europe and the stagnant, backward, undeveloped present in the rest of the world" (Chatterjee, 1990, 128 - 129). Nevertheless, Chatterjee stresses that "community, which ideally should have been banished from the kingdom of [colonial and later postcolonial] capital, continues to lead a subterranean, potentially subversive life within it because it refuses to go away" (1990, 130).

At first glance, Chatterjee's conception of community seems to resonate in significant ways with ungovernability, given civil society's hostility to community and the latter's persistence in the face of capitalist incursions. However, not all subaltern communities have been independent of the state and capital since their initial encounters with the latter under

the conditions of colonialism and imperialism: whereas many Indigenous communities in Oaxaca were left relatively undisturbed by Spanish colonial and mestizo neo-colonial rule up until the mid-twentieth century, many of their adivasi counterparts in Jharkhand have fought state power since the British consolidated their control of India, as evinced by the regional Santhal Rebellion of 1855-56. Ungovernability is a more dynamic analytic for reckoning with the constant tension between oppressed communities asserting their autonomy and the hegemonic forces they oppose, especially in the present era of highly sophisticated governmentality. Furthermore, ungovernability acknowledges that the communities at hand can typically only remain "subterranean" for so long, precisely because they must resurface to confront the relentless incursions of the state and capital.

Chatterjee's assessment of the subversive potential of community also merits closer scrutiny. He contends that the rhetoric of community is "in fact anti-modernist, anti-individualist, even anti-capitalist" (Chatterjee, 1990, 131). Chatterjee emphasizes the capacity of community to resist the logic of capital, to the extent that he boldly declares, "It is not so much the state-civil society opposition but rather the capital-community opposition that seems to be the great unsurpassed contradiction in Western social philosophy" (1990, 130). Chatterjee predicts that the struggle between community and capital will continue for as long as the postcolonial nation-state extends the patterns of accumulation established by its colonial predecessor (1990, 131). Here, Chatterjee arguably oversimplifies the composition and orientation of subaltern communities. Quite often, these communities are enumerated by the state to make them more manageable as it pursues its political and economic goals: the Indian state, for instance, categorized adivasis as Scheduled Tribes to integrate them into its bourgeois industrialist-led modernization drive, which was meant to

resolve the supposedly innate backwardness of these communities; my Oaxacan interlocutors expressed comparable reservations about the Mexican state's discourse of Indigeneity, which stands at odds with their own actually existing worldviews and lifeways, not to mention their militant opposition to state and corporate megaprojects. The mechanics of state and capitalist enumeration trouble a clear-cut community-capital opposition, as does the willingness of many oppressed communities to cooperate with their hegemonic overseers, even if they do so under compulsion. As such, community runs the risk of being a passive analytic that masks subaltern entanglements with the state and capital; ungovernability, in contrast, entails active oppositional praxis that takes these entanglements as its points of departure.

While Chatterjee identifies a great deal of continuity between community in the colonial and postcolonial eras, Beverley delimits community as Chatterjee conceptualizes it to the former time period:

> Whereas in the work of the Subaltern Studies Group there is said to be a civil society in the forms of customary law and tradition in the precolonial Indian subcontinent, the colonial state imposed by the British existed above and in some ways against this civil society, despite its attempts to subsume it. *That* precolonial form of civil society—the `home' of the binary home and the world, the `spirit' of the people, `native' religion, food, art, dress—was essentially *homologous with community* [emphasis added] and could function therefore as a site of resistance to the colonial state, which could neither penetrate nor incorporate it.
>
> In this, and only in this very precise *historical* sense, anti-colonial struggle is a struggle of civil society against the state, of the `personal' against the `political' (understood in the sense of formal politics), of `tradition' against (an externally

imposed) modernity. (1998, 313)

Beverley's emphasis on historical precision suggests that independent, traditional, and subversive communities as Chatterjee imagines them were, for the most part, specific to the colonial era. The terrain and dynamics of anti-colonial, anti-statist, and anti-capitalist struggle have shifted since then, requiring novel conceptual tools such as ungovernability. As part of this shift, "'native' religion, food, art, dress," and other manifestations of tradition are no longer sufficient to make community a site of resistance to the state and capital, as clearly demonstrated by the commodification of all these aspects of traditional Indigenous culture in Jharkhand, Oaxaca, and elsewhere. Perhaps these traditional beliefs and practices were never sufficient for resistance, given how subaltern communities in my research sites and across the world regularly had to launch insurrections to defend their lives, livelihoods, and customs from colonial and imperial rule.

Beverley clarifies that "the [contemporary] subaltern does not operate solely within the frame of tradition or "folk" culture" (1999, 128). Contemporary subaltern actors may have little in common with the idyllic pasts projected onto them, not least of all because they might believe that certain aspects of their traditions are actually oppressive in their own right (Beverley, 1999, 128; Beverley, 2001, 53). Many of my Oaxacan interlocutors, for instance, stressed that women in Oaxacan Indigenous communities have had to confront neoliberal state repression at the same time as they contest patriarchal interpretations of customs that have excluded them from self-governance in their communities. For that matter, subaltern actors not infrequently desire modernity, or at least certain aspects of it, rather than resisting it (Beverley, 2001, 53). For this reason, together with the ever-present possibility of co-optation, Beverley argues that the communal logic that undergirds subaltern traditionalism

can peacefully co-exist with statist and capitalist modernity (2001, 122). Ungovernability does not overcome this cohabitation altogether, but it disturbs the peace at hand in the hopes of forcing hegemonic actors to cede ground to subaltern self-assertion.

Instead of community or tradition, Beverley identifies subaltern heterogeneity—that is, the collective assertion of difference—as the potential basis for "resistance, opposition, and insurgency" against neoliberal capitalist globalization (2001, 49). Unfortunately, heterogeneity in and of itself has the same fundamental shortcomings as the romanticizing discourses that Beverley critiques. Neoliberal multicultural state discourse can appropriate difference to strengthen the stranglehold of capital, just as it does with community and tradition. Importantly for the purposes of my project, neoliberal multiculturalism has generated the figure of the *indio permitido* or "authorized Indian," an Indigenous subject who does not call basic state (and capitalist) prerogatives into question and accepts narrowly defined cultural rights as a substitute for political and economic rights (Hale, 2004). The adivasi nonprofit professionals who unequivocally eschewed the Pathalgadi Movement exemplify this subjectivity, demonstrating how it extends well beyond the Latin American contexts in which it was originally conceptualized. In short, oppressed communities that defer to community, tradition, or identity without explicitly grappling with the political and economic forces shaping their lives very much leave themselves vulnerable to state and capitalist capture.

Both Chatterjee and Beverley draw upon Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony; following Gramsci's close association of hegemony with civil society, Beverley stresses that historical subaltern actors fought not only the content but also the form of colonial rule. He stipulates that, "if, in order to gain hegemony [and thus integrate into civil society], the

subaltern classes or groups have to become essentially like that which is already hegemonic—that is, modern bourgeois culture and the existing forms of the state—then the ruling class will continue to win, even in defeat" (2001, 49). Beverley's critique of precolonial community as well as its extrapolation into the present indicates that subaltern classes or groups cannot simply retreat into tradition to protect themselves against the state and capital. My Jharkhandi and Oaxacan interlocutors recognize the threats of both hegemonic assimilation and uncritical, apolitical traditionalism, and they employ repertoires of ungovernability to mitigate these threats by couching whatever customs they uphold within anti-statist and anti-extractivist political mobilizations.

Beverley adds that historical subaltern uprisings, especially South Asian Indigenous insurrections for land, had limited geographical reach and ambition, which prevented them from challenging the territoriality of the colonial state by default. As such, "they could not move from a position of subalternity to one of hegemony. They remained subaltern in the very process of contesting domination" (Beverley, 1998, 314). The mobilizations I examine in Jharkhand and Oaxaca have also been locally and regionally circumscribed, not just by default but, to a significant degree, by design. Ungovernability, for better or worse, might indicate that the actors involved do not strive to replace state and capitalist hegemony with their own, instead preferring to establish and maintain autonomy within their own particular locales. The caveat of this strategy is that the autonomy enjoyed by these communities will remain contingent and thus incomplete for as long as the state and capital persist. I return to these vital qualifications of ungovernability, which have a major impact on the portability of any given repertoire, in my conclusion.

b. Political Society's Inadvertent Validation of State Power

As a result of its previously discussed difficulties in making civil society the purview of Europe while rendering colonies manageable, the colonial state could only confer subjecthood on the colonized masses, not citizenship (Chatterjee, 1990, 130-131). According to Chatterjee, anti-colonial nationalism broadly emerged as a refusal to accept membership within this "civil society of subjects" and a concomitant drive to construct a novel, encompassing national community in which diverse local and regional communities could coexist "peacefully, productively, and creatively" (Chatterjee, 1990, 131). However, the emergent national bourgeoisie crucially undermined nation-building projects in this vein by tying them to capitalist accumulation built on the foundations provided by colonial rule, which, to a significant extent, fortified pre-existing social divisions to protect ruling class interests. For this reason, Beverley argues that bourgeois civil society in postcolonial contexts vies to bring its subjects into capitalist modernity much like its colonial antecedent, albeit through more contemporary means. Civil society necessitates civic participation, which in turn tends to require literacy, nuclear family units, attention to formal politics and business news, and/or property or a stable income source; as such, it mandates development along pedagogic, economic, hygienic, and other lines, which opens the door to state and capitalist interventions (Beverley, 1998, 312 – 313). However, numerous inhabitants of capitalist postcolonial societies still do not meet all or any of these requirements, in spite of the de jure citizenship status they have been accorded. Postcolonial political, economic, and social elites also leverage citizenship to solicit governability: they conditionally extend it to those who match the national profile of the state and/or bolster its bourgeois orientation while withholding it from those who do not. The de facto sociopolitical status of many residents of postcolonial nation-states might thus fall between citizenship and subjecthood, with most

arguably skewing towards the latter; they would at best belong to a civil society of citizen-subjects, to modify Chatterjee's original formulation.

In reflecting on the Subaltern Studies Project, including his earlier account of civil society, Chatterjee concedes that the image of the subaltern rebel portrayed by the members of the Subaltern Studies Collective seems like "a throwback to the days of the British Raj" that would be of little help in understanding contemporary subaltern citizen-subjects (2012, 45). Chatterjee contends that deepening and widening apparatuses of governmentality have combined with the tenuous sociopolitical status of postcolonial citizenries to shape contemporary subalternity. The incursion of governmental activities—such as the distribution of foodstuffs, water, or electricity, the construction of infrastructure, and the provision of education and public health services—into the everyday lives of both rural and urban oppressed populations has shifted the terrain of mass politics towards negotiation (2012, 47).

The widespread dissemination of governmental control has arguably functioned as a slow but relatively encompassing and effective instrument of counter-insurgency: it has, to no small extent, forced many subaltern populations into relationships of dependence with their corresponding state authorities for the sake of their survival. Under these conditions, a full-fledged insurgency could spell death for subaltern actors, not even necessarily as a result of direct repression by the state but through the much simpler deprivation of basic necessities. Ungovernability in Jharkhand, Oaxaca, and beyond is distinct from insurgency, as the communities involved confront state and capitalist power brokers without necessarily attacking them outright. Chatterjee concludes that the conditions imposed by governmentality have fostered two new kinds of mass politics in India and, by extension, many other parts of the world subjected to neoliberal governmentalization: "one that involves

a contest over sovereignty… and the other that makes claims on governmental authorities over services and benefits" (2012, 47). Insurgency has by no means disappeared as a mode of subaltern mobilization, as proven by active Maoist struggles in Jharkhand and its surrounding states as well as Oaxaca's neighboring state of Guerrero, but its considerable risks beg the question of whether oppressed communities can contest sovereignty through non-insurgent means, with ungovernability answering this question in the affirmative. Ungovernability also shows that the two kinds of mass politics that Chatterjee outlines are not mutually exclusive: oppressed communities can make claims on governmental services and benefits while simultaneously contesting the sovereignty of the government at hand.

In principle, making claims regarding services and benefits that are supposed to be provided by the government reaffirms multiple liberal accounts of civil society examined above: undertaking collective action presumably built upon critical-rational discourse for normative and substantive purposes, with a view towards influencing state policy, invokes Walzer, Taylor, and Calhoun's definitions of the domain at hand and its subdomains. Nevertheless, making collective claims on government services and benefits under the actual conditions imposed by a neoliberal postcolonial state is far from the entirely legitimate and respectable endeavor it initially appears to be. Given that so many of the inhabitants of a given postcolonial state are only tenuously rights-bearing citizens, they cannot straightforwardly channel their demands for services and benefits through civil society. By seeking to establish control, the mechanisms of governmentality paradoxically prompt the mobilization of tenuously, ambiguously, and contextually rights-bearing populations. Members of these populations frequently make claims to habitation and livelihood as a matter of right (Chatterjee, 2004, 40). In order to advance their causes, the claimants firstly

give themselves the moral attributes of a community. For instance, Chatterjee details how southern Bengali and Bangladeshi refugees and persons from caste-oppressed backgrounds banded together to constitute a rail colony in the middle of Kolkata (2004, 53 – 58). The claimants secondly employ a range of paralegal arrangements to secure civic services and welfare benefits and to defend their gains: these arrangements include the construction of formally unrecognized collective bodies to further their interests, the illicit appropriation of public utilities such as water and electricity, and the deployment of direct action tactics such as a human wall against the state and capitalist power brokers and functionaries who would otherwise dispossess and displace them (Chatterjee, 2004, 56, 59).

Chatterjee contends that the multitude of subaltern social actors assuming the moral traits of a community and employing paralegal arrangements to make claims on the state belong to what he reimagines as political society.[7] The "messy, contentious, and often unpalatable" concerns of political society frequently clash with the "enlightened desires" of civil society (Chatterjee, 2004, 77). This is not to say that the two domains are mutually exclusive, as "groups in political society have to pick their way through this uncertain terrain by making a large array of connections outside the group—with other groups in similar situations, with more privileged and influential groups [such as civil society organizations], with government functionaries, perhaps with political parties and leaders" (Chatterjee, 2004, 40 – 41). For Chatterjee, these strategic negotiations illuminate actually existing mass politics in most of the world, investing the categories of governmentality with the imaginative possibilities of community in the process (Chatterjee, 2004, 60).

[7] Chatterjee's deployment of this term should not be conflated with its Gramscian equivalent, which refers to the state and its coercive power.

Actors within political society as Chatterjee conceptualizes it might take the state to task for failing to fulfill its responsibilities, and they might employ a number of measures independent of and opposed to the state that evoke repertoires of ungovernability in pursuit of this end, but, in the final estimation, their political horizon is limited by the state. Once these actors secure their desired services and benefits, they exit political society, even though they don't necessarily join the ranks of civil society and they might return to political society in the event of future governmental failures. Chatterjee thus blurs the line between the politics of sovereignty and the politics of governmentality without considering alternatives to both of these political modalities altogether. Ungovernability is conspicuous by its absence from Chatterjee's schema for political society. This oversight is all the more concerning because it fails to fully recognize how so many neoliberal postcolonial states across the world have become increasingly unresponsive to subaltern appeals and repressive towards the communities that make these appeals. It also overlooks how numerous oppressed communities partly or entirely reject state services and benefits because they have adequate resources within their territories to ensure their basic survival and they justifiably perceive these provisions as instruments of control.

The Imperative of Theorizing Ungovernability

In this chapter, I have shown that liberal civil society's foundational ties to the state and capital have inhibited its capacity to meet the needs of oppressed populations across its various expansions and reconfigurations; in fact, it has consistently sought to subjugate insubordinate communities that reject its hegemonic mandates. It may no longer exclusively consist of bourgeois elites, but it only incorporates non-bourgeois actors who are willing to render themselves governable. The independence that it promises to actors within its

boundaries is underwritten by the state's monopoly on legitimate violence, which advocates of the public sphere fail to acknowledge when they promote rational-critical discourse. The false civil / uncivil society distinction inadvertently empowers the very reactionary elements liberal civil society advocates seek to delegitimize, while reinforcing the liberal democratic state's hostility towards its ungovernable others.

Ungovernability as an analytic builds upon the Marxist critique of liberal civil society as the locus of bourgeois hegemony for all of the aforementioned reasons while subverting the Marxist valuation of the state as the primarily vehicle for abolishing civil society's basis in private property. It further builds upon critiques of the coloniality of civil society put forward by postcolonial and subaltern studies scholars while circumventing the latter's idealization of community, tradition, and difference and ultimate deference to the liberal democratic state. Theorizing ungovernability in greater depth is essential for coming to terms with subaltern subjectivities that are entangled with but nonetheless opposed to the state and capital under the conditions imposed by neoliberal postcolonial states. Keeping this imperative in mind, I now turn to my first research site, Jharkhand, to address the shortcomings of Chatterjee's conceptualization of political society by analyzing repertoires of ungovernability with the Indigenous mobilization that drove me to probe the limitations of liberal civil society in the first place: the Pathalgadi Movement for communal autonomy.

Chapter Two:

Stoning the State:

Tracking Quasi, Pseudo, and Anti-Political Society in the Pathalgadi Movement of Jharkhand, India

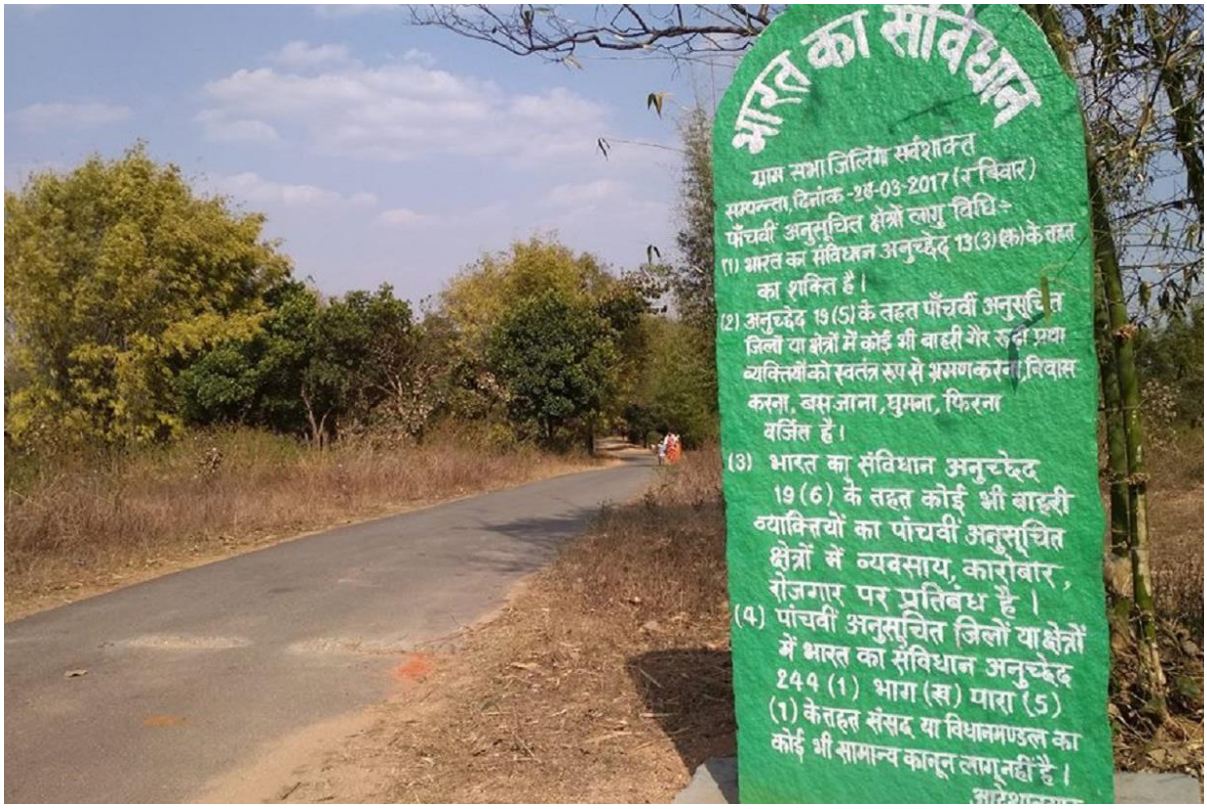


Image courtesy of Subha Protim Roy Chowdhury (https://www.groundxero.in/2020/04/01/pathalgadi-movement-among-the-protesting-voices/)

Starting in early 2017, huge, engraved stone slabs began to appear at the entrances to hundreds of primarily Indigenous villages across Jharkhand as well as its neighboring states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha. Known as “pathals” in the Mundari language spoken by many regional adivasis, these stones displayed the protections guaranteed, at least on paper, to the country's Scheduled Tribes by the Indian Constitution and key pieces of

legislation such as the 1908 Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNTA), the 1949 Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act (SPTA), the 1996 Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) (PESA) Act, and the 2006 Forest Rights Act.

Mundari communities have traditionally used pathals to demarcate village boundaries, commemorate births and deaths, and clarify communal principles of conduct. However, residents of these communities began putting the typically 15-feet-long, 4-feet-wide slabs to far more confrontational use after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led state government of Raghubar Das amended the CNTA and SPTA to facilitate the transfer of tribal lands to state authorities and their corporate backers (Kiro, 2017). The Pathalgadi Movement, as it became known, provoked a range of responses from regional and national politicians, political commentators, and the agitators themselves. Das and other BJP officials attributed the mobilization to Maoist guerrillas, Christian evangelicals, opium cultivators, and other "anti-national elements," with Das threatening to crush the movement in order to protect "innocent tribals" from these supposedly ruthless exploiters (Tewary 2018, para. 29). Das and his right-wing Hindu nationalist compatriots made good on their threat as well: they deployed paramilitary forces to several participating villages, in addition to arresting several movement leaders and social activists (Mohan, 2018). When these initial arrests failed to quell the movement, state authorities arrested more than 11,000 movement participants (Sharma, 2019). In 2019, Das was defeated in Jharkhand's Legislative Assembly Elections by a nominally liberal coalition led by Hemant Soren and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, with Soren promising to drop all the sedition cases as part of his platform. Throughout all these developments, prominent liberal intellectuals and activists emphasized the movement's apparent "constitutional messianism" (Sundar, 2018): they drew attention to concerted efforts

by younger, more educated participants to spread awareness of adivasi rights, claiming that the constitutionality of these efforts was the prime cause for alarm among the movement's reactionary opponents.

The perspectives of lay movement participants themselves, on the few occasions that they offered or were asked for their opinions, were far more unpredictable, dynamic, and difficult to categorize than those of their more privileged and powerful counterparts, leaving the movement at least partly illegible to many of its interpreters. Accounts of the movement's principles, tactics, and proliferation are littered with gestures toward sociopolitical refusal and exit, as well as claims to autonomy. These gestures suggest that the adivasis concerned were neither rabid "anti-national" insurgents nor innocuous dupes of predatory political forces nor unconditional adherents of the Indian Constitution and its attendant jurisprudence. Nor do they come across as a heterogeneous multitude of individuals pulling in innumerable, cumulatively unintelligible directions, given the significant organization, internal coherence, and resilience of their actions.

In this chapter, I draw upon key works of postcolonial and subaltern studies scholarship to analyze a series of English-language news reports, editorials, and scholarly articles and select interviews with Jharkhandi Indigenous activists to offer a reinterpretation of the Pathalgadi Movement that pays attention to its disruptions of Indian liberal politics. I explore the possibilities that these disruptions present for coherent communal alterity beyond the limits of constitutionalism and other liberal democratic modalities. In order to more effectively shed light on potentially transformative adivasi agitation in Jharkhand and wider India, I critique, amend, and supplement key concepts articulated by the postcolonial and subaltern studies theorists under consideration: I develop their analysis of the inadequacy of

liberal political categories by recalibrating their instruments and optics for their historiographical studies to match contemporary Indigenous mobilizations. I also circumvent the romanticizing tendencies that these frameworks have displayed by probing the internal limits of the Pathalgadi Movement's particular modality of insubordination.

I begin by recontextualizing Ranajit Guha's seminal analysis of peasant insurgencies to suggest that the Pathalgadi Movement announced its rebel presence through its deliberate partial invisibilization from the landscape of state governance. This conscious self-elision modified the historical mode of peasant insurgency for an age in which state power—by dint of global governmentality established by financialized securitization through preemption (De Goede, 2012)—is far more sophisticated and far-reaching. To elucidate the movement's self-elision, I subsequently take up historian Dipesh Chakrabarty's theorization of the "scandalous" or "uncanny" dimensions of subaltern knowledge paradigms and Partha Chatterjee's conceptualization of civil and political society: the former illustrates the dogged incommensurability of subaltern discourse, while the latter illuminates key features of the Indian postcolonial sociopolitical landscape within which the Pathalgadi Movement operated and sought to define itself.

Building upon these theorizations, I contend that the Pathalgadi Movement's sociopolitical exit and the deliberate obfuscation of its orientation, intentions, and operations from the Indian and Jharkhandi state apparatuses highlight political potentialities that exclude this particular instance. These potentialities demand a nested vocabulary that fits the sometimes overlapping or interconnected and at other times distinct modalities of political mobilization articulated by movements like Pathalgadi. These zones include i) quasi-political society, a zone beyond the reach of governmentality that maintains minimal points of

engagement with the state for the sake of survival; ii) pseudo-political society, a dis/simulation of political society intended to bypass civil society and leverage the state's obligations to entitlement-bearers; and iii) anti-political society, a zone of subaltern existence detached to the fullest extent possible from the state and civil society that actively eschews and refuses participation therein. I argue that these prefigurations significantly complicated the state's categorization and thus its control of the Pathalgadi Movement. In doing so, they outline a repertoire of ungovernability that serves as both a counterpoint and a complement to Chatterjee's politics of the governed, which is ultimately concerned with subaltern subjects seeking the benefits of integration into the ambit of state power.

