

# Berta Cáceres, Agency and Resistance: A Feminist-indigenous interpellation of the Capital / Life crisis

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between and the intersection of Feminist agencies and indigenous women's resistance movement strategies in Mesoamerica by focusing on Honduran indigenous activist Berta Cáceres Flores, who was murdered in 2016. Cáceres's speeches as leader of the Honduran Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations (COPINH) between 2009 and 2016 are analysed through the lens of three key topics: Agency; Resistance strategies; Grassroots-indigenous Feminism. The methodology used in this paper builds on Sociological Discourse Analysis (SDA) and highlights the structure of discourse based on categories such as the context of production and its interpretation as a social practice. The study's findings lead to the idea that Cáceres' discursive position embodies the junction between indigenous resistance and Feminist agencies, which is to say the grassroots defence of land and body as a response to the Capital-Life crisis and the commodification of common goods. The paper also questions Neo-Liberalism's hegemonic narrative as it showcases subjective proposals forming part of resistance to colonial capitalist power. These subjectivities are expressed in practices based on 'commons', care, reciprocity, community life linked to nature, and the priority given to life's reproductive cycle.

**Keywords:** feminisms of the south, discourse analysis, Honduras, Latin America, Capitalism, environment.

## SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

The Zapatista uprising of 1994 in Chiapas, Mexico, was a watershed from which a wave of global movements (often referred to as ‘alter-globalisation’) sprang to challenge Neo-Liberalism. One of its main features was the regeneration and revitalisation of indigenous and peasant movements in Latin America (Pleyers, 2018). According to Svampa (2010), Zapatismo began a new cycle of collective action that steadily took in diverse struggles against the region’s neo-extractivist development model. This

model, as described by Harvey (2004), involves “accumulation by dispossession,” enabling Capitalist concentration and expansion by throwing the natives off their land, and by over-exploitation and looting of natural resources. Within this framework, indigenous and peasant movements fighting to preserve their natural resources, and biodiversity soon hit the world headlines. They became beacons of resistance to the mighty development model based on the notion of unlimited economic growth (Estermann, 2012).

The dawn of the 21st Century marked the beginning of a new stage of global struggles, with women's movements gaining international prominence, giving new meaning to the slogan "What's personal is also political," Here, social networks were used to denounce and highlight the various forms of violence inflicted on women (Muñoz-Saavedra, 2019). Women's demonstrations and other forms of protest began to make a big impact in Latin America, a region where such political processes were amplified in the context of social remobilisation and opposition to Neo-Liberal and Neo-Conservative policies (Forstenzer, 2019). These movements were influenced by intersectional paradigms and epistemologies that incorporated life experiences of subaltern women from indigenous, peasant, Afro-descendant, migrant, Lesbian, poor, mixed-race backgrounds (Villarrol, 2018).

Berta Cáceres Flores,<sup>1</sup> was a courageous woman who embodied both global struggles. She was murdered in 2016. According to Curiel (2019), Berta grasped how racism, sexism, and classism are intertwined with neo-colonial extractivist policies. Cáceres, a Lenca indigenous woman and founder of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH), led the battle against extractivism on her native land. In particular, she became a global icon of the environmental movement<sup>2</sup> for her opposition to the building of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric plant on the Gualcarque River, a sacred site for The Lenca Folk. Due to her anti-patriarchal stance, she is also a source of inspiration for Feminism (Korol, 2018), as reflected in Eco-Feminist texts (Herrero, 2017), Popular Feminism (Korol, 2018), De-colonial Feminism (Curiel, 2019), and the Feminism woven "from world visions, spiritualities, and ancestral knowledge" (Korol, 2018, p. 233).

This paper analyses the discourse of the Honduran indigenous activist Berta Cáceres to look at the relationship between and convergence of indigenous resistances and

feminist agency within the framework of community defence of both land and the body (Cabnal, 2010; Ulloa, 2021). The document comprises six sections. The first three delve into the discourse's production context and the theoretical concepts guiding its analysis, while the last three sections present the study's methodology, results, and discussion/conclusions.

