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Reflections on Collaborative Ethnography and Decolonization in Latin America, Aotearoa, and Beyond

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ABSTRACT | As the ongoing legacies of colonialism are challenged, scholars and activists are increasingly carrying out collaborative research to respond to the asymmetrical privileges built into Western science by partnering with communities and explicitly orienting their research towards communities' political aims. In this article, we trace the ways this shift intersects with other important trends in ethnographic research, especially attention to the politics of knowledge and decolonization. We discuss how collaborative research in Latin America is shaped by the context and political agendas of those involved to show what is produced. While in some circumstances collaboration can serve to level the colonial playing field by making Indigenous knowledge and practices visible, in other situations it can reinforce constructed dichotomies between Indigenous and Western knowledge and practices. As it increasingly the norm for government agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations to promote participatory methods to further their own agendas, we suggest that collaboration can be the site of governance as well as liberation. By bringing the dilemmas in our different research projects on Indigenous politics in Bolivia into dialogue with critical engagements from Indigenous scholars in Aotearoa and decolonial thinkers globally, we urge careful analysis of the multiple and changing standpoints of our collaborators in order not to re-construct essentialized notions of Indigeneity. Ultimately, we see the need to acknowledge the tight spaces of negotiation that we all find ourselves drawn into when we undertake collaborative endeavours.

Keywords: Anthropology; Collaborative Research; Decolonization; Politics of Knowledge; Indigenous Peoples

Introduction

Elizabeth Povinelli opens her 2011 book about her long collaboration with her Indigenous friends and kin in Australia with a short story by science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin. “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” tells the story of a city, Omelas, where “the happiness and well-being of its inhabitants depends on a small child’s being confined to and humiliated in a small, putrid broom closet” (Povinelli 2011: 1). All the inhabitants know about this relationship; this is not a metaphorical, but a material, broom closet. “Every member of Omelas must assume some relationship among his or her present personal happiness, their solidarity with the present happiness of the millions inhabiting Omelas, and the present suffering of one small human being” (Povinelli 2011: 2). Moreover, Povinelli suggests, this situation is not perceived as a crisis, but as the kind of “ordinary, chronic, and cruddy” suffering to which most people have become accustomed. Le Guin offers three options for the residents of Omelas: some offer facile excuses for preferring their happiness to the child’s; others face the paradox, raging against the injustice until they finally accept it; others walk away, leaving the child in the closet. The question Le Guin and Povinelli pose is: “how does one construct an ethics in relation to this kind of dispersed suffering?” (Povinelli 2011: 4)

This fictional account calls our attention to epistemological and ethical dilemmas that are posed by anthropological research. As we describe below, anthropologists have long been critiqued for using their privileged positions and colonial gaze to study those considered ‘the Other,’ especially Native peoples. As this “politics of knowledge” has been challenged, one important result has been the rise of Indigenous-led research (L.T. Smith 1999a and 1999b). Non-Indigenous scholars have also tried to overcome the asymmetries built into Western science by partnering with communities and explicitly orienting their research towards the political aims of their interlocutors. In this article, we examine this important shift towards collaboration, tracing the ways it intersects with other important trends in the field, especially the politics of knowledge and decolonization, to better understand its potentials and limitations.

This article builds on a previous version that focused mostly on the experience of researchers in Latin America (Kennemore and Postero 2020). In this article, we expand our argument to incorporate more fully the rich experience of Māori researchers and their collaborators, and the developing model of Indigenous research known as “kaupapa paradigm” that emerges from Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) (L. T. Smith 1999a and 1999b; George 2018). We describe two separate sites where collaboration can intervene. The first is the effort to decolonize anthropological practice itself, addressing the unequal privileges built into the discipline. This is a concern shared mostly by professional anthropologists. The second is a focus on the larger question of social inequality. Here academics and collaborators are experimenting to see what collaborative tools can offer to Indigenous and civil society organizations working towards emancipation. We see these two sites as related, however, as knowledge and power are always imbricated. As has been shown by countless researchers (see Deloria 1969; Lewis 1973; Simpson 2014; L.T. Smith 1999a and 1999b, Willis 1972), the forms of knowledge produced by social scientists about Indigenous and peasant peoples has often justified social structures of racism and dispossession.

This knowledge/power dynamic shapes how collaborative researchers envision the possibilities for their research, and why we engage in collaboration in the first place.