The Pathalgadi Movement resonates with the much larger phenomenon of people exiting global neoliberal capitalist, state-centered modernities in ever greater numbers, as illuminated by Dilip Gaonkar (2014). In short, liberal civil society as a mode and unit of analysis falls short of capturing Indigenous mobilizations in the Global South in all their diversity, complexity, and contradiction. This chapter crucially maps new political subjectivities and zones of political mobilization in the wake of subaltern studies. The unraveling of the liberal fictions of the state, the nation, and the people; the tensions between various marginalized populations across the Global South and their respective postcolonial states; and the fledgling experiments in autonomy that these relationships have fostered are relatively well-established in the aforementioned bodies of scholarship. However, performances of incomplete autonomy in the shadows of highly repressive surveillance states remain understudied and undertheorized.

Quasi-political, pseudo-political, and anti-political society all indicate very different relations between the state and the oppressed communities under its purvey, but the

Pathalgadi Movement has combined elements of each in articulating its politics of ungovernability. I draw on all of these political modalities to offer a new critical apparatus for understanding these mobilizations, in full recognition of the complications of complete autonomy for many marginalized populations. This schema reconciles the prefiguration of alternative forms of community and society with the imperative for survival by elucidating how minimal engagement with the state can in fact support broad-based and highly generative disengagement. Intellectuals, journalists, activists, and others seeking to understand and support marginalized actors cannot afford to ignore, underplay, or devalue dynamic, creative, and militant political formations of this kind. Contrarily situating the subaltern subjects in question squarely within the liberal logics of governmentality is analytically unsound, socially irresponsible, and politically dangerous. By the same token, failing to recognize and productively reckon with the contradictions that prevail among these subjects and their articulations, even for the sake of defending their admirable efforts, ultimately risks abandoning the former to their oppressors by assuming that they have perfected their strategies for the perennially uphill battle against the state and capital.

Communal Structures of Defiance, Past and Present

Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency, Ranajit Guha's landmark study of peasant rebel consciousness within various Indian anticolonial rebellions, is defined in no small part by a politics of visibility.[8] Regardless of whether they appear to the historian and reader through the direct reporting of "rebel utterances" or select indices within elite discourse, Guha's peasant subjects tended to be visible, if not transparent, to the colonial authorities

[8] Contemporary descendants of most of the historical communities that Guha refers to as peasants in his analysis largely conceive of themselves as adivasis.

under whom they were forced to live (1983, 15-16). The language of contagion utilized by numerous British colonial officials to describe peasant rebellions brought these uprisings within the conceptual purview of the hospital, the asylum, and the laboratory, three of European society's defining disciplinary institutions. The colonial state explained away any and all gaps in its knowledge by invoking the fundamental irrationality of peasant populations, which naturally struck a sharp contrast with the supreme rationality of British colonial purveyors (Guha, 1983, 220-222). In this case, as in many others, the colonial state could track the dynamics of peasant existence and resistance even if it could not fully decipher them.[9] One of postcolonial and subaltern studies' key insights has been that the self-documented failures of colonial governance potentially gesture towards intractable histories of rebellion among subaltern populations (Guha, 1988). Here, I seek to extend this insight to current modalities of political mobilization.

Although he centers the elevated visibility of full-fledged peasant insurgency, Guha recognizes that Indian peasant communities developed intricate "structures of defiance" over their centuries of subjugation and that these structures were operative, albeit "in a weak and fragmentary manner, even in everyday life and in individual and small group resistance" (1983, 12). To evoke Antonio Gramsci, who was a major inspiration for Guha and other postcolonial and subaltern studies theorists, these communities by and large exemplified "great social disintegration," as pre-political peasants lacked the cohesion necessary to give a centralized expression to their needs and aspirations (Gramsci, 2000, 178-179). Peasant

[9.] Notwithstanding major advances in terms of technological sophistication, geopolitical scope, and societal suffusion, colonial regimes paved the way for the contemporary state surveillance mechanisms briefly considered later in this paper. The monitoring of designated deviants and threats by settler colonial administrations and their preemptive regulation of these disobedient subjects formed crucial parts of the prehistory of the modern surveillance state.

structures of defiance only come into their own “in an emphatic and comprehensive fashion” when the peasants in question upset the established colonial order under the influence of charismatic leadership. The beginnings of the peasants' sense of themselves as a “social mass” were thus indicated by acts of extreme violence directed against moneylenders, landlords, and other comparable oppressors. The elevated visibility of the peasantry was typically tied to their exacerbated suffering; as such, the peasant only became an insurgent when starvation, taxation, dispossession, and other indignities of colonial domination turned him into a dacoit (bandit) (Guha, 1983, 12, 87-92).

The visibilization of peasant insurgents brought them closer to the state in many ways. On the one hand, they obviously became clearer and higher priority targets for state surveillance, sabotage, and persecution. On the other hand, the inversive character of peasant insurgency often simulated state functions: rebels identified themselves as a formally constituted army, their commanders as law-enforcers, and other leaders as ranked civilian officials (Guha, 1983, 10). Fundamentally imperfect though this simulation might have been, its gestures toward matching and supplanting its British counterparts may well have posed as much of a threat to the colonial state as the prospect of outright destruction, while still articulating this threat in terms intelligible to the state.

Guha attributes much of the visibilization of peasant struggles to charismatic demagogues capable of marshalling the masses through self-mythification. “In India, as elsewhere,” he stipulates, “the leaders of some of the mightiest peasant revolts spoke in the inspired language of prophets and reformers.” These leaders did not merely mediate the communal and strategic aspects of insurgency through myth and the ideology of class struggle through religion (Guha, 1983, 251). Rather, they spearheaded their respective

rebellions to such a degree that they came to embody many of these insurgencies in their entirety, as was the case with the Birsa Munda Movement that emerged in the Khunti District of present-day Jharkhand in the late nineteenth century. The personalization of peasant rebellions made the insurgencies in question more vulnerable to disruption by the colonial state, as the latter could—and did—simply seek to eliminate the former's figureheads. To amend Gramsci's theorization of Southern Italian peasant intellectualism, peasant mobilizations mediated by "prophets and reformers" always ended up "finding themselves a place in the [extra]ordinary articulations of the state apparatus"—that is, its various means of exercising and abusing its monopoly on legitimate violence (2000, 181).

Guha's analysis begs three interrelated questions, especially insofar as its applicability to contemporary conditions imposed by neoliberal governmentality is concerned: firstly, what happens to peasant structures of defiance when they are not forced by heightened circumstances to resort to insurgency? Secondly, what happens to peasant movements that lose charismatic leaders? And finally, can peasants operate outside the terms of the state altogether?

Guha does not seem to offer an outlet for structures of defiance apart from insurgency; he implies that, though these structures may persist into the future as they endured in the past, they will only ever be preludes to insurgency. This line of reasoning becomes all the more problematic with respect to peasant survival under less exceptional but no less oppressive conditions of existence: does the peasant only become legible to the state as a dacoit when he takes up arms after his suffering becomes unbearable? What does the state make of the peasant when he endures hunger and other forms of slow violence over the medium to long term without necessarily revolting?

Guha takes a stronger stance on communities and uprisings deprived of their leaders. The lay peasant's deference to and dependence upon sacerdotal mediation by a “priest, saint, healer, preacher, prophet” was supposedly symptomatic of a consciousness that proved far too feeble to cope with its own autonomously generated collective project and therefore left this project to a superior wisdom (Guha, 1983, 273). On the one hand, Guha argues against the purported spontaneity of historical peasant rebellions in order to challenge colonial, nationalist, liberal, and some socialist historiographies that depict peasants as pre-political subjects lacking a revolutionary consciousness and the capacity to develop one without external intervention. On the other hand, however, he perceives a severely stunted self-organizational capacity among the peasant masses: peasants did not so much define their own aims as much as they were assigned these goals by demagogues. Guha leaves the critical reader to wonder whether leaders of this kind were all that prevented peasants from dissolving into the “'sub-political' outbreaks of mass impetuosity without any direction or form” that he denounces (1983, 9-10).

Guha's outlook on peasant operation outside the terms of the state is more ambiguous: in fact, it hinges on ambiguity. The British Raj developed particular administrative codes for dealing with the dacoit and the rebel, and it was more than willing to classify all rebels as dacoits for the purposes of counterinsurgency (Guha, 1983, 101).[10] Nevertheless, frequent misrecognition rooted in colonial inertia when responding to rapid peasant code-switching

[10.] Even though she does not grant thugs subaltern status, Parama Roy’s analysis of the colonial codification and abolition of thuggee (1996) could potentially shed provocative light on the concurrent suppression of peasant rebels. Extrapolating Roy’s theorization suggests that the criminalization in question could have stemmed from the British Raj’s anxiety over the heterogeneity, fluidity, and mimicry of peasant, rebel, and dacoit identities and, in turn, their capacity to weaken the colonial regime’s epistemological and ontological foundations. Like sati as examined by Spivak (1988), the case of thuggee also illuminates the threats posed to subversive, insurrectionary, and/or emancipatory social movements by liberal programs of reform undertaken by a repressive state.

opened up conceptual and practical space for subaltern maneuvers beyond the grasp of the state. As illustrated by political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott in the comparable context of Upland Southeast Asia (2009), situations involving day-to-day peasant existence as opposed to outright revolt widened the space for subaltern subversion and rebellion even further. For instance, the British Raj's gross misinterpretations of the usage and/or circulation of the drum, the flute, the horn, and the chapathi were far more outlandish and potentially more impactful than its failures to keep up with the machinations and insurrections of dacoits (Guha, 1983, 226-246). Notwithstanding instances in which these fixtures of peasant life did actually mobilize peasants, the colonial accounts surveyed by Guha display a seemingly paradoxical desperation to assert that these symbolic objects were being deployed for subversive ends, no matter how absurd that possibility might have been in any given situation even at the time. The slightest hint of open insubordination and insurrection curiously appears to have been more comforting to the colonial state than undeniably mundane evidence of the failure of an alien authority fully to understand, hence control, the native population under its rule.

Reports and commentaries on the Pathalgadi Movement provide compelling contemporary answers to the three questions raised by Guha's analysis of historical peasant rebellions. In 2018, movement participants took up symbols of armed revolt and some rudimentary weapons in their own communities without launching all-out assaults on their oppressors; this is perhaps a key distinction between them and Maoist insurgents in India's so-called Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) Corridor who engage in open armed confrontation with state authorities. For instance, adivasis who attended one of the largest Pathalgadi gatherings in the village of Kochang in April of 2018 brandished bows and arrows as well as

AK-47s carved out of wood; police and paramilitary forces kept their distance, much as they had previously been reluctant to enter participating communities (Tewary, 2018). Pathalgadi participants came closest to reproducing the historical mode of peasant insurrection in August of 2017 when they abducted three policemen from the house of a BJP Member of Parliament in the Khunti district. Authorities subsequently fired tear gas shells and used batons to disperse a mob blocking their entry into a village during their search for the abductees (Press Trust of India, 2018).

Even when Pathalgadi resistors incurred the wrath of the Jharkhandi state by taking its enforcers hostage, thereby inverting the state's monopoly of force over sovereign territory, they did not necessarily confront it in the same way as their forebears. Instead, they put the state on the defensive by forcing it to pursue them into their own terrain and break down their resolve. Khunti Assistant Director of Police R.K. Malik's statement that actions in the name of Pathalgadi would be dealt with "as per the law" could have been more than a reaffirmation of police business as usual: it could have been an attempt to reassert the authority of the state in a territory vying to retreat from it, with some amount of success at the time (Press Trust of India, 2018). The state is equipped to deal with the crime of kidnapping in and of itself but possibly less so with retreat from outright confrontation and overall withdrawal from territorial sovereignty. In the absence of demands for negotiation, reform, or state-oriented secessionism, the retreat and withdrawal in the case at hand appear to have confounded the state by operating outside the statist binary of insurgency and counter-insurgency.

The retention of certain symbols, weapons, and tactics of historical peasant insurrection potentially indicate the Pathalgadi Movement's internalization of the spirit of armed revolt; it was, after all, based in no small part out of the historical birthplace of Birsa

Munda and his legendary millenarian uprising. Instead of merely serving as an outlet for communal structures of defiance, revolt or at least the prospect of it may well have served as a structure or meta-structure of defiance in itself, weaving "weak and fragmentary... individual and small group resistance" into a script at least partly illegible to the state (Guha, 1983, 12). Particularly under the authority of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP since 2014, the Indian state and its subcomponents have demonstrated an ever-expanding expanding propensity to crack down on direct challenges to their authority through massacres, lynchings, mass arrests, communication network shutdowns, and other forms of state and state-endorsed violence in West Bengal, Delhi, Kashmir, and countless other locales. As fascistic as many aspects of this crackdown might be, its proponents also enjoy the added protection of the liberal democratic institutions they have managed to capture, in a divergence from early twentieth century European fascism (Ahmad, 2016). This divergence complicates assessments of the prevailing Indian political landscape in terms of populism: arguing that the spiral of competitive populism prevents a return to liberal propriety fails to acknowledge how liberalism itself is complicit in ever-intensifying Hindu nationalist authoritarianism (Chatterjee, 2020, xvi). Beneath the façade of democratic process paradoxically buttressed by right-wing populist mobilizations, the Indian state's surveillance and population management mechanisms have become increasingly sophisticated. The 2016 demonetization of ₹500 and ₹1,000 banknotes in a purported bid to uncover "black money," the all-encompassing Aadhaar biometric / demographic identification system, and the hacking scandal facilitated by the Israeli-origin Pegasus spyware (Safi, 2018a, 2018b; NewsClick, 2021) epitomize the finance-security assemblage outlined by Marieke De Goede (2012). In much the same way that sweeping British and American legislative acts totalized

terrorism in the post-9/11 era, demonetization, Aadhar, and Pegasus, among other shadowy instruments of statecraft, threaten to expose, immobilize, and even destroy dissidents by tracking virtually all transactions, donations, and affiliations through the murky multi-sited and multilevel conjunctions of laws, institutions, treaties and private initiatives (De Goede, 2012, 80-82). In light of these eminent dangers, illegibility could have been vital to the survival of villagers participating in the Pathalgadi Movement and could also prove valuable to other grassroots movements confronting an increasingly totalitarian and fascistic regime.

The movement's continuation in spite of the incarceration of its leaders attests to the importance of its partial invisibility as well as to its operational viability beyond its figureheads and potentially hierarchical organizing structures built around them. In March of 2018, police in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh charged movement coordinators Vijay Kujur, Herman Kindo, and Joseph Tigga with hate speech, obstruction of public servants, and criminal conspiracy in an effort to quell the Pathalgadi rebellion. Nevertheless, secondary leaders and ordinary villagers filled the gaps left by this flurry of convictions—a far cry from the "mass impetuosity without any direction or form" lamented by Guha (1983, 10). The movement only truly began to lose ground when its participants were charged with sedition en masse. The Pathalgadi Movement's dynamism and durability outside the terms and limits of charismatic leadership offer a contemporary counterpoint to Guha's assertion that cults of personality were the starting and ending points of historical peasant mobilizations.

The apparent secular constitutionalist orientation of the movement further strikes a contrast with the inspired prophetic rhetoric that Guha identifies with past peasant insurrections. This aspect of the Pathalgadi rebellion could indicate that modernization through industrialization, education, and liberal democratic politicization, among other

means, may have moved adivasis out of the pre-political realm and closer to a modern revolutionary consciousness, in keeping with Guha's analysis. However, the deep spiritual and communal significance of the pathals complicates a purely secularist interpretation of the rebellion. For hundreds of years, regional adivasis have used pathals to honor ancestors, community leaders, and the dead; to clarify village rules; to demarcate village boundaries and other important landmarks; and to reaffirm adivasi stewardship of the land (Sahu, 2018). At the same time, certain figures in the movement explicitly stated that they do not believe in the Indian Constitution and contrarily linked the movement to Gujarat's Sati-Pati cult, citing its dossier *Heaven's Light, Our Guide*[11] as the basis for their claim to "jal, jangal, aur zameen" ("water, forest, and land") (Sundar, 2018). These various currents—secular, sacerdotal, or some combination of the two—endured concerted state attacks upon the movement's leaders and communities. Ironically, the Hindu nationalist zeal that underpinned Das' Jharkhand and continues to propel Modi's India suffered the same pitfalls when grappling with the Pathalgadi Movement as the modern secular consciousness its proponents vehemently reject. While Hindutva ideologues certainly do not believe that the world is a disenchanted place, they seem to struggle to come to terms with regimes of enchantment outside their own and the interwovenness of these regimes with more secular or at least less dogmatically religious codes of conduct.

Notwithstanding their confounding exit from the purview of the state, Pathalgadi adivasis would appear, at first glance, to have organized themselves into communal

[11]. While "Heaven's light our guide" was the official motto of the Order of the Star of India founded by Queen Victoria in 1861, the dossier Nandini Sundar inspected during her visit to communities participating in the Pathalgadi Movement consisted of a wide assortment of documents, from the Gujarat revenue rules to various newspaper clippings. The Sati Pati cult asserts that adivasis are the rightful owners of all Indian land, on the basis of a promise apparently made by Queen Victoria to cult founder Keshri Singh.

institutions all too familiar to nation-statecraft and its proponents. They have seemingly reaffirmed and replicated the political and philosophical foundations of the Indian postcolonial state through their constitutionalism. Arguments by liberal scholars like Nandini Sundar (2018) that "the engagement of citizens with the Constitution [in the case of Pathalgadi and otherwise] appeared to be in direct proportion to the [Modi and Das] administration's abandonment of it" confirm that movement participants engaged with the state as a general, deep-seated modality, if not with its manifestation under national and sub-national Hindutva politics. Additionally, movement participants formed their own schools as well as an examining board on the pattern of the Central Board of Secondary Education, the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education, and the Jharkhand State Board to supervise these schools (Tewary, 2018). Even the gram sabha, the village council consisting of all adults claimed by movement participants as their traditional and rightful governing body, is recognized, if not understood or respected, by the Indian governmental apparatus: the Constitution itself as well as the 1996 PESA Act acknowledge the gram sabha and seek to reconcile it with the country's overall developmental vision (Kothari, 2000).

Schools and an examining board administered by a state-recognized governance structure under the auspices of the Constitution come across as the modern-day equivalents of the mimicry that Guha attributes to numerous historical peasant insurgencies. Nonetheless, tensions within the rebellion indicate that its simulation of these institutions may have not only been imperfect reproductions but also not universally desired. While some movement participants very much grounded their beliefs and practices in the Constitution and even pledged their non-opposition to the Indian nation, others distanced themselves from the latter or, at the very least, sought to disentangle the Constitution from the Indian state. "We are the

Bharat Sarkar (the Indian government)," declared a group of adivasi youths gathered in Khunti's Arki block in April of 2018. "We do not recognize the Central or State governments or the President, Prime Minister or Governor. Our gram sabha is the real constitutional body," Another group of young leaders added, "Pathalgadi are basically a way to demarcate our territories and tell outsiders (government officials) that the law of the land does not apply here" (Tewary, 2018, para. 4).

In both these instances, Pathalgadi agitators appear to have emptied the state of many of its defining protocols and proscriptions in order to articulate their rebellious exit, employing simulation in the sense of dissimulation rather than reproduction: they deliberately simulated *but did not emulate* state institutions, functions, and aesthetics, with a view towards trapping the state in a liminal space of uncertainty between familiarity and unfamiliarity. This maneuver apparently worked: the desperation of state officials to identify one or more nefarious forces behind the movement echoes the insistence of British colonial administrators that beating drums and baking chapathis masked mutiny. Poor, innocent tribals—salvific objects in need of protection from external exploiters—are naturally far more palatable to a constellation of powers whose very operation and legitimacy turns on the denial of adivasi agency. Politicians, law enforcement officials, bureaucrats, and pro-establishment commentators may have not just been concerned that movement participants were claiming their legal entitlements, as a number of liberal commentators contended. At a much more fundamental level, these hegemonic actors could have been worried that they would be exposed as hostile alien authorities by the collective rejection of a native population whom they do not—perhaps cannot, perhaps refuse to—fully understand and respect. As the next section demonstrates, the Pathalgadi Movement's refusal to be controlled through

welfare disbursements only intensified the trepidation at hand.

The Repertoire of Pathalgadi Ungovernability

The largely illegible withdrawal of the Pathalgadi Movement, its continuation despite its leaders' arrests, and its simulation in the sense of dissimulation all speak to the notions of "scandal" / "the uncanny" and the subaltern analyzed by Dipesh Chakrabarty and the mechanics of political society framed by Partha Chatterjee. Discussing what he has learned from Vincente Rafael and Gayatri Spivak's discussion of the politics of translation, Chakrabarty stipulates that "there remains something of a "scandal"—of the shocking—in every translation." As such, an ambiguity must mark the translation in question in order to make it both intelligible to the intended interpreter and yet "enough unlike to shock" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 89). Insofar as something of the uncanny / scandalous "remains" in a translation, it potentially refuses to be effaced, although it is by no means invulnerable to erasure. The pressures exercised by peasant insurgency on elite discourse serve as an obvious and pertinent historical example of this resistance to effacement (Guha, 1983, 17). Sometimes, the scandalous aspects of translations, avoidable or unavoidable, cannot be silenced, even though the scholar in question may intentionally or unintentionally render these aspects inaudible for the sake of ideological coherence.

Although they might believe that the Pathalgadi Movement was nothing more than legalistic maneuvering, liberal commentators like Priya Ranjan Sahu and Nandini Sundar implicitly conceded otherwise when they chronicled adivasi viewpoints on the rebellion that diverged from this understanding. Sahu was forced to recognize militant Munda opposition to the government theft of land, which flies in the face of liberal good governance discourse that advocates for partnerships between local, national, and transnational stakeholders and

thus reaffirms the fundamental beneficence, rationality, and legitimacy of the liberal democratic state. Sundar, meanwhile, recorded adivasis involved with the Pathalgadi Movement declaring that, "The judicial system only grinds people down, it does not deliver justice" and that, "We are taught false *sanskriti* [culture, specifically Hindu culture] in schools," thereby questioning the sacrosanct liberal institutions of the rule of law and education (2018, para. 20). The complaint regarding Hindu indoctrination could perhaps be resolved by calling for a re-secularization of Indian education, but the indictment of the judicial system in its entirety resists easy liberal reform. The scandal of non-liberal and even anti-liberal emancipatory politics seems to lurk behind the constitutionalism shrouding the Pathalgadi Movement. The sentiments above move beyond ambiguity to challenge Sahu and Sundar's depictions of the movement's compatibility with liberal democracy, refusing, in a sense, to be translated into the language of the state and capital. In the absence of an alternative account of the political aspirations communicated by these sentiments and the overall Pathalgadi Movement, they will be registered solely as subaltern discontent, indistinguishable from similar sentiments expressed by millions of other oppressed people in India and across the world. The analytic of ungovernability offers a means of constructing this alternative account.

The subaltern will speak regardless of whether scholars can hear them.[12] Scandalous subaltern sentiments are as likely to interrupt what these scholars write as they are to reverberate through the latter's writing with their explicit intent and permission if they

[12]. With the publication of her landmark essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in 1988, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak initiated a vital conversation about the international division of labor that separates both Global Northern and elite Global Southern intellectuals from their subaltern subjects of study, muting the latter's voice and agency in the process. Rosalind Morris and Jean Franco (2010) have made particularly astute contributions to the ongoing discussion of Spivak's idea.

happen to be sympathetic to their subaltern interlocutors. As such, subaltern subjects may be mediated by the problems of representation, but they can, in turn, mediate these problems as well by asserting their "rebel presence" in discourses of power (Chakrabarty, 2000, 94; Guha, 1983, 15 -16). Chakrabarty focuses on the subaltern's disruption of the global narrative of capital; at the same time, he also gestures toward this subject's construction of a narrative of community that serves as a persistent undercurrent to the narrative of capital, which also disrupts the interwoven narratives of the state by foregrounding an alternative, non-compliant political modality. In addition to reminding us of "other ways of being human than as bearers of the capacity to labor," the subaltern can also prefigure subjecthood and agency outside the terms of modern secular liberal democracy and governmentality (Chakrabarty, 2000, 94).

a. ***Quasi, Pseudo, and Anti-political Society***

Chatterjee's exploration of political society in Kolkata and wider West Bengal partially answers Chakrabarty's call to consider subaltern life at and beyond the limits of the capitalist state. Chatterjee understands political society as a site of negotiation and contestation opened up by the activities of governmental agencies aimed at population groups, such as the delivery of civic services and welfare benefits. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Chatterjee describes how poor and disenfranchised groups in most of the postcolonial world have devised "messy, dangerous, and often unpalatable" strategies to ensure that they have some choice in how they are governed (Chatterjee, 2004, 74 -77). They have given themselves the moral attributes of a community and employed a range of paralegal arrangements to chart a course through civil society in order to access services and benefits guaranteed to them by the state (Chatterjee, 2004, 57, 77).

Political society is, for Chatterjee, ultimately shaped by a politics of engagement with

the state: it is adjacent and connected to civil society even though it is distinct from the latter. The poor and disenfranchised may choose *how* to be governed, but the fact that they can only resort to modifying, rearranging, or supplementing prevailing structures of property and sovereignty implies that they cannot choose *whether* to be governed at all. Political society may very well subvert the new liberal dogma of participation of civil society and, by extension, the subaltern classes it represents, but it does not challenge the much older liberal dogma of participation in representative democracy and its distributive apparatuses. Unlike formally codified rights, the entitlements of members of political society are not legally guaranteed by the state, but they nevertheless entail a responsibility of the latter to use its resources to satisfy the former.

The dark side of political society constituted by violence and criminality troubles the state's responsibility to political society in exchange for the latter's submission and respectable conduct. Nonetheless—and most likely because governmental services essential to the survival of the deprived groups are on the line—"a quick and often generous inclusion into the ambit of governmentality" tends to subsume these transgressive behaviors (Chatterjee, 2004, 75-76). Whatever the means of political society's negotiation might be, its enthusiastic or begrudging end goal is, for Chatterjee, welfare and security through submission to governance. Subaltern actors in political society might remind the state and civil society of other ways of being human, but these scandalous or uncanny tendencies are not necessarily incompatible with their hegemonic counterparts—often quite the contrary.

In certain respects, the Pathalgadi Movement conforms to Chatterjee's analytical schema and the main case study he uses to illustrate it. The movement's demand that all funds earmarked for tribal development be handed over to gram sabhas parallels the *Jan*

Kalyan Samiti or People's Welfare Association's role as a liaison with the Gobindanapur Rail Colony's governmental agencies, police and municipal authorities, and NGOs in inner-city Kolkata since the 1980s (Chatterjee, 2004, 56). The “dark side” of the rebellion, such as its promise of armed self-defense and the kidnapping of police officers, would then presumably be nothing more than a belowground pathway to the aforementioned aboveground development. The rebellion's aversion to police officers, NGO workers, journalists, and virtually all other outsiders entering participating villages additionally parallels the human wall created by Rail Colony residents to prevent the construction of a wall around the settlement in 1965 (Chatterjee, 2004, 54).

However, the human wall was only ever meant to be a temporary tactic to shift the terms of the Colony's negotiation with the state in favor of its residents; Pathalgadi rebels, on the other hand, did not attach any deadline whatsoever to their blockade, with the latter only succumbing to the state’s deployment of excessive force. This contrast illuminates the movement's overall departure from the political society / civil society nexus. Other aspects of the 11-point charter drawn up by the movement belie its request for tribal developmental funds: it demanded that the government stop sending adivasis to jail on the pretext that they are Maoists, that all amendments to land laws permitting the sale of tribal land to non-tribals be scrapped, and that all police and paramilitary forces be withdrawn from tribal areas (Tewary, 2018). This combination of sweeping demands for freedom from state occupation, surveillance, and persecution with a single petition for access to state resources may indicate that the Pathalgadi Movement embodied a *quasi-political society* at best. Instead of seeking wholesale inclusion into the ambit of governmentality, most of the rebellion's underside could have comprised a zone beyond the reach of the government; this zone was nonetheless

conjoined to a lone point of engagement rendered inevitable for survival by the state's control over resources. Even this lone point of engagement—the communal demand for national and regional tribal development funds—by no means entailed good-faith partnership or even extended coordination with the state. It conversely comes across as an intermittent financial transaction merely meant to enable and complement direct control over land, forests, and water that deliberately circumvented block and district officials.

The anti-statist politics of the Pathalgadi Movement did not end with its calls for governmental non-intervention in adivasi communities; it extended to adivasi non-participation in core state institutions and processes. Movement leaders repeatedly attested that their communities would not participate in elections held at any level or in national occasions like India's Republic and Independence Days (Tewary, 2018). Furthermore, many Pathalgadi communities actually rejected their governmental entitlements to food, rural employment, housing, and pensions. Decrying the pilferage that plagues such schemes, villagers claimed that they could survive without them because they had been, for all intents and purposes, doing exactly that for years. "Out of the budget of Rs. 12, 000 for a *Swachh Bharat* [Clean India] toilet," complained Budhua Munda to Priya Ranjan Sahu, "government officials and contractors eat up more than a half. Out of the budget of Rs. 1.30 lakh for the *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna* [Housing for All], the beneficiary finally gets less than Rs. 1 lakh. What is the point of such development" (2018, para. 20)?

Budhua Munda's unequivocal disenchantment with state governance and welfare distribution, which was roundly echoed by the villagers in his midst, indicates that the node of the Pathalgadi Movement that engaged the state could be described in terms of *pseudo-political society*, a dis/simulation of political society intended to bypass civil society and

leverage the state's obligations to entitlement-bearers. Though they may have operated under the banner of the Constitution to some extent, Pathalgadi participants seem to have had little interest in being governed. The constitutionalist face that they maintained for strategic ends appears to have camouflaged what could be called an *anti-political society*: a zone of subaltern existence detached altogether from the state and civil society that actively eschewed and refused participation therein. This scandalous other way of being human was neither parallel or adjacent to nor compatible with its hegemonic counterparts, nor did it seek to replace them on the largest scales possible: it simply existed outside of and deliberately apart from them to the fullest extent possible.

Quasi-political society reappropriates state resources for the survival of subaltern actors while still keeping the state at a safe distance. Pseudo-political society reinforces this survival strategy by articulating the mobilization at hand in terms that are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar enough to side-step, delay, or otherwise inhibit well-heeled counterinsurgency measures that could capsize a movement long before its brute suppression. And anti-political society fosters the cultivation of alternate, autonomous lifeways behind these strategic measures. Together, these prefigurations frame a repertoire of ungovernability, wherein the subaltern actors at hand do not force their governing authorities to learn *how* they would prefer to be governed but rather how much they would prefer to *not* be governed, as exemplified by their deception of the state through their deliberate self-obfuscation and subsequent complication of their categorization and management. This repertoire entails a multidimensional political strategy that requires all three prefigurations, though subaltern actors do not necessarily employ all three at the same time or all the time.

Chatterjee (2004) persuasively argues that governmentality can expand the conditions

of democratic political participation, but he fails to adequately recognize that this expansion can be and virtually always is limited by the state's overriding economic, political, and social agenda, which, in the case of contemporary Jharkhand and India, largely promulgates neoliberal dispossession through state violence and Hindu fundamentalism. The poor and disenfranchised are not unequivocally compelled to accept this agenda, regardless of whether the state expands or constricts the conditions for their democratic participation; in fact, they might contrarily be compelled to reject it if engaging with dominant sociopolitical institutions threatens to compromise their autonomy. Electoral participation may have increased among the poor, minorities, and disadvantaged population groups in India, and many of the country's public works and social services may be ambitious (if cynically devised, poorly administered, and largely ineffective), but they do not in and of themselves circumscribe subaltern political creativity, aspiration, and mobilization.

b. Jharkhandi Civil Society's Trepidation Towards Ungovernability

The maneuvers carried out by Pathalgadi participants across quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society confounded not only state authorities and liberal scholars and political commentators but also a number of Jharkhandi non-profit professionals, activists, and intellectuals who have worked closely with adivasi populations. When I first visited Jharkhand in the summer of 2018, the state was still reeling from the disruption caused by the movement, as exemplified by the preponderance of police, army, and paramilitary forces in Ranchi, the state capital, and Khunti, the movement's aforementioned focal point. Despite the looming danger of state violence, virtually all of the non-profit professionals that I interviewed in Khunti—the majority of whom are Mundas, just like the majority of Pathalgadi participants—denounced the movement's subversion of adivasi custom, its non-

compliance with state and national law, and, in turn, its refusal to endorse the agenda of cultural preservation, development, and good governance that their own organizations typically propagate. Some of these professionals acknowledged in passing that the movement's grievances about the governmental and corporate seizure of land were at least partly legitimate and that adivasis generally desire and perhaps even deserve self-determination. However, they followed these tentative concessions with rather acerbic criticisms of movement participants for politicizing and thereby sullying a sacred adivasi tradition, for keeping well-meaning outsiders at a distance, for supposedly indulging in deplorable behaviors such as alcoholism and human trafficking, and, in a more general sense, for not recognizing the futility of their anti-statist actions.

The professionals at hand, who worked at the time for an array of local, national, and international nongovernmental organizations, juxtaposed the movement's opposition to well-meaning outsiders, such as themselves as well as state bureaucrats and welfare service providers, with its alleged links to malicious outsiders, especially "left-wing extremists." Even more striking than these unprovable but nonetheless pointed accusations was the previously mentioned dual claim made by multiple professionals that adivasis have the right to protect their own cultures at the same time as they do not have the right to construct "parallel institutions," such as the schools, banks, and other initiatives set up by the Pathalgadi agitators. Notwithstanding the fact that that these initiatives are at least partly rooted in beliefs that long precede the Indian and Jharkhandi states, which adivasis might thus consider the true parallel institutions at issue, this apparently self-contradictory statement is very telling: it reveals that, from the perspective of the non-governmental sector that has come to dominate civic associational life in Jharkhand, the Pathalgadi Movement

does not only lie outside the boundaries of civil society but is further opposed to the latter's rational, respectable, and modern liberal sensibilities, for which it must be taken to task. This broad consensus among the non-governmental representatives that I interviewed could justify state violence against the very communities they claim to be protecting. Here, the concrete dangers of liberalism's fundamental incommensurability with and its ultimate antagonism to militant, self-directed, anti-authoritarian subaltern mobilizations is cast in rather sharp relief.

The Jharkhandi activists and intellectuals with whom I discussed the movement were more overtly sympathetic to its intentions while nonetheless reiterating some of the aforementioned criticisms. While they too did not approve of the movement's divergence from the older and less confrontational Munda practice of Pathalgadi, their objections focused more so on the movement's transgression of liberal democratic protocol as a self-defeating move. On the one hand, these particular interviewees affirmed the right of adivasis to control their traditional lands with little to none of the hesitation displayed by their non-profit counterparts; on the other hand, they could not bring themselves to condone what they perceived as the movement's unnecessarily bellicose methods, averring that Pathalgadi agitators should contrarily secure their rights through the "proper channels"—presumably, by petitioning state authorities to protect adivasi territories from corporate appropriation, by removing the Das regime from power during the next election, and, at most, by staging peaceful protests to solicit wider support for their cause.

To be clear, none of these activists harbor any illusions about the threats posed to Indigenous and other subaltern collectivities by the previous Das state government or the incumbent Modi national government. Having witnessed the BJP and the Hindu Right as a whole consolidate power in their own state and across India, they have been harassed,

arrested, and threatened with far worse fates for their solidarity with the most marginalized and exploited sectors of Jharkhandi and Indian society over the past several years. This is to say that they certainly recognize how the much-vaunted institutions of Indian liberal democracy have been captured by proto-fascist forces. And yet—perhaps out of fear for their hyper-vulnerable compatriots, perhaps due to their ideological and ethical commitments, but certainly with the best of intentions—they have maintained their faith in the processes that are meant to undergird these institutions, if not the current iterations of these institutions and the opacity, duplicity, and impunity that increasingly define them. This faith shone through even when I returned to Jharkhand in 2019 and found that many of these activists and intellectuals had actively and courageously engaged the Pathalgadi Movement in the previous year. Regardless of whether they still questioned the movement's weaponization of adivasi tradition or its combative methods, they had rushed to the defense of the thousands of participants arrested by the Das government prior to the latter's defeat in the 2019 Legislative Assembly Election. This undeniably laudable show of support was nevertheless couched in the language of liberal democracy: it was a challenge to the government's contravention of participants' civil liberties and a call for dialogue between state authorities and participants, not an endorsement of the movement's political project (The Wire Staff, 2019). The discourse of liberal democracy may well have been strategically necessary to enlarge the movement's base of support and help its participants navigate the less than hospitable corridors of judicial power. However, it reaffirms the persistent tension between civil society and its quasi, pseudo, and anti-political antipodes all the same: certain actors within these oppositional domains of politics can clearly work in concert with each other to productive effect, but the limits set by civil society's pervasive and dogged liberalism and the negative reaction that

this orientation provokes from many subaltern political actors could also prevent the two sets of actors from working together to cultivate a broad-based collective alternative to the postcolonial statist and capitalist status quo in the medium to long term.

Recognizing Subaltern Politics Beyond Liberal Analytics

The Pathalgadi Movement's contingent repertoire of ungovernability was by no means invulnerable to the state's monopoly on legitimate violence. The mass arrests suffered by the movement at the hands of the Das government severely impacted its reach and strength. Media coverage of the movement dwindled to sporadic reports providing technical updates on the legal proceedings involving key arrestees. Interest in the movement briefly spiked again in January of 2020 under horrifying circumstances: a group of Pathalgadi supporters in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum District allegedly decapitated seven villagers with whom they had argued about the movement's direction; other supporters believe that the accused were framed, much as the movement was, accordingly to all reliable accounts, falsely blamed for the gang rape of five anti-trafficking activists in 2018 (Press Trust of India, 2018; Kiro, 2020). For the most part, though, the media and the Jharkhandi state, now under the control of Hemant Soren and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, all but declared the movement finished. Jharkhandi adivasi activists have pointed out that Soren has yet to fulfill his promise to drop all sedition cases lodged by Das, but even this incomplete task reduces the present state of the movement to a matter of due process.

And then, in February of 2021, a group of about 100 adivasis from the Gumla District came to Ranchi and tried to install a large stone plaque in front of the Jharkhand High Court. They claimed that the land on which the Court sits is Indigenous territory where the government has no executive powers and that the recently elected government is

unconstitutional. When questioned, they insisted that their actions had nothing to do with Pathalgadi whatsoever (Times of India, 2021). Furthermore, in March of 2021, social workers in five villages in Khunti attempted to convene a two-day-long meeting to discuss how the 1996 PESA Act, perhaps the most significant piece of national legislation guaranteeing adivasi control over traditional lands, resources, and cultures, should be implemented in their areas. Due to pressure from the police, the convenors were forced to cancel the event, and they too went out of their way to disassociate themselves from Pathalgadi (Saran, 2021).

Is the Pathalgadi Movement experiencing a resurgence in all but name? Are the incidents above the latest maneuvers by participating communities within quasi and pseudo-political society, perhaps in the hopes of eventually opening up enough space for an anti-political intervention? Is the previously dispersed multitude of the Pathalgadi Movement slowly, cautiously, and surreptitiously attempting to reassume its previous collective form or reconstitute itself into a new one? If all of these questions can in fact be answered in the affirmative, however, will the new Pathalgadi Movement be as misunderstood and misrepresented as its predecessor, as it is once again refracted through the lens of liberalism by its opponents, its observers, and even some of its outside supporters?

As neoliberal Hindu nationalism has tightened its hold on Indian politics since the election of Narendra Modi in 2014, liberal constitutionalism, legalism, and welfarism seem to have taken on a far more subversive and even revolutionary hue among the country's progressive and left-leaning scholars, activists, and political commentators. Unfortunately, as this paper has shown, these optics are inadequate to understand and appreciate many of the subaltern political formations that have emerged, at least in a rudimentary form, to contest

Hindu nationalism, neoliberal capitalist exploitation, extractivism, and displacement, and state surveillance and repression. Beyond the particular contexts of Jharkhand and the Pathalgadi Movement, people continue to exit neoliberal capitalist, state-centered modernities with alarming and perhaps increasing regularity in the present, especially in the Global South, and situating them squarely within the liberal logics of governmentality is analytically unsound, socially irresponsible, and politically dangerous.

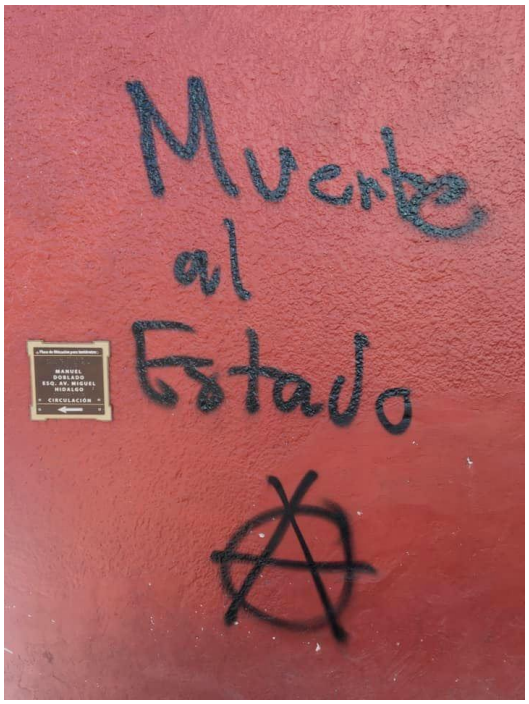
If the subaltern historian, political scientist, or journalist writing for the sake of social justice and equity is to "take history [or politics], the code, to its limits in order to make its unworking visible" (Chakrabarty, 2000, 88, 96), they must be prepared to examine not only negotiation in the state's long shadow but also political escape from this penumbra altogether. This analytical, political, and ethical imperative is perhaps even more crucial for personal, organizational, and material solidarity with subaltern actors: the latter may well be alienated rather than encouraged by appeals from intellectuals and activists to collaborate and coordinate with state authorities, NGOs, news media, and other agents of bourgeois-oriented civil society. Pathalgadi anti-political society did not precipitate tried and tested repressive state protocols by mounting armed revolt, nor did it depend entirely on demagogues who mirrored state representatives or uncritically simulate institutions all too familiar to the state. It did not wholeheartedly seek entry into civil society for the sake of accessing civic services and welfare schemes. It did not even present the state with a crowd of loosely affiliated individuals capable of being dispersed through tear gas and rubber bullets, if not citizenship and the public sphere. Like so many other subaltern communities and movements emerging across India, the Global South, and the rest of the world, it contrarily invites a careful rethinking of all these fixtures of both liberal governance and extra-governmental efforts to

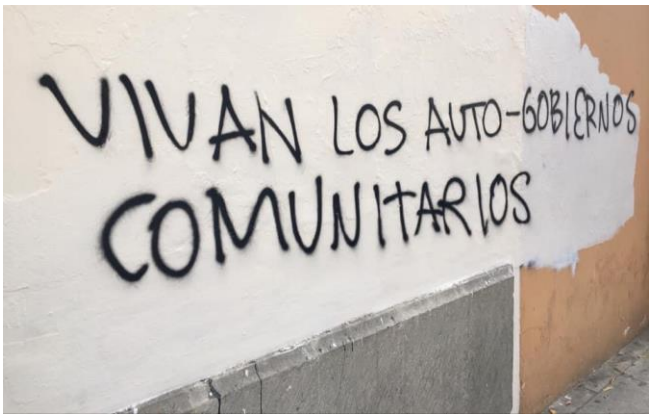
engage the state, illuminating the rich, dynamic political spaces, insurgent strategies, and collective forms thriving beyond the grasp of both. In the next chapter, I turn my attention to these spaces, strategies, and forms as they exist in Oaxaca, where they articulate a distinct but comparable repertoire of ungovernability steeped in the Mexican state's own histories of colonial and capitalist domination.

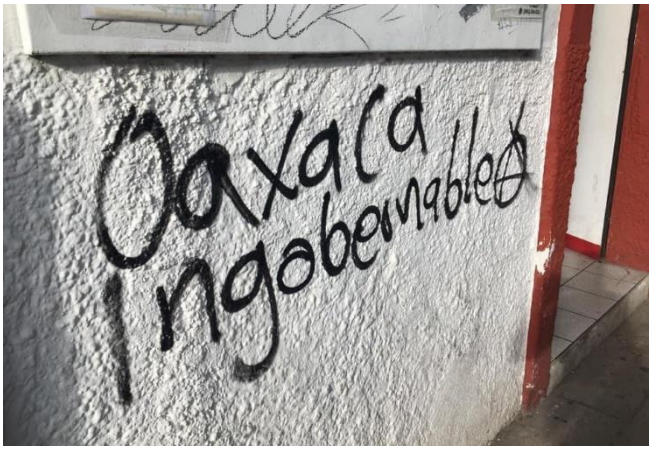
Chapter Three:

The Makings of "Ungovernable Oaxaca":

Grappling with the Communal Inversion of Civil Society in Southwestern Mexico







All photos taken by the author in Oaxaca City on October 5, 2021

"*¡Vivan los auto-gobiernos comunitarios!"* "Long live the communitarian self-governments!"

"*¡Muerte al estado!"* "Death to the state!"

"*Oaxaca es ingobernable."* "Oaxaca is ungovernable."

These are but a few of the pieces of graffiti that cover the walls of downtown Oaxaca City. Even knowing Oaxaca's reputation as a simmering cauldron of revolt from my previous visit in 2014 did not adequately prepare me for the ubiquity and intensity of the anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian sentiments that manifest in the public spaces of its capitol, defiantly

confronting tourists, police personnel, and local residents alike. As I traversed the cobblestone streets of the city in the summer of 2021, I found myself surrounded by both these incendiary affirmations of rebellious life as well as far angrier and sadder commemorations of rebellious death: other graffiti, posters, and banners decrying the widespread, unrelenting state violence that has claimed the lives of so many Indigenous defenders in the past two decades. Oaxaca is, as yet another piece of street art declares, *un portal al otra dimensión*, "a portal to another dimension," in a dual sense: it is a swirling vortex of rebellious possibility and counter-insurgent suppression, illuminating how Indigenous peoples, among other oppressed populations, can lead their individual and collective lives on their own terms to the fullest extent possible, as well as the lengths to which their oppressors will go to stop this pursuit dead in its tracks. But how was this portal opened? In other worlds, how do Oaxacan Indigenous communities enact alternatives to the neoliberal dispossession and state violence they confront on a quotidian basis, and how might these alternatives resonate with but also diverge from the self-governance asserted by their Jharkhandi adivasi counterparts in the Pathalgadi Movement?

Autonomy established on the basis of *comunalidad* has unquestionably played a crucial role in opening the aforementioned portal: that is, it has opened a particular dimension of political thought and practice that variously materializes among Oaxaca's Indigenous communities. *Comunalidad* is an epistemological orientation and a mode of being among the peoples of the Sierra Norte mountainous region and other areas of Oaxaca that resists the individualization of knowledge, power, and culture precipitated by all past and present state and capitalist development projects (Martínez Luna 2010; Osorio 2019). *Comunalidad* has been extensively theorized since its inception in the late 1970's and early

1980's. Rather than re-examining what *comunalidad* is in and of itself, I am interested in conceptualizing the political domain constituted by the Indigenous practice of *comunalidad*. I am also interested in analyzing the relations of power and counter-power between this domain and the neoliberal Oaxacan state.

On the basis of an intensive literature review as well as several in-depth interviews and participant observation session with Oaxacan grassroots intellectuals and activists affiliated with the Universidad de la Tierra (University of the Earth or Unitierra) community organizing hubs in Oaxaca City and Huitzo, I contend that Oaxacan Indigenous peoples have effectively inverted modern state and market-oriented civil society by vying for autonomy grounded in *comunalidad*, where inversion signifies the subaltern reversal of a hegemonic concept, practice, or institution's relations of power. This inverted civil society is defined by communal opposition to the dictates of the *mestizo* nation-state and neoliberal capital, in spite of the persistent contradictions that bind and draw its inhabitants to these dominant structures and systems of power. Civil society might seem like an odd referent for autonomous politics in light of the hostility to ungovernability described my first chapter, but, due in part to the influence of the Zapatistas from neighboring Chiapas, it figures heavily in Oaxacan discourses of autonomy: nearly all of my interlocutors situated their work within the domain of civil society, while also distancing this domain from the NGO, industrialist, extractivist, corporatist, and liberal democratic agendas. This persistent disidentification necessitates the reimagination of civil society, as opposed to the extension of political society required to understand Jharkhand's Pathalgadi Movement. Inverted civil society partly incorporates the practices of *comunalidad*; however, this domain's interface with the state and capital is not

commensurate with existing conceptualizations of either *comunalidad* or conventional civil society, mandating another analytic.

I begin this chapter by providing a brief synthesis of Oaxacan autonomy based on *comunalidad* in theory and practice. I then analyze how practitioners of this autonomy have inverted the tenets of modern civil society along four main axes. Firstly, they challenge the pseudo-autonomy promulgated by the Oaxacan and Mexican states. Secondly, they rhetorically and practically subvert prevailing nationalist, statist, and populist fictions revolving around independence, Indigeneity, and representative democracy. Thirdly and on a more meta-level, their autonomous governance strategies deliberately render them opaque to the gaze of the state by eschewing conventional left/right political divisions, despite clearly having an anti-capitalist orientation. Fourth, actors within inverted civil society in Oaxaca prioritize responsibilities over rights, unlike their liberal democratic civil society counterparts.

Having framed all these features of inverted civil society, I briefly consider how actors within the domain at hand embody certain contradictions with respect to the hegemonic apparatuses that they challenge: namely, they call on the government to provide them with certain social services and demand certain consumer goods at the same time as they refuse to let government authorities and public and private corporations expropriate their land and control their decision-making processes. These contradictions do not invalidate the counter-hegemonic challenge mounted by Oaxacan practitioners of autonomy. I conclude by contemplating the resonances and differences between inverted civil society and both Sonia E. Alvarez et al.'s conception of uncivic political activism as well as my own conception of quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society. Insofar as it redefines the civic and circumvents

conventional understandings of professionalized activism, inverted civil society exceeds "uncivic" or "uncontained" activism at the same time as it draws upon the latter; it also treats the autonomy embodied by anti-political society as a capacity that Indigenous communities already have and must defend rather than an aspiration or a fleeting reality only experienced in the course of active agitation.

Autonomy through *Comunalidad*

The historical basis for Oaxacan Indigenous autonomy runs deep at the same time as its current manifestations are, to a significant extent, responses to the erosion of liberal democratic institutions and the proliferation of accumulation by dispossession under neoliberalism. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, Oaxaca is home to approximately 570 municipalities, more than half of which utilize Indigenous governance traditions known as *usos y costumbres*. Oaxaca is a relative stronghold of Indigenous self-governance due to a combination of historical isolation and grassroots mobilization. Historically, as a partial result of the region's harsh mountainous terrain and its lack of readily apparent resources, Spanish colonial rule exerted a politically indirect and economically circumscribed influence over Oaxaca between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries; for similar reasons, Oaxaca was left comparatively untouched by the tremendous sociopolitical convulsions that rocked Mexico between the early nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, from independence to dictatorship to revolution and the reforms that followed in the latter's wake (Murphy and Stepick, 1991, 26). Needless to say, the categorization of Oaxaca as a backwater was by no means unrelated to its majority Indigenous population and, for that reason, by no means politically inconsequential, as evidenced by the psychosocial ruptures produced by neo-colonial educational institutions and

the Catholic Church. However, the *pueblos originarios* of Oaxaca were crucially able to maintain control over their traditional lands and, concomitantly, the long-standing self-governance traditions established within these spaces.

Many of my interlocutors emphasized that self-governance traditions vary significantly between different Indigenous populations on the basis of their continuous, geographically specific cultural practices and histories. This is to say that autonomy within the Oaxacan context is not a modular practice adopted by different communities but rather a heterogeneous array of political beliefs and practices grounded in variegated political, economic, and social circumstances. Commonalities, of course, exist between these heterogeneous approaches to autonomy: many communities are constructed around consensual decision-making through assemblies or *asambleas*; collective, unpaid labor for the common good, often known as *tequio*; rotating individual obligations for important tasks, often known as *cargos*; and communal celebrations intended to redistribute wealth and strengthen intra-communal relations, often known as *fiestas* (Osorio, 2019, 131 – 132). Notwithstanding such broad similarities, *comunalidad* is not a singular political framework underpinning Oaxacan autonomy as a whole but rather an encompassing descriptor for the diverse ways in which Indigenous peoples of the Sierra Norte in particular and Oaxaca in general articulate relationships among themselves and their lands.

This seemingly vague description actually covers key aspects of *comunalidad*: firstly, it recenters the social bonds between community members while decentering the self-interested individual and the market economy as the foundations of self-understanding, interaction, and order. Zapotec anthropologist Jaime Martínez Luna—who, together with Floriberto Díaz, is credited with formally conceptualizing *comunalidad*—contends that

comunalidad resists the "decrepit individualization of knowledge, power, and culture" produced by colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism (2010, 86). Secondly, and in keeping with this first key feature, *comunalidad* extends beyond a given community's human residents to their non-human co-existential partners and the ecosystems that both share and co-constitute; in yet another evocative explication, Martínez Luna stipulates that, as per this principle, "the land does not belong to those who work it… rather, those who care for it, share it, and, when necessary, work it belong to the land" (2010, 93). *Comunalidad* thus transcends conventional Marxist proposals for revolutionizing peasant existence[13]: instead of merely calling for the redistribution and collectivization of land in the clutches of capital and the bourgeois state, which still separates land from its human occupants and posits the former for extraction and use, *comunalidad* questions the very idea of land as a resource for human use. Thirdly, and perhaps more implicitly, *comunalidad* is simultaneously rooted in ancestral traditions and dynamic in responding to the challenges confronting Indigenous communities in the present: as such, these communities often have to strike a delicate balance between appropriating useful ideas, commodities, and practices; dealing with impositions; and keeping out corrosive influences from the wider world.

This balancing act takes on a heightened significance in the neoliberal era, wherein it generates a tension between the imperatives of togetherness and survival. As the "verbal

[13] Marxists have long grappled with "the peasant question" posed by Marx's conception of the industrial proletariat as the protagonists of socialist and communist revolution and the concomitant disdain he displays for peasants in some of his earlier writings (he famously deems French farmers "a sack of potatoes" in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*). The development of Maoism and other Third World Marxist frameworks and strategies in the twentieth century re-evaluated the peasant's revolutionary potential, but these approaches nevertheless retained a rather instrumental view of nature, which is the perspective that I am invoking here. The genesis of Eco-Marxism and eco-socialism in more recent years arguably promises to overturn this anthropocentric orientation altogether, in no small part by drawing inspiration from non-anthropocentric Indigenous conceptions of nature.

predicate of the We," *comunalidad* entails "mutual hospitality": "We harbor the Truth of the Other, while the Other hosts ours," stipulates Unitierra collaborator Arturo Guerrero Osorio (2019, 130, 133). "The Other," in this case, refers both to community members, in all their diversity and complexity, and to the otherization of Indigenous peoples within Mexico. For all its pretensions of *mestizaje*—the intermixing of various racial groups to produce a unified, harmonious nation—Mexican society continues to preserve its colonial racial hierarchy, with Spanish-descended *mestizos* upholding "the norms, aspirations, and goals of Western civilization" at its apex and Indigenous peoples, as well as Afromexicans, at its nadir (Bonfil Batalla, 1996, xvi). In this respect, *comunalidad* allows *pueblos originarios* to reclaim their otherness as it has been formulated and weaponized by the *mestizo*-controlled Mexican state and its corresponding ruling class and to redefine it on their own terms.

However, precisely because of the state and capital's relentless advances into Indigenous territory, Indigenous communities cannot uncritically extend "mutual hospitality" to all outside parties that they encounter. As we sat and spoke in a small public park in downtown Oaxaca City on October 3, 2021, Joaquín, a young facilitator with Unitierra[14], repeatedly remarked that Indigenous communities are "very cautious of anything foreign," widely exhibiting "a general skepticism towards government and towards corporations and towards white people." This skepticism has become all the more intense as capitalism in the region, as has been the case across Mexico and many other parts of the world, has

[14] As detailed in my introduction, Unitierra is a grassroots learning initiative and organizing hub that equips its students and interlocutors with the skills they require to strengthen their struggles and communities as well as the space to form networks of resistance. Unitierra started in Oaxaca City and has since opened other "campuses" in its neighboring town of Huitzo, other Mexican states such as Chiapas, and a number of towns and cities around the world. I was initially planning to focus on the Unitierra spaces in Oaxaca City and Huitzo, but I realized in the course of my fieldwork that are nodes in much larger webs of struggles in the region, which I subsequently chose to center in my analysis.

transformed from a mode of production into a mode of accumulation, according to Unitierra co-founder Gustavo Esteva. “Extractivism is not just about mining,” emphasized Esteva during our extended conversation at Unitierra – Oaxaca City on September 30, 2021. “They are grabbing as much as they can from everyone: jobs and salaries and fringe benefits and land and territory.” Oaxacan state authorities have blatantly colluded with mining companies and other major corporations as well as paramilitary forces in conducting these various extractivist activities. They have demonstrated that the targets of Indigenous skepticism come together to form a nexus rather than operating as separate antagonistic entities. This state-corporate-paramilitary nexus goes a long ways towards explaining why, in the words of Esteva, “disenchantment with democracy is today universal” (2019, 100). Mexico’s much vaunted democratic transition in 2000, which ended the center-right Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI)’s unofficial dictatorship of over 70 years, has not drastically improved the lot of Indigenous communities in Oaxaca and other states, with ruling parties across the liberal-to-conservative spectrum maintaining the neoliberal status quo, frequently through violent means (Esteva, 2001, 124). The manifold failings of formal representative democracy have strengthened the case for *comunalidad*; the latter offers Indigenous communities a way to actually hold and exercise power, instead of being held hostage by power and those who claim to wield it in the interest of these communities.

Comunalidad is thus far from a utopian endeavor; on the contrary, it is driven by necessity and, for the same reason, beset by practical problems posed by the state-corporate-paramilitary nexus. These pragmatic considerations underwrite Esteva’s crucial distinctions between ontonomy, heteronomy, and autonomy: ontonomy encapsulates authentic self-

government in the areas of administration, justice, land ownership and use, and self-defense based on endogenous values; heteronomy encapsulates rules imposed by the state and capital as external actors; and autonomy encapsulates "processes by which a group or community adopts new norms" as it navigates between ontonomy and heteronomy (Esteva, 2019, 99-100). As such, autonomy in Oaxaca is not synonymous with Indigenist traditionalism, as much as it is often steeped in Indigenous self-governance customs. Furthermore, the adoption of new norms, insofar as it entails some degree of compromise with the state and capital, is largely involuntary but also potentially includes elements of consent: it is propelled primarily by the monopoly over resources that these hegemonic systems enjoy as well as the pressure that they apply, but the communities in question can also be drawn in by the promises of welfare, security, and material abundance held out by these same systems. For their parts, the state and capital reciprocate this compromise up to a point: autonomy through *comunalidad* is "largely tolerated by the authorities. However, it has always been practiced at odds with the dominant regime, and it is continuously exposed to contradictions and dissolution as a result of the extension of 'the rule of law,' that is, the administrative invasion of daily life" (Esteva, 2015, 137). I will return to these contradictions at a later point in this chapter.

In sum, *comunalidad* constitutes the heterogeneous ways in which mainly Indigenous communities in Oaxaca articulate interpersonal and land-based relationships grounded in their past and present circumstances. *Comunalidad* is relationship-oriented, extending to non-human animals and ecosystems and transgressing the boundaries between the past and the present. At the same time as it promotes "mutual hospitality" within the communities that practice it, *comunalidad* also necessarily excludes the intrusions of the state and capital to the fullest extent possible, making communal autonomy a mode of negotiation between

Indigenous tradition and *mestizo* capitalist modernity. I now turn to the particular mechanics of this negotiation to illuminate how autonomy has inverted civil society in Oaxaca.

Inverted Civil Society in Oaxaca

Autonomy, on the basis of *comunalidad* or otherwise, is antithetical to bourgeois and petit-bourgeois civil society as conceptualized by Partha Chatterjee, among others; as such, it is antithetical to actually existing civil society in many parts of the world, which tends to be dominated by nongovernmental organizations and civic associations recognized by, collaborating with, and/or partly replacing the functions of the capitalist state. And yet, nearly all of my Oaxacan interlocutors situate their understandings of autonomy within the realm of civil society. What distinguishes their understanding of civil society from the widespread conception of it as a domain intimately tied to the dictates of the state and capital, in which reform is the only viable political horizon?

Despite undeniable similarities and resonances with its counterparts in other parts of the formerly colonized world, civil society in Latin America has followed a somewhat unique path as far as its relationship to the state is concerned. Civil society emerged a pre-eminent concept within the region's popular discourses in the 1980's, galvanized by mass mobilizations against authoritarian capitalist regimes (Esteva, 2015, 136). As a result of these origins, civil society actors in Latin America have historically had well-founded reasons to adopt a critical stance towards state power. As this particular phase of state repression was intertwined with the rise of neoliberalism, with all the sweeping social dislocation that accompanied the latter, Latin American civil society was also more inclined towards accommodating the newly created precariat: the millions of poor, working, and lower-middle class people left disenfranchised, dispossessed, and generally disenchanted by

neoliberalization. In subsequent decades, many of neoliberalism's Latin American victims channeled their energies into electoral measures and campaigns that promised to roll back privatization, re-establish social safety nets, and wrest economic and political control away from upper-class technocrats, as evidenced by the rise of the Pink Tide in the late 1990s and 2000s. Others, however, treated their abandonment by the state as a launching pad for cultivating or fortifying their own collective political power.

Mexico has admittedly borne witness to both of these developments, with the first marked by the victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (popularly known as AMLO) and the Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (National Regeneration Movement or MORENA) in the 2018 general election. AMLO and MORENA's purportedly progressive agenda is highly pertinent to popular movements in Oaxaca, as I will show shortly, but, for the purposes of reconceptualizing civil society vis-à-vis autonomy, I am primarily concerned here with how numerous residents of Mexico's villages, neighborhoods, and towns began to carve out a space independent of and, in fact, antagonistic to the government, state institutions, and political parties in the 1980's, in response to the latter's failure to mitigate the economic crisis stemming from neoliberal reforms (Esteva, 2001, 127). The 1985 earthquake that devastated Mexico City particularly highlighted the profusion of unions, blocs, coordinating committees, and convergences pursuing political objectives on their own terms.

Now, independence from and antagonism towards the state do not, in and of themselves, fall outside the ambit of conventional civil society; in fact, Michael Edwards (2011), Huri Islamoglu (2015), and Charles Taylor (1990), among others, identify these traits as core features of modern civic associational life, as previously discussed. However, the extent of this independence and antagonism, as well as the ethos guiding both, set

autonomous civil society in Mexico and Latin America apart from its typically bourgeois or petit-bourgeois and state-oriented equivalents. Instead of aiming to capture state power or focusing its efforts on influencing state policy, this civil society of grassroots initiatives and popular movements "puts into effect the power it already possesses"; it defends this power "in the people's autonomous space so that they can process their contradictions on their own and escape the logic of capital and the industrial mode of production" (Esteva, 2001, 126). Total escape from the state and capital is, of course, not immediately possible; nonetheless, autonomous civil society actors operate within the frameworks of the nation-state and representative or "formal" democracy while challenging and transcending these frameworks in pursuit of new forms of society and democracy at the same time. These civil society actors do not uncritically complement the state and capital but rather engage these hegemonic domains only when necessary and for the purposes of cultivating their own norms and practices on the basis of their situated histories, cultures, and struggles.

The overarching ways in which autonomous actors and mobilizations have turned conventional civil society on its head might be evident, but how do these dynamics play out within the specific context of Oaxaca? And how do they articulate contextually grounded but broadly resonant alternatives to prevailing forms of society and democracy at the regional, national, and transnational levels? Inspired by Unitierra's subversion of the idea of the university, wherein the term "university" ironically signals learning approaches and intellectual objectives diametrically opposed to those of the modern, corporatized, state-oriented university, I propose the concept of inverted civil society as a response to these pressing questions. Inversion here signifies the subaltern appropriation and reimagination of a hegemonic concept, practice, or institution so as to reverse the relations of power that

define it to the fullest extent possible; inverting civil society thus entails detaching it from the state and capital, thereby making it a domain hospitable to ungovernable others and their political priorities as opposed to the preservation of bourgeois interests. I move towards the concept of inverted civil society as a productive zone and use the term "inverted" to suggest a double move: the mobilization of civil society as a pre-existing domain for modern associational forms, on the one hand, but also the imperative to unlearn the civil to remake it, on the other. Unitierra is an ideal site for developing this concept, as its status as a well-respected associational space is subsumed by its role as a node in larger webs of militant grassroots struggle. I now turn my attention to five specific dimensions of inverted civil society in Oaxaca, so as to better understand how they come together to not only make participating communities ungovernable but allow them to protect, consolidate, and, when necessary, evolve centuries-old strategies of self-governance that have been placed in the cross-hairs of neoliberal dispossession and state repression.

a. Repudiations of Pseudo-autonomy

"Rebellions, rebellions, rebellions, rebellions." This is how Joaquín summarized the longue durée of Oaxacan history. In the course of all these rebellions, whether successful or suppressed, Oaxacan Indigenous communities have become intimately familiar with the many faces of statecraft and the false promise it has held out to them on numerous occasions, which I term pseudo-autonomy. Pseudo-autonomy encompasses two types of maneuvers observed under formal democracy: attempts to present the capitalist state's institutions, protocols, and priorities as representative of the popular will in its entirety, on the one hand, and attempts to integrate communal decision-making bodies into the former, on the other. In short, it is a form of managerial autonomy that deliberately obscures the true intentions of the

state and capital. I have already chronicled the deep-seated skepticism that pervades communal attitudes towards the state-corporate-paramilitary nexus. As per the testimonies of my interlocutors, two major developments in Oaxaca's recent history have further intensified this skepticism and concomitant communal repudiations of pseudo-autonomy: Oaxaca's mass insurrection in 2006 and the proliferation of neoliberal state violence, particularly to advance potentially disastrous infrastructural megaprojects, in the past ten to fifteen years.

As detailed in my introductory chapter, violent police repression of a *plantón* or public occupation in Oaxaca City staged by Section 22—a widely respected radical state-wide chapter of the dissident National Council of Education Workers or CNTE—stimulated a statewide uprising against the aggressively neoliberal regime of Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) Governor Ulises Ruiz from June to December of 2006. Involving Indigenous, environmentalist, feminist, human rights, labor, and other progressive and revolutionary organizations and movements, the 2006 insurrection fueled the construction of barricades to impede police and paramilitary forces; the autonomization of food distribution, garbage collection, public safety, and other social services; and the occupation of local radio stations to combat state propaganda (Denham, 2008; Esteva, 2007). In these ways, among others, it brought long-standing rural Indigenous *usos y costumbres* into Oaxaca's foremost urban center, at the same time as it innovated novel tactics towards this end that subsequently spread beyond Oaxaca City's boundaries.

Despite its eventual suppression by the Federal Preventive Police, the 2006 insurrection was "a process of awakening, organization, and radicalization" that left an indelible mark on Oaxaca's popular political landscape (Esteva, 2007, 130): by resisting brutal state and paramilitary repression for five months, it not only irrevocably damaged Ruiz

and the PRI's aura of legitimacy and invulnerability but "condensed itself into an experience and transformed into a behavior," diffusing into "the daily attitudes of many people, who will never return to the old "normalcy"" (Esteva, 2010, 989). Most Oaxacans were by no means enamored of the state to begin with, but the Ruiz regime's ultra-belligerent actions went some way towards dispelling any remaining illusions that prevailing state institutions fundamentally respect popular opinion or protect public wellbeing, let alone recognize Indigenous autonomy. This antagonism has not dissipated over time: Joaquín opined that communities across the state believe that virtually everyone elected to or appointed by the government "just has this mentality of, "Extract as much as you can,"" with extractivism being understood in the broad sense laid down by Esteva.

The historical memory of insurrectionary autonomy that has pervaded Oaxaca since 2006 has become all the more entrenched and enlivening as neoliberal state violence has intensified in the intervening years. In 2016, Oaxaqueños once again mobilized in huge numbers after federal police opened fire on teachers and community members protesting neoliberal education reforms in the Mixtec municipality of Asunción Nochixtlán, killing at least eight people and injuring over 170 more (Abbott, 2016). Evoking the spirit of the 2006 uprising, individuals, collectives, and movements standing in solidarity with Nochixtlán in other parts of Oaxaca and in neighboring states mounted roadblocks on several major highways, in addition to occupying Oaxaca City. During our extended dialogue at the Los Cuiles Café on September 24, 2021, Unitierra facilitator Vincente Guerrero clarified that the movement that emerged in the wake of the Nochixtlán massacre was even "more direct and more profound" than its 2006 counterpart, as exemplified by how many community members put up blockades that far exceeded the terms of Section 22's official call for action (Larson,

2016). Section 22 might be "one of the most radical [unions] in the hemisphere," according to American race, labor, and social movements scholar Erik Larson, but the diffusion of a militantly anti-authoritarian outlook among Oaxaca's residents since 2006 has arguably moved the latter even further left of the union's mandate. Oaxacans have thus not only become unwilling to accept the paltry substitutes and excuses for autonomy offered by the increasingly violent Oaxacan and Mexican states but also seem to be imbued with a real sense of urgency for carving out and defending actual autonomy, to the point that they are not even willing to strictly adhere to the roadmap to this goal drawn up by organizations and individuals that are very much on their side.

This "other way of organizing"—in Vincente's words—that came into view after the 2016 Nochixtlán solidarity movement has crystallized in the course of widespread communal resistance to highways and railways, hydroelectric dams, conservation projects, mining concessions, and hydrocarbon extraction plans cumulatively known as "megaprojects." Though they admittedly precede the start of his presidential term in 2018, AMLO has made megaprojects the cornerstone of his national development agenda, promising that they will create jobs, curtail economic displacement, and close the gap between Mexico's industrialized north and cash-poor south by capitalizing on strategic locations and resources. Numerous Indigenous communities and organizations, especially in Oaxaca, have contrarily argued that megaprojects will facilitate the production and circulation of commodities to the benefit of national and transnational capital, justify the further militarization of Mexican society, serve as de facto barriers to migration, and destroy vital ecosystems (Young, 2020).

Instead of even attempting to buttress regional and local self-sufficiency by tackling the outflow of persons, resources, and wealth at its root, megaprojects constitute among the

most serious threats to Oaxacan Indigenous autonomy by promising to invade, degrade, and destroy the latter's lands, both in the course of their implementation and as a result of their projected outcomes. In a word, they threaten to embed Oaxacan *pueblos originarios* even more deeply into the circuits of industrial capital at the direct expense of their land-based self-governance. Conservation projects, for instance, have deprived mountainous Oaxacan Indigenous communities of access to water and other crucial means of subsistence (Bessi and Young, 2017). Meanwhile, practically all megaprojects—from the flagship "Mayan Train" to the Inter-oceanic Corridor planned for the Isthmus of Tehuantepec divided between Oaxaca and Veracruz—have moved forward through the deployment of military and paramilitary force. At almost all of the Unitierra group dialogues that I attended, discussants sardonically referred to AMLO as *"el amigo de los indios"* or "the friend of the Indians," highlighting how his administration has attempted to mask the continuities between its megaprojects and neoliberal developmentalist past proposals such as the Plan-Puebla-Panama with rhetorical invocations of Indigeneity.

To prop up this discourse, AMLO and MORENA claim to have garnered popular support for their megaprojects through a series of community "consultations" from 2019 onwards. A statement issued by the *El Istmo es Nuestro* ("The Isthmus is Ours") coalition in 2021 condemns these consultations as "farcical… bureaucratic and sham processes, violating and trampling on the right to self-determination of Indigenous peoples" (It's Going Down, 2021). As any semblance of governmental recognition and respect for Indigenous autonomy has given way to nakedly self-serving violence, Oaxaca's *pueblos originarios* have by and large seen through this other form of pseudo-autonomy that purports to fold their assemblies and other autonomous decision-making bodies into the designs of the state. The 2021 *El*

Istmo es Nuestro statement goes on to reaffirm the importance of horizontal coordination between different communities and social and territorial organizations confronting megaprojects; in doing so, it refuses to even entertain the state and its corporate backers as legitimate actors, emphasizing that its constituent collectivities "do not negotiate, nor surrender" (It's Going Down, 2021).

Writing in the aftermath of the 2006 insurrection, Esteva suggested that Oaxacan insurgents at the time by and large perceived participatory democracy, implemented through such mechanisms as referendums, plebiscites, and participatory budgets, as a useful tool for building and defending radical democracy epitomized by *comunalidad* (2007, 90). While this perception might not be completely extinguished in Oaxaca, commonplace contempt for megaproject "consultations" and for all the other manifestations of pseudo-autonomy documented here could indicate that statist actors have squandered what little goodwill they previously had. Whereas conventional civil society hinges on the fulfillment of the social contract between a state and its subjects, the Oaxacan state's social contract lies in tatters: it has been shredded by both covetous political and economic power brokers and rebellious state inhabitants unwilling to submit to the former's oppressive will, not least of all because they have experienced genuine collective power firsthand, in 2006, in 2016, and for as long as they have been able to sustain their traditions of self-governance.

b. The Communal Subversion of Nationalist, Statist, and Populist Fictions

The pseudo-autonomy repudiated by Oaxacan Indigenous communities speaks to the foundational failings of the Oaxacan and Mexican states, according to many of my interlocutors. On multiple occasions, they posed the question, *"¿Independencia para quién?"* ("Independence for whom?") when discussing state power with me or their Unitierra

compatriots. This provocative question speaks to the conviction among many *pueblos originarios* in Oaxaca and other parts of Mexico that the nation-state within which they are situated has taken on the mantle of its Spanish colonial predecessor in every meaningful way. As we spoke at the Jícara Restaurant and Cultural Space on September 23, 2021, Unitierra programming coordinator Wendy Juárez went so far as to declare that Mexican independence paradoxically entailed "the perfection of colonization." *Mestizo* elites have consistently regarded Indigenous peoples as holdovers from a bygone era and thus a problem to be solved; with the legitimacy offered by the façade of independence, they have, in certain ways, been able to Hispanicize *pueblos originarios* in the areas of labor, language, and education, among others far more effectively than the Spanish ever could. The 2021 *El Istmo es Nuestro* statement makes these oppressive continuities between the past and the present explicit by describing ongoing projects of dispossession as "derived from the arrival of the conquistadores, passing for the liberal governments, and now the current neoliberal governments" (It's Going Down, 2021).

Needless to say, the conceptualization of the Oaxacan and Mexican states as neocolonial challenges corresponding nationalist myths, which have been renewed and/or reinvented by AMLO and MORENA since their ascendance to power in 2018. AMLO has framed his vision for Mexico as "the Fourth Transformation," aiming to both build upon and address the limitations of three pivotal episodes in the country's modern history—namely, the War of Independence from Spain (1810 – 1821), the Reforms Period (1857 – 1872), and the Mexican Revolution (1910 – 1971) (Durif, 2019). Posing the rhetorical question, *"¿Independencia para quién?"* not only refutes the notion that AMLO's administration is departing from the course charted for the country by the PRI and the National Action Party

(PAN) but strikes at the very fictions that undergird the Oaxacan and Mexican states: the harmonizing power of *mestizaje* at the national level, the respect for Indigenous autonomy at the state level, and the democratic capabilities of governmental institutions at both levels. Wherever neo-colonial control, exploitation, and dislocation prevail, the integration of *pueblos originarios* into conventional civil society is, by definition, impossible: they cannot be the subjects, let alone the citizens, of a nation-state that they consider illegitimate at best and illusory at worst, nor can they situate themselves within its public sphere, even beyond the constraints of citizenship.

Radios comunitarias or community radio projects epitomize the rejection of nationalist and statist fictions and falsehoods by many regional Indigenous communities, a point driven home by nearly all of my interlocutors.[15] These projects simultaneously perform a range of subversive political and social functions. With many Indigenous communities understandably viewing the state as a harbinger of devastation and death, they have allowed members of these communities and the movements they have mounted to share information crucial to their survival during moments of heightened confrontation, such as the 2006 insurrection or the 2016 Nochixtlán solidarity mobilization, as well as more extended periods of violence promulgated by the state-corporate-paramilitary nexus. Vincente stressed that *radios comunitarias* enabled participants in the 2006 uprising to produce, distribute, and receive "information from below" about hired assassins roaming the streets of Oaxaca City and attacking barricades and protestors, in diametrical opposition to "information from

[15] Indigenous media scholars such as Erica Cusi Wortham (2013) and José Rabasa (2004) emphasize that community radio is a vital tool for contemporary Indigenous movements in Mexico and other parts of Latin America. They argue that the radio signals used by these movements each have a geographical footprint that can prove valuable to establishing territories that challenge state sovereignty.

above" that amounted to nothing less than "a lynching" of the teachers of Section 22 and their supporters. To the degree that the Mexican state is waging a war of extermination against the Indigenous communities within its borders, their collective survival is itself an act of defiance—a kind of implicit treason—with community radio projects serving this end.

This strategic usage of community radio channels is supplemented by myriad forms of community-building, with a focus on cultural revitalization and intra-cultural empowerment: Vincente further explained that *radios comunitarias* have been vital to providing Indigenous women with a platform to contest the patriarchal oppression they face in their communities in addition to state and capitalist oppression. The connections between these two modes of oppression and thus the magnified transformative effects of community radios should not be underestimated: Esteva describes the nation-state system as a whole and its Mexican node in particular as deeply patriarchal, a claim borne out by the femicide epidemic that has consumed the country in recent years as well as the noticeably paternalistic overtones of AMLO's "Fourth Transformation" discourse (2019, 17). The de-patriarchalization of Indigenous communities, partly pursued through alternative communication technologies and networks, is thus a crucial part of cultivating forms of autonomy that embrace gendered and sexualized perspectives, bodies, and modes of collective existence that are systematically marginalized and violated by the forces of the nation-state.

In a similar vein, community radio initiatives have helped to combat the ethnolinguistic homogenization pushed by the Oaxacan and Mexican states' *mestizo* elites and sub-classes. Joaquín averred that they frequently feature a variety of programming in locally and regionally specific languages, undermining Spanish-language hegemony. Wendy

framed this hegemony as a critical tool of Mexican statecraft, a line of reasoning supported by Esteva's trenchant critique of development, which illuminates how the language of the capitalist state is deliberately riven with assumptions and prescriptions that reaffirm its governmentality (2010, 68). In the process of rejecting the discursive terms of the state, programs in the Zapotec, Mixtec, and other languages traditionally spoken by *pueblos originarios* have the potential to foster *comunalidad* by articulating realities particular to the spaces inhabited by their speakers, drawing upon the past to offer a viable framework for engaging the present. Moreover, the importance attributed to these specificities by the communities in question illuminate the latter's critique of Indigeneity as a statist construct: both Vincente and Wendy contended that "Indigenous" is actually "a term of the state," denoting psychological, cultural, and political backwardness in order to justify de-indigenization through integration into *mestizo* capitalist modernity.[16] As a result of its atavistic outlook, this statist misinterpretation of Indigeneity naturally conceives of *pueblos originarios* as pre-political or, at best, apolitical: their "salvation"—that is, their maximal separation from their traditional lands and accompanying self-governance customs—is the precondition for their entry into the Mexican nation-state and its civil society. Whatever tolerance the Oaxacan and Mexican states display towards *pueblos originarios* and their lifeways is virtually always temporary, facetious, and/or conditional: as linguist Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil pointedly stipulates, "Exercises of autonomy only interest the government when they don't threaten the construction of state megaprojects" (2021, 120). Neoliberal developmentalist state authorities have embraced women's empowerment and, to a lesser

[16] I have only used the term "Indigenous" in reference to Oaxacan *pueblos originarios* in this chapter due to the term's resonance within global Indigenous scholarship and activism—which, of course, rejects any association with primitivity—and due to the lack of appropriate alternative descriptors.

extent, linguistic revival across the world, including in Mexico; however, when situated with the context of autonomy based on *comunalidad*, these programs take on a distinctly anti-authoritarian and thus dangerous character.

Finally, assemblies and networks among Oaxacan Indigenous communities have subverted the combined nationalist, statist, and populist fiction of "the people." Admittedly, this fiction has itself been hollowed out by neoliberal governmentality in many parts of the world, leaving the so-called people with "the mere empirical membership of a motley collection of population groups, each with specific interests and demands that would be met or denied in accordance with the technical determinations of policy," as opposed to a moral sense of participation in sovereignty (Chatterjee, 2020, xv). AMLO's bombastic pronouncements about "the Fourth Transformation" could thus be construed as attempts to patch up a Mexican national fabric frayed by decades of neoliberalization. Assemblies and networks confound this endeavor as they embody and reinforce neither "the people" nor readily manageable or compliant population groups; they also reject the separation of the human and other-than-human implicit in this liberal democratic fiction, as detailed later. Inasmuch as they refuse to accept the pseudo-autonomy offered by the state, question the very foundations of the modern Oaxacan and Mexican polities, and transgress the latter's linguistic, demographic, and other parameters, communal assemblies withhold their recognition of and participation in a body politic they consider far from moral or, for that matter, sovereign. At the same time, their conscious refutation of statist categories imposed upon them, such as the dismissive and depoliticizing label of Indigeneity, jams the gears of governmentality, as does their unwillingness to present their interests and demands to the state. Much like Pathalgadi Movement participants operating within their own zones of

ungovernability, these communities primarily demand to be left alone to pursue their own visions of the good life.

Just as individual assemblies do not reproduce the cultural and institutional trappings of "the people," inter-communal networks similarly do not reproduce this fiction's key socio-spatial dimensions. According to Esteva, one crucial tenet guides communities in the Sierra Norte and other parts of Oaxaca as they coordinate their efforts to build autonomy: "We are an assembly when together, and we are a network when separated." This is to say that they do not set up a large, centralized organization or collectivity that could serve as an alternative state or its constituency: the organic and intimate horizontality of this arrangement strikes a contrast with the manufactured and impersonal camaraderie of the nation, while the former's fluidity counters the latter's stasis. Networks facilitate intercultural exchange based on a mutual respect for difference, instead of collapsing or instrumentalizing differences for the sake of national, racial, or cultural unity, as is typically the case with "the people." Networks can also be expanded, contracted, or otherwise amended according to the needs of the communities that constitute them, whereas definitions of "the people" tend to remain stagnant for prolonged periods of time and are usually only changed by powerful nation-state actors seeking to consolidate their power over the corresponding population.

c. Autonomy through Dis/simulation

By subverting nationalist, statist, and populist fictions, Oaxacan *pueblos originarios* have rendered themselves illegible in terms of conventional civil society to the state. This illegibility is not simply a byproduct of *comunalidad*: it is actively planned and propagated by individuals, collectives, and movements striving for autonomy on this basis. Even more so than the maintenance of alternative communication channels, the depatriarchalization of

Indigenous communities, and the rejection of statist discourses of independence and Indigeneity, the deliberate deception of state authorities to protect the integrity of autonomous decision-making bodies offers proof of intentional illegibility.

Hernando Dominguez, an organizer from the Capulálpam de Méndez municipality in the Sierra Norte region, initially stated during our exchange that his community maintains a "relationship of respect" with the Oaxacan and Mexican states. However, he immediately clarified that this respect does not translate into the unquestioning obedience of state dictates; he also later acknowledged that state power is fundamentally coercive inasmuch as it tries to inhibit any and all opposition to its plans, resorting to intimidation, co-optation, disappearances, and numerous other modes of violence when it fails to stem dissent. As such, the respect at hand certainly does not seem to be founded on sincere belief in the benevolence, evenhandedness, or restraint of the state. If anything, the performance of respect is a tactical maneuver to placate the state and thus keep its influence at bay; many instances of compliance by *pueblos originarios*—such as appointing a municipal president, holding elections, or setting up a given committee—are intended to meet their minimal obligations to the state in order to draw attention away from their internal forms of communitary organization, which continue to hold de facto decision-making power. This dis/simulation is supplemented by the counter-hegemonic understanding of representation among Indigenous communities: Hernando as well as Vincente testified that persons chosen to represent communities before the state are actually delegates, in the sense that do not wield power on behalf of their communities and cannot claim to be their sole voices. This external / internal divide vis-à-vis political procedure can shield Indigenous communities from total

subsumption by the capitalist state: the smokescreen of civic cooperation masks the persistence of militant autonomy.

Although Oaxaca has, for most of its history, been a PRI stronghold, its *pueblos originarios* advance a critique of capitalist state power that transcends conventional left / right divisions, even as it clearly has an anti-capitalist orientation. This critique is vindicated by the convergence of diverse political parties around Mexico's neoliberal status quo (Esteva, 2001, 124), reflected in the aforementioned continuities between the AMLO administration and its antecedents. For this reason, as Vincente highlighted, many Indigenous communities have prevented political parties and their affiliated social organizations from establishing a presence on their lands altogether. This measure is all the more understandable in light of how, according to Esteva, Vincente, and Hernando, statist actors across the political spectrum have repeatedly sown the seeds of division in *pueblos originarios*, to the point that the plethora of issues associated with mining have sometimes been superseded by the far more disheartening problem of community members fighting and killing each other. Facing dispossession, displacement, and assassination by megaprojects and their military and paramilitary foot soldiers—in addition to their decades, if not centuries, of economic marginalization, impoverishment, and exploitation—Oaxaca's Indigenous communities are all too familiar with the existential threats posed by the capitalist system. Nevertheless, as long as progressive electoralism from the likes of AMLO and MORENA offers little more than cosmetic reforms to this system, *pueblos originarios* may well avoid assuming political labels and identities more legible to the state and thus more prone to manipulation.

The Oaxacan Indigenous critique of partisanship and state power overall applies not only to the state proper but also to conventional civil society actors that fortify its authority.

Chief among these actors are nongovernmental organizations: Vincente acerbically remarked that Mexico and Oaxaca are "plagued" by organizations and foundations that serve as instruments of the state, which provides much of their funding. Joaquín further estimated that, while 80-90% of Oaxacan civil society, both conventional and inverted, might be influenced by leftist ideals, only about 30% actually puts these ideals into practice, as a result of the remainder's dependence on state recognition and support; this dissonance between rhetoric and action only stands to make *pueblos originarios* all the more wary of outsiders who could undercut their autonomous political traditions. As a result of these disconcerting dynamics, dis/simulation is not only employed by Indigenous communities themselves but by collectives and organizations vying to stand in solidarity with them. Unitierra, for instance, might be technically classified as a nongovernmental organization or civil association, but its mode of political engagement subverts this status. As per Esteva, Vincente, and Joaquín's testimonies, it goes to great lengths to avoid imposing any kind of agenda on the communities with whom it collaborates, instead seeking to "walk alongside" the agendas that these communities have autonomously devised; it is simply "a space of collective reflection" that facilitates dialogue between different approaches to autonomy in the region and beyond. Unitierra's respectability by virtue of its official status, the credentials of its co-founders and facilitators, and its positive valuation by local, national, and international intellectuals and activists is akin to the "relationship of respect" with the state sought by Hernando's community: it serves as a useful buffer for the far more agitational activities within this space and in coordination with its insurrectionary community partners.

d. Responsibilities over Rights

As yet another part of resisting the individualization of knowledge, power, and culture through *comunalidad*, Oaxacan *pueblos originarios* broadly accord more importance to collective responsibilities than individual rights, turning liberal democratic political norms on their head. This might be apparent from their approach to political representation as detailed above, in which the communal assembly takes precedence and chosen leaders are no more than spokespeople and liaisons with the state. This approach also underpins the intra-communal approach to *cargos* or rotating individual obligations, which must be performed willingly and without payment for the benefit of the community; Unitierra programming coordinator Wendy Juárez specified that the fulfillment of these posts lies outside the transactional logic of capitalism, in that they neither provide any immediate rewards nor allow for the accumulation of economic and/or political power over the medium to long term. Accumulation is also inhibited by redistributive, community-building *fiestas*, which additionally stand in stark contrast to the rigid schedule of capitalist production and the alienation it breeds by suspending all economic activities to foreground the bonds between community members. Meanwhile, Isabella, an organizer with Unitierra in San Joaquín Huitzo, a rural municipality approximately 30 km from Oaxaca City, described *tequio* or communal labor as a way of "constructing the community" unto itself, by putting up and renovating key local infrastructure and tending to the land to ensure the timely and healthy growth of staple foods as well as medicinal plants. Needless to say, the *tequio-cargo-fiesta* system does not prohibit the development of individuality, even as it disincentivizes self-serving consumerism, competition, and demagoguery; if anything, it cultivates a more stable

basis for individual flourishing by ensuring that the basic needs of all are met to the fullest extent possible.

The *tequio-cargo-fiesta* system is underwritten by an ethos of economic self-sufficiency. By actualizing this ethos within a collective context, the system in question deflates the capitalist myth of the self-sufficient individual, who can supposedly only achieve independence through the acquisition of private property. Furthermore, the concept of *defensa de la tierra* or "defense of the Earth / land" that defines this system and ethos' relationship with the land epitomizes the Oaxacan Indigenous prioritization of collective responsibilities. Hernando described this form of defense as the cornerstone of Capulálpam's autonomy; taken at face value, it serves a supremely practical purpose, in that the prevention of mining and the continuation of subsistence farming avert ecological destabilization that could make the land in focus uninhabitable. However, this practicality is coupled with a deep respect for the Earth as a co-existential partner. Hernando went on to frame the ultimate goal of *defensa de la tierra* as *"buen vivir,"* a term encapsulating a plurality of Latin American perspectives that "displaces the centrality of humans as the sole subject endowed with political representation and as the source of all valuation… by recognizing the intrinsic value of non-humans and the rights of nature."[17] *Buen vivir* conceives of communities as consisting of "humans and non-humans, animals, plants, mountains, spirits, and so on, in specific territories" (Chuji, Rengifo, and Gudynas, 2019, 112). This is to say that *defensa de la tierra* in pursuit of *buen vivir* upends the commodifying discourse of land purely as a "resource,"

[17] *Buen vivir* is a key component of Indigenous cosmovisions across Latin America, as Arturo Escobar (2020), Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2018), and many other decolonial scholars have established. These cosmovisions have inspired various forms of Indigenous cosmopolitics that strive to defend both the human and other-than-human members of Indigenous communities from displacement, dispossession, and other modes of violence precipitated by colonial and capitalist modernity.

which is promoted not only by neoliberal capitalism but quite a few strains of Eurocentric socialism. In this sense, it is at odds with the capitalist state that strives to enforce entirely legalistic relationships among its subjects and between them and its sovereign territory, which precipitate the disintegration and exploitation of both. As Esteva remarked during a group conversation about peace at Unitierra, "Having a relationship with nature is very different from having a right to it."

In addition to redefining place, *defensa de la tierra* qua *buen vivir* further reconceptualizes time in ways that contravene the individualistic notion of linear progress derived from the capitalist mode of production. Both Isabella and Hernando spoke of activities that fall under this category in terms of "recuperation" and "regeneration," implicitly embracing a circular notion of time based on the natural life cycles of the Earth, not to mention an intergenerational sense of responsibility towards the land. Neither of them, nor any of my other interlocutors, have any romantic illusions about the exhaustive labor involved in meeting these obligations, due to both the constant pressures applied by the state and capital and the very nature of smallholder agriculture. Nonetheless, these hardships do not detract from the principle of *cariño* or care for both fellow community members and the Earth that guides their subsistence activities.

On several occasions, my interlocutors spoke of their interactions with fellow community members; with communities, organizations, and movements with whom they seek solidarity; and with the land in terms of *acompañamiento* or "accompanying."[18] At a

[18] *Acompañamiento* builds upon Diana Taylor's conceptualization of *¡presente!* or a politics of presence, which constitutes "an act of solidarity as in responding, showing up, and standing with; a commitment to witnessing; a joyous accompaniment; present among, with, and to, walking and talking with others; an ontological and epistemic reflection on presence and subjectivity as process; an ongoing becoming as opposed to a static

basic level, this encompassing popular concept drives home the subversion of individualism by inverted civil society among Oaxaca's *pueblos originarios* by centering relationality and decentering the discrete, self-interested, rights-bearing individual subject at the heart of liberal democratic civil society. In addition, *acompañamiento* frames the relationships in focus and, in turn, inverted civil society as ends unto themselves, whereas relationships within civil society are primarily means to the end of influencing the state and the market. As such, "accompanying" also implies respecting the heterogenous paths to autonomy chosen by diverse actors, as opposed to coercing them into following the established governmental and nongovernmental channels that are a hallmark of conventional civil society.

Emancipatory Potentialities in the Face of Inevitable Contradictions

Esteva's distinction between autonomy, ontonomy, and heteronomy, wherein autonomy represents a compromise between endogenous and externally imposed values and practices, grounds Indigenous politics in the material realities of life under capitalism and the state. The inversion of civil society through the repudiation of pseudo-autonomy; the subversion of nationalist, statist, and populist fictions; dis/simulation before the state; and the prioritization of collective responsibility does not produce a utopian domain of pure *comunalidad*. The contingent nature of Oaxacan Indigenous autonomy should already be evident from the constant threats posed by megaprojects and military and paramilitary repression, as well as subtler state impositions on the political processes of *pueblos originarios*. However, compromise by these communities does not necessarily amount to capitulation to the forces of the state and capital: notwithstanding undeniable defeats and

being, as participatory and relational, founded on mutual recognition; a showing or display before others; a militant attitude, gesture, or declaration of presence" (2020, 4).

setbacks in certain instances, the emancipatory potentialities that they articulate through their autonomy persist.

Vincente was all too aware that Indigenous struggles can be and, in a number of cases, have been co-opted by the state. In this respect, he lamented the allure of AMLO's seemingly progressive populist discourse to oppressed populations in the region, commenting that many communities that were previously opposed to impending megaprojects reversed or at least weakened their stances after their leaders and constituents developed allegiances to MORENA. As insidious and disruptive as co-optation might be, it is not irreversible, as Erica Sebastián, the daughter of a former Oaxacan political prisoner, attested at the Chinantla Forum on Dispossession and Repression in 2017: reflecting on how self-appointed leaders profited from and failed to advance the campaign to free her father and other political prisoners from the Loxicha region, she concluded, "What we have learned is that we have to be the subjects of our own struggle… What we have learned is that it does not require leaders" (Bessi and Navarro, 2017). Oaxacan self-governance traditions are well-suited for course correction in this vein, given that *cargos* are rotational by definition and representatives can be recalled by assemblies. *Pueblos originarios* have also leveraged whatever footholds they may have within the machinery of the state to force state legislation to leave room for autonomous praxis to the fullest extent possible: for instance, sizeable popular mobilizations fostered the reform of Oaxaca's electoral code in 1995 and the amendment of its Constitution in 1998 to let municipalities choose whether to be governed by a political party or their own *usos y costumbres*, with a majority deciding on the latter (Esteva, 2001, 135).

Oaxacan Indigenous communities also sometimes have to strike a balance between closing themselves off to outsiders to safeguard their political, economic, and cultural autonomy and depending on key public goods and social services from the state, such as electricity, running water, and healthcare. These goods and services can inculcate dependence by bringing *pueblos originarios* into the administrative ambit of the state, but, as with co-optation, they can be reappropriated or supplanted by grassroots solutions: Joaquín stated that many communities will accept whatever the government provides them but then use these items for entirely different purposes; Unitierra also provided rural communities with oxygen tanks and other crucial medical supplies when the Oaxacan public health system all but collapsed in responding to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Economic independence is, in some ways, more difficult to secure than its political counterparts, given the ubiquity of consumerist propaganda, on the one hand, and the monopolization of the means of production by the state and capital, on the other. Esteva and Joaquín conceded that various communities in the region covet junk food, personal computers, and other industrialized products; while these communities are cognizant of the severe externalities associated with industrialization, they find themselves in a bind when they need certain commodities, such as transistors for community radios, to meet their basic needs rather than their more frivolous wants. Joaquín offered no easy answers to this pressing problem, simply remarking that *pueblos originarios* and their supporters will have to adapt and evolve if they are to more fully consolidate material autonomy. Capulálpam might offer some tentative solutions: Hernando mentioned that it houses a few *empresas comunitarias* or "communitary businesses," such as a sawmill, a stone-crusher plant, and an ecotourism center, all of which are run as cooperatives. Whatever concessions these businesses have to

make to the transactional logic of the market are arguably compensated by the support they provide to subsistence activities much more in tune with the collective goal of *buen vivir*.

Inverted Civil Society, "Uncivic Activism," and Quasi / Pseudo / Anti-Political Society

Critiques of contemporary civil society are not new: as the tides of neoliberalism have carried the mantras of "good governance," "development," and "participation through NGOs" to the farthest corners of the globe in the past three decades, critical social scientists and radical activists across the Global South have noted, with concern, the ascendance of a new rationality of governance that "calls forth an entrepreneurial citizen, self-regulation, responsibility for one's own problems, and non-conflictive partnerships with the state" (Alvarez et al, 2017, 9). Sonia Alvarez et al. have methodologically chronicled this tendency within various Latin American contexts: to unsettle the hegemony of civil society as a zone of "antipolitics," they propose the provocative concept of "uncivic" or "uncontained" activism as a shorthand for confrontational and often derided and criminalized political mobilizations, all the while pointing out that Latin American social movement repertoires have consistently blurred the civic/uncivic distinction (2017, 8, 332 – 333).

My conceptualization of inverted civil society is indebted to Alvarez et al.'s notion of "uncivic" / "uncontained" activism, at the same time as it exceeds the latter in important ways. The statist classification of "uncivic" mobilizations as pathologically backward takes on a special significance for Oaxaca's *pueblos originarios*, who have been relegated to the lowest rungs of Mexico's *mestizo*-controlled social hierarchy for hundreds of years. The corresponding criminalization of unruly political actors is also all too familiar to Oaxacan Indigenous actors, although the extrajudicial and extreme nature of much of the state violence that they endure lends a darker meaning to Alvarez et al.'s description of uncivic

activism as *lo no permitido* or "the prohibited, unauthorized, intolerable" (2017, 4). Given that *pueblos originarios* are ultimately fighting for their right to exist on their own terms, the Oaxacan and Mexican states deem them unacceptable on an ontological level.

More importantly, this ontological dimension of Oaxacan Indigenous struggles calls into question the extent to which they are "uncivic" or, for that matter, "activists": their inversion of civil society for the purposes of re/generating and defending autonomy based on *comunalidad* and their frequent avoidance of confrontation with state authorities could indicate that they are reimagining and resituating the "civic" on their own terms, instead of simply rejecting the definition provided by the state. In contrast to the far greater degree of skepticism towards civil society exhibited by many subaltern movements and communities in South Asia, Oaxaca's *pueblos originarios* engage this concept without accepting its bourgeois, statist origins. Furthermore, none of my interlocutors would necessarily describe themselves or the community members with whom they collaborate as "activists": aside from suggesting professionalization of the kind *pueblos originarios* typically try to keep out, this term more foundationally implies a separation from the aggrieved political group in question, which runs counter to the principles of *comunalidad*, *defensa de la tierra*, and *acompañamiento***.** "Uncivic activism" then, arguably pertains to the political terrain Oaxaca's *pueblos originarios* strive to leave behind, as opposed to the lands to which they belong.

Inverted civil society has a comparably complex relationship to my own conception of quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society, mapped in the context of Jharkhand's Pathalgadi Movement in the previous chapter. The two schemas are by no means mutually exclusive: Oaxacan Indigenous communities' strategic compromises with the state evoke quasi-political society, while their dis/simulation maneuvers before the state evoke pseudo-political society.

However, anti-political society—a zone of autonomy detached to the fullest extent possible from the state and capital—is much less of an aspiration or a fleeting reality for Oaxaca's *pueblos originarios* than it has been for Pathalgadi Movement participants: for all the contradictions that they endure, Oaxaca's Indigenous peoples are arguably better positioned to perceive autonomy as a capacity that they already have and must protect at all costs, thanks partly to their state's long history of isolation. For this reason, they can dare to conceive of a radically different civil society that links their various territories, cultures, and struggles, instead of limiting their conception of autonomy to their own territory for the sake of managing an incipient movement confronting incredibly daunting odds.

Chapter Four:

Another World is (Still) Possible:

Understanding the Ungovernable Uncommons as Incipient Alternative Globalization

Is another world still possible? If so, what—and where—are the seeds for its cultivation?

These questions have framed my project as a whole since its inception. The first amends the best-known slogan of the alternative globalization "movement of movements" that captured headlines and imaginations across the world in the late 1990's and early 2000's, which itself drew inspiration from the vision of "a world of many worlds" put forward by the Zapatistas after the start of their rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico in 1994. Also known as the global justice or anti-globalization movement, this confluence of incredibly diverse populations, organizations, and movements, from Indigenous peoples to environmental groups to labor unions to feminist collectives, announced its presence to the world at mass demonstrations against the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), and World Bank, such as the famed "Battle of Seattle" in November of 1999. It also inspired the formation of the World Social Forum (WSF) in January of 2001, which was meant to bring together grassroots actors from around the globe to coordinate transnational responses to the neoliberal status quo represented by the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. After more than a decade of disorientation and demoralization precipitated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the aggressive promulgation of the Washington Consensus, the alter-globalization movement supposedly signaled the revival of the global left.

However, more than two decades after it burst onto the world stage, the alter-globalization movement seems to be in severe disarray, if not entirely extinguished. It has

fallen prey to both hostile external forces and its own internal contradictions: its momentum was compromised when the post 9/11 "War on Terror" drastically redefined sociopolitical landscapes worldwide, and its rhetoric has been appropriated by right-wing authoritarians in more recent years, at the same time as movement actors have arguably been beset by philosophical and political divisions and the resultant lack of a unifying vision of a better future for all. The ever-mounting crises of neoliberalism have cast these setbacks and shortcomings in even sharper relief: the need for "another world" espoused by the alter-globalization movement has become all the more urgent as the presumed co-creators of that world have struggled to reorient themselves to the novel challenges posed by the existential threat of climate change and the necropolitical whirlpools of nativism, religious fundamentalism, authoritarianism, and proto-fascism.

Many proponents of the alter-globalization movement, such as journalist and activist Naomi Klein (2001), conceived its transformative potential in terms of a concerted effort to reclaim the commons targeted for appropriation by the forces of neoliberalism. While this continuing effort is by no means unworthy, anthropologists Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser's conceptualization of the uncommons reckons with the anthropocentrism of contemporary commoning: de la Cadena and Blaser (2017, 2018) critique both conservative and progressive governments and social movements in Latin America and beyond for justifying the exploitation or protection of so-called natural resources by presuming an ontological discontinuity between humans and non-humans that is not upheld by many Indigenous communities subjected to extractivism. As the "entangled excess" of this discontinuity, the uncommons is the constitutive outside and thus the condition of possibility for the commons (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017, 186). More importantly for the purposes of

this project, the uncommons is a potential tool for weaving a world of many worlds as it facilitates the formation of alliances based on "divergence" or mutually constitutive heterogeneity as opposed to simple difference. Uncommoning, then, could be crucial to resuscitating the alter-globalization movement while addressing some of its critical failures.

In this chapter, I bring together my research sites and their respective interlocutors to consider how repertoires of ungovernability in Jharkhand and Oaxaca articulate with the concept of the uncommons and, in doing so, constitute an increasingly pervasive but thus far largely illegible form of alter-globalization. The dynamics of quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society in Jharkhand and inverted civil society in Oaxaca demonstrate how Indigenous and other subaltern communities can deliberately produce the "entangled excess" of the uncommons to evade state and capitalist domination. In contrast to the public face adopted by the WSF in the hopes of convening "global civil society," these manifestations of the ungovernable uncommons shun state and societal attention and even recognition in order to safeguard their experiments in autonomy. On the one hand, this self-elision calls for an alter-globalization movement that expands its scope beyond civil associational forms to interstitial and often illicit spaces of communal refusal and regeneration, with all the contradictions that the latter contain. On the other hand, it begs the question of whether these spaces and the communities operating within them can be willingly integrated into a larger alter-globalization project capable of confronting late capitalist crises in their entirety.

I begin this chapter by providing a brief overview of the commons and uncommons that contemplates how the latter concept can be expanded beyond its original geopolitical context of Andean extractivism. I then turn my attention to the resonances of the uncommons within Jharkhandi and Oaxacan practices of ungovernability, focusing on refusals of human /

other-than-human discontinuity and key instances of domaining, equivocation, and divergence, all of which are integral components of de la Cadena and Blaser's schema. Thereafter, I examine how the ungovernable uncommons of Jharkhand and Oaxaca recontextualizes, reinvents, and/or transcends key facets of the alter-globalization movement—namely, the latter's calls for diversity, global civil society unity, and participatory democracy. Throughout these analyses, I consider how the ungovernable uncommons addresses some of the past weaknesses of the alter-globalization movement while potentially reproducing others.

The Fundamentals of the Commons and Uncommons

The commons has a long and contested conceptual and practical history, but biologist Garrett Hardin arguably made the most impactful—and potentially damaging—intervention into this long-running debate when he lamented "the tragedy of the commons" in a 1968 editorial for *Science*.[19] Aiming to alert readers to the crisis of overpopulation as he perceived it, Hardin depicts humans as inherently selfish beings who would willingly deplete and degrade all natural "resources" held in common, from grasslands to the seas (1968, 1244 – 1245). He recommends either privatizing these commons or placing them under governmental control, both of which, by his own admission, entail coercive enclosure, which, despite its unjust nature, is the best-possible system for averting the "horror" that awaits if the commons remain open to all (Hardin, 1968, 1247). As far as Hardin is concerned, the commons are nothing more than a means to the end of selective human flourishing. Despite acknowledging the injustice of enclosures in passing, he conveniently and ironically fails to

[19] Hardin's argument continues to be widely cited and republished, but it has been repudiated for its racist, nativist, and eugenicist underpinnings and its promotion of a zero-sum "lifeboat ethics" by numerous scholars of environmental politics (Mildenberger, 2019).

recognize how the modern-day "economic man" he centers in his analysis is the historical product of enclosures in Europe and later in the "New World." Marxist feminist Silvia Federici (2004) shows that these enclosures constitute a foundational violence within the modern world-system in a dual sense, as they laid the foundations for agricultural capitalism through the primitive accumulation of European peasant and American Indigenous lands.

In direct opposition to Hardin's schema, De la Cadena and Blaser clarify that their conception of the uncommons emerged out of the context of neo-extractivist activities such as strip mining, the expansion of carbon fuels frontiers, the construction of large hydroelectric dams, and the proliferation of agribusiness in South America (2017, 185). They note a paradoxical conceptual convergence between the justifications provided for the enclosure of the commons by both conservative and progressive extractivist regimes and those provided for the defense of the commons by typically non-Indigenous environmental and social justice activists. Extractivist regimes claim the natural commons as a resource to be exploited for the national good by either private or public corporations, whereas non-Indigenous environmental and social justice activists tend to frame it as a biodiversity hub to be protected from human interference (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017, 186). Both of these viewpoints fail to account for the agency that many Indigenous communities assign to forests, animals, rivers, mountains, and other-than-human beings of other kinds, whom they regard as co-existential partners or even superior powers rather than subordinated and/or instrumentalized entities. The aforementioned convergence is highly pertinent to my research sites, as it potentially sheds light on the subjugation of Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous peoples by their respective states across different governmental regimes, in addition to

illuminating a possible basis for divisions between Indigenous communities and hegemonic civil society organizations in both states.

The discourses of the natural commons as a resource and as a biodiversity hub are both ultimately legible to state power—that is, to different iterations of the state shaped by different ideologies and organizations along the conventional left / right political spectrum. Even when environmental and social justice activists challenge a particular governmental regime for attempting to enclose the commons, they still articulate the latter in terms that the state can, in principle, understand, even if it is hostile to this interpretation at the juncture under consideration. The uncommons, then, exists in constant tension with state power in spite of the fact that it is discursively and materially co-produced by various forms of statist commoning. This tension is all the more understandable in light of the putative threat that the uncommons poses to state sovereignty: if Indigenous communities striving for autonomy over their traditional territories are dangerous to state authority in and of themselves, other-than-human beings are even further beyond the pale of state recognition, not least of all because their agency by definition prohibits economic exploitation.[20] For these reasons, state actors constantly try to clear away the excess of the uncommons so as to render its subversive potentialities invisible.

The uncommons specifically challenges the state's requirement of sameness. Taken at face value, this requirement seems to be linked to the state's homogenizing nationalist project, which would claim the natural commons for a narrowly imagined community. This interpretation speaks to how the Indian Hindu and Mexican *mestizo* nationalist projects seek

[20] Several critical environmental scholars concur that the life / non-life division converts other-than-human agency into matter that is extractible without consequence.

to subsume Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous communities and their traditional lands and cultures. However, the neoliberal state has also proven itself more than capable of managing difference, as demonstrated by AMLO and MORENA's invocations of and meagre, largely symbolic concessions to Mexican Indigenous communities (detailed in the previous chapter). These maneuvers might go some way towards explaining why de la Cadena refers to difference as the "twin" of sameness (2018): as social categories deployed by the state for the purposes of governmentality, they are, for all intents and purposes, indistinguishable. The challenge posed by the uncommons to these categories operates on an ontological level rather than a purely administrative one: other-than-human beings not only refute the state's managerial dictates but the very anthropocentric sociopolitical reality within which these dictates are situated. The concept of divergence that de la Cadena adapts from Isabelle Stengers accordingly circumvents the statist trap of sameness / difference to cultivate space for this ontological challenge. Divergence highlights how heterogeneous perspectives and practices come into being and continue to define themselves through each other, even as they remain distinct; these perspectives and practices have interests in common that are not the same, such as the desire to protect a mountain because it is at once a vital ecosystemic node, on the one hand, and a powerful earth being, on the other (de la Cadena, 2018). Divergence is thus particularly appropriate for framing the complex realities of incomplete autonomy among Indigenous communities in Jharkhand and Oaxaca, as it opens a window onto the strategic maneuvers carried out by these communities to navigate their entanglements in the mechanisms of the state, capital, and civil society without foregoing their aspirations for collective existence on their own terms.

Domaining, as proposed by de la Cadena and Blaser, encapsulates the spatial dimensions of divergence and the uncommons as a whole. Commoning "unavoidably entails outlining a shared domain," but it begs the question of where the boundaries of a given community should be drawn. Proponents of the commons address this question by reproducing the conventional scalar imagination of nested units, wherein "the global encompasses the national that encompasses the regional that encompasses the local" (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2017, 187). Political alignments determine the political, economic, and social significance of these nested units to a great extent: the agents of an extractivist state tend to conceive of local and regional domains as the material foundations of nation-building projects that correspondingly serve as two-way conduits for transnational capitalism, whereas non-Indigenous environmental and social justice activists might conceive of these domains as the staging grounds for struggles tied to transnational webs of anti-neoliberal solidarity and ecological interdependence. In either case, domaining, as a compounded commoning practice, stimulates the proliferation of the uncommons across these scalar units, which, in turn, offers the possibilities of alternative socio-spatial arrangements and relations. Ontologies co-created by other-than-human beings among Indigenous communities in Jharkhand, Oaxaca, and elsewhere not only stand to disrupt national and transnational capitalist supply chains but also Eurocentric and anthropocentric understandings of solidarity, community, and collective transformation. Domaining as an instrument of statecraft thus inadvertently contains the seeds of counter-domaining, through which human and other-than-human occupants of the uncommons can contest the hegemonic spatialities imposed upon them.

Equivocations—discursive constructions that use the same terms to refer to different conceptions and even worldviews—underwrite domaining, and they demonstrate how this commoning practice endeavors to mask and ultimately eliminate divergences that announce the presence of the uncommons. The state, capital, and hegemonic civil society's deliberate delimitation of political, economic, and social possibility renders the field of equivocations asymmetrical, consequently giving these dominant forces disproportionate power to set the terms on which their opponents can claim or challenge prevailing notions of the commons. If they wish to enter into negotiations over the status or usage of forests, mountains, or rivers, Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous communities have no choice but to use these terms and the anthropocentric ontology from which they stem, at the expense of their own conceptualizations of the entities in question. This asymmetry does not, however, wholly leave Indigenous communities at the mercy of their oppressors; in fact, hegemonic equivocation opens the door to the subversive appropriation of these terms for the purposes of advancing their self-defined goals. At the same time, dominant actors can themselves appropriate and repurpose the conceptualizations that Indigenous and other oppressed communities put forward to frame their own ontologies, as evinced by the Jharkhandi and Oaxacan states' co-optation of discourses of Indigeneity.

Divergence, domaining, and equivocation all illustrate the dynamism of the uncommons as the "entangled excess" of hegemonic commoning projects. Having established these core elements of the uncommons and their broad relevance to my research sites, I now explore their particular mechanics as they have unfolded within the repertoires of ungovernability employed by Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous communities.

Uncommoning Ungovernability in Jharkhand and Oaxaca

a. The Multiple Manifestations of Ontological Refusal

Refusal of the ontological discontinuity between humans and other-than-human beings generates the uncommons, as established above. Blaser and de la Cadena's interlocutors openly indicated the Earth beings who share and co-define their territories: for instance, the leaders of an Awajun-Wampis community in Peru's Amazonian lowlands described the Amazon rainforest as their brother and refused to kill him or allow him to be killed by extractivism and pollution (2015, 3). Explicit invocations of other-than-human beings are by no means unthinkable for Indigenous peoples in my research sites; Critical anthropologist Alpa Shah, for example, conceives of traditional Jharkhandi adivasi communities as sacral polities actively shaped by humans and other-than-human animals and spirits on a quotidian basis. These polities combine the political, economic, ecological, and sacred realms and, among other things, facilitate pragmatic interactions with spirits believed to live in certain trees (2010, 62 – 65, 109 – 111). Nevertheless, invocations in this vein should not serve as the benchmarks or even the primary reference points for ontological refusal. Even if a particular Indigenous community believes in and seeks to protect its other-than-human coexistential partners, its human residents might not publicly disclose these beliefs for a number of understandable reasons: in Oaxaca, Jharkhand, and beyond, dominant social classes, castes, and/or races typically perceive non-anthropocentric worldviews as prime evidence of Indigenous backwardness. This damning diagnosis of atavism, in turn, enables state authorities to subject the communities in question to psychosocial conditioning in order to bring them into the folds of capitalist modernity, in the hopes that the

abandonment of their traditional beliefs will facilitate the abandonment of their traditional lands to external appropriation and exploitation.

Indigenous communities may hesitate to invoke other-than-human beings in their sociopolitical interventions not only because they fear hostility and opportunism from ruling social, political, and economic classes but also because they do not wish to be misrepresented by their self-proclaimed civil society allies, which too can have serious political, economic, and ecological repercussions. Shah chronicles how predominantly educated, urban, middle-class Indigenous activists in Jharkhand have unwittingly subjected predominantly uneducated, rural, and poor and working-class adivasi communities to "eco-incarceration": determined to preserve the romanticized image of adivasis as immutable ecological guardians living in harmony with nature, these activists have leveraged state power to prevent the community members in question from killing animals that endanger their safety and from temporarily migrating to urban areas for extra work to support their families (2010, 113 – 116, 138 – 143). Despite initially appearing to respect Indigenous worldviews, the romanticization of Indigenous peoples' relationships with nature is a disciplinary mechanism in a very concrete sense, as it refuses to recognize how these relationships do not revolve around unconditional, unwavering, high-minded reverence. An Indigenous community leader I met during my first trip to Oaxaca in the summer of 2014 pithily encapsulated the significant pragmatic dimensions of these relationships: when asked how he would describe the ongoing process of tending to the land, he paused for a moment and then replied, "*Es una chinga*" ("It's a bitch"). In contrast to the notion of the natural commons as a biodiversity hub to be protected from human interference, this pragmatic outlook regards other-than-

human beings as essential to the daily survival of Indigenous communities without commodifying them as resources.

Many of my Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous interlocutors articulated pragmatic relationships to their traditional territories grounded in a continuity between human and other-than-human beings without explicitly invoking the latter. Veteran Jharkhandi activist and journalist Dayamani Barla advocated for the cultivation of a "nature-based society" in opposition to "the global market," adding that, "without the hills, tribal culture is not alive." At first glance, these evocative statements seem to embrace the romanticized perception of Indigenous peoples as eco-savages. This perception, to be clear, continues to circulate within Jharkhandi civil society, as two prominent urban, educated, middle-class activists illustrated when they described adivasis as "worshippers of nature." However, Barla's testimony transgresses the limits established by this perception, as she went on to clarify that "our [adivasi] religion is our land" because "forest security is *jal, jangal,* and *zameen* [water, forest, and land]." The cosmological function of the land within adivasi worldviews is thus inextricably intertwined with its role as the basis of material existence; the land's sacredness elevates it above the status of a mere resource but does not prevent its careful usage for the purposes of social reproduction.

Barla's account of Jharkhandi adivasi relationships with the land is particularly provocative because it arguably embodies the "entangled excess" of the uncommons that defines the latter's ties to the state and civil society. On the one hand, Barla's interpretation of forest security not only challenges hegemonic conservation but also the securitization of forested areas by the Jharkhandi state, which has deployed an array of police, military, and paramilitary units in rural areas to protect public and private investments. On these terms,

Barla's proposed "nature-based society" is liberated from the state's monopoly on legitimate violence that underwrites the "global market." On the other hand, Barla also framed her vision in relation to "sustainable development," which, as the editors of *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* point out, has extended capitalism's lifeline by greenwashing its façade, deflating much more genuine political antagonism in the process (Kothari et al., 2019, xxvii). In this way, sustainable development purports to strike a compromise between conservative and progressive approaches to the natural commons by giving privatization a moral compass. Barla's understanding of sustainable development is a possible instance of equivocation, but it could just as well exemplify how the co-production of the commons and the uncommons can be a bottom-up tendency instead of just a top-down one. Even a dedicated grassroots organizer like Barla, who has put her life on the line for Indigenous struggles several times, can open the door to state power at the same time as her proposed alternatives exceed its terms.

In the previous chapter, I detailed how *defensa de la tierra* in pursuit of *buen vivir* subverts the commodifying discourse of land as a mere resource in Oaxaca. Here, *defensa de la tierra* amounts to more than territorialism in the narrow and often derisive sense of the term; in keeping with Gustavo Esteva's distinction between having a relationship with nature rather than a right to it, it entails fighting alongside *la tierra* and, by implication, the other-than-human beings it hosts rather than fighting over it. This fighting frequently occurs in a quotidian register rather than a grandiloquent one: Vincente Guerrero, for instance, described corn, chiles, and beans as the foundations of alimentary and economic autonomy for Indigenous and peasant communities in Oaxaca and across Mexico, to the extent that these crops have indelibly shaped communal identities. The forced entry of transgenic corn, then,

threatens to not only undermine their food sovereignty but moreover cause an ontological rupture between the human residents of these communities and the plants that, in a very literal sense, give them life and form.

Struggles of this kind are articulated in opposition to statist commoning initiatives, such as megaprojects. Hernando Dominguez stipulated that the *pueblos originarios* of Capulálpam are not opposed to mining as an activity in principle, but they refuse to accept governmental concessions that would allow public and private corporations to extract all available minerals from their territories over several decades. This nuanced stance elucidates how extractivism is more than just the extraction of certain valuable materials from the Earth: rather, it is a relentless necropolitical force that stands to consume virtually all of the living and non-living matter in its wake. Hernando and his community's conditional openness to mining is thus not a patent betrayal of the principles of *buen vivir*, as this activity is delinked from the state and capitalist priorities that drive extractivism and instead resituated within the context of communal autonomy, both in terms of scale and purpose. Hernando hinted at this critical recontextualization when he blamed the disappearance of regional water springs on large mining concessions. As previously suggested, the recognition and respect for other-than-human beings that distinguishes the uncommons is entirely compatible with Indigenous usufruct rights. Uncommoning, as represented by the practices and visions of ungovernability recounted here, challenges contemporary state power not because it opposes the usage of natural abundance per se but because it refuses the latter's endless instrumentalization and exploitation to serve the ends of anthropocentric societies ruled by the dictates of capital.

b. Domaining and Counter-domaining in Jharkhand and Oaxaca

Blaser and de la Cadena contend that "domains constitute sites where uncommonalities abound" (2017, 187). Successive state-building, society-making, and profit-generating projects have dominated Jharkhand and Oaxaca from their respective colonial eras to the present day, generating a range of uncommonalities among their Indigenous populations as a result. Blaser and de la Cadena attend to how commoning projects and the domains they erect constantly seek to disavow the uncommons through "same-ing" that renders divergences ontologically intelligible to hegemonic forces, and my research sites emphasize how same-ing can be a strategic compromise with insubordinate insurgent bodies that allows for divergences to resurface, especially when this compromise is eroded by the exigencies of extractivism.

The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (CPTA) of 1908 and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act (SPTA) of 1949, which prohibited the sale of Jharkhandi adivasi land to non-adivasis, sought to contain potent insurgent currents among the region's Indigenous populations within the legislative domain, all while creating a backdoor for the state to exercise its power of eminent domain over adivasi lands. The establishment of Jharkhand as a separate state in 2000 paradoxically gave this contingent containment strategy a new lease of life: under the guise of finally granting authentic representation to adivasis now within its borders, the Jharkhandi state could make more audacious incursions into their supposedly protected territories, as exemplified by the numerous memorandums of understanding for various extractivist projects signed by both adivasi and non-adivasi Chief Ministers in the past two decades. These heightened incursions have not gone unanswered, as demonstrated by the prolonged mobilizations against the creation of the Netarhat Field Firing Range in the Gumla and

Latehar Districts as well as the construction of an ArcelorMittal steel plant in the Gumla and Khunti Districts.

If these agitations gestured towards alternative domains, the Pathalgadi Movement was a full-fledged experiment in counter-domaining. It was sparked by the BJP-controlled Jharkhand state legislature's amendments to the CNTA and SPTA to expedite public and private land accumulation in 2016. These amendments to long-standing, widely accepted legal standards show how a seemingly innocuous or even benevolent form of same-ing, such as codifying certain adivasi land rights into law, can give way to severe ontological violence by virtue of the state's disproportionate power to define the commons. As such, they show how precariously occupants of the commons exist under state power, particularly when the latter is exercised under the conditions of neoliberalism and ultra-nationalism. Recognizing this precarity, Pathalgadi Movement participants might have declined to fight their case solely through designated institutional channels with the aid of respected civil society actors and instead reclaimed their traditional lands through direct action. The movement challenged the spatiality imposed upon adivasi communities in multiple ways: it not only rejected the conception of Indigenous territories purely as lands rich in mineral resources but transgressed state units and borders by connecting adivasi communities across Jharkhand's districts and neighboring states. Furthermore, it did not articulate its guiding vision in terms of secession for the purposes of alternate statehood, thereby circumventing yet another spatial arrangement legible to the Jharkhandi state.

Whereas the Pathalgadi Movement illustrates how counter-domaining can constitute an exit from the landscape of the state, inverted civil society in Oaxaca demonstrates how it can also erupt from cracks in the domains of the state forced open by occupants of the

uncommons. As in Jharkhand, Oaxaca's legislative structures have attempted to restrain and regulate Indigenous rebellion. Unlike the CNTA and the SPTA, however, Indigenous movements have been directly involved in major legal reforms concerning their governance and collective organization, which explains why these laws permit significant expressions of Indigenous autonomy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, state legislators amended Oaxaca's electoral code in 1995 to allow Indigenous municipalities to decide whether a recognized political party or their own *usos y costumbres* would determine the election of their authorities, with a majority choosing the latter. An amendment to the Constitution of Oaxaca and the passage of the Law on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples and Communities of Oaxaca in 1998 reaffirmed this accommodation of Indigenous self-governance (Esteva, 2001, 134 – 135). These reforms were, in part, containment tactics employed by the Oaxacan state to prevent the recently initiated Zapatista rebellion from gaining traction in Oaxaca. At the same time, Oaxacan Indigenous communities that had participated in forums convened by the Zapatistas and negotiations between the Zapatistas and the Mexican federal government asserted themselves during the decision-making processes that produced these reforms. The Oaxacan state's efforts to appropriate grassroots agitation for Indigenous autonomy were thus reappropriated by those very agitators. These shrewd maneuvers indicate that the uncommons is not solely a passive byproduct of the commons: rather, opponents of statist commoning practices can, in some cases, intentionally plant the seeds of the uncommons in the statist domains they are forced to navigate.

The seeds planted by Oaxacan Indigenous communities have flowered into the counter-domaining consolidation of communal autonomy at various points when the Oaxacan state has tried to consolidate or expand its domains. In keeping with Esteva's

expansive definition of extractivism as a mode of accumulation that targets all spheres of existence, the 2006 Oaxacan uprising and the 2016 Nochixtlán solidarity movement, both of which were galvanized by governmental crackdowns on protesting teachers, can be construed as assertions of the uncommons against violent neoliberal enclosures of knowledge production. They unsettled the domains of the state by bringing *usos y costumbres* into the streets of Oaxaca's capitol and by using roadblocks to prevent the circulation of goods and services that is the lifeblood of neoliberal Oaxaca. Communal resistance to megaprojects in recent years has taken uncommoning even further by openly rebuking the state's commodification of nature and calling for the defense of life in its multifarious forms: both biologist Patricia Mora and member of the Indigenous National Congress Juan Roque Perez clarified that Indigenous mobilizations against megaprojects in the Chinantla region of Oaxaca aren't struggles over land per se but a war waged by human residents alongside the plants, air, water, and subsoil against the death wrought by the state and capital (Bessi and Navarro, 2017). As the Oaxacan state has increasingly resorted to extrajudicial tactics to advance its neoliberal agenda, *pueblos originarios* have felt the pressing need to fight for their collective survival beyond the limits of the law, including the laws that they previously co-devised. These bold anti-authoritarian stances and tactics suggest that many Oaxacan Indigenous communities construed the legal reforms of 1995 and 1998 as openings to strengthen their autonomy in opposition to anthropocentric state power rather than social contracts forged in good faith with state authorities. Much as Indigenous communities can form negotiated political alliances with non-Indigenous environmental and social justice activists to defend common interests that are not the same, they can also minimally cooperate with the state without accepting its domaining or commoning projects.

c. Ungovernable Divergence through Equivocation

In reclaiming land from the unreliable protection of the law, Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous communities have shown that they have significant interests in common with the state that are not the same. The basic ontological conflict between state sovereignty and Indigenous autonomy perhaps makes these divergences inevitable, although the forms that these divergences take and the junctures at which they appear cannot be generalized.

As noted in Chapter Two, many of the Jharkhandi activists and intellectuals that I interviewed, including those with extensive records of grassroots political engagement, were critical of the Pathalgadi Movement's transgression of liberal democratic protocol and, to a lesser extent, its departure from the older, less confrontational practice of Pathalgadi. Nevertheless, they challenged the state government's subsequent mass arrests of Pathalgadi Movement participants, though their solidarity did not necessarily amount to a full endorsement of the movement or its methods. In this instance, primarily urban, educated, and middle class or lower-middle class activists and intellectuals, who can be considered representatives of Jharkhandi civil society, formed a working alliance with their predominantly rural, uneducated, and poor counterparts from the Pathalgadi Movement's quasi, pseudo, and anti-political societies. Their shared interest in securing the release of arrestees diverged in purpose: the activists and intellectuals in question defended the civil liberties of Pathalgadi Movement participants on principle and called for negotiations with the state, whereas movement participants themselves seem to have desired release in order to continue their agitation, as indicated by the tentative resurgence of the movement since early 2021. Needless to say, these divergent motivations also speak to divergent ontologies among the two sets of actors. This collaboration proves that the divide between relatively

empowered Indigenous activists and intellectuals and their relatively disempowered communities is by no means insurmountable; the transcendence of this divide is, however, contingent on the former's willingness to leverage their familiarity and possible bargaining power with the state without expecting deference from the latter and the latter's willingness to accept this assistance in good faith.

While the collaboration detailed above is promising, divergence can at the same time fuel antagonism between civil society and its ungovernable others, compounding the latter's confrontation with the state. During a group discussion with me and a small group of visiting Belgian activists and students, veteran Jharkhandi activists Ranjan Dasgupta and Alok Tirkey described the billboard campaign undertaken by their organization, Jharkhand Jangal Bachao Andolan (Jharkhand Save the Forest Movement or JJBA for short). JJBA activists have mobilized adivasi communities to erect billboards to elucidate community forest management rights; as part of their presentation on this campaign, Dasgupta and Tirkey showed clips of adivasi community members holding rallies prior to the installation of these billboards, during which they chanted, "Forest Department go back!" and asserted their collective stewardship of the forest. The parallels between this campaign and the Pathalgadi Movement are self-evident, and yet, when I inquired about these parallels, Tirkey stressed that the two have "no connections" whatsoever because the campaign does "nothing illegal." Dasgupta was more conciliatory and admitted that, "in spirit," the two mobilizations "are the same"; however, he, too, emphasized the legality of the JJBA campaign and additionally deemed the Pathalgadi Movement an unrealistic "revivalist" upsurge.

Both the billboard campaign and the Pathalgadi Movement have a clear shared interest in adivasi self-governance; however, they define themselves through each other

while remaining distinct in a contradictory way rather than a complementary one. Furthermore, this distinction may not necessarily allow these two mobilizations to co-exist despite their disagreements: Dasgupta and Tirkey's disavowal of the Pathalgadi Movement inadvertently vindicated the Jharkhandi state's suppression of this uncommoning force, despite the fact that both of them strongly denounced state violence against Indigenous populations. The mere fact of divergence—of having an interest in common that is not the same—is thus insufficient to shape alliances between heterogeneous sociopolitical actors; on the contrary, these actors may well have to explicitly reckon with and develop a mutual respect for each other's perspectives and tactics if they are to form these alliances, let alone make them last. The burden of this task falls mainly to agents of civil society by dint of their asymmetrical power in relation to the state.

Needless to say, equivocation is integral to the aforementioned repertoires of ungovernability. I contemplated Dayamani Barla's critical invocation of "sustainable development" earlier in this chapter; furthermore, I examined the inversion of civil society by Oaxacan *pueblos originarios* at length in Chapter Three. Interventions in the legal domain by Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous communities, such as claiming civil liberties in the face of mass arrests or amending electoral and constitutional frameworks, also arguably entail equivocation as these interventions are grounded in ontologies that exceed, if not defy, the very foundations of the states under consideration. The alternative plans for Oaxaca's Isthmus de Tehuantepec devised by regional *pueblos originarios* offers one more illustrative example of ungovernable equivocation. Gustavo Esteva informed me that Unitierra has been collaborating with Indigenous communities and collectives in the area to create a "*Plan del Istmo* from the grassroots." This plan announces the presence of the uncommons by turning

the very notion of centralized government planning on its head, diametrically opposing the logic that drives the megaprojects of the proposed Inter-oceanic Corridor. The grassroots architects of this uncommoning plan specifically counter the anthropocentric dimensions of these megaprojects by defending the tremendous biodiversity of the Isthmus region against decimation in the name of development. In addition, Gustavo attested that *El Istmo que Queremos* ("The Isthmus We Want")—one of two major groups opposing the Inter-oceanic Corridor along with the previously mentioned *El Istmo es Nuestro*—resists the conceptualization of the Isthmus as a discrete region in itself. "The Isthmus does not exist," Gustavo said as he summarized this organization's viewpoint, "because you cannot trace the borders of the Isthmus, where the Isthmus starts and the Isthmus ends. And people think in their region, in their place, in their community, not in the area." In this case, the equivocation of a "*Plan del Istmo* from the grassroots" does not simply invoke an alternative conception of the region in question but one that negates the state's domaining imposition altogether.

The Ungovernable Uncommons as a Novel Form of Alter-Globalization

Repertoires of ungovernability employed by Indigenous communities in Jharkhand and Oaxaca embody and reproduce the uncommons in multiple ways, but how do they answer the call for another world in the process? De la Cadena contends that alliances based on divergence offer the possibility of "an altogether different practice of politics" (2015, 7); together with Blaser, she argues that these alliances may be capable of "proposing… the practice of a world of many worlds, or what we call a pluriverse: heterogeneous worldings coming together as a political ecology of practices, negotiating their difficult being together in heterogeneity" (2018, 4). My research sites confirm that many of these worldings lie beyond the limits of state power even as they strategically engage it. In addition, the

uncommons might be ungovernable by default, given that it consists of ontologies that refuse the human / other-than-human dichotomy which undergirds the capitalist state, but quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society in Jharkhand and inverted civil society in Oaxaca demonstrate that intentional collective interventions by and large produce these counterhegemonic worldings, with the possibility of a pluriverse consequently stemming from these interventions. On these grounds, the ungovernable uncommons upholds the promise of the alternative globalization movement. However, does it simply pick up where the latter left off and, if so, does it risk running into the same obstacles? If not, how does it diverge from the alter-globalization movement of movements, and what are the consequences of this divergence for the diverse actors that it involves?

The provocation of the ungovernable uncommons essentially begs the question of how the alter-globalization movement dealt with heterogeneity, and much literature on the movement seems to offer an immediate, straightforward answer. In its heyday from the late 1990s up until the early-to-mid-2010s, the movement in its broadest sense encompassed an impressive plurality of actors, strategies, and visions of the future. In fact, referring to the movement in the singular is arguably a mis-characterization, according to a number of scholars and activists who studied and contributed to it: social movement scholars Tom Mertes (2004, 2017) and Jai Sen (2017, 2018), among others, contrarily deem it a "movement of movements" that comprised a host of worldwide opponents to the prevailing neoliberal order, from farmers in the Global South to anarchists in the Global North. This unifying "no" to neoliberalism went hand in hand with "many yeses" in terms of alternatives, though the common threads of economic and ecological justice as well as comprehensive, resilient, and multi-level democracy ran through most of these proposals. Labor scholars

Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith go so far as to argue that "diversity is the essence of the alternative" put forward by the movement, stressing that it did not entail "a single vision," "a universal faith," or "a shared utopia" (2002, 62 – 64).

On these accounts, the alter-globalization movement of movements appears to have been fertile grounds for the cultivation of alliances around common interests that were not the shame. Without a doubt, a number of alliances in this vein did emerge, such as the celebrated Alliance for Sustainable Development and the Environment formed between workers demanding job security at the Texas-based Kaiser Aluminum Corporation and environmentalists demanding the protection of California and Oregon's old-growth redwood forests (Brecher, Costello, and Smith, 2002, 50 – 51). However, plurality in and of itself does not inhibit same-ing, and many high-level advocates of the alter-globalization movement circumscribed its ontological parameters in spite of their avowed commitment to diversity. Brecher, Costello, and Smith, for instance, repeatedly situate the transformative agenda of the movement within global civil society, at the same time as they call for a strengthening of non-market state functions to keep neoliberalism in check and further implement the agenda in question (2002, 40 – 42). While these positions were pragmatic to some extent, they also ran the risk of alienating movement participants, especially from multiply marginalized backgrounds, who might have had more ambitious aims and more militant means of pursuing them because they were more directly targeted by neoliberal dispossession and state violence. This alienation was evident at World Social Forums: according to longtime WSF participant-observer Janet Conway, the "political and epistemic marginality of women, racialized, Indigenous, and other subaltern movements" persisted more than a decade after the WSF's establishment (2012, 390). The WSF and the overall alter-globalization

movement's emphasis on civil society additionally courted the participation of NGOs, which subsequently dominated many major gatherings at the expense of their grassroots counterparts. Veteran Kenyan activist Firoze Manji penned an especially acerbic response to the 2007 World Social Forum in his home country for being more of an "NGO trade fair" than a genuine anti-capitalist mobilization, with the overrepresentation of international organizations with larger budgets proving that "the WSF was not immune from the laws of (neoliberal) market forces."

Though the WSF sought to be "the central place for the project of advancing an alternative society" (Massiah, 2019), it was admittedly far from the only site of alter-globalization. The ungovernable uncommons potentially proliferated beyond the WSF's margins in the thousands of local, national, and regional communities, organizations, and movements that constituted the larger alter-globalization ecosystem. Nonetheless, the commoning influence of civil society and the state as mediated by more powerful movement actors often extended to these expressions of the uncommons. For instance, mass demonstrations at G8, G20, and World Economic Forum summits shaped the alter-globalization movement alongside the WSF, and they frequently featured property destruction and other disruptive tactics deployed by anarchists, anti-fascists, and other militants. Despite the movement's putative commitment to a diversity of tactics to match its diversity of participants and perspectives, protest marshals on the front lines of these demonstrations and the politicians, intellectuals, and activists who frequently served as spokespeople for them denounced these "hooligans" and their "vandalism," with some even inviting the police to clamp down on both (Dupuis-Dèri, 2014, 70 – 72, 130 – 132). Given that these allegedly violent militants for the most part took measures to ensure that their

actions would not endanger others, justifications for this regulation of the movement's character and public profile on the grounds of safety are not entirely persuasive. Rather, the movement's top-down mandate for non-violence may well have delimited its capacity to achieve its goals by forcing uncommoning perspectives, actors, and approaches to toe the line of respectability or withdraw their participation for fear of their own safety and well-being at the hands of their censorious privileged and powerful counterparts. In these ways, the WSF's "domestication of potentially explosive actors" (Rasheed, 2007) was a microcosm for the overall alter-globalization movement's rhetorical and sometimes physical pacification of the same unruly contingents to a significant extent.

In addition to alienating many grassroots and/or militant participants, the alter-globalization movement's containment of heterogeneity within the domains of civil society and the state often reinforced the discontinuity between human and other-than-human actors to the detriment of Indigenous communities that challenge this discontinuity. Naomi Klein was one of the best-known figureheads of the alter-globalization movement throughout its emergence and heyday, and she conceives of the movement as an attempt to "reclaim the commons" from the neoliberal privatization of everyday life (2001). Klein's remarks on the movement's approach to nature and the involvement of Indigenous peoples as essential parts of this commoning mission are particularly illuminating: in the first case, Klein highlights how movement participants across the world were "reclaiming bits of nature and saying, "This is going to be public space" (2001, 82). This framing at once implies that nature is a resource subject to human control, regardless of whether it is made private or public. Furthermore, Klein's notion of "public space" in opposition to neoliberalization may well create an opening for a re-assertion or, rather, reconfiguration of state power in spite of its

apparent focus on community governance, insofar as it approximates and validates the public domain that has historically been the purview of the state.

Klein's resource-based conceptualization of nature and concession to state power are arguably even more visible in her brief account of Indigenous alter-globalization struggles against extractivism: she clarifies that, "Most people in these movements are not against trade or industrial development. What they are fighting for is the right of local communities to have a say in how their resources are used, to make sure that the people who live on the land benefit directly from its development" (2001, 88). Indigenous communities are unquestionably interpellated by the logics and mechanisms of the state and capital in ways that produce internal contradictions and compromises, as documented in Chapters Two and Three. However, Klein's qualifications about trade and industrial development over-generalize Indigenous attitudes to these phenomena so as to ignore resistance to both in many instances, such as Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous opposition to mining and megaprojects. Klein also distinguishes Indigenous communities from their "resources," which they could very well perceive as other-than-human beings who cannot simply be "used" or "developed" as their human co-existential partners see fit. In addition, "the right to have a say" over the utilization of resources presumes the inevitability of both state power and development and, in turn, implicitly implores Indigenous communities to collaborate in good faith with both, albeit on more equitable terms. In contrast, my research sites show that many Indigenous communities are just as invested, if not more so, in their "right to get away" from these hegemonic entities than their "right to have a say" in the latter's operations.

In sum, the ungovernable uncommons stands to redefine alter-globalization's relationship with heterogeneity as it unfolded in the de facto global "movement of

movements" of the late 1990s to early 2010s. As a guiding concept in the latter's revival and reinvention, it enables the formation of alliances around common differences that are not the same, which will not be subsequently curtailed by the imposition of state and civil society-friendly commoning mandates on the whims of more privileged and powerful actors. By the same token, it accommodates repertoires of action, especially of the more militant variety, which defy these mandates out of necessity, as it recognizes that commoning respectability politics endangers entire ontologies comprised of oppressed human and other-than-human beings. This full-fledged diversity of tactics consequently allows Indigenous communities, among other subaltern actors, to counter-domain in and across their territories without the conciliatory anthropocentrism of past alter-globalization mediators compounding their confrontation with state power. In other words, the ungovernable uncommons offers a surer footing for fulfilling the movement's commitment to horizontal coordination among its heterogeneous participants.

The alter-globalization movement of movements sought to renew and reimagine democracy as an integral part of its challenge to neoliberalization. Leading movement advocates argued that neoliberal elite-controlled economic institutions such as the IMF, WTO, World Bank, and World Economic Forum, in combination with governmental bodies willingly or grudgingly implementing their agenda, have "reduced the power of individuals and peoples to shape their destinies through participation in democratic processes" (Brecher et al., 2002, 8). In response, they demanded the re-democratization of decision-making institutions at every level, from the global to the local; in concrete terms, they broadly called for popular participation in the negotiation of international economic agreements and the monitoring of corporate behavior, equal representation for the world's poor in international

trade and financial institutions, and the decentralization of decision-making power based on the subsidiarity principle, according to which "power and initiative should be concentrated at as low a level as possible, with higher-level regulation established where and only where necessary" (Brecher et al., 2002, 72).

These proposals envision expanded, intensified, and otherwise improved participation largely within pre-existing institutional arrangements. When they do embrace the construction of alternative institutions, such as worker and community-owned cooperatives or a Global Economy Truth Commission, they limit these alternatives to the lower rungs of the subsidiarity ladder and to information-gathering and truth-telling functions meant to apply pressure on hegemonic structures. These proposals assign essentially deliberative and consultative roles to the forums convened by the alter-globalization movement as well (Brecher et al., 2002, 70 – 72). Grassroots participation here is thus premised on accepting the legitimacy of prevailing state, interstate, and capitalist institutions, even if it decries the transformation of these institutions under neoliberalism. As such, grassroots actors must recognize the domains established by these institutions, as a result of which their alternatives will be integrated into the latter's commoning initiatives; any uncommoning impulses contained within these alternatives will therefore be subsumed, if they are not rooted out by more restrictive deliberative processes in the first place. Ungovernability is, by definition, beyond the pale of this mode of participation.

Counterintuitively, the delimiting participatory democracy outlined above is the other face of the withdrawal of consent from established institutions, according to Brecher, Costello, and Smith. They reason that withdrawing consent through strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience, and other means places dominant political and economic institutions on the

backfoot, at which point they will cede ground on which grassroots actors can intervene through participation (2002, 20 – 22). In this schema, the withdrawal of consent is negative reinforcement intended to remind state and capitalist power brokers of the power held by their collectively organized subjects, whereas the resumption of participation is positive reinforcement for hegemonic compromise. While this strategy has been effective in many notable instances that cannot be ignored, it is almost exclusively capable of securing concessions rather than enacting revolutionary social transformation. More importantly, this strategy crucially fails to acknowledge that state and capitalist institutions and their foot soldiers can, in many situations, continue business as usual even if their subjects withdraw their consent, simulate popular consent for this purpose, and simply ignore appeals for participation, all of which render the very question of consent moot. Indigenous communities in Jharkhand, Oaxaca, and elsewhere that have endured the brute force of neoliberal dispossession and state violence know this harsh reality all too well.

The withdrawal of consent does not have to be linked to the desire to participate in hegemonic institutions and their decision-making processes. However conciliatory they might be, most archives of the alter-globalization movement register the consistent presence of another mode of participatory democracy, one that articulated collectivities as ends unto themselves and partial manifestations of other possible worlds. Political anthropologist Marianne Maeckelbergh chronicles the pervasiveness of prefiguration across the alter-globalization movement's many sites; she defines prefiguration as "trying to make the process we use to achieve our immediate goals an embodiment of our ultimate goals, so that there is no distinction between how we fight and what we fight for, at least where the ultimate goal of a radically different society is concerned (2009, 66 – 67). Even the most

hierarchically organized World Social Forums and summit protests were replete with examples of prefiguration in action, from councils to assemblies to occupations of public or private space. Intentional communities and autonomous organizations opposing neoliberal globalization away from the bright lights of these high-level convergences have taken this principle even further, as epitomized by the Zapatista dedication to "making the road by walking" or, for that matter, the direct action undertaken by Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous communities to create their own zones of subaltern ungovernability. Participatory democracy in these cases entails the co-constitution of alternative ways of collective existence, not integration into pre-existing dominant structures. Instead of suppressing divergence to gain seats at the table of power, it allows heterogeneity to come into being through communal entanglements in the state and capital while remaining distinct.

To be participatory in the fullest sense of the term, prefigurative processes and collectivities must engage other-than-human beings in a non-anthropocentric manner. Ecofeminist activist Vandana Shiva, another icon of the alter-globalization movement, describes this imperative in terms of "Earth Democracy": self-governance grounded in the subsidiarity principle that positions human beings as "part of the Earth family" and respects the intrinsic worth and agency of other-than-human beings (van Gelder and Shiva, 2003). This self-governance explicitly contravenes the logics and mechanisms of economic and political neoliberalization—that is, the privatization of "nature" by national and transnational capital that is facilitated by state power. It also contravenes the more fundamental instrumentalization of nature, which, as seen in the preceding subsection, inflected the dominant discourse of the alter-globalization movement as well. The ungovernable uncommons is arguably vital to cultivating Earth Democracy in its broadest and deepest

sense, stemming as it does from non-anthropocentric ontologies in tension with state power. Practices of intentional subaltern equivocation within its ambit could diffuse Earth Democracy to non-Indigenous actors by rendering the continuity between humans and other-than-human beings intelligible to them. As part of this translation, uncommoning is well-suited to reconceptualizing both the spatiality and polity encompassed by this continuity through its transgression of nested hegemonic domains, not least of all the nation-state. Diverse repertoires of ungovernability additionally stimulate and accommodate an array of heterogeneous self-governance practices adjusted not only to various social, political, economic, and ecological contexts but different degrees and forms of entanglement in dominant structures.

a. Other Worlds versus Another World?

The potential of the ungovernable uncommons to reinvigorate and reorient the alter-globalization movement by embracing heterogeneity and prefiguring Earth Democracy does not guarantee that it will. Part of this uncertainty naturally comes from the asymmetrical power of the state and capital to minimize or eliminate expressions of uncommoning. However, it also arguably comes from two salient and interrelated features of the ungovernable uncommons itself: its frequent reliance on self-elision and the contingency of alliances among actors with divergent interests.

As stated before, many aspects of the alter-globalization movement of movements did not receive nearly the same attention as the World Social Forums or summit protests. For instance, transnational peasant movement La Via Campesina, which has been central to alter-globalization's agricultural wing, claims to represent over 200 million farmers in 81 countries; the majority of these farmers have been involved in local, national, and regional

struggles removed from, though not necessarily unconnected to, the overarching organization's successful petitioning of the United Nations General Assembly to pass a Declaration on the Rights of Peasants. Some nodes of such far-reaching transnational networks are almost bound to pursue their shared interests in relative obscurity. Nevertheless, other movement participants, such as the Zapatistas and the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil, have intentionally obscured a number of their activities from public view, so as to more effectively safeguard against state surveillance and counter-insurgency. At the same time, these movement participants typically have sizeable public-facing initiatives, such as the Zapatistas' famous international *encuentros*, to build solidarity with their various partners in struggle.

In contrast, many Indigenous communities in Jharkhand and Oaxaca facing comparable or even greater dangers of repression have insulated themselves against state authorities, activists, intellectuals, and most other representatives of the world beyond their territories to a much greater extent. Pathalgadi Movement participants, for example, explained the justifications for their rebellion to representatives of a few mainstream and independent news outlets, but they never flaunted the strategies or achievements of this rebellion to these reporters or any other outsiders; land defenders from Oaxaca's Sierra Norte were similarly circumspect. As and when these movements did enter into alliances, they mainly did so with local actors in response to the exigencies of state violence, such as the mass arrests of Pathalgadi participants in Jharkhand or corporate-sponsored paramilitary aggression in Oaxaca. The long histories of internal colonialism among both sets of actors makes this inward-facing orientation, even in relation to potential allies, all the more understandable: the goodwill that so many diverse alter-globalization movement participants

extended to each other is far riskier in communities that have been maligned and betrayed by their surrounding societies for generations.

Self-isolation through self-elision in these and other comparable cases might be a byproduct of autonomy as much as a means for pursuing it. Notwithstanding the desire and/or need for certain consumer products and public goods and services, Jharkhandi and Oaxacan Indigenous communities have made a concerted effort to grow, build, or otherwise develop everything they need in their traditional territories. Their ethos and praxis of self-sufficiency could, to some degree, make external support unnecessary—at least, as long as they are not under heavy fire from state and corporate forces. This caveat shows the volatile milieux in which these ongoing mobilizations exist, which also means that their positioning in relation to the outside world could evolve with their circumstances. Extractivism in Jharkhand, Oaxaca, India, and Mexico will continue for the foreseeable future, by all accounts, as will significant grassroots opposition to it; as more and more precious commodities are either exhausted or reclaimed by Indigenous and other oppressed communities, state and capitalist power brokers are likely to become all the more desperate and thus all the more willing to employ even more repressive means of achieving their ends. This descent into heightened violent neoliberal commoning could necessitate a convergence of the ungovernable uncommons across even more expansive counter-domains, try as hegemonic forces might to prevent this very outcome. Under these conditions, occupants of the uncommons might also be compelled to forge alliances around common interests that are not the same with more sympathetic and dependable agents of civil society and even dissidents within the domains of the state itself. The 2006 Oaxacan uprising and its suppression, which precipitated an outpouring of nationwide solidarity and brought Oaxaca

to the attention of many international observers for the first time, offers concrete proof of this possibility.

Illicit Alternatives to Globalization and Interstitial Coalitions

If it is to realize any of the emancipatory potential it might hold, the ungovernable uncommons requires a rethinking of major areas of alter-globalization theory and action. Namely, it requires attentiveness to how invocations of diversity can be undermined by same-ing, calls for participation in dominant decision-making processes can actually undermine participatory democracy, and certain communities fighting neoliberal globalization might resist easy integration into a resurgent "movement of movements."

Alter-globalization scholars and activists who are prepared to take on the provocation of the uncommons to continue their struggle for "a world of many worlds" should, firstly, intentionally open this arena to interstitial and often illicit spaces of communal refusal and regeneration. As the crises of late capitalism have accelerated and intensified in the past few years alone, they have rewritten and, to a point, discarded, the social contracts between many states and their constituencies, forcing an ever-increasing number of citizens and subjects to the frontiers of legality, if not into the realm of illegality. Illegality is, of course, no assurance of a politically progressive contribution to the global struggle against neoliberalism by divergent actors, as indicated by the recent right-wing appropriation of anti-globalization rhetoric (Stringer, 2017). That said, quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society in Jharkhand and inverted civil society in Oaxaca illustrate how viable anti-neoliberal and anti-authoritarian autonomy can proliferate at, beyond, and in-between the boundaries of the law. A singular reliance on transparent, respectable and implicitly bourgeois or petit-bourgeois civil society organizations to bring "another world" into being is arguably more misguided and

counterproductive now than it ever has been. This is to say nothing of how other-than-human beings almost entirely elude the purview of the law, further mandating an expansion of alter-globalization's permissible ontologies, perspectives, and strategies.

Multiple retrospective analyses of the alter-globalization movement have criticized it for not putting forward a unifying long-term vision and concrete political agenda for world social transformation (Savio, 2019; Consolvo, 2019). At the same time, accounts of the movement offered by prominent figureheads such as Brecher, Costello, Smith, and Klein highlight how the responsibility for crafting such a vision and agenda tends to fall on the shoulders of more privileged and powerful movement participants, which can reduce such proposals to the lowest common dominators of liberal institutional reform. As valuable as targeted changes to global governance might be in the short to medium term, a greater degree of grassroots militancy might actually be the key to limiting disaffection among oppressed communities squarely in the crosshairs of the state and capital; it could also be integral to addressing mounting global crises that will no longer be stopped by half-measures, if they ever could be. Militants must adapt their means and ends to suit the specific territories in which they operate, if for no other reason than to avoid becoming convenient targets for counter-insurgency. Openness to a wide variety of ungovernable repertoires and visions might thus be far more important for renewing the alter-globalization movement than same-ing prescriptions for militant action. In accordance with this openness, alter-globalization scholars and activists may have to accept that numerous grassroots communities may only be willing and able to propose localized alternatives to neoliberal globalization in their respective counter-domains, as opposed to broad-based forms of alternative globalization that can serve as models for other constituencies, organizations, and movements around the

globe. Whether this uncommoning approach to alter-globalization will be sufficient to weave a patchwork of self-governance that can generate the world of which the Zapatistas dream remains to be seen, though that is no excuse for not testing its capabilities.

Conclusion:

A Frame, not a Stencil:

Postulating Further Openings for Inquiry and Solidarity Facilitated by Ungovernability

The repertoires of ungovernability analyzed in this dissertation are neither blueprints for action for other oppressed communities to uncritically implement nor isolated instances of subaltern mobilization unintelligible beyond their specific contexts. At the same time as it encapsulates a range of embodied collective and individual oppositional practices, ungovernability is a lens for reframing Indigenous and other subaltern mobilizations so as to better appreciate the emancipatory potentialities they prefigure in spite of their entanglements with the state and capital. How portable, then, are these particular repertoires, and what does portability even mean in the first place? What other repertoires of ungovernability might exist, and what distinguishes Indigenous ungovernability from widespread subaltern practices of rioting, refusal, and "just making do," which often involve some form of criminality? How should ungovernable actors relate to other practitioners of emancipatory politics, such as leftist insurgents or socialist parties seeking to seize the state? And how should critical global studies come to terms with ungovernability as part of fulfilling its self-professed commitments to centering marginalized perspectives and contributing to progressive social transformation? I provide some tentative responses to these pressing questions by way of concluding this dissertation, in the hopes of opening up avenues for further investigating the conceptual apparatuses I have proposed and the opportunities for solidarious political engagement that they offer.

Disruptive Reverberations in a Wider Relational Web

Broadly speaking, a number of communities oppressed by neoliberal dispossession and state violence in other sociopolitical contexts arguably employ the repertoires of ungovernability outlined here, in part if not in their entirety. As previously mentioned, the Zapatistas have shaped, reaffirmed, and reinforced the inversion of civil society undertaken by their Oaxacan neighbors; this is exemplified by their definition of civil society as "common, everyday… simple and humble people" who do not belong to political parties and who "do not put up with things, who do not surrender, who do not sell out" in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (2005, 1, 8). Subcomandante Marcos, the best-known spokesperson of the Zapatistas from 1996 to 2014, also masterfully utilized the dis/simulation that typifies pseudo-political society in service of anti-political society when he enigmatically retired his public persona in 2014, claiming that Marcos had never been more than a hologram behind which members of Zapatista communities could consolidate their autonomy. Outside of southwestern Mexico, quasi, pseudo, and anti-political society could bring the fugitive peoples and zones of refuge in Zomia analyzed by James C. Scott in *The Art of Not Being Governed* up to date by shedding light on their negotiations with the "distance-demolishing" technologies of various states—such as modes of transportation, communication, and, of course, resource distribution—in the contemporary era (2009, xii).

From Oaxaca to Chiapas and Jharkhand to Zomia, the repertoires of ungovernability I have examined thus far have only secured some degree of autonomy on the material basis of their access to land, as tenuous as this access might be in many cases. This factor does not make ungovernability an inherently or exclusively Indigenous political strategy: numerous Indigenous peoples have been displaced from their traditional lands by colonialism,

imperialism, and capitalism, and even some who have managed to stay on their territories might comply with the dictates of the state and capital rather than challenge them, as a result of compulsion, conditioning, or simply class interest. By the same turn, non-Indigenous peasants and other rural populations could take up the repertoires at hand in a similar fashion to their Indigenous counterparts, but this does not mean that ungovernability is utterly untenable in an urban or peri-urban setting: for instance, the Abahlali baseMjondolo shack dwellers' movement has reoccupied and decommodified unused government land in several South African cities since its establishment in 2005; it has utilized a robust range of legal and illegal tactics, from court applications to road blockages, and secured basic necessities such as electricity and sanitation for its participating communities at the same time as it has constructed its own community daycare centers, community kitchens, and vegetable gardens (Abahlali baseMjondolo, n.d.). Many civil society organizations have supported Abahlali baseMjondolo campaign against state violence and for land rights, offering yet another example of how alliances can form around divergent interests as and when subaltern actors are willing to engage in equivocation, as the shack dwellers in question have. Nevertheless, Abahlali baseMjondolo has not necessarily refuted the ontological discontinuity between human and other-than-human beings while reclaiming land, which shows that not all repertoires of ungovernability articulate with the uncommons.

The aforementioned examples build upon the relationality that links my interlocutors in Jharkhand and Oaxaca, redefining the portability of my chosen repertories in the process. The Zapatistas extend their inverted conceptualization of civil society to the world as a whole, but they recognize that insubordinate "simple and humble people" elsewhere will necessarily develop their own modes of oppositonal politics: they have explicitly called upon

organizations and individuals who support them in other parts of the world to not uncritically reproduce the institutions and practices they have developed in Chiapas and contrarily channel the spirit of Zapatismo into confrontations with their own social, political, economic, and ecological circumstances, all while dialoguing with actors engaged in similar struggles in other locations (Esteva, 2010, 18). Using repertoires of ungovernability developed in Jharkhand or Oaxaca as pre-constituted benchmarks for identifying and evaluating potentially similar practices elsewhere risks overstatement or disappointment. In contrast, any and all sensitive but effective inquiries into ungovernability must be open-ended: refusing to accept the political horizon set by liberal-democracy while recognizing pervasive entanglements in the state and capital, they should invite insubordinate oppressed populations to articulate if and how they have refuted regimes of sovereignty, governmentality, and coercion while offering insights into how other actors have done so in other locales. These open-ended inquiries might illuminate different repertoires of ungovernability altogether.

Rioting, Criminality, and Refusal without Community and World-building

The term "ungovernability" intuitively conjures images of rioting, which, as Dilip Gaonkar argues, has become a near-ubiquitous feature of global political landscapes as liberal fictions such as popular sovereignty have unraveled (2014, 1, 4). The conditions of neoliberalization subtend countless instances of rioting, but Gaonkar clarifies that the latter is not solely driven by political and economic factors, as riots sparked by sporting events or the perceived contravention of cultural mores demonstrate. The variability of rioting's root causes distinguishes it from the repertoires of ungovernability I have reviewed in this dissertation, which are explicitly sociopolitical and socioeconomic (if concomitantly sociocultural) responses to neoliberal dispossession and state violence; within the contexts of

my research sites, they specifically challenge the incursions of extractivism. The extended collective intentionality and planning behind repertoires of ungovernability in pursuit of medium to long-term visions of autonomy distinguishes them from politically, socially, and economically motivated riots as well. This is not to say that rioters do not engage in collective decision-making or, for that matter, that they are not inspired by visions of alternative futures, but they tend to be spontaneously galvanized by societal flashpoints and immediate material needs, and, due in no small part to the neoliberal state's highly advanced capacities for counterinsurgency, they can be dispersed relatively quickly. These dynamics leave rioters with little time to build any alternative communal and social arrangements they might desire. Needless to say, rioting can open up spaces for ungovernable praxis, such as the cooperative houses, medical facilities, and community centers in the Exarchia neighborhood of Athens, Greece, which were established by anarchists, antifascists, refugees, and immigrants through squatting and have been repeatedly defended through rioting (Crabapple, 2020). As such, rioting could be viewed as a potential bridge to repertories of collective ungovernability, if not a repertoire in itself.

From the perspective of the state, rioting is one of the most spectacular and dangerous forms of criminality; however, the latter manifests in various quotidian behaviors among oppressed populations across the world as well. Sociologist Asef Bayat classifies "vast arrays of often uninstitutionalized [and explicitly criminalized] hybrid social activities" among poor, working class, and otherwise oppressed populations, typically in developing countries, under the rubric of "uncivil society" (1997, 55).[21] Some of these activities—such as Iranian

[21] In contrast to the liberal conception of "uncivil society" that I critique in my first chapter, Bayat does not use this term to condemn actors and practices beyond the political pale.

squatters demanding electricity and running water and establishing roads, clinics, stores, and other collective institutions in their communities—hew somewhat close to elements of the repertoires of ungovernability foregrounded above or at least to Chatterjee's conception of political society. Most, however, involve disenfranchised and impoverished individuals simply striving to survive by setting up stalls and kiosks, driving pushcarts, and engaging in other informal economic activities; they contest governmental crackdowns on these illicit activities through spontaneous direct action, legal battles, or quiet non-compliance (Bayat, 1997, 53-54). Bayat himself concedes that, barring certain moments of collective mobilization, these actors more often than not lack the organizational power of disruption and that they tend to seek immediate solutions to their immiseration on an individual level (1997, 58-59). "Making do" as a political modality strikes a contrast with ungovernability: both modalities involve coping with the state and capital, but this is both the means and the ultimate end of "making do," whereas it is largely just the means of ungovernability and only partly so, at that. Mere survival is an entirely understandable goal under neoliberal domination, but subaltern actors who employ repertoires of ungovernability strive for more, not least of all because they are wary of being wholly reincorporated by the liberal democratic state if they simply "make do."

The fairly robust community and world-building capabilities that I assign to repertoires of ungovernability seem to resonate to a greater extent with practices of refusal as they have theorized by anthropologists Carole McGranahan, Audra Simpson, and others. McGranahan stipulates that refusal refers to a host of practices by diverse actors that generally indicate "a stoppage, an end to something, the breaking of relations," be that with regards to an institutionally imposed affiliation, identity, or obligation (2016, 320 – 322). The

actors in question may refuse citizenship, military service, resettlement, or vaccination, to cite but a few examples; refusal thus constitutes an oppositional stance in the face of state power, though, as the final example of vaccination suggests, this stance is not inherently progressive, let alone emancipatory, and it may not be exclusively taken by subaltern actors. McGranahan stresses that refusal is generative and that it can specifically produce or reproduce community and new kinds of political space (2016, 322). In this sense, ungovernability simultaneously embodies the processes and the possible outcomes of refusal: quasi and pseudo-political society permit ungovernable subaltern actors to generate incomplete but nonetheless bold and provocative autonomy that can be conceptualized in terms of anti-political society and inverted civil society. Nevertheless, these repertoires of ungovernability crucially also involve acquiescing to state power in certain situations, even if this acquiescence might ultimately enable more profound assertions of refusal. McGranahan and other theorists of refusal undoubtedly recognize that actors engaging in refusal may have to cede ground to the state and capital, but they shift these concessions to the background of their schema. Ungovernability, on the other hand, foregrounds these concessions as part of the intentional political calculus of many subaltern communities.

Ungovernability as an analytic exceeds rioting, "making do," and refusal in important ways, but it is by no means above critique or, for that matter, incapable of failure. The repertoires of ungovernability that I have examined in this dissertation have been employed by Indigenous communities suffering under the cumulative weight of colonial and imperial legacies and continuities, neoliberal capitalist dispossession, and rampant state violence; they have used these repertoires to advance struggles for autonomy that are broadly progressive in character, insofar as they challenge the commodification, usurpation, and denigration of their

lands, livelihoods, and cultures from well-documented positions of oppression. These mobillizations have not, to the best of my knowledge, embraced chauvinistic, exploitative, or abusive beliefs and practices, in spite of the allegations levied against them by state-controlled media organizations and reactionary political and social power brokers. Nevertheless, as I have reiterated throughout my analysis, the corresponding communities are riven with contradictions due in no small part to their histories of oppression, and certain members or even segments of these communities might embody beliefs and practices in this vein. Needless to say, if these internal contradictions are not addressed or, worse yet, intensify, they could seriously threaten the cohesion, decision-making capacity, and, above all, the ungovernability of these communities.

The self-circumscription of these communities and mobilizations in geographic, cultural, and, to an extent, demographic terms could very well complicate my theorization of the emancipatory possibilities they offer. On the one hand, these communities designate clear boundaries for themselves to protect themselves against state violence, whether directly through police, military, and paramilitary violence or indirectly through infiltration, surveillance, and sabotage. On the other hand, these boundaries could enable various kinds of exclusion that reinforce any pre-existing internal hierarchies and establish external hierarchies involving other oppressed populations. Afro-Mexican and caste-oppressed populations have lived alongside Indigenous peoples in many parts of Mexico and India and respectively, but this does not mean that Indigenous communities are immune to racist and casteist tendencies pervasive in these societies; rigidly policed boundaries around Indigenous communities could perpetuate these tendencies, especially if they overlap with frequently unequal access to land among these diverse oppressed populations. These boundaries could

further give rise to cultural nationalism among the ungovernable Indigenous communities at hand, which risks inhibiting their dialectical engagement with the political and economic forces they confront—possibly opening them up to state and capitalist incorporation—as well as consolidating a cadre of cultural gatekeepers along the lines of seniority, lineage, gender, or other pertinent differentiating categories who could wield disproportionate power over community affairs. These regressive turns are not inevitable or irreparable, but the potential for them to arise must be acknowledged, just as my assessments of these communities, their strategies, and their futurities must be revisited and potentially revised if they do.

Beyond internal contradictions, ungovernability is not innately invulnerable to co-optation by the forces of reaction. Rioting, quotidian criminality, and refusal are not the sole purview of the Left, as vividly illustrated by the anti-Muslim pogrom carried out by Hindu nationalist mobs in New Delhi in 2020, the attempted white supremacist insurrection on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. in 2021, or highway blockades mounted by supporters of neo-fascist ex-Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro following the general election of 2022. Dismissing these mobilizations purely on ethical or moral grounds makes for a weak argument, given how easily terms from popular and leftist discourse, such as "oppression" or "autonomy," can be appropriated and resignified by the Right. What perhaps really distinguishes these apparent instances of right-wing ungovernability from the repertoires I have highlighted is that their opposition to the state and capital is, at best, selective and, at worst, illusory: they by and large only decry certain figureheads, policies, values, and/or organizational bodies within their corresponding state and capitalist apparatuses for their corruption, dishonesty, or "weakness," all while championing replacements as well as designated defenders of these apparatuses, such as the police, military, and even corporate

capital as a whole. This dissonance in their thought and praxis also undermines any visions of (typically ethnonationalist, religious fundamentalist, racist, cisheteropatriarchal, or otherwise chauvinistic) autonomy that they put forward. Furthermore, eco-fascism might technically overcome the ontological discontinuity between humans and other-than-human beings, but its antagonism to difference renders divergence and equivocation virtually impossible. Right-wing insurgents have certainly presented their own alternatives to neoliberal globalization, but they are highly unlikely to engage in anything like coherent uncommoning, and their supposed ungovernability is little more than a smokescreen for their ultimate fealty to the state and capital.

Prospects for Ungovernable Solidarity

Building upon the Zapatista to bring together the "small and humble" rebels of the world, Ashish Kothari et al. propose a "Global Tapestry of Alternatives," which is meant to be a solidarity network and strategic alliance among already existing and emerging communal alternatives to the dominant regime of capitalism, statism, anthropocentrism, racism, and cisheteropatriarchy (2019, 339). As alluring as this proposal is, it must be reconciled with the practical challenges of weaving such a "tapestry," a number of which are evident from my research sites. Pathalgadi Movement participants initially rejected any and all outsiders, including established members of Jharkhandi civil society. Many of Oaxaca's *pueblos originarios* are similarly reluctant to invite journalists, intellectuals, activists, or any other interested parties into their contested territories, although, as previously mentioned, the heterogeneous communities of the Sierra Norte have established collective decision-making and communication protocols among themselves. The Pathalgadi Movement only accepted outside help when it confronted mass arrests, while Oaxacan Indigenous communities are

willing to coordinate their efforts through proven, long-standing spaces of political convergence like Unitierra.

As such, weaving a Global Tapestry of Alternatives might be a painstaking and occasionally unfruitful process: notwithstanding suspicion stemming from long histories of external oppression, many oppressed communities may simply seek relative isolation after they have effectively employed repertoires of ungovernability to keep the state and capital at bay; securing their incomplete autonomy in the face of neoliberal dispossession and state violence might take precedence over assuming the risks of attacking these oppressive phenomena at their roots. In the absence of extended, respectful dialogue, they may fail to see what they stand to gain in concrete terms from the Tapestry, or they might disagree with certain aspects of its overall conceptualization, either as a result of their internal contradictions or their own competing interpretations of the "dominant regime" and solidarity. My research sites show that building trust through extended engagement based on the principle of divergence can reap rewards, but the Tapestry, such as it is, might wind up with a few holes left behind by the non-participation of certain communities, a possibility with which the coordinators of the Tapestry and scholars and activists engaging the communities in question will have to make peace. Ungovernability can, to some extent and in some cases, disincentivize solidarity-building at the same time as it cultivates autonomy.

Beyond the logistical difficulties of solidarity-building, a global solidarity network and strategic alliance consisting solely of communal alternatives may well be insufficient to defeat the forces of the state and capital in and of itself. The gaps between these alternatives are potential openings for accumulation as well as repression, which might eventually have a significant bearing on these alternatives themselves: for instance, Unitierra and Oaxaca's

pueblos originarios cannot, in and of themselves, address the concerns and meet the needs of all the poor and working-class persons of Indigenous descent who populate Oaxaca's streets, markets, and factories, and asking them to do so would be unreasonable, in any case. Scaling up communal alternatives of this kind might defeat their spirit and, more than that, their intended purpose and ability to function, while the problems involved in simply replicating them in other environments has already been addressed. Could ungovernable communities, then, effectively coordinate and collaborate with other types of progressive and leftist organizations operating within or beyond their respective spheres?

Insurgency would seem to naturally complement repertoires of ungovernability, with the former directly attacking the neoliberal state and the latter reclaiming territory from it. Jharkhand is a key part of India's "Red Corridor," a zone covering eleven states in the central, southern, and eastern parts of India with active Maoist insurgents (Shah, 2010, 163-166). Oaxaca similarly falls within the territory of the *Ejercito Popular Revolucionario* (Popular Revolutionary Army or EPR for short), a Maoist organization primarily based out of the neighboring state of Guerrero but supposedly active across Mexico (Gatsiopolous, 2007). This proximity, however, has not necessarily forged alliances between these insurgents and ungovernable Indigenous communities—at least, none that are readily apparent. Alpa Shah contends that, contrary to its claim that it is a "movement of the poorest for the poorest" against the bourgeois state and its violence, Jharkhand's chapter of the Maoist insurgency is disproportionately dominated by rural elites who supplant the security functions of the state, often through a politics of fear (2010, 162-183).

Pathalgadi Movement participants implicitly expressed a much more fundamental justification for not associating themselves with the Maoist insurgency: they feared that they

would face even greater state repression if they were to do so (Sahu, 2018; Sundar, 2018), given that India has designated the Maoists as its greatest internal security threat and carried out a brutal counterinsurgency campaign that has targeted numerous adivasi, peasant, and other rural communities on suspicion of harboring Maoists. None of my Oaxacan interlocutors mentioned the EPR during our conversations about grassroots politics in the state, though a 2007 North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) news report described similarly extensive measures taken by the Mexican military to suppress the group, adding that the Zapatistas had denied any affiliation with it (Gatsiopolous, 2007). Revolutionary violence, as Fanon emphatically insisted, is not at all categorically unjustified or counterproductive, and both the Pathalgadi Movement and Oaxacan *pueblos originarios* have intermittently demonstrated a willingness to take up arms in self-defense. Nonetheless, I hypothesize that ungovernable communities in Jharkhand, Oaxaca, and potentially elsewhere perceive insurgency and even a passive affiliation with it as a strategic risk that could undermine whatever gains they have made by placing them in the crosshairs of the state. Unless and until they are willing to take on this risk, insurgents seeking solidarity will have to determine how to keep the communities in question out of harm's way to the fullest extent possible, if they can gain an audience with these communities at all. A dogmatic Marxist-Leninist-Maoist orientation could also place them at odds with beliefs and practices in these communities, necessitating dialogical translation across this ideological rift.

Ideological and programmatic reorientation might also be necessary for any and all socialist or communist parties that seek to engage ungovernable subaltern communities. This engagement itself would seem to be a contradiction in terms, with the real possibility that the communities in question will reject any political party that could wield power over them.

Numerous Indigenous communities across Latin America, from Bolivia to Chile to Ecuador to Honduras, have expressed discontent with and even rebelled against progressive or leftist governments, to no small extent because these governments have continued resource extraction on their territories. In a similar vein, adivasi communities across India have been dispossessed and displaced by dams and other infrastructure projects helmed by supposedly progressive governments at the national or regional level. Socialist or communist parties have never ruled over Jharkhand or Oaxaca, and they look unlikely to do so in the near future. In fact, many Pathalgadi Movement participants abstained from voting in Jharkhand's 2019 Assembly elections, which might have inadvertently allowed a BJP candidate to win in Khunti (Sharma, 2019). Nevertheless, if progressive and leftist political parties desire rapprochement with Indigenous communities in these states in the hopes of expanding their base, they may well have to rethink their prototypical emphasis on public-oriented development through industrialization and specifically extractivism. The International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations issued a broad statement of support to the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca during the 2006 statewide uprising, calling for a united front of workers, peasants, and other "exploited peoples" against imperialism, fascism, and capitalism. Specific policy proposals for respecting Indigenous autonomy might have to supplant admirable but vague sentiments of this kind if progressive and leftist political parties are to make any real headway with the communities at hand.

The Importance of Ungovernability to Critical Global Studies

To the extent that global studies has become "the handmaiden of neoliberalism" (Darian-Smith, 2014), it has done so in large part by adhering to the tenets, possibilities, and, most importantly, the limits of liberalism, especially as they are enshrined by liberal

democratic institutions at the national and international levels. The "utopian qualities" conventionally assigned to civil society by liberal global studies scholars seem particularly ill-suited for reckoning with the increasingly dystopian landscapes shaped by the mounting crises of the neoliberal order. These qualities, to a significant extent, do not resonate with the beliefs and practices of numerous oppressed actors navigating these landscapes, who have been forced to defend themselves from relentless neoliberal dispossession and state violence by any means necessary and available to them. At the same time, intergovernmental, nongovernmental, and other civil society organizations continue to be endowed with considerable resources that could prove useful to these actors in their struggles.

How should critical global studies scholars proceed, given this conundrum? To begin with, they should take to heart William I. Robinson's insistence that "history… has no end," which is to say that "the society in which we live is only one possible form of society" (11-12). Other, more emancipatory forms of society are sprouting from the ever-widening cracks in the neoliberal state system, but they can only be nurtured if key liberal shibboleths are discarded: namely, that capitalism can be reformed and returned to its former glory, that the state is the ultimate political horizon, and that associational life should be civil, compliant, and modest. The analytic of ungovernability is essential to this paradigm shift: it promises to resituate global political theory within the messy, contentious, often dangerous, and yet potentially invigorating realm of actually existing politics among insubordinate oppressed populations. Its recognition of persistent entanglements with the state and capital among these populations offers a guide to repositioning political engagement for improved effectiveness and sensitivity. Its open-endedness and its openness to a range of critical and

radical theoretical frameworks, from *comunalidad* to uncommoning, allows for robust yet dynamic dialogical engagement with novel forms of subversive and rebellious praxis.

Collaborative dialogical engagement with ungovernable communities under constant attack from hegemonic forces cannot be purely discursive. In other words, critical global studies scholars must be prepared to accompany their interlocutors wherever the latter are willing to take them within their sites of struggle: to tiny tea shops and crowded public squares, to their homes and their places of work, to their organizing meetings and their social gatherings. This accompaniment necessitates paramount responsibility with the knowledge that interlocutors share, their identities, the details of their activities, and the nature of their affiliations; sometimes, it requires not telling certain aspects of their stories that could place them in harm's way. It requires rejecting both rigid dogmatism and amorphous eclecticism, with critical global studies scholars neither trapping their interlocutors within liberal or Marxist, decolonial, Indigenous, and any other logics nor unconditionally accepting all of their viewpoints due to the mere fact of their subalternity. Perhaps most disconcertingly, accompaniment might require critical global studies scholars to transgress the limits of liberal democratic protocol themselves to support their interlocutors in concrete ways: they might have to reconceptualize civil society as a vehicle for smuggling resources to the communities that need it most, as opposed to the end-point for any impactful political engagement. In other words, they will have to reproduce the double movements carried out by their interlocutors, wherein they recognize the weight and presence of civil society but insist on their critiques and reformulations of it.

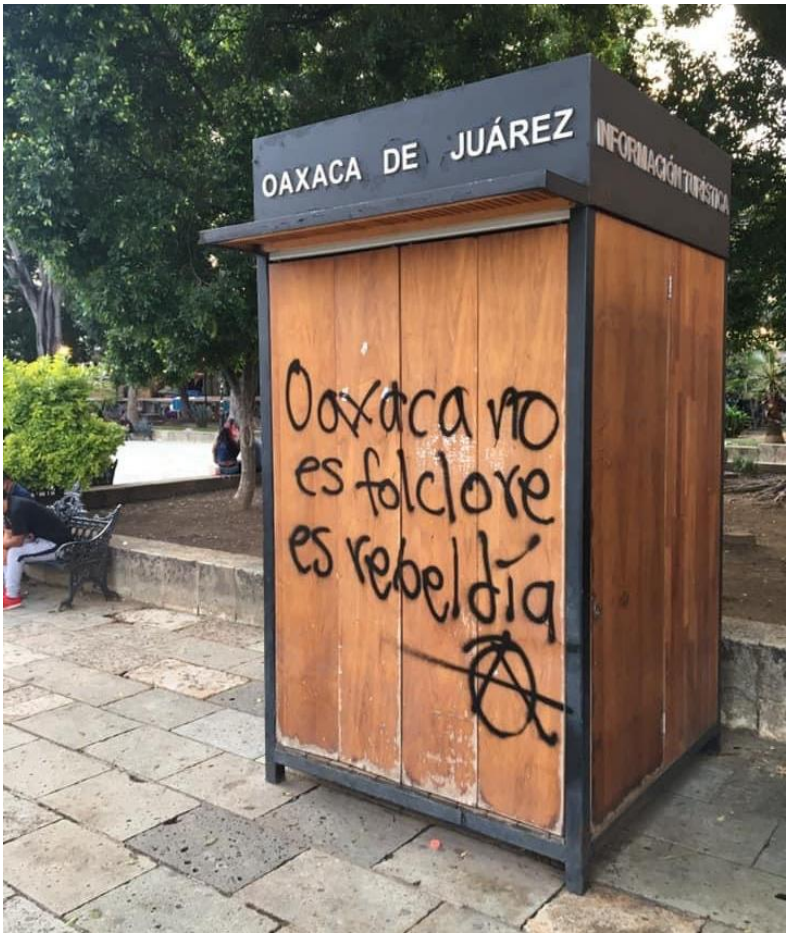


Photo taken by author on October 4, 2021

On one of my last nights in Oaxaca City in October of 2021, I stumbled across a Oaxacan Ministry of Tourism information booth in a corner of the *zocalo* or main square. The booth had been vandalized with graffiti that boldly declared, "*Oaxaca no es folklore, es rebeldía*" ("Oaxaca is not folklore, it's rebellion"). Of all the numerous murals and pieces of street art and graffiti I saw in Oaxaca, this declaration was among the most memorable. It encapsulates how so many Indigenous and other oppressed communities in Oaxaca, Jharkhand, and various other parts of the world refuse to accept the administrative categories and material realities imposed upon them by the state and capital, including supposedly celebratory depictions of their traditional culture. They refuse to be anachronisms,

showpieces, or the remnants of rapacious colonial, imperial, and neoliberal accumulation. They contrarily synthesize audacious if incomplete strategies for disentangling themselves from their oppressors and moving closer to the autonomous, dignified, and abundant futures they desire—not just for themselves but with the other-than-human inhabitants alongside whom they live, work, and play every day.

The state and capital and the civil society they shape will not simply go away—not without a ferocious, extended, gargantuan fight—but neither will the subaltern collectivities that leverage their obligations while prefiguring a future beyond and without them. The onus is on critical global studies scholars to ensure that their ungovernable interlocutors do not fight alone.

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