Cartographies of Contemporary Class Struggles

The Art and Pedagogy of the Iconoclasistas

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República tóxica de la soja (Toxic Soy Republic, 2019) is a digital illustration created by the Iconoclasistas based on a collective mapping workshop they led in Asunción, Paraguay (fig. 1). The workshop's participants, who hailed from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, included ecological agricultural producers and representatives of Indigenous communities and popular movements that have organized around the defense of their territories.[1] Created to be an instrument of political communication and agitation, *República tóxica* synthesizes the workshop participants' knowledge and was produced with their consent. It depicts contemporary social and environmental conflicts that are born of the operations of the transnational soy industry in South America. In the map of South America that fills most of the illustration, territory occupied by soy plantations is represented by a green swath extending across Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia. Major railways and waterways are indicated on the map to show where soy is transported to ports, where it is exported principally to Europe, the United States, and China. Icons on the map indicate processes that are part of the industrial cultivation of transgenic soy, though they are often not acknowledged as such. They indicate sites of ecocide and deforestation, including places where land has been cleared for industry by burning. They also represent the forced migration of rural smallholders, as land ownership is increasingly concentrated in the hands of large transnational firms, as well as sites where fumigation with pesticides has harmed the health of proximate communities.

República tóxica's cartographic representation of these various processes demonstrates their material interrelation; that is, how dispossession, forced migration, repression, and the degradation of the biosphere and of human health are all *systemic* features of export-oriented transgenic soy production that are seen across the entire "toxic republic." It thereby echoes an analysis of capitalist agriculture and resource extraction that has long been promulgated by peasant, Indigenous, and socialist movements. That is, it shows that capitalist accumulation via the exploitation of labor is inseparable from the exploitation of nature,[2] and that the ever-intensifying exploitation of both, which capitalism requires, is destroying the biosphere and degrading the lives of the masses of people.

Pablo Ares and Dr. Julia Risler have led scores of collective mapping workshops across Latin America since founding the Iconoclasistas in Buenos Aires in 2006. They describe the Iconoclasistas as a "laboratory of communication" whose practice "combines graphic art, creative workshops, and collective investigation to produce resources and practices for free circulation, appropriation, and use."[3] Their name is a portmanteau that combines the Spanish words for "iconoclast" and "classist" (with the latter denoting class-consciousness, not elitism). In one of the interviews I conducted with Ares and Risler, Risler talked about choosing this name: "I said, 'As far as I'm concerned it should include *clasista* because I believe that class struggle exists. . . . We need to vindicate Marxist terms.'"[4] For Marxists, *class struggle* refers to a wide variety

1. "República tóxica, 2020," Iconoclasistas, https://iconoclasistas.net/portfolio-item/sudamerica-2020.

2. Sabrina Fernandes, "Ecosocialism from the Margins," *NACLA Report on the Americas* (Summer 2020): 138, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2020.1768731.

3. Original: "laboratorio de comunicación." Iconoclasistas, *Cosmovisión rebelde* (Buenos Aires: self-pub., 2006), 1, https://issuu.com/iconoclasistas/docs/cosmovision_rebelde. "Combina el arte gráfico, los talleres creativas y la investigación colectiva para producir recursos y prácticas de libre circulación, apropiación y uso." Quoted in Iconoclasistas, "Conocimientos colaborativos. Entrevista por Renata Cervetto y Miguel A. López," in *Agítese antes de usar: desplazamientos educativos, sociales y artísticos en América Latina*, ed. Renata Cervetto and Miguel A. López (Buenos Aires: MALBA, 2006), 193. All translations from Spanish are by the author.

4. "yo dije, no, para mí está bien que esté 'clasistas,' porque yo creo que todavía hay lucha de clases . . . hay que recuperar términos del marxismo." As Risler and Ares explained to me via email, this vindication was a reaction to the uptake in Buenos Aires of anticapitalist political theory that denies the contemporary relevance of Marxist theories and strategies of class

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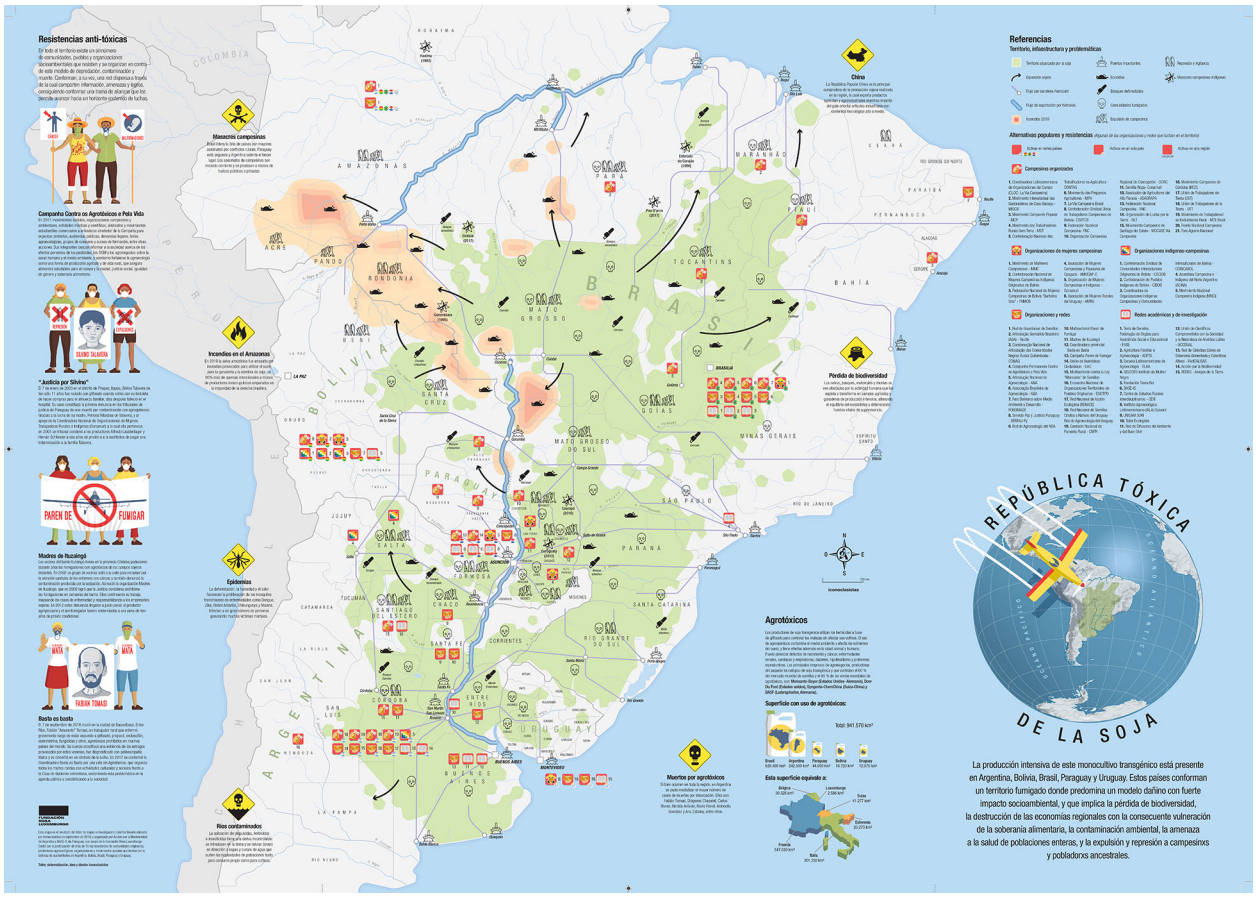

FIGURE 1. Iconoclasistas, *República tóxica de la soja* (*Toxic Soy Republic*), 2019, digital illustration (published online by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the Iconoclasistas; reproduced courtesy of the artists)

of collective struggles developed on the material basis of the means and resources that ensure life. They are the motor force of historical development and the basis of social conflicts.[5] Therefore, the analysis of class struggles is crucial for understanding why society is organized as it is and how people can change it.

The Iconoclasistas' practice draws on and contributes to the tendency in Marxist praxis commonly referred to as "ecological Marxism." This tendency builds on insights of Marx's and Engels's own thought, including their dialectical and historical materialist ontology that is "predicated on the ultimate unity between nature and society,"[6] their insistence that nature and human labor are the source of all value, and their criticisms of environmental degradation caused by capitalist production.[7] Ecological Marxism is a crucial counterpoint to bourgeois forms of environmentalism, including neo-Malthusianism and technocratic and market-based approaches that fail to identify the specific role of capitalist accumulation in creating the social and ecological crises our planet and species face today.[8]

In an important essay on Marxist ecology, James O'Connor argues that contradictions inherent to the capitalist mode of production explain its systematic degradation of both the environment and human labor. He identifies two interlinked contradictions that characterize

struggle—namely the work of John Holloway, Michael Hardt, and Toni Negri. Julia Risler, interview with the author, January 18, 2014; Julia Risler and Pablo Ares, email communication with the author, January 6, 2022.

5. For a discussion of Marx's theory of class struggle as a theory of social conflict, see Domenico Losurdo, *Class Struggle: A Political and Philosophical History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

6. John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 216.

7. Ecological Marxism also counters a tendency in Western Marxism to reject this foundational aspect of Marxist philosophy and instead deploy a "historical-cultural frame of analysis focusing on human praxis that exclude[s] non-human nature." Bellamy Foster et al., *Ecological Rift*, 215.

8. James O'Connor, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Theoretical Introduction," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 1, no. 1 (1988): 13.

capitalism. The first of these is defined by Marx and Engels as the contradiction between capitalist productive forces, which are socialized, and capitalist production relations, which determine the private appropriation of the products of socialized labor. This contradiction manifests as the antagonism between the proletariat and bourgeoisie and the latter's social and political power over the former. It also manifests in capital's limitless drive to increase the rate of exploitation and in capitalism's systemic realization crises (or crises of overproduction).[9] Inextricable from this first contradiction is a second contradiction between, on one hand, capitalist production relations and productive forces and, on the other hand, the conditions of capitalist production. Capital tends to degrade or destroy its own production conditions in both their social and material dimensions. For Marx, conditions of production include "external physical conditions," the labor power of workers and their "personal conditions of production," and the "the communal, general conditions of social production"—a definition that includes space and social environment.[10] In other words, because capitalism grows by exploiting labor *and* "robbing nature" (as Marx wrote), the more it grows, the greater is its degradation of the natural world, social environments, and human labor.[11]

The Iconoclasistas' work builds on these insights of ecological Marxism. It demonstrates how contemporary processes of capitalist accumulation and reproduction (i.e., the reproduction of conditions of production) plunder nature and shape social and natural environments in ways that degrade the living conditions of people of the working and popular classes, as well as those of other species. While showing how these processes are structured by social relations that are continually reproduced under capitalism, and that therefore give rise to similar processes across time and space, the Iconoclasistas' work also illustrates how these processes are manifest in specific places and conflicts. Indeed, their work encourages in its participants and viewers a mode of analysis that can move between empirical details of concrete situations and a more abstract apprehension of the global capitalist system. This is enabled by their multiscalar representation of social conflicts.

As seen in *República tóxica*, the Iconoclasistas' work brings into view material connections underlying different contemporary popular struggles. The most eye-catching icons on *República tóxica*'s main map refer to sixty-six different organizations, unions, movements, and networks involved in struggles related to access to land, ecological agriculture, public health, and the self-determination of Indigenous communities. What emerges, then, is a picture of extensive popular resistance to the effects of soy production, which includes organizations of smallholders and agricultural workers, mothers against pesticide fumigation, Indigenous communities, and environmentalists. *República tóxica* does not suggest that these organizations are working together. Rather, it reveals the material basis for potential unity among the disparate struggles it maps.

As sociologist Sabrina Fernandes writes, fostering solidarity and synthesis among different struggles of the popular classes is precisely the task we face in our current conjuncture of social and ecological crises. Ecological Marxism is of great use to this effort, she argues, because it comprehends how "class and oppression are inseparable from ecological conditions." As Fernandes writes, "Rather than different struggles simply marching alongside each other, the horizon calls for making connections around the ecological underpinnings of the material conditions for survival—and even revolution."[12]

O'Connor also argues that the analytical framework of ecological Marxism can identify the material basis for unity among apparently disparate struggles. His theorization of capitalism's systematic degradation of production conditions was an effort to scientifically identify the material basis for unity among contemporary popular movements, including and especially those that are not traditional labor movements. It was an explicit retort to post-Marxists' characterization of "new social movements" as being non-class-based movements.[13] Against this, O'Connor argues that because different popular struggles—such as those pertaining to the environment, food, housing, health, gender—are rooted in contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, they must be

9. See Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 705–6.

10. O'Connor, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism," 15–17.

11. Bellamy Foster et al., *Ecological Rift*, 208–9, 350. See the Marx quote on p. 350.

12. Fernandes, "Ecosocialism from the Margins," 142.

13. O'Connor specifically critiques Ernesto Laclau and Chantel Mouffe on this point.

understood as class struggles, though they may also be *more* than class struggles.[14]

In this essay, I use an analysis of the Iconoclasistas' works to demonstrate how various territorial conflicts in South America express class struggles that operate at multiple geographic scales (e.g., locally, nationally, regionally, transnationally). First I discuss some of the Iconoclasistas' earliest landscape illustrations, from 2007. The second section focuses on the Iconoclasistas' representation of social and ecological effects of extractivism, a development model based on the extraction of natural resources that are sold as primary commodities on global markets. Next I discuss the method of collective mapping that Risler and Ares first developed in 2008, and I also address its relationship to Marxist educational philosophy and practice. As I explain, the techniques taught in the Iconoclasistas' mapping workshops, as well as the visual representations that result from them, are intended to be useful to antisystemic struggles—that is, social or popular movements organized against injustices of the capitalist world-system.[15] In the fourth section of this essay, I argue that the development of Risler and Ares's practice was directly influenced by their own contact with antisystemic movements in Argentina, as well as by their experience of neoliberal crisis. Throughout the essay, I show how the politics of the Iconoclasistas' practice inheres in its modes of production and circulation, as well as in the representations it puts forth. The essay's final section argues that their approach to cultural production can be situated within a tradition of Marxist aesthetic philosophy and practice that is concerned with transforming capitalist social relations of cultural and intellectual production.

1. THE PRODUCTION OF LANDSCAPES

The Iconoclasistas' work specifically addresses how visual ideologies and representations shape people's understanding of social reality and, particularly, how we understand the social production of space. Space is itself a product of class struggles and a material force in them.[16] It is also a "political instrument of primary importance" for the state.[17] The ideological force of many symbolic representations rests on their promulgation of particular spatial or territorial imaginaries. This is handily demonstrated by the promotion of bourgeois, colonial, and nationalist ideologies via maps, landscapes, historical monuments, travel narratives, and border spectacles.[18] Such representations often naturalize a historically contingent sociospatial order and obscure the contradictions and conflicts that its production entailed. They also encourage "the identification of individual citizens with a particular territorial imagination of the space with which they are expected to identify and be most concerned."[19] By contrast, the Iconoclasistas use forms and techniques of visual representation, including landscape and cartography, to *denaturalize* current sociospatial orders and investigate the social forces that produced them. By doing this, they show how both urban and rural landscapes are dynamic products of ongoing class struggles.

In one of the Iconoclasistas' earliest works, illustrations of urban and rural landscapes, punctuated with text, explicate myriad aspects of capitalist reproduction, while revealing material landscapes to be products of uneven transnational capitalist accumulation. Risler and Ares first produced *Cosmovisión rebelde* (Rebellious Worldview, 2007) as two posters featuring black-and-white digital illustrations of landscapes. They subsequently included these illustrations, respectively titled *Panorámica del control* (Panorama of Control, fig. 2) and *El saqueo neocolonial* (Neocolonial Plundering, see fig. 4), an essay, and additional illustrations in a zine they self-published. They widely distributed it via postal mail, through their own bus-based travel in Argentina, and at La Feria del Libro Independiente y Autónoma, an autonomous book fair in Buenos Aires.[20]

The landscape illustrations in *Cosmovisión* constitute a counterhegemonic appropriation of landscape as a visual

14. O'Connor, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism," 37.

15. Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World-System* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 9–10.

16. I use the term *class struggle(s)* as it is broadly understood in the Marxist tradition as pertaining to human emancipation and therefore referring not only to struggles around the exploitation of labor by owners but also to the exploitation of some nations by others, the relations of exploitation and oppression enshrined by patriarchy, and the enclosure and destruction of the commons. See Domenico Losurdo, *Class Struggle: A Political and Philosophical History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 7–52.

17. Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 186.

18. On border spectacles see Nicholas de Genova, "The 'Crisis' of the European Border Regime: Towards a Marxist Theory of Borders," *International Socialism*, no. 150 (2016): 39.

19. Mark Neocleous, "Off the Map: On Violence and Cartography," *European Journal of Social Theory* 6, no. 4 (2003): 421.

20. Julia Risler and Pablo Ares, interview with the author, Buenos Aires, October 12, 2013.

FIGURE 2. Iconoclasistas, *Panorámica del control* (Panorama of Control), detail of *Cosmovisión rebelde* (Rebellious Worldview), 2007, publication with digital illustrations on paper, 16 x 11¼ in. (40.6 x 28.6 cm), eight pages. Collection of the author (digital image courtesy of the artists)

ideology and artistic genre because they reveal the social relations that produce specific urban and rural landscapes. According to cultural geographer Don Mitchell, "landscape" names two interrelated phenomena: (1) the material form of a place that results from and structures human labor and social interactions, and (2) ideological representations of places and social life. Landscapes are "a product of social struggle, whether engaged over form or how to grasp and read that form," he writes.[21] Dennis Cosgrove has shown that the enclosure and commodification of land conditioned the historical emergence of landscape as a visual ideology, which has since served to shape people's perceptions of places and social life in ways that both erase signs of the dispossession and exploitation this commodification entails and naturalize capitalist social relations and their shaping of places.[22] Mitchell compares this reification of landscapes to commodity fetishism as theorized by Marx, in which the ideological perception of a produced object "masks the facts of its production, and its status as a social relation."[23] Just as interrogating the social relations involved in producing commodities reveals the reality of exploitation, investigating the production of a given landscape reveals it to be a product, and material aspect of, class struggles.

The illustrations in *Cosmovisión* visually represent processes of capitalist reproduction as it manifests in the material form of urban and rural landscapes. Rather than representations of specific places, they are composites of archetypical Argentine landscapes (which could also easily represent landscapes of other peripheral social formations that export primary commodities). The illustrations' own narrative and didactic qualities are enhanced by diagrammatic elements and short texts. Arrows indicate flows of labor, capital, and waste. Text bubbles identify the processes being depicted. They also pose questions that encourage viewers to identify the forces behind these processes, as well as the social agents that benefit from or are victimized by them. This invites an engaged and critical practice of viewership—in regard to both the representations in *Cosmovisión* and actual physical landscapes.

The urban landscape in *Panorámica del control* brings into a single bird's-eye view of a city interrelated processes of exploitation, consumption, waste disposal, ideological domination, and financial speculation, to show how these forces shape, and are supported by, the city's material form (see fig. 2). It also traces material relationships between spaces and phenomena that are experienced as distinct. For example, it shows how the offloading of waste and the degradation of the social and natural environment in one place is related to the accumulation of profit, which may be appropriated in another country entirely. Clusters of small self-built houses appearing in *Panorámica* represent informal working-class neighborhoods. They are peopled by figures of hunched-over workers who walk toward the city's center under the watch of armed persons representing the policing apparatus. While this shows the daily flow of laborers into the city, an arrow labeled "desperdicios" indicates that waste from the city is dumped in the areas where these workers live, including a dump next to their shacks, where some informal workers pick through trash to recycle it. Their degraded and polluted housing contrasts with a walled-in estate at the top of the illustration, representing a bourgeois suburb, and with glass-walled high-rise buildings that are being constructed in the city. A text bubble at right asks, "¿Vivienda para todos/as o especulación inmobilaria?" (Housing for everyone or speculation in real estate?), emphasizing that the treatment of housing as a commodity and site for financial speculation is pursued over and against meeting people's shared needs for housing.

In *Panorámica,* most of the city is presided over by corporate advertising, including images on billboards and signs bearing the names of transnational corporations. Their ubiquity and prominence in the illustration suggests that capital dictates the city's dominant visual culture, making the cityscape into a material force for shaping the consciousness of its inhabitants and promulgating the imperative to consume. Arrows indicate that the profits from consumption are amassed by transnational corporations, whose power is symbolized in a skyscraper that towers above all else, bearing the names of twelve transnational conglomerates. This imposing building also serves as a symbol of the economic base of ideological power: a broadcasting tower transmitting from its rooftop points to the corporate control of the media. While a text bubble asks, "¿Por qué las multinacionales se instalan en Argentina?" (Why do multinationals establish themselves in Argentina?), the illustration offers an

21. Don Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3, 26–27, 29.

22. Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

23. Mitchell, *Lie of the Land*, 30.

answer: arrows pointing to a ship readied to depart indicates that these multinationals' "extraordinary profits" flow out of Argentina and head to other latitudes. Nearby, a huge and menacing shark emerging from the ocean symbolizes the rapaciousness of transnational capital in its expropriation of surplus value from Argentina and, by extension, from other social formations in the Global South.

The two landscapes in *Cosmovisión* are accompanied by illustrations that represent, at a hyperlocal scale, manifestations of processes referenced in the larger landscapes, such as deforestation, crop fumigation with agrotoxins, concentration of land ownership, pollution of water, and speculation in housing (fig. 3). As the Iconoclasistas explained to me, they designed *Cosmovisión* to represent social process at multiple scales:

> Ares: We wanted to make multiple levels: to go from the classic map, through panoramas and landscapes and to the person—to go breaking through these layers.
>
> Risler: Like a zoom: [. . .] from the furthest away to the closest.
>
> Ares: And [to show] problematics from very high up all the way to how they have an impact on the body, on one's subjectivity.[24]

As Risler and Ares noted, the illustrations in *Cosmovisión* connect processes of capitalist reproduction that shape urban and rural landscapes to the scale of the human body. Corporate advertisements emblazoned on billboards in *Panorámica* and on the sides of semitrailers in *El saqueo neocolonial* represent the transformation of humans' bodies and consciousness in relationship to their consumption or production of commodities (fig. 4). Looking again at figure 2, visual references to psychopharmaceuticals and suicide point to psychological effects of the social order *Cosmovisión* depicts. Images also represent humans being treated as commodities: a billboard showing a hand grasping a feminine body that is emblazoned with a dollar sign may reference the exploitation of sex workers or the way gender functions within capitalist property relations to render working-class women especially vulnerable to exploitation and oppression.

2. EXTRACTIVISM AND ECOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM

El saqueo neocolonial is among the first of the Iconoclasistas' many works that address the socially and ecologically deleterious effects of twenty-first-century extractivism (which some refer to as "neo-extractivism"). It is a composite of rural landscapes that have been shaped by the operations of extractive industries, which profit from the exploitation of natural resources. In it, an oil pump drills into a blackened landscape, land is carved up into an open-pit mine by a backhoe bearing the names of transnational mining companies headquartered in the global North, and a forest is dwarfed by the smokestack of a factory that bears the names of Argentine and transnational corporations that produce wood and paper products. The Iconoclasistas have continued to investigate struggles around extractivism through collective mapping workshops, and they have since produced at least ten additional illustrations in the form of both digital and printed posters based on these workshops' findings.[25]

These works represent dynamics of extractivism that operate in Argentina and across Latin America. Contemporary extractivism in the region is characterized by the dominance of large-scale, capital-intensive (and oftentimes not labor-intensive) enterprises that occupy massive tracts of land and are oriented toward the export of primary commodities, such as fossil and biofuels, minerals, and agrofood products, with the Global North and China acting as the primary consumers.[26] The predominance of these industries is a result of the reprimarization of Latin

24. Ares: Queríamos hacer los multiplanos, queríamos desde el mapa clásico pasar por panorámicas, pasar por paisajes y pasar a la persona, ir rompiendo capas.

Risler: Como un zoom: . . . de lo más lejos hasta lo más cercano.

Ares: Y cómo las problemáticas pueden ser muy desde arriba hasta cómo las problemáticas impactan en el cuerpo, en la persona y en la subjetividad de cada uno.

Risler and Ares, interview, Buenos Aires, October 12, 2013.

25. Works by the Iconoclasistas on extractivism, not including those discussed in this article, include *Cuerpo-territorio: 10 problemáticas socio-ambientales en la Argentina y Sudamérica* (2021), *Sembrando biodiversidad: panorama de la agroecología, los movimientos organizados y las problemáticas socio ambientales de la provincia de Misiones* (2020), *Mapa colectivo ambiental de las y los docentes de la provincia de Rio Negro* (2019), *¿A quién pertenece la tierra?* (2019), *Energía, ¿para quién?* (2017), *Infraestructuras del fracking en el Cono Sur* (2017), and *Boom de los no convencionales en la provincia de Neuquén* (2014).

26. Henry Veltmeyer and James F. Petras, "Theses on Extractive Imperialism and the Post-Neoliberal State," in *New Extractivism: A Post-Neoliberal Development Model or Imperialism of the Twenty-First Century?*, ed. Henry Veltmeyer and James Petras (London: ZED Books, 2014), 223–24, 228–30; Maristella Svampa, "¿El desarrollo en cuestión? Algunas coordenadas del debate latinoamericano," in *El desarrollo en disputa: actores, conflictos y models de desarrollo en la Argentina contemporánea*, coord. Maristella Svampa (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento), 22–24.

FIGURE 3. Iconoclasistas, detail of *Cosmovisión rebelde*, 2007, publication with digital illustrations on paper, 16 x 11¼ in. (40.6 x 28.6 cm), eight pages. Collection of the author (digital image courtesy of the artists)

American economies—that is, their reorientation toward the export of primary commodities with little added value.[27] Though it was intensified with the commodities boom of the early twenty-first century, reprimarization largely began in the 1990s. At that time, Latin American governments, pressured by conditionalities imposed by the IMF and World Bank, implemented neoliberal reforms that encouraged the exploitation of "natural

27. Svampa, "Commodities Consensus," 65.

FIGURE 4. Iconoclasistas, *El saqueo neocolonial* (Neocolonial Plundering), detail of *Cosmovisión rebelde*, 2007, publication with digital illustrations on paper, 16 x 11¼ in. (40.6 x 28.6 cm), eight pages. Collection of the author (digital image courtesy of the artists)

resources to increase exports and thus generate the foreign exchange and additional fiscal revenues" to service foreign debt.[28] Critics of this development model argue that it produces familiar patterns of imperialist accumulation, increasing Latin American countries' dependence on foreign capital, inhibiting domestic capital formation, and fostering the development of enclave economies.[29]

Extractivist industries operate as engines of primitive accumulation, furthering the enclosure of the global commons and separating direct producers from their means of production.[30] These persons' proletarianization is often accompanied by their territorial displacement. These processes operate through the privatization and commodification of natural resources, land-grabbing, and the degradation of habitats and ecosystems, which destroys livelihoods and ways of life, particularly those of rural and Indigenous populations.[31]

El saqueo represents both the social and ecological dimensions of these processes, underscoring their interrelation. It depicts the expansion of industrial monoculture farming of transgenic crops with an image of a homogenous field of crops being fumigated by a plane. The cloud of agrotoxins extends toward a small farm. The imminent expulsion of these smallholders is foreshadowed by figures of families, labeled *expulsados/as* ("expelled persons"), who are departing, belongings in hand. The illustration thus represents the dispossession of former smallholders and their forced migration, which is often to the kind of working-class urban peripheries that were depicted in *Panorámica del control*. A text bubble that asks, "What is the reason for the expulsion of Indigenous people?" underscores the way that the territorial expansion of extractivist industries intensifies ongoing colonial processes of dispossession and displacement.

El saqueo reveals how costs of extraction are regularly hidden from public perception because they are socially and spatially displaced onto poor and vulnerable communities and rural environments. The river depicted in it is wholly enfolded into the geography of extractive accumulation as a means of distribution and site of energy production. It is also a place where corporations dump industrial waste, thereby "externalizing" this cost of production, i.e. passing onto others the cost of clean-up or mitigation, as well as health and environmental impacts. An arrow indicates that the mining industry utilizes "cheap energy" produced by the damming of the river, while a flooded working-class home downstream suggests that this energy is not *actually* cheap, but rather, its costs are passed on to vulnerable workers (including via so-called "natural" disasters that are, in fact, man-made).

Eduardo Gudynas argues that corporations' efforts to externalize the social and environmental costs of their operations is exacerbated by the centralism of Latin American political cultures. Problems generated by extractive industries often affect rural areas that rarely receive attention in national media, and they are regularly managed by local or provincial, rather than federal, governments.[32] Atilio Borón also notes the important role of lobbies that assist extractive industries in hiding their effects from the broad public.[33] Thus, the control of information about extractivism flows, in part, from the ways that the representation (in both senses) of people and territories fragments and isolates them. The Iconoclasistas directly counter this tendency by visually and analytically demonstrating how processes that are experienced in different places and at different geographic scales are, in fact, interconnected.

When Marcela Fuentes astutely argues that the Iconoclasistas use "geographic scale as an analytic methodology," she builds upon geographer Neil Smith's analysis of the social construction of scale as "a primary means through which spatial differentiation 'takes place.'"[34] Scale is the means of constructing, differentiating, and naturalizing localities, regions, nations, and so

28. Veltmeyer and Petras, introduction to *New Extractivism*, 36. Also see Atilio A. Borón, *América Latina en la geopolítica del imperialismo* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Luxemburg, 2012), 151.

29. Veltmeyer and Petras, "Theses on Extractive Imperialism," 226–32. Also see Raúl Zibechi, "El estado de excepción," in *Territorios en disputa: despojo capitalista, luchas en defensa de los bienes comunes naturales y alternativas emancipatorias*, ed. Claudia Composto and Mina Lorena Navarro (Mexico City: Bajo Tierra Ediciones, 2014), 81.

30. Veltmeyer and Petras, "Theses on Extractive Imperialism," 237.

31. Veltmeyer and Petras, 230; Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 2–5; Zibechi, "El estado de excepción," 80–81.

32. Eduardo Gudynas, "Diez tesis urgentes sobre el nuevo extractivismo," in *Extractivismo, política y sociedad* (Quito, Ecuador: Centro Andino de Acción Popular and Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social, 2009), 218.

33. Borón, *América Latina,* 153.

34. Marcela A. Fuentes, "Zooming In and Out: Tactical Media Performance in Transnational Contexts," in *Performance, Politics and Activism,* ed. Peter Lichtenfels and John Rouse (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 48; Neil Smith, "Contours of a Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale," *Social Text*, no. 33 (1992): 62.

forth.[35] Smith argues that "the continual production and reproduction of scale expresses the social as much as geographical contest to establish boundaries between different places, locations, and sites of experience." It functions materially and ideologically to establish such demarcations and thereby contain social activity. For these reasons, the production and reproduction of scale is a site of political struggle.[36]

The Iconoclasistas engage in such a struggle on an ideological plane by showing how processes of capitalist production and reproduction that operate at different geographical scales are interlinked. In so doing, they demonstrate not only how different localized conflicts are interrelated but also how they are manifestations of class struggles that are also unfolding at regional and transnational scales. For example, *El saqueo neocolonial*, *Megaminería en los Andes secos* (Mega-Mining in the Dry Andes, fig. 5), and *Radiografía del corazón del modelo sojero* (X-Ray of the Heart of the Soy Model, fig. 6) all depict interrelations between environmental degradation, the colonization of territory by extractivist industries, and forced migration—all of which regularly manifest as local conflicts. The posters also demonstrate that these are outcomes of transnational processes of capitalist accumulation led by corporations in the Global North.

The way these works represent effects in Argentina of the operations of transnational capital highlights both socioeconomic and ecological dimensions of neocolonial extraction. For example, in *El saqueo neocolonial*, arrows pointing to an enormous cargo ship on the river indicate that the primary commodities produced by the extractive industries are being exported with "low or null tax withholdings" (*exportaciones con bajas o nulas retenciones*). Transnational corporations have often enjoyed subsidies and preferences from some Latin American states (including Argentina), which use public money and resources to attract foreign investment, while paying an extremely small portion of the value they extract from their territories. For example, a gold mine in Argentina operated by Barrick Gold, a transnational corporation headquartered in Canada, pays only 3 percent in royalties on the value of gold it exports.[37]

While *Cosmovisión* addresses the siphoning of surplus value from peripheral countries to ruling classes in the capitalist core, *El saqueo* also specifically depicts how relations of unequal exchange include the cost of environmental degradation in the places where natural resources are extracted. The theory of "unequal exchange" has long been used to reveal hidden transfers of value from the periphery to the capitalist core as a consequence of capital's lower compensation of labor in the periphery. Ecological Marxists have shown how this mechanism for generating global inequality is accompanied by unequal relations in the transfer of matter and energy from the periphery to the core, as well as in the exploitation of environmental space in the periphery for intensive production and waste disposal.[38] In sum, as capitalists in rich countries pursue profit by appropriating land, resources, and labor in poorer countries, they increase the environmental degradation there.[39] This process is powerfully illustrated in *El saqueo*. While the cargo ship indicates the transnational export of natural resources (oil, crops, metals, and minerals), it leaves behind a polluted landscape, colonized by transnational corporations and covered in agrotoxins, as well as people who pay the costs of extraction with their health and loss of access to land. A giant locust at the top of the illustration symbolizes this process of capitalist predation as a rapacious invasion that strips the land bare before moving on.

The Iconoclasistas' illustrations emphasize the structural power that transnational capital wields over Latin American states and people. The landscapes and maps I have discussed depict this power manifest in the material transformation of landscapes, as well as in the extraction of wealth. With its title and illustrations, *República tóxica de la soja* (see fig. 1) suggests that the territorial control exercised by transnational corporations competes with states' sovereignty. Its title is a *détournement* of a notorious 2003 advertisement by Syngenta, a Basel-based global producer of transgenic seeds and agrotoxins. This advertisement represented soy plantations in South America as a large territorial expanse that passes over and erases multiple national borders, dubbing it the "República unida de la soja" (the United Soy Republic).[40] The Iconoclasistas' poster modifies Syngenta's ad's text to specify the toxicity—literal and metaphorical—of the soy industry's expansion. At the same time, preserving the idea of a "soy republic" suggests that the soy industry exercises power

35. Smith, "Contours of a Spatialized Politics," 61–64.
36. Smith, 62–64.
37. Borón, *América Latina,* 154.
38. Bellamy Foster et al., *Ecological Rift*, 347.
39. Bellamy Foster et al., 347, 345–72.
40. Fuentes, "Zooming In and Out," 47.

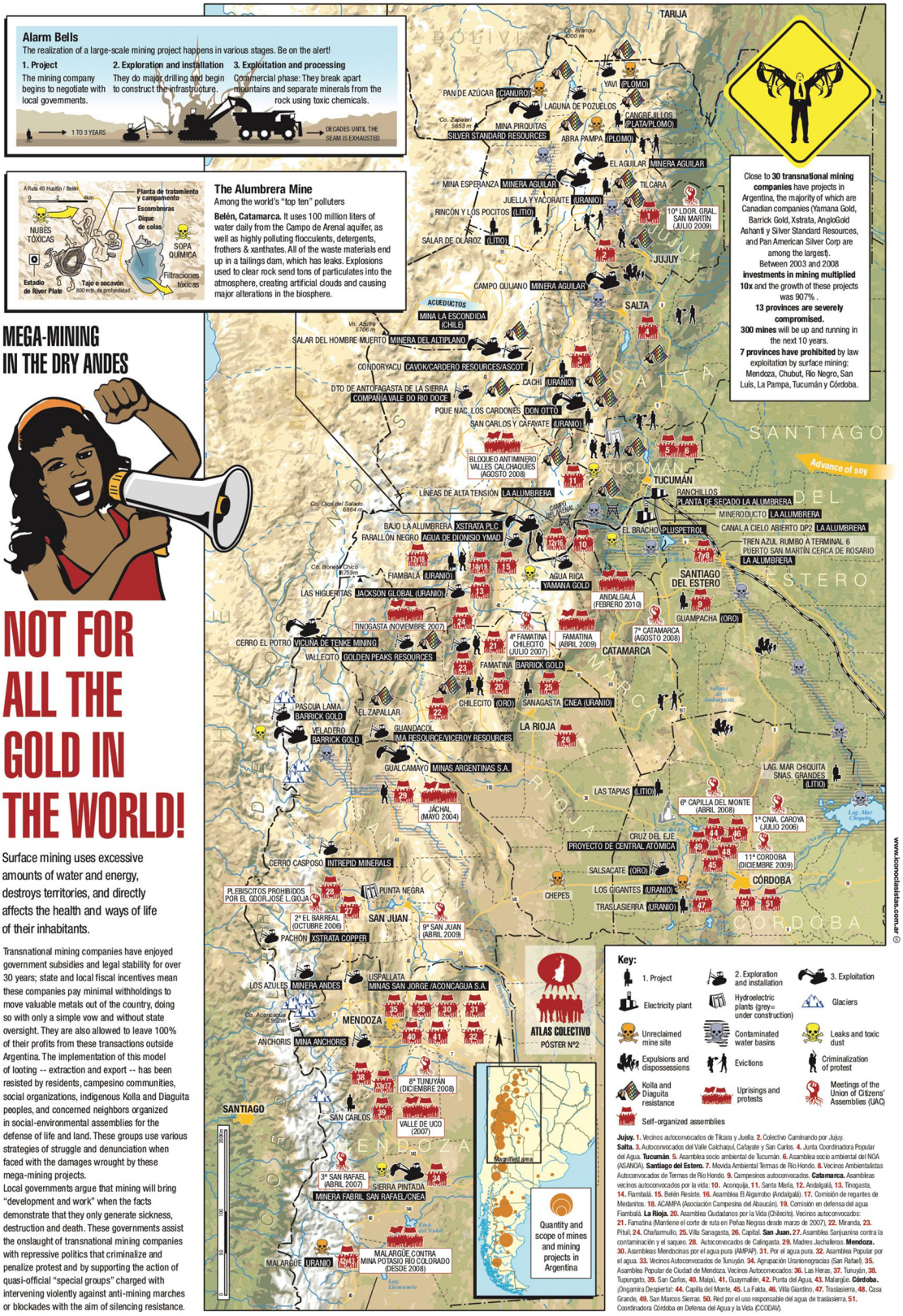

FIGURE 5. Iconoclasistas, *Megaminería en los Andes secos* (Megamining in the Dry Andes), 2010, digital illustration (digital image courtesy of the artists)

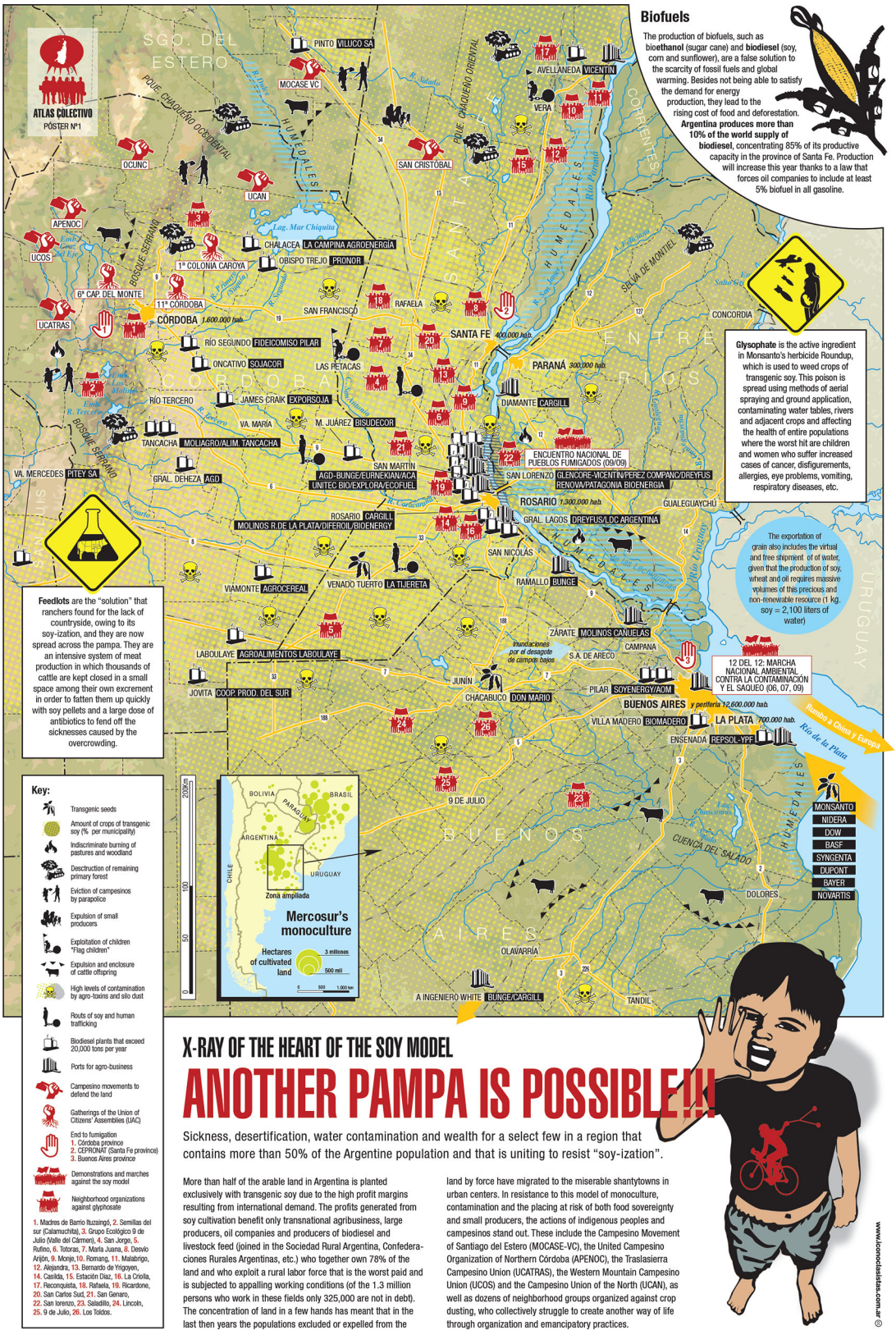

FIGURE 6. Iconoclasistas, *Radiografía del corazón del modelo sojero* (X-ray of the Heart of the Soy Model), 2010, digital illustration (digital image courtesy of the artists)

comparable to that of the governments of the republics that its plantations span. *República tóxica* critiques this power from a political ecology perspective (one trained on conflicts over access to natural resources), calling attention to its neocolonial character and the vast ecological destruction it has produced.

Recognition of the structural power that transnational capital wields over South American social formations does not imply that states are uninvolved in the processes of extraction depicted in *República tóxica* or *El saqueo neocolonial*. On the contrary, South American states have steadily promoted the expansion of extractivism in the region since the nineties with laws, corporate subsidies, national and multinational infrastructure projects, and state-led development projects that support and expand this model of accumulation.[41] They have also repressed movements that have presented resistance to extractivist industries. Indeed, scholars and activists argue that the criminalization and repression of social protest is inherent to extractivism and its concomitant dispossession of Indigenous and peasant masses.[42] In *República tóxica,* icons representing "repression and surveillance" and "peasant-Indigenous massacres" appear across the map of the "toxic soy republic," depicting state and parastate repression as integral to industrial soy farming in South America.

While the illustrations and maps discussed here account for the role of state repression in extractivism, they only minimally account for states' socioeconomic role in this development model. It appears in the representation of transportation infrastructure and ports in the maps and landscapes, as well as in *Cosmovisión*'s mention of duties on exports. Yet South American states' reliance on revenues generated from extractive activities via rents and duties is an important aspect of this model of accumulation. Progressive governments of the Pink Tide used such state revenue to fund social welfare programs that benefited the working and popular classes.[43] Examples of this form of redistribution include the Bolsa Familia program introduced in Brazil by the government of Lula da Silva, social welfare programs implemented in Bolivia by the government of Evo Morales (e.g., Bono Juancito Pinto, Juana Azurduy, and Renta Dignidad), and social loans in Argentina funded by duties on soy exports under the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.[44] As Steve Ellner argues, analyses of extractivism should account for the resource nationalist policies employed by progressive governments not only because they generated significant state revenues, but also because they were the principal reason why these governments faced fierce opposition from sectors of the local and transnational capitalist class.[45]

Recognizing that states' redistribution of wealth to the working and popular classes has been enabled by the capture of revenue from extractivist activities does not negate the aforementioned critiques of this model of accumulation. As Borón writes, "While it is the case that programs financed by the bonanza of exporting natural resources serve as palliatives for the agonizing social situation that characterizes the countries in [Latin America] (. . . the continent with the greatest income inequality in the world), it is certain that the extractivist frenzy generates new social and environmental costs that require urgent attention from our governments. . . . [I]t can be said that we are in the presence of a true vicious circle."[46] While the Iconoclasistas' work does not fully account for the economic role of states vis-à-vis extractivism, or the way in which state policy is an arena of class struggle, it does highlight structural features of this development model that shape and constrain states' efforts at progressive reform.

3. COLLECTIVE MAPPING

The Iconoclasistas' mapping practice has been described as an example of "counter-cartography" because it challenges normative uses of maps by states and elites.[47] This definition refers to the use of cartographic techniques in ways that contest the social relations of intellectual production in which they are generally deployed, as well as to the creation of maps that contest hegemonic

41. Maristella Svampa, "¿El desarrollo en cuestión?," 31–35.

42. Borón, *América Latina,* 115.

43. Steve Ellner, introduction to *Latin American Extractivism: Dependency, Resource Nationalism, and Resistance in Broad Perspective*, ed. Steve Ellner (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 2.

44. Borón, *América Latina,* 154–55, 189.

45. Ellner, *Latin American Extractivism*, 1–9.

46. Borón, *América Latina*, 155.

47. André Mesquita, "Counter-cartography," in *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism*, ed. Graham Meikle (New York: Routledge, 2018), 261. Also see Counter Cartographies Collective, Craig Dalton, and Liz Mason-Deese, "Counter (Mapping) Actions: Mapping as Militant Research," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 11, no. 3 (2012): 441–42; and Federico Eduardo Urtubey, "Territorio, prácticas culturales y producción social del espacio: análisis de un estudio de caso," *Bitacora* 28, no. 3 (2018): 60.

representations of social reality. The Iconoclasistas practice counter-cartography in both senses.

They first developed their collective mapping practice in 2008 after a friend asked them to design analogical tools that could help him and other geographers carry out their fieldwork. Upon realizing that they also wanted to use the toolkit they had designed for their friend, Risler and Ares started organizing mapping workshops in places in Argentina they traveled to exhibit *Cosmovisión rebelde.* People who had seen *Saqueo neocolonial,* which had wide distribution in Argentina, invited the Iconoclasistas to do workshops to help them create maps about their own localities. From 2008 to 2009 Risler and Ares traveled around Argentina by bus, conducting collective mapping workshops in places where they had been invited by organizations involved in grassroots, territory-based struggles.[48] They then synthesized the analyses these workshops generated by producing two maps that addressed open-pit mining and the farming of transgenic soy (see figs. 5 and 6, respectively).[49] While these two maps focus on the effects of these industries within specific swaths of Argentina's territory, they identify processes of enclosure, environmental degradation, forced migration, and organized resistance that characterize class struggles taking place across the Americas around extractivist industries.

The Iconoclasistas design each mapping workshop to address specific conflicts pertaining to the hosting and participating organizations and site(s) being addressed. Their past workshops have addressed the cost and conditions of housing, the degradation or accessibility of public spaces, informal work, geographies of waste, the environmental effects of various industries, and the displacement of people from their homes or land.[50]

The exercise the Iconoclasistas term *agit-pop mapping* is the core of their workshops. It begins with an opening presentation or dialogue in which the Iconoclasistas discuss the ideological function of maps—that is, their ability to shape how people perceive themselves and the world. Whereas maps typically function to naturalize sociospatial relations, as Alicia Montes argues, *denaturalization* is a central tactic in the Iconoclasistas' mapping practice.[51] Participants in their workshops, working in small groups, are provided with official maps of the places being investigated and icons and other graphic tools designed by the Iconoclasistas. These tools, as well as questions Risler and Ares pose, encourage participants to draw on their own knowledge and experience of a place to interrogate its sociospatial relations and the broader social processes that shape them. Using graphic tools, writing, and drawing, the participants add their own markings to official maps to represent spatial manifestations of the social conflicts under investigation. Each group then shares the map it has created with the larger group and discusses its findings. Through dialogue, participants collectively produce new analyses of the territorial conflicts being investigated, and this becomes a basis for planning their next steps.[52] The organizers or participants may systematize these findings. In some cases, the Iconoclasistas do this work by designing a map that synthesizes the findings the participants have reached consensus on. They may disseminate this in the form of a poster or zine, which is meant to become a catalyst for further investigation and/or organizing.[53]

The Iconoclasistas have also developed collective mapping methods that complement agit-pop mapping. These include "space-time mapping," in which participants mark up a map as it relates to a time line they create to address the ways a given territory has changed over time, the organization of urban "drifts" as a research practice, and the creation of landscapes by collaging photos taken on these urban drifts.[54] As Risler and Ares describe it, the "toolbox" of techniques they bring to the workshops enables participants to represent their knowledge in a collective setting.

> Risler: We go with this little predesigned toolbox [of] icons, pictograms, maps, graphic devices, time lines, genealogies, landscapes. . . . What the map and these types of designs facilitate is the rapid organization of information in a visual manner while, at the same

48. Risler and Ares, interview, October 12, 2013.

49. These two 2010 maps were originally produced in Spanish. Their text was translated to English by Brian Whitener for their exhibition in *Arrhythmias of Counterproduction: Engaged Art in Argentina, 1995–2011*, curated by Jennifer Ponce de León (née Flores Sternad) for the University Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego, 2011.

50. For an analysis of the Iconoclasistas' work on informal recycling workers in Buenos Aires, see Agnese Codebó, "Decolonizing the Landfill: Counter-Maps of Waste in Buenos Aires," *Journal of Latin American Geography* 18, no. 3 (2019): 30–53.

51. Alicia Montes, "Net.art y experiencia popular urbana," *Amerika*, no. 6 (April 2012): 6, https://journals.openedition.org/amerika/2895.

52. Julia Risler and Pablo Ares, *Manual de mapeo colectivo: recursos cartográficos críticos para procesos territoriales de creación colaborativa* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2013), 15–18.

53. Iconoclasistas, "Conocimientos colaborativos," 198.

54. Risler and Ares, *Manual de mapeo colectivo,* 21–30.

> time, encouraging people to participate—people coming from various backgrounds, or different ages and professions. . . . This thing of cutting out the icons, talking with others—they begin to exchange their knowledge and debates happen. . . .
>
> Ares: And the people have knowledge. . . . They can participate. It's not that they have had to have read four hundred books or even one book. Rather, they know what is going on in the place.[55]

As their comments make clear, the duo works to foster an egalitarian environment in the workshops that encourages the open exchange of ideas without typical hierarchies that would only valorize specialized and disciplinary forms of knowledge. They consider their role in the workshops to be that of "facilitators," while the collective labor of the participants is what truly creates the substance of the workshops.[56]

The Iconoclasistas' collective mapping practice is indebted to Marxist philosophies of education, including the work of Paulo Freire. Freire theorized the role of education in the revolutionary process, understood as a process that takes the "total society . . . including all human activities, as the object of its remolding action."[57] He argued for a concept and method of pedagogy in which it constitutes "a humanist and liberating praxis [that] posits as a fundamental problem that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation."[58] Freire critiqued the traditional model of capitalist education, which he also saw replicated in paternalistic relationships between political leaders and their constituents. The model conceives of knowledge as being possessed solely by the teacher (or leadership) who then bestows it upon persons who are treated as ignorant, as if they were simply passive receptacles. Against this, he argued for a practice of "co-intentional education" that is based on the idea that teachers (leaders) and students (base) are equally active subjects in the task of "unveiling reality, and thereby coming to know it critically" as they collectively re-create their knowledge. Freire emphasized the importance of dialogue throughout this process.[59] He also argued for educating through reflection on real problems that affect people in their day-to-day lives, not as abstract theoretical problems. His aim was to help oppressed people see the world "not as a static reality, but a reality in process,"[60] and to gain awareness of the causes of their oppression so they could actively intervene in reality to address them.

The Iconoclasistas' workshops put into practice key aspects of Freire's theories insofar as they position all participants as active agents in a dialogical process of coinvestigation that proceeds through reflection on problems that directly relate to their real-world experience. Indeed, Risler and Ares acknowledge their indebtedness to Freire, as well as to revolutionary educators who are their own contemporaries. They have been especially influenced by the Buenos-Aires based popular education group Pañuelos en Rebeldía and the work of one of its members, feminist writer, educator, and activist Claudia Korol. Like Freire, Korol conceives of emancipatory pedagogy as a crucial tool in the cultural battle whose ultimate horizon is cultural revolution, or the "birthing of the new woman and new man." It must be an "anticapitalist, anti-imperialist, liberationist and socialist pedagogy," she argues.[61]

The Iconoclasistas contribute a rich and accessible visual language to the practice of radical pedagogy that can be used in the task of collectively re-creating and representing knowledge. Their collective mapping techniques enable people to develop alternative representations of reality based on their own collective investigation of specific social struggles. By socializing techniques of critical visual analysis, they encourage reflection on the ideological mediations involved in all visual representations and on how our visual perception is itself a social and

55. Risler: Vamos con esta cajita de herramientas previamente diseñada: iconografía, pictogramación, mapas, dispositivos gráficos, línea de tiempo, genealogías, paisajes . . . Lo que facilita el mapa y todo este tipo de diseños es organizar muy rápidamente la información de manera visual y a su vez incentivar a la gente a que participe, porque digamos, a las personas que provengan de ámbitos diversos, de edades diversas, de profesiones diversas . . . esta cuestión de recortar el ícono, de conversar con otros . . . se empiezan a intercambiar estos conocimientos y se producen los debates . . .

Ares: Aparte, la gente que viene ahí tiene conocimientos . . . La gente puede participar, no es que tiene que haberse leído 400 libros o un libro siquiera sino que sabe lo que está pasando en el lugar.

Risler and Ares, interview, October 12, 2013.

56. Risler and Ares.

57. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Berman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 139.

58. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 67.

59. Freire, 51.

60. Freire, 64.

61. Claudia Korol, "Pedagogía de la resistencia y de las emancipaciones," in *Los desafíos de las emancipaciones en un contexto militarizado: sujetizando el objeto de estudio, o de la subversión epistemológica como emancipación*, ed. Ana Esther Ceceña (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2006), 218–19.

historical product that is shaped by ideology and therefore, by class struggles.[62]

The collective mapping workshops also contribute a focused attention to spatial dimensions of class struggles and social positioning (that is, social agents' location within "a set or conjuncture of economic, political, and cultural structures"[63]). Prison abolitionist and geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore argues that antisystemic organizing benefits from attention to the spatial features of material conditions experienced by working-class people, which inevitably shape people's consciousness. She also argues that addressing forms of spatial marginalization and oppression can form "the basis for syncretizing previously separate political movements" in ways that organizing around ascriptive identities cannot."[64]

Gilmore also cautions against assuming that a given mode of organizing is necessarily affiliated with a certain political tendency. "There is no organizational structure the right cannot use for its own purposes," she reminds us.[65] This is an important counterpoint to analyses that confuse political strategy with tactics, as well as to those that attempt to displace questions of political strategy altogether with a sole focus on the ethical and/or proceduralist evaluation of social forms. This is to say that when egalitarian and collective processes of communication and decision making are part of a political or cultural practice, the politics of such a practice cannot be determined based on this alone but are also fundamentally a question of overall strategy: who is being organized and to what end.

The counterhegemonic cultural politics of the mapping workshops derives not only from the collective and participatory form of knowledge production they organize. It also has to do with the skills they teach the participants, their function as a form of consciousness raising, and the workshops' relationship to specific antisystemic struggles. The production of maps is not an end in itself, but a "means to something," as Risler told me. As André Mesquita writes, "the maps disseminate a political analysis of reality with the purpose of enabling collective action to transform it."[66] In this sense, the workshops can be situated within the tradition of militant research, broadly understood as investigation that aims to support antisystemic struggles and that self-reflexively accounts for ways in which knowledge production is always embedded in class struggles.

4. FROM CRISIS TO COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTION: LEARNING FROM MOVEMENTS

The Iconoclasistas recognize the importance of antisystemic movements as producers of knowledge, and they have developed a practice to serve these movements by enabling the collective discussion, systematization, and dissemination of knowledge produced in them. Theirs is a counterhegemonic approach to intellectual production, as it counters extant social hierarchies, property regimes, and ideologies regarding knowledge, and it opposes the social function of professional intellectuals in shoring up ruling class hegemony.[67] Risler and Ares developed this approach through their own experience with antisystemic movements that flourished in Argentina in the late nineties and the following decade in the context of neoliberal crisis. Their practice evinces the influence of these movements' collective modes of organization and insistence upon the territorial basis of class struggles. Moreover, their multiscalar analysis of class struggles reflects their experience of financial crisis, wherein transnational class warfare from above radically affected the day-to-day lives of nonelite Argentines.

As I have written in *Another Aesthetics Is Possible: Arts of Rebellion in the Fourth World War*,

> At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Argentina was a hotbed of self-organized, grassroots social movements that strategically enacted resistance to the mandates of neoliberal capitalism and repudiated the political institutions that imposed these. The radicalization of neoliberal economic policies in the 1990s produced widespread unemployment and austerity and eventually plunged

62. See Jennifer Ponce de León and Gabriel Rockhill, "Toward a Compositional Model of Ideology: Materialism, Aesthetics and Cultural Revolution," *Philosophy Today* 63, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 95–102.

63. Rosaura Sánchez, "On a Critical Realist Theory of Identity," in *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, ed. Linda Martin Alcoff, Michael Hames-García, Satya P. Mohanty, and Paula M. L. Moya (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 35.

64. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Forgotten Places and the Seeds of Grassroots Planning," in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*, ed. Charles R. Hale (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 43.

65. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "In the Shadow of the Shadow State," in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, ed. INCITE! (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 50.

66. Mesquita, "Counter-Cartography," 266.

67. On the social function of intellectuals, see among others William I. Robinson, *Into the Tempest: Essays on the New Global Capitalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019).

> the country into a depression and financial crisis. This crisis distributed wealth upwards and destroyed a huge proportion of the wealth and earning power of the middle and working classes. People across the country mobilized in resistance to these predations, and a massive popular uprising in 2001 ousted Argentina's president and his entire cabinet. It was among a constellation of popular uprisings seen throughout the Americas in which the popular classes rose up in defiance of the inequality and dispossession produced by neoliberal capitalism, including the Caracazo in 1989, L.A. Rebellion in 1992, Zapatista Uprising in 1994, Cochabamba Water Wars in 2000, and at least fifteen others.
>
> The Argentine uprising and the crisis of state hegemony it signaled gave a new visibility to popular movements organized around various sites of social conflict, including labor, education, and human rights, and enabled their mutual interrelation.[68]

The conjuncture opened by the crisis and uprising was marked by a tendency toward the socialization of production and reproduction and the breakdown of logics of specialization that typically segregate different practices.[69] These tendencies manifested themselves in cultural production as well. This was seen in the flourishing of politicized and collective art practices, the creation of autonomous cultural infrastructure, and contra-disciplinary cross-pollination among otherwise sequestered spheres of action and knowledge.[70] Risler notes that with the socialization of aesthetic and communicational tools in this context, one did not have to be an artist to take them up: "After 2001 and the explosion of groups doing street art and urban interventions and such, a bunch of artistic and communicational tools remained available in common for all of us, such that we felt like anyone could take them up to boost their creativity."[71]

Risler, a writer and professor with a doctorate in social sciences, refers to herself as a "child of 2001" because of the profound impact Argentina's financial and political crisis and uprising had on her, pushing her toward a more "territorial, community-based and grassroots politics." In the nineties she was involved in indie, do-it-yourself, and free culture scenes in her hometown of Córdoba and later in Buenos Aires. While she found these scenes to be somewhat self-isolated, she nonetheless thinks that they introduced certain counterhegemonic perspectives and practices to her "depoliticized generation" that came of age in the nineties. Namely, they fostered a critical consciousness about the corporate control of the culture industries and the exploitation of labor in them. Moreover, Risler said, the countercultural indie scene encouraged cultural workers to create alternative circuits of production and circulation and develop skills in, and a disposition for, self-management. "That experience meant that I had at hand a ton of tools and practices and forms of interacting with others that helped me immensely at the moment of becoming involved with more territorial politics," she said.[72]

For Risler, the financial crisis put a spotlight on the precarity and immiseration that all workers, including cultural workers like herself, were experiencing. She believes the widely felt experience of the crisis and concomitant popular mobilizations fostered an orientation toward collective forms of social action, while also creating new opportunities for interaction and collaboration among people of different strata of the popular and middle classes. As she said, "The economic crisis obviously wiped us all out; we found ourselves in the street, and one begins to come into contact with people with other problems, from other places, etc." This experience pushed Risler toward a more grassroots, collective, and movement-based orientation in her cultural work, which would eventually come to characterize the Iconoclasistas'

68. Jennifer Ponce de León, *Another Aesthetics Is Possible: Arts of Rebellion in the Fourth World War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 126–27. See also Raúl Zibechi, *Geneaología de la revuelta: Argentina, la sociedad en movimiento* (La Plata, Argentina: Letra Libre, 2003).

69. Colectivo Situaciones, "Politizar la tristeza," 2007, https://primeravocal.org/politizar-la-tristeza-del-colectivo-situaciones.

70. Ponce de León, *Another Aesthetics Is Possible*, 127. See also Alice Creischer, Andreas Siekmann, and Gabriela Massuh, eds., *Schritte zur Flucht von der Arbeit zum Tun = Pasos para huir del trabajo al hacer* (Buenos Aires: Interzona Editora, 2004); Andrea Giunta, *Pos-Crisis: arte Argentina después del 2001* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2009); the overview of art collectives in *Ramona* 33 (July–August 2003); Ana Longoni, "¿Tucumán sigue ardiendo?," *Brumaria*, no. 5 (Summer 2005): 43–51; and Ana Longoni, "A Long Way: Argentina Artistic Activism of the Last Decades," trans. Fabián Cereijido, in *Collective Situations: Readings in Contemporary Latin American Art, 1995–2010*, ed. Bill Kelley Jr. and Grant Kester (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 105–7.

71. "Después del escenario 2001, de la explosión de grupos de arte más de la calle o de intervenciones urbanas y demás, habían quedado disponibles, digamos, al común, de todos nosotros, un montón de herramientas artísticas y comunicacionales que nosotros sentíamos que cualquiera podía retomar para impulsar su creatividad." Risler, interview, January 18, 2014.

72. "Ese tipo de recorrido hizo que yo también tuviera a la mano un montón de herramientas y de prácticas y de modo de interactuar con otros que a mí me vinieron muy bien a la hora de empezar a activar en políticas más territoriales." Risler.

practice. The exigencies of the crisis also put into relief the limitations of cultural endeavors not connected to broader social struggles. As Risler sees it, because most Latin Americans face the precarity and impoverishment produced by systemic capitalist crises, "we can't indulge in the luxury of having our heads in the clouds, as it were." She told me, "I can't say to a young person, 'sure, write your poetry and alienate yourself and just be with your friends,' because then the crisis hits and you're screwed, unless you have a network of people and practices to rely on."[73] Her sharp critique of the bourgeois idyll of art practice, in which art is seen as an individualist practice that is separate from day-to-day realities, suggests that working people cannot afford such a lack of engagement, given the harsh social conditions they inevitably face.

While Ares has had a movement-based activist art practice since the nineties, his work was also affected by his experience of the 2001 crisis and popular movements that emerged from it, as these pushed him toward more collective processes of creation. Ares participated in countercultural activities in the late eighties and nineties, creating underground comics and doing graffiti while working commercially in graphic design and animation. Starting in 1998, he brought his art practice into his militancy in Argentina's grassroots human rights movement through his work in Grupo de Arte Callejero (GAC, Street Art Group). This activist art group created guerrilla urban interventions that melded with the movement's direct-action tactics such as *escraches*, denunciation protests that comprise a form of popular justice, seeking the social condemnation of persons responsible for state terrorism. GAC used cartographic techniques in many of their interventions, including *Aquí viven genocidas* (Genocidists Live Here, 2001–6), a series of maps designed by Ares that identified the homes of persons who had been denounced for their involvement in state terrorism (fig. 7).[74] These are precedents for Ares's work in the Iconoclasistas and the duo's production of maps as tools of political communication meant to advance the campaigns of popular movements.

Ares's experience of grassroots organizing practices with the human rights movement and the popular assembly movement also encouraged his interests in collective processes of knowledge and art production, which he then brought to his work with the Iconoclasistas. He was inspired by the ethos of "collective construction" he observed among the militants of Mesa de Escrache Popular, a grassroots human rights organization in Buenos Aires. Ares also participated in the popular assembly movement that flourished in Buenos Aires in the first years of the 2000s. As part of his neighborhood's assembly, he took part in collective cultural and activist endeavors, including editing a free weekly newsletter of political commentary and coorganizing solidarity actions with informal trash recycling workers (*cartoneros*). Ares's participation in these collective processes made him want to pursue an "assembly-like" mode of making art, based in "the idea that art could be not participatory but collective."[75]

5. MARXIST AESTHETICS

In addition to its debt to Marxist philosophies of education, the Iconoclasistas' practice also reflects key concerns of Marxist aesthetics and cultural production. As I have written in *Another Aesthetics Is Possible: Arts of Rebellion in the Fourth World War*, Marxist intellectuals have consistently emphasized the need to consider the social relations of cultural and intellectual production—and not only the ideological character of their products—as a site of class struggle. Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin articulated this position in the 1930s when they asserted that the politics of committed intellectuals' (including artists') practices lies not only in the political ideas represented in works they produce but also in their work *on the forms and instruments of production*. The intellectual in a capitalist society should work to "alienate the apparatus of production from the ruling class" and transform it "to the maximum extent possible in the direction of socialism," Benjamin wrote, drawing on Brecht's concept

73. "Con toda la crisis que hay económico, que obviamente nos pasó el trapo a todos, nos encuentra en la calle y uno empieza a encontrarse con gente, con otras problemáticas, de otros lugares, etc." "No podemos darnos el lujo de estar, como se dice, en un pedo de nubes . . . Yo no le puedo decir a un joven 'bueno, escribí tu poesía y aliénate y andá con tus amigos.' Después te agarra la crisis y cagaste. Ahí no hay nadie que te sostenga si vos no tenés una red de gente o de prácticas." Risler.

74. *Escrache* means "to drag into the light" in the Italianate Argentine argot Lunfardo. These types of denunciation protests are practiced throughout Latin America and are also known by other names, such as *funa*. For more on *escraches* and GAC's work, see Ponce de León, *Another Aesthetics Is Possible,* 126–55, 215–27; Grupo de Arte Callejero, *Thoughts, Practices, and Actions*, trans. Mareada Rosa Collective (Brooklyn, NY: Common Notions, 2019).

75. Pablo Ares, interview with the author, Buenos Aires, December 9, 2013.

FIGURE 7. Grupo de Arte Callejero, *Aquí viven genocidas* (Genocidists live here), 2001 to 2004, guerrilla interventions with digital illustration realized annually in Buenos Aires (photograph courtesy of Archivo GAC, Grupo de Arte Callejero)

of functional transformation.[76] In his writing on radio, Brecht argued that in the face of the increasing concentration of the ownership of the means of communication, it was necessary to reconfigure the cultural apparatus in order to turn its consumers into producers.[77] Other intellectuals have taken up this challenge by creating new forms of literature, theater, and cinema that demanded the active participation of consumers (as in works of Third Cinema) or made them into coproducers of a work (as in Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed). In some cases, like that of Teatro Campesino in California, artists also sought to reconfigure typical modes of artistic production, circulation, and reception in order to integrate their artworks into processes of political organizing.[78]

The Iconoclasistas' practice echoes these efforts to transform social relations of cultural production. The modality of collective knowledge production their workshops foment stands as an explicit rejection of the monopolization of knowledge claims by credentialed specialists and gate-keeping institutions, which are typically of and for the middle or ruling classes. They reject propriety approaches to producing and disseminating knowledge and culture. Instead, they work to socialize the techniques, methods, and tools they have developed. As Ares said, they teach collective mapping with the idea that "the people will empower themselves with this tool and reuse it."[79]

The ways the Iconoclasistas distribute their work and facilitate its appropriation by others also reflects their valorization of its use value over its potential exchange value as a commodity or as intellectual property. In early works like *Cosmovisión*, they used techniques of design

76. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," *New Left Review* 62 (July–August 1970): 89; Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Film and Radio*, ed. and trans. Marc Silberman (London: Methuen Drama, 2006), 41–48.

77. Brecht, *Brecht on Film*, 41–48.

78. Ponce de León, *Another Aesthetics Is Possible*, 18–19.

79. Risler and Ares, interview, October 12, 2013.

and production that made the works easy and cheap to reproduce. By 2009 they had learned about the possibilities of Web 2.0, and they soon developed their own website, Iconoclasistas.net. This site serves as both a digital archive of the Iconoclasistas' work and a resource for others to learn the techniques they have developed. Hundreds of icons the Iconoclasistas designed for mapping workshops are available for free download on the website, as are detailed accounts of the techniques used in each of their mapping workshops. They publish all of their work with Creative Commons licenses that allow for its noncommercial use and the production of derivative works, as long as these are not used for commercial purposes. The way the Iconoclasistas facilitate the appropriation of works they have produced and techniques they have developed reflects the ethos of free culture movements that Risler has long been involved with and that critique the way intellectual property regimes limit access to knowledge and culture.

The Iconoclasistas furthered the socialization of their techniques by publishing *Manual de mapeo colectivo: recursos cartográficos críticos para procesos territoriales de creación colaborativa* in 2013. Soon thereafter they published its English translation, *Manual of Collective Mapping: Critical Cartographic Resources for Territorial Processes of Collaborative Creation*. The manual at once provides a history of the Iconoclasistas' practice while serving as guide and resource for those who would take up the techniques and tools they have developed. Using text and illustrations, it outlines the techniques of collective investigation they have developed and offers tips on how to adapt these to different settings and time frames. It also includes pages of the icons they have used in these workshops, which are printed to facilitate them being photocopied for use. Risler and Ares said they were inspired to create this type of publication because they were receiving more requests to facilitate workshops than they were able or wanted to fulfill. They thought that instead they could provide a manual, so that others could implement their techniques and facilitate workshops themselves.[80]

The importance of ideology critique and politically grounded experimentalism in the Iconclasistas' practice also aligns with the international tradition of Marxist aesthetic theory and art making I outline. Risler and Ares implicitly cite Marxist aesthetics by referring to some of their work as "agit-pop." This is a play on *agit-prop*, shorthand for "agitation and propaganda," which names an approach to political communication first theorized by Georgy Plekhanov, refined by Vladmir Lenin, and put in practice in the Soviet Communist party's uses of theater as a means of political education.[81] The addition of "pop" may refer to the style of the Iconoclasistas' graphic art, which echoes styles seen in popular genres like comics. (This is not surprising, given Ares's experience in animation, comics, and commercial design work.) But the Iconoclasistas' work is also popular in the sense Brecht gave this term when intervening in debates about socialist art. Brecht argued that art should be for the people, the working masses, noting, "We have a people in mind who make history, change the world and themselves."[82] Such an approach to art making is evidenced in the Iconoclasistas' creation of widely accessible artworks with real use value for political communication and to popular movements, and in their embrace of techniques and insights of radical pedagogy in their practice.

The Iconoclasistas' work is also "realistic" in the specific sense that Brecht gave to this term when he used it to call for socialist artworks that render apprehensible the "causal complexes of society," exposing ideologies that obscure these as "views imposed by the powerful," while "making possible the concrete and making possible abstraction from it."[83] The way the Iconoclasistas' own work and workshops analyze specific spatial relations and conflicts as they express contradictions of the social totality, as well as their denaturalization and critique of hegemonic visual ideologies and representations (such as those found in maps and landscapes) exemplify the kind of realism Brecht argued was needed in socialist art.

The Iconoclasistas' multidisciplinary experimentalism is also consistent with this tradition of Marxist cultural theory and practice. Brecht insisted that artists needed to be experimental and innovative in their aesthetic choices because they live in a dynamic social reality that is continually transformed by class struggle. He argued that artists "should use every means, old and new, tried and untried, derived from art and derived from other sources,

80. Julia Risler and Pablo Ares, presentation of *Manual de mapeo colectivo*, FM La Tribu, Buenos Aires, December 4, 2013.

81. See Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement*, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, Marxists.org, www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/iii.htm.

82. Brecht, "Against Georg Lukács," in *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Fredric Jameson (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2007), 81–82.

83. Brecht, "Against Georg Lukács," 81–82.

to render reality to men in a form they can master."[84] He also argued against treating those practices that have been socially codified as "art" as if they belonged to a separate realm from other applications of human skill and imagination, such as the sciences or engineering, and he encouraged intellectuals to defy the siloing of knowledge and technical skills that is encouraged by bourgeois literary and art criticism.[85] The Iconoclasistas' combination of graphic arts with techniques of cartography, radical pedagogy, and militant research reflects the kind of omnivorous experimentalism that Brecht calls for—particularly because it responds to the exigencies of contemporary class struggles and reflects an effort to create work that has real use value for the popular classes engaged in these struggles. This should be distinguished from the embrace of formal innovation that primarily responds to market demands or to a specialized discourse about the history of fine art.

In *Another Aesthetics Is Possible* I describe artists' use of techniques and forms from other fields and types of practice as *paradisciplinarity*, a term meant to acknowledge the way they go beyond the norms of particular disciplinary practices while also functioning as heterodox versions of them.[86] The Iconoclasistas' paradisciplinarity not only enriches the capacities for visual art to respond to territorial struggles; it also enriches techniques of social cartography and radical education by bringing to them a rich visual language, as well as sustained attention to the ideological power of visual representations.

I offer this crossdisciplinary genealogy of the Iconoclasistas' practice as a complement to more art historical approaches that situate their work within the discourse of social practice, also known as socially engaged art, activist art, and formerly as new genre public art.[87] As social practice has been consolidated as a genre of post-studio contemporary art since the mid nineties, it has come to denote art practices that are "inter-relational, embodied, and durational"[88] and that seek to ameliorate social inequities or solve social problems, usually operating at a local scale.[89] Social art practice often entails the composition of intersubjective relations and social scenarios, rather than the authorial production of art objects.[90] It also often involves forays into techniques and practices considered extraneous to the arts.[91] The reception, in some quarters, of the Iconoclasistas' work as contemporary art reflects shifts in contemporary art practice and discourse that are reflected in the rise of "social practice" as a genre. These include "increasing permeability between 'art' and other zones of symbolic production," as well as increased interest in collective, collaborative, participatory, and process-based experience.[92]

While future research on the Iconoclasistas' work will surely benefit from art historical research on socially engaged art, certain tendencies in this discourse may obscure historical and political specificities of a practice like theirs. First, as I have shown, the Iconclasistas' practice developed out of commercial and street art practices, movement-based cultural activism, and methods of popular education. It is not consistently presented as a fine art practice or perceived as such. One should be cautious, then, to not impose upon it ideas about the historical development of socially engaged art that have primarily been formulated through the study of professional artworks whose production, circulation, and reception are mediated by museums, biennials, art schools, and art markets. As social practice has been increasingly promoted as a genre of contemporary art, Grant Kester has underscored the need to analytically distinguish "'art world' social practice" from forms of socially engaged art that have "little or no relationship to the mainstream art world of art fairs, biennials, private dealers and so on."[93]

Second, some influential art historical scholarship on social practice, such as the work of Claire Bishop, is based on premises of bourgeois aesthetic philosophy; namely, the insistence that aesthetic experience is distinct from other types of experience and that art occupies (or should

84. Brecht, 83.

85. Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Art and Politics*, ed. Steve Giles and Tom Kuhn (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 242–43.

86. Ponce de León, *Another Aesthetics Is Possible*, 20. I am drawing on Brian Holmes's arguments about extradisciplinarity in contemporary art in "Extradisciplinary Investigations: Towards a New Critique of Institutions," *Transversal*, January 2007, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0106/holmes/en.

87. See Kelley and Kester, eds., *Collective Situations*; Fuentes, "Zooming In and Out."

88. Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: The Infrastructural Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 2010), 12; Leigh Claire la Berge, *Wages against Artwork: Decommodified Labor and the Claims of Socially Engaged Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 5, 201.

89. La Berge, *Wages against Artwork,* 5, 201.

90. Grant Kester, "Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art," *Afterimage* 22 (January 1995): 5.

91. Kelley and Kester, introduction to *Collective Situations*, 2.

92. Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 7.

93. Grant Kester, interview by Carlos Garrido Castellano, *Art & the Public Sphere* 7, no. 2 (2018): 166.

be imagined to occupy) an autonomous social realm.[94] This is expressed in a mode of historicization that privileges the comparison of formal attributes of artworks (those that are institutionally recognized as fine art) over the analysis of art's relationship to histories, techniques, and/or forms of social action that did not develop within professional art disciplines and markets. Conversely, my historicization of the Iconoclasistas' work has emphasized its relationship to contemporary class struggles and to forms of social action and organization developed within antisystemic movements. I also situate their work within a tradition of Marxist aesthetic theory and practice that is antithetical to the ideology of art's autonomy from the social world.

Third, because discourses on social art often deploy exceedingly abstract notions of politics with little reference to specific political ideologies, strategies, or constituencies, the genre has been associated with a vague sense of progressive uplift that obviates more precise specification of the politics of particular practices (including those with reactionary politics).[95] I have sought to offer a more precise account of the politics of the Iconoclasistas' work by addressing its relevance to specific popular struggles and situating it within a historical genealogy of Marxist pedagogy and aesthetics.

The Iconoclasistas' paradisciplinary practice and the corpus of works they have produced demonstrate how the critical interrogation of the social production of space can shed light on different manifestations of contemporary class struggles. Their materialist and multiscalar approach enables the crucial work of analyzing how structural dynamics of the capitalist world-system manifest in specific ways and places, and of representing the underlying forces and contradictions that make different, localized struggles relevant to each other. Most importantly, because their practice is enmeshed with the knowledge production that takes place within antisystemic struggles, it helps to map the contours of these struggles and identify possibilities for building alliances among them.

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94. Examples include Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012) and La Berge, *Wages Against Artwork*.

95. Kester, "Aesthetic Evangelists." Also see Ben Davis, "A Critique of Social Practice Art?" *International Socialist Review*, no. 90 (2013), https://isreview.org/issue/90/critique-social-practice-art/index.html.