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### AGENCY, RESISTANCE, AND TERRITORIAL DEFENCE: ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT AND LIVING IN THE WORLD

Following the so-called "Washington Consensus" in 1989, international agencies fostered a set of measures<sup>3</sup> in 'developing countries' that boosted the global expansion of Neo-Liberal policies (Reyes and Fiorino, 2019; Harvey, 2004). Yet after decades of pushing these policies, there has been little reduction in poverty (Reyes and Fiorino, 2019), global inequalities have widened (Milanovic, 2018), and socio-environmental conflicts have sprung up, linked to the commodification of common goods and trade liberalisation (Shiva, 2020).

Discontent with these measures in Latin America has led to the emergence of political proposals to counter both hegemonic development theories and the Capitalist accumulation model. One of them is the Zapatista movement, and the other is the *sumak kawsay* [Good Living] paradigm, inspired by a slew of the worldviews of Andean peoples in Ecuador and Bolivia (Cabnal, 2010). Both movements reject the hegemony of Neo-Liberal Capitalism while also offering ontological, epistemological, and axiological proposals for another way of co-existing and living in the world. Quijano (1999) states that *sumak kawsay* is based on social practices that seek the production and reproduction of collective/community life, linked to an alternative social existence pattern, distinct from the Capitalist development and European colonial project's power structure. This transition, as described by Acosta (2020), implies moving from a destructive anthropocentric

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1 To delve deeper, we recommend the documentary *Las semillas de Berta* [Berta's Seeds] (Entrepueblos, 2019) and the referenced texts by Korol (2018) and Curiel (2019)..

2 In 2015, she received The Goldman Prize, which recognises leading environmental defenders.

3 Reduction of tariffs, trade liberalisation, downsizing of The State, privatisation of public services and assets.

model to an emancipatory socio-biocentric one that respects Nature and conserves bio-diversity.

In these proposals, territory becomes a space for autonomy, the creation of social relationships, and building political subjectivities (Svampa, 2019). Resistance against extractive capital takes the form of an “emancipatory strategy” (Giroux, 1992) or a form of “subaltern contestation” (Santos, 2018). It seeks to dismantle the various forms of domination that appropriate territory materially and symbolically. Alongside resistance, alternatives arise, such as the ‘eco-territorial’ turn, referred to by Svampa (2019) as the building of frameworks for collective action and shaped by the meanings, knowledge, and proposals of paradigms such as *sumak kawsay*. These frameworks facilitate both meanings and interpretations for protest movements.

In a broader context, critical studies of development and post-development suggest the world is going through a civilisational crisis<sup>4</sup> (Estermann, 2012; Rauber, 2016). Environmental collapse reveals the failure of global Capitalism and the development models based on extractivism and unlimited growth. According to Ojeda and Villarreal (2020), these models are guided by a Westernised modernity project with marked colonial, Eurocentric features, and that homogenises peoples and only measures well-being by Western benchmarks.

The aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) also affected so-called ‘post-industrial’ countries (Milanovic, 2018). Pérez-Orozco (2019) points out the growing inequality and economic precariousness, and shrinking Welfare as public spending was slashed to deal with the 2008 crisis. The upshot has been weakening social protection and an ever more commodified lifestyle. In response, some social movements seek alternatives to protect common goods, with a surge in initiatives for social and

solidarity-based economies (Madrilonia.org, 2011). Thus, as noted by Garay (2008), indigenous thinking incorporating *sumak kawsay* and Zapatism align with the growing commons-based international debates: common goods, the commonwealth, and community management (Federici, 2020; Shiva, 2020).

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### FEMINISMS TO CONFRONT THE CAPITAL/LIFE CRISIS

In a similar vein, Feminist Economics highlights the fact that the hegemonic development model poses an irreconcilable conflict between the accumulation of “Capital” and the sustainability of “life” (Pérez-Orozco, 2019). The “Capital-Life” crisis has been touched on by several strands of Latin American Feminism. (Korol, 2016; Zapata, 2007). Popular Feminism’s criticisms are based on experiences of a solidarity-based economy in opposition to a Neo-Liberal one. Feminists argue that the false dichotomy between commodity production and life needs to be overcome. In the epistemological field, De-colonial Feminisms (Lugones, 2008; Curiel, 2019; Espinosa, 2019) question the colonial and racist foundations of Capitalist accumulation in modern societies. Meanwhile, Community and Indigenous Feminisms (Gargallo, 2013; Cabnal, 2010; Guzmán and Triana, 2019) criticise the dominant economic paradigm from their community practices and worldviews, challenging the notion that life should revolve around economics.

Like other social movements, the emergence of these Feminist strands in Latin America is intertwined with the social and political factors shaping the continent over the past 50 years. Following Carosio (2012), Latin America is a territory where women’s experiences of resistance have emerged from revolutions, guerrilla wars, dictatorships, and peace-building. Such experiences have given rise to sundry anti-hegemonic, anti-colonial Feminisms. These critical perspectives, in some cases, converge with ecologism in recognising eco-interdependence (Svampa, 2019; Pérez-Orozco, 2019) and with anti-Capitalism in questioning the Neo-Liberal paradigm as a driver of global injustices (Federici, 2020).

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<sup>4</sup> Understood as a series of intersecting crises covering: (1) Ecology/Climate; (2) Colonialism/ Mercantilism; (3) Globalised Modernity; (4) Caring for and Sustaining Life (Estermann, 2012).

This diversity of knowledge, experiences, and political and community practices – and individual change and collective action to transform the structures subjugating women – underlies the idea of Feminist agency (Kabeer, 2021). From this standpoint, agency has two facets: (1) autonomy and the ability to act to reach certain goals; (2) structural constraints that hinder roll-out but do not stop it. According to Martínez (2019) and Medina (2018), this facilitates political subjectivation – both individual and collective – in certain situations of structural vulnerability, driving agency in countering hegemonic power and control. Here, processes, practices and experiences of resistance are inextricably linked to agency.

One Feminist trend that appears to combine resistance and agency is Indigenous and Community Feminism. According to Ulloa (2021), “Indigenous Feminisms contribute to the Social Sciences by proposing conceptual and methodological reconfigurations of the political, the spatial, and the collective, based on their fluidity and relationality, as they seek to transform Capitalism by defending life” (p. 38). This relational approach challenges the individualistic ethos of the hegemonic Neo-Liberal narrative by coming up with proposals that stem from subjectivities that, argues Quijano (1999), survived the Capitalist colonial power structure. These proposals are expressed in practices based on ‘common’ care, reciprocity, community life linked to nature, and giving priority to life’s reproduction.

This concept of community is not limited to the strictly territorial or the management of common goods. That is because it introduces new epistemological categories within Feminism, such as the territory-body and territory-land, through which other ways of knowing and experiencing the world are expressed (Guzmán and Triana, 2019; Torres, 2018). The body-territory-land relationship refers to cosmological and political interpretations arising from reciprocal and mutual affective relationships, seeing territory and the non-human as living beings with which experiences and practices are shared. Hence, when there is violence against territories, there is also violence against bodies, and vice versa (Ulloa, 2021).

Furthermore, community Feminists offer a critical view of the sexual oppression of women, and of body-territory, identifying the intersection between the Neo-Liberal Capitalist model and the colonial condition in the subjugation of rural and indigenous women. According to Cabnal (2010) and Guzmán and Triana (2019), this perspective does not idealise pre-Hispanic cultures and worldviews, as it also identifies oppressive and patriarchal practices within these too. It denounces misogyny within some political expressions of Zapatism or *sumak kawsay*. Therefore, their proposal “suggests a double de-patriarchalisation of territories in the face of forms of oppression by Capitalism, as well as by ancestral patriarchy” (Torres, 2018, p. 237). These processes embody a kind of resistance that, using Giroux’s categories (1992), arises from ancestral emancipatory interests to dismantle three structures or forms of mutually-reinforcing domination (whether explicit or implicit), namely: Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Colonialism. Women, as those passing on traditional knowledge and as guardians of the land, help strengthen collective identity and cohesion in the face of dispossession (Federici, 2020).

In this process of agency, resistance, and territorial defence, indigenous women align with Eco-Feminist<sup>5</sup> perspectives critical of the global Capitalist accumulation system based on extracting natural resources from peripheral countries (Bosch et al., 2005). In particular, they resonate with the spiritual tradition found in southern Eco-Feminism. The latter values the worldviews and religious philosophical traditions of non-Western peoples, offering a critical perspective on patriarchy and the developmentalist economic system from the standpoint of North-South power dynamics. This perspective focuses on what they call the ‘mis development’ model, which imposes a positivist culture and productivist structure on Southern global territories, undervaluing and destroying local and traditional ways of life (Shiva, 1988; 2020). In Latin America, this

<sup>5</sup> Various trends converging in Eco-Feminisms are: Classical, Essentialist-Dualist, Spiritualist, and Constructivist (Puleo, 2002).

train of Eco-Feminist<sup>6</sup> theological thought (Guevara, 1989) takes a critical stance to systems of domination, asserting that social justice requires eco-justice.

These spiritual approaches have been criticised for their likenesses to Classical or Essentialist Eco-Feminism, which posits the existence of a female nature or essence to revalue deprecated feminine attributes. They have also been criticised for incorporating the spiritual dimension, which attributes a sacred character to nature and life, aspects that often remain incomprehensible to Western Eco-Feminism (Puleo, 2002). In particular, they are criticised by constructivist Eco-Feminism, which problematises the articulation between women and the attribution of certain biological characteristics, arguing the need to break away from patriarchal rationality and overcome hierarchical dualisms: nature/culture, woman/man, body/mind, affectivity/rationality, matter/spirit that legitimise women's subordination (Plumwood, 1993).

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### HONDURAS: FEMINISMS, INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT, AND TERRITORY

In the early 1990s, the peace processes in Central America<sup>7</sup> led to the revolutionary movement shifting from armed struggle to negotiation. It was in this context that autonomous women's organisations began to take shape (Madrid, 1998). The initial Feminist practices in Central America went by various names but 'Popular Feminism' was the strongest trend, drawing from experiences in Mexico and South America. According to Zapata (2007), this "was developed by poverty-stricken women who articulated the class struggle with the appropriation and reinterpretation of Feminism during their involvement in social movements" (p.12).

A milestone in highlighting Feminism in the region was the holding of The Sixth Latin American and

Caribbean Feminist Meeting (1993) in El Salvador, along with the preparatory Central American Feminist meeting (1992). Two regional projects sprang from this process: *La Corriente*, which formed and led institutional Feminism, and *Las Próximas*, which were linked to autonomous Feminism. *La Corriente* pressed for legislative and institutional changes, mainly in two areas: political participation and laws against domestic violence, stressing State modernisation and changes in political relationships. A dominant Feminism, based on equality, was established, and from this perspective, organisations representing civil society against the institutional State formalised their practices and discourses on equality and political influence (Paradis and Matos, 2012).

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the weakening of traditional social movements, the demobilisation of guerrillas, and new 'democratic' and economic openings paved the way for the emergence of new social movements. The Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH) was founded in 1993 to mobilise indigenous peoples' demands. It defended various causes, including ratification of Convention 169, demilitarisation, and opposition to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). It worked with other social movements in South America, such as the Zapatistas.<sup>8</sup> These processes converged with the rise of progressive governments, the promotion of projects such as ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas), the World Social Forum, and a proposal for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism.

The GFC in 2008 marked the beginning of a rearrangement of the transnational Capitalist system in which The United States once again turned its attention to Latin America, driving military-political processes that weakened Latin American integration initiatives (Paz Rada, 2017). The *coup d'état* in Honduras in 2009 marked the starting point for a new configuration and militaristic domination in countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

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6 Linked with Liberation Theology.

7 Esquipulas Accords I (1986) and II (1987).

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8 For more information on COPINH's path and political guidelines, see Barra (2019).

Following the coup, citizens organised themselves into the National Front of Resistance, driven, among others, by Feminist activists in resistance and COPINH. This movement broke away from the institutionalised collective action approach, giving rise to a movement characterised by diversity and a host of political actors. In the process, traditional social movements overlapped with new ones, leading to a historic encounter between the indigenous and Afro-descendant movement and the Feminist movement, which joined forces to confront Extractive Capitalism and patriarchy. This convergence is expressed in the struggle for both body and territory. Suarez (2013) summarises this historical, contextual, theoretical, ethical, and aesthetic proposal by women in Central America as an emerging Feminism rooted in communities and linked to struggles for territory, their own culture, bodies, and life.

## METHODOLOGY

To establish the content corpus, we chose to focus the discourse analysis on the period between the *coup d'état* in Honduras (2009) and the murder of Cáceres (2016). To this end, we examined audio-visual materials produced during that period. Based on this, we drew up a sample (Salgado, 2018) to select the units of analysis, for which we used predefined criteria that were grounded in theory. The result was a corpus reflecting the development of Cáceres' thinking and her political path. The sample comprises 5 video documentaries (Table 1), which include interviews with Cáceres and some of her interventions at international events as a representative of COPINH. The selection criteria were: the period 2009-2016; material relevance; accessibility.

**Table 1** Audio-visual materials included in the text corpus

Title [Translation]	Year published	Description
<i>Pañuelos en Rebeldía</i> [The Hanky Rebellion]	2009	Video showing Berta Cáceres' taking part in an event held by the group <i>Colectivo Pañuelos en Rebeldía</i> in 2009, in Buenos Aires. Available at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hr6e4DcdDFc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hr6e4DcdDFc</a>
<i>Discurso Ceremonia de entrega Premio Ambiental Goldman</i> [Goldman Environmental Prize – Award Ceremony Speech]	2015	Video showing Berta Cáceres' speech during the Award Ceremony. Available at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVKBYbZXCvg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVKBYbZXCvg</a>
<i>Con sus propias palabras</i> [In Her Own Words]	2016	Video of an interview with Berta Cáceres in 2012. Available at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AR1kwx8b0ms">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AR1kwx8b0ms</a>
<i>Guardiana de los ríos</i> [The River Guardian]	2016	Documentary featuring a compilation of excerpts from interviews with Berta between 2009 and 2015. Available at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J13jk_LGVqc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J13jk_LGVqc</a>
<i>Las revoluciones de Berta</i> [Berta's Revolutions]	2016	Documentary featuring a compilation of excerpts from interviews with Berta between 2009 and 2015. Available at <a href="https://youtu.be/K0zK2NvwB2A">https://youtu.be/K0zK2NvwB2A</a>

Source: Authors

The dimensionalisation and categorisation of the audio-visual sources were carried out following the Sociological Discourse Analysis approach (Ruiz, 2019, 2009), in combination with other analytical techniques. First, after a full reading of the transcriptions of the audio-visual material and an inductive decoding procedure (Huberman and Miles, 2000), the text was split into units of analysis (Cáceres, 2003), and defining criteria (Díaz-Herrera, 2018) to reveal the composition of the discourse (Ruiz, 2009). Second, stress was put on

understanding the context of discourse production to systematically deduce the definition criteria. This gave rise to interpretative categories, following the grounded theory procedure (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Third and last, following Ruiz (2009), theoretical links were made between the initially coded and then categorised discourses, with the social space of production. This led to the identification of three key analytical dimensions: Agency; Resistance; Community and Indigenous Feminism (Table 2).

**Table 2 Organisation and classification of the discourse**

Key dimensions	Categories (Context units)	Codes (Recording units)
Agency	i) Women's autonomy	1. Anti-patriarchal positioning 2. The right to one's body
	ii) Control over the territory's resources (common goods)	3. Capital-Life conflicts
	iii) Collective thinking.	4. Collective reflection 5. Outlook
Resistance strategies	i) Resistance practices.	6. Building from joy and hope 7. Diversity as value
	ii) Internationalising the conflict.	8. Building kinds of autonomy 9. Ratification Convention 169
	iii) Defence of an indigenous world vision and spirituality (The Lenca Folk)	10. The Lenca Folk's world vision 11. Contempt for the spirituality of others 12. Institutional Racism
Community- Indigenous Feminisms	i) Territory-body and territory-land in the resistance.	13. Triple mastery/the struggle 14. Reaffirming struggles
	ii) The fight for Life and against Capital.	15. Collective construction 16. A new Life Project
	iii) Forging community links.	17. Anti-colonial/anti-patriarchal cohesion

Source: Authors



## RESULTS

The *agency* dimension is based on three categories: (i) the autonomy of indigenous women; (ii) control over resources and territory; (iii) collective reflection. These categories are intertwined, reflecting the interrelation between The Lenca Folk's living conditions and indigenous women.

Regarding the autonomy of indigenous women, Cáceres points out that:

“(...) the political approach is not only gender-focused but also takes an anti-patriarchal stance, (...) reaffirming who we are as women and our own identities, and even reaffirming the right to our bodies, to our sexuality” (Code 1 and 2. *Guardiana de los ríos*).

Another recurring pattern in her discourse bears on the importance of control over common goods in the face of Extractive Capitalism, as the following excerpt shows:

“(...) as a people, we grasp that we are striving for a fairer, more humane society, and that we are working to defeat the imperialist annexation project that is one of domination and plunder (...)” (Code 3. *Pañuelos en Rebeldía*).

Individual and collective agency processes are also linked to ways of doing things (De Certeau, 1996), a praxis, in Deleuze and Guattari terms (1980), built from the past but that is also rooted in the present, that, when collectively mused, becomes a binding future perspective:

“(...) and we always start with an analysis reflecting on reality. I believe that, from then until today, collective analysis of national, local, and community realities has been a powerful tool for COPINH to reflect on how things stand (...), helping us gain a perspective and build our principles accordingly” (Code 4 and 5. *Las revoluciones de Berta*).

*Resistance strategies* are the second dimension of analysis for grasping the evolution of indigenous women's movements in Mesoamerica. We placed

each of these strategies under one of three broad heads: (i) resistance practices; (ii) internationalisation of the conflict, and (iii) The Lenca Folk worldview.

Proposals for a refoundation of The State began to take shape after the setting up of the National Front of Resistance against the *coup d'état* (2009). This meeting of movements and visions led to recognition and the prizing of diversity, along with the hope and joy with which collective struggle is framed:

“We had a debate about it with women from different parts of the country and well, this is also a shared joy because if there's one thing we know after the coup, it's that if we don't take joy in our efforts to fight it, and tackle the issues with enthusiasm, and hope, we might just as well be dead” (Code 6, *Con sus propias palabras*).

The collectivisation of struggles and resistances, both within and outside the territory, emerged as a strategy for wielding political influence to reach certain ends. In this sense, the internationalisation of the conflict was to lead to the ratification of international treaties but also to COPINH forging links with Latin American and global resistances so as to build a broad social movement:

“We make national and international efforts, and that path has led to many successes, such as the ratification of Convention 169 on indigenous peoples of Honduras. (...) It has helped us: win community land titles; stop privatisation of common natural resources; set up indigenous municipalities; find ways of seeking and building autonomy” (Code 8 and 9. *Guardiana de los ríos*).

The Lenca Folk's worldview and the defence of their spirituality was another recurrent element in Cáceres' discourse:

“In our worldview, we are beings who sprang from the earth, water, and maize, from the rivers; we are ancestral custodians of The Lenca Folk, protected also by the spirits of girls, who teach us that we must defend the rivers for they give life to all Mankind and the world we dwell in” (Code 10, *Con sus propias palabras*).

The defence of The Lenca Folk's spirituality makes COPINH an anti-racist, anti-colonial movement. This definition should not only be understood in relation to the actions of The United States and multi-nationals but also as a political gesture that questions and denounces the supremacy of the white minorities in Honduras, and of institutionalised racism:

"(...) we could see these attitudes in the judge, in the prosecuting lawyers working for the company, and in the Public Prosecutor, who was DESA's frontman. Their racism was blatant in what they said, as was their contempt for our spirituality. It enraged us. We reject such institutionalised racism" (Code 11 and 12, *Las revoluciones de Berta*).

One can split the 'community and indigenous dimension' into three categories. These all shed light on the production context of Feminist discourse on the indigenous-community movement represented by Cáceres: (i) body-territory and land in resistance; (ii) the struggle for life against Capital; (iii) community bonds.

After the *coup d'état*, new features began to emerge in the political landscape. One was the articulation of complex identities (class, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation) in line with the proposals made by Popular Feminism (Korol, 2016). Another feature was the development of Feminist agency. The latter involved the conscious recovery of the first territory of patriarchal order — women's bodies — as an emancipatory political act in keeping with the Feminist slogan "What's personal is also political."

Cáceres refers to this as follows:

"(...) we need our own spaces to revitalise ourselves, reaffirm our struggles as women, and also to grasp the fact that we are facing a 'triple domination', as we call it, namely: Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Racism. We women are engaged in that struggle on all three fronts (...) " (Code 13 and 14. *Las revoluciones de Berta*).

This involves a process of deliberation and self-awareness, both individually and collectively, on the need to dismantle male compacts to recover and defend women's bodies and freedom. This proposal is part of the historical struggle of indigenous peoples for the recovery and defence of land-territory, "as a guarantee of a specific territorial space where the life of bodies is manifested" (Cabnal, 2010; 22-23).

The confluence between the body and territory places the struggle for life against Capital at the heart of things, to protect the women and their communities, and also to transform the economic development model into one that respects human beings and the Earth (Federici, 2020).

Cáceres describes this process as follows:

"We encourage you to take hope and fully give yourselves to this new process, and to all your social movements, in building peace through full, effective, decisive, diverse commitment to all society, social movements, and insurgencies" (Code 15 and 16. *Las revoluciones de Berta*).

Likewise, the need to strengthen collective identities and cohesion against dispossession (Harvey, 2004) emerges as a challenge for forging community bonds that confront extractivism and racism:

"We think this community struggle is not an isolated one (...) for it is a global problem (...). We are not alone in this battle. That it is because it is a struggle that all the peoples fighting colonialism and who have a sense of justice and emancipation are engaged in" (Code 17. *Con sus propias palabras*).

Thus, this community-rooted Feminism is allied with other Feminisms and social movements in battling against the extractive, patriarchal Neo-Liberal model. Following Suarez (2013), it is a process of building a Mesoamerican Feminism that is enshrined in the struggle for the body and territory, and whose strength and worldview constitutes a political proposal for social and cultural change.

## DISCUSSION

The main insights from the interpretative analysis are set out below. They link Cáceres' discourse with its production context and the theoretical discussion, organised around the three key analytical dimensions. They let us draw several conclusions that bear on our research goal.

### *Agency*

One of the main contributions and features of the agency process seen in Cáceres' discourse and in COPINH's development is the articulation of resistance. This creates a space for setting out principles and coming up with new political meanings (Svampa, 2019). From it emerges a contextualised "emancipatory proposal" (Giroux, 1992) that is based on three central ideas: (1) the anti-patriarchal stance and autonomy of women; (2) control over resources and territory; (3) collective reflection as a tool for change.

In this regard, Cáceres saw COPINH's political project as centred on the idea of anti-patriarchal struggle and women's autonomy. This was a shift away from theoretical/institutional definitions of Feminism and of gender promoted by equality agencies. It is therefore a unique and original proposal in line with the practices and language of Popular and De-colonial Feminism, which claim autonomous subjects with links to other social movements (Curiel, 2019; Korol, 2018). However, the greatest coincidences are observed in the positions of Community Feminism, especially in the notion of collective defence of land-territory and body-territory. Such notions emerge as a worldview and a political interpretation of reality that spawns structures of meaning and of dissenting or alternative interpretive schemes (Svampa, 2019).

Cáceres and Community Feminists share meanings when it comes to territory, community, and the value assigned by indigenous worldviews and subjectivities to women's ancestral ties to life and the land (Federici, 2020). These aspects are intertwined with the need to defend and care for the territory

against Extractive Capitalism, using strategies of direct action in environmental, social, and political conflicts (Gargallo, 2013). This ties in with an emancipatory political project that arises from collective reflection as a tool for social transformation. In this sense, Cáceres political commitment aligns with the "eco-territorial turn" referred to by Svampa (2019) and is an invitation to imagine new ways of organising society, based on the defence and care of all aspects of life against its commodification and privatisation.

### *Resistance Strategies*

The strategy that stands out is the one incorporating organisation and struggle mechanisms bearing on joy, hope, and rebellion. These aspects distinguish the movement from other more hierarchical and traditional peasant/indigenous movements, yielding another way to reframe collective struggle (Federici, 2020). These strategies are supported by ancestral worldviews and practices that challenge Western developmentalism, while also valuing the diversity and plurality of knowledge (Torres, 2018).

In Cáceres' discourse, the struggle for the defence of the territory is broad, solidarity-based, unitary, and involves diverse voices, excluding none. The foundation of her proposal stemmed from and was underpinned by the community. Hence, its defence requires everyone to take part and to build cross-cutting, inclusive alliances among people of diverse ages, genders, backgrounds, and origins. This facilitates the internationalisation of the conflict and working together with other resistances. Here, her positions are practical/experiential and clearly express the limits and consequences of the Neo-Liberal model worldwide. Her discourse on Mankind's eco-dependence and global interdependence covers the causes and consequences of commodifying common goods. She starkly shows how commodification leads to ecosystem destruction (Svampa 2019; Pérez-Orozco, 2019). This lets us identify with her struggle and make common cause with other socio-environmental conflicts elsewhere.

The Lenca Folk's worldview is based on social practices that value the reproduction of collective/community life rather than the production of commodities. This community forms a common, ancestral identity and focuses on bodies and territory. This aligns with the concept of *sumak kawsay* and the need to think ways of life that reclaim the ontological, epistemological, and axiological proposals of indigenous peoples in Latin America (Cabnal, 2010).

### *Indigenous-Community Feminisms*

A major finding bears on the ability to articulate diverse collectives in a socially-fragmented global setting. The Lenca Folk's political proposals transcend exclusionary identities, incorporating various expressions of resistance that challenge the three forms of domination present in the territories, to wit: Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Colonialism. This intersection impacts both women's bodies and territories (Guzmán and Triana, 2019), and Cáceres' discourse also incorporates the Feminist slogan (reinterpreted by Popular Feminism) that "What's personal is also political" (Korol, 2018).

Within the Lenca worldview, Female spirits dwell in rivers, and women are their main guardians. However, in Cáceres' discourse, this does not essentialise the role of women because the survival of The Lenca Folk depends on community defence of the environment through a relational, socio-biocentric paradigm (Acosta, 2020). There is a risk of essentialising the notions of indigenous women when they are reinterpreted in a decontextualised manner. Hence the importance of linking these notions with worldviews and the political struggle for survival — in this case, in the battle against Capitalism seeking to commodify the water of the Gualcarque River and thereby destroy the territory (land and body).

The discourse reveals a sort of practical/survival Eco-Feminism (Shiva, 1988), where the spiritual dimension questions the model that makes the social, material, and natural reproduction of life unsustainable. It is an Eco-Feminism that opposes

binary, hierarchical developmentalist culture and that is strongly linked to the Feminist critique of the "patriarchal lineage" that fused original ancestral patriarchy with colonial patriarchy (Cabnal, 2010). Thus, Cáceres' discourse converges with community and indigenous Feminisms in its critique of patriarchy, individualism, and false human autonomy. The remedy it proposes focuses on building bonds and strengthening the community. This ties in with Feminist paradigms such as that of the commons (Federici, 2020) and the need to collectivise strategies of struggle in Neo-Liberal contexts to rid the world of inequality, exploitation, discrimination, and racism.

### *Conclusions*

The interrelation of the three thematic dimensions and analytical categories shows that Cáceres articulates the overlap between Feminist agency and indigenous resistance strategies. Her discourse cross-links gender, ethnicity, and class categories from community practice and collective political reflection. Her approach emerges from a setting of political, economic, and epistemic violence. It is against this background that resistance, political subjectivation, and agency arise, putting forward alternatives and ways of counteracting hegemonic power and control.

An emancipatory relational paradigm is formed in which the body and territory emerge as the inseparable spaces of vital existence, resistance/agency, and theoretical-practical construction. It questions patriarchal, individualistic, and colonial approaches and prizes ancestral knowledge and the wisdom of indigenous worldviews. That is because such knowledge and views have let humans preserve biodiversity over the aeons and relate to the ecosystem in fairer, more balanced ways. It is a perspective that reinterprets the past to fight in the present and to save the future.

Cáceres questions the idea of endless economic growth, arguing that it has spawned the Capital/Life crisis. Here, she encourages us to shift our political focus from the market to caring for and preserving what

we have in common. Her contributions go beyond exclusionary thinking, stressing the importance of building community and weaving a broad, diverse, joyful social fabric. Such an approach challenges binary perspectives and takes in various social move-

ment timelines and indigenous worldviews. As Berta Cáceres' life and work so clearly reveal, we need to overcome binary, exclusionary thinking if we are to link and exchange knowledge and emancipatory political practices.

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