We are delighted to be sharing our work with the *Commoning Ethnography* community and to be in dialogue with its contributors. The idea of “commoning ethnography” that is at the foundation of this new journal resonates deeply with the goals of the collaborative ethnography trend we analyze in this article. In an essay for this journal, Eli Elinoff imagined what an ethnographic commons might look like. “I see a future of ethnography as directed towards the creation of new commons—spaces of gathering, sharing, exchange, and collaboration—spaces for learning to make a better, different ethnography together. The commons approach offers potential for doing better scholarship by troubling the primary boundary between field and home, breaking down barriers that cloister our research, and opening up our own strange processes of knowledge production to better incorporate the people at the heart of our research...” (2018: 75). We agree with Elinoff that collaboration can be a “space in which learning and research take place by being together. This ‘being together’ reflects the most compelling part of ‘the commons’ and, indeed, ethnographic praxis itself” (Ibid: 75).

These goals are at the center of the kinds of research we are examining here, and yet, in what follows we argue that not all forms of collaboration are successful. We echo the pragmatic approach to the commons we find in the journal, and the understanding that any commons is provisional, built on both “being together” but also on disagreement and ruptures (Elinoff 2018; Elinoff and Trundle 2018, citing Berlant 2016). In this article, we want to critically consider how collaboration happens and what might be produced as a result. While in some circumstances, collaboration can serve to level the colonial playing field to make Indigenous knowledge and practices visible, our research also shows that in other situations it can act to reinforce the constructed dichotomies between Indigenous and Western knowledge and practices, reifying the “hyphen” in Indigenous-colonizer collaboration, as Māori and Pākehā collaborators Jones and Jenkins (2014) put it. Moreover, in many countries today, including both Bolivia and New Zealand, it is also increasingly the norm for government agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations to take up participatory methods based on the principles of intercultural dialogue and reciprocal exchange to further their own agendas. We suggest that collaboration, like other seemingly progressive discourses such as decolonization, can be the site of governance as well as liberation (see Postero 2017). We argue, therefore, that it is critical to go beyond lauding this new trend to carefully analyze what collaborative research practices actually produce.

For this reason, in this article we are not just evaluating collaboration in terms of its effectiveness as a tool of anthropological research. Instead, we are asking if it responds in a meaningful way to the broom closet dilemma Le Guin and Povinelli lay out. If we confront the fact that our profession depends on observing and analyzing the struggles of others, does collaboration provide an answer to the dilemmas that anthropologists face in the post- (or not so post-) colonial world? How might our methods and analyses better serve grassroots efforts to dismantle ongoing structural inequalities on the ground, to help us “stand

with” (Tallbear 2013, 2014) those who are engaged in breaking down the broom closet in different ways? In what ways does collaboration help us to better understand the composition of the broom closet; that is, the relationship between structural constraints and asymmetrical privileges built into knowledge practices? And, finally, in what ways might collaboration in fact recreate the broom closet, acting to solidify or essentialize collaborators’ positions within it?

Indeed, we see collaboration as a response to the understanding that we must all face the same colonial broom closet. Yet, we are all situated differently in relation to it, raising different expectations and demands of each other as we engage in collaborative relationships (Briones 2017). Thus, researchers, scholars, and their collaborators engage in collaboration in response to very different political agendas, leading to different methods and outcomes. Moreover, the traditional binary of researcher/subject has become increasingly blurred; who counts as an “insider” or an “outsider” is not always clear (Rappaport 2005). Is a Native American anthropologist studying Native geneticists (see Tallbear 2013) any more an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’ than a White British anthropologist who has been a member of a coca farming union in Bolivia for 40 years (see Spedding 2016)? Understanding these particularities means we cannot outline a clear research agenda or prescribe best practices for all collaborations. Instead, in this article we hope to show the multiple levels of collaboration that are happening in different spaces, what they produce, and what they imply for research on justice and activism in today’s world. We begin with the critiques of traditional anthropological practices and the flawed politics of knowledge they imply, and then describe the many proposals to transform them. We find inspiration in many of the efforts we describe here, yet the broom closet persists. We resist the urge to ignore it, or to assume that these new practices necessarily resolve it, returning in conclusion to the questions the broom closet provokes.

‘Skeletons in the broom closet’: critiques of anthropological politics of knowledge

Working at a moment when colonized peoples across the world were breaking the chains of imperialism, Black, feminist, and Native American scholars in the U.S. during the 1970s called attention to the historical conditions in which anthropology had developed and been used as an instrument of colonial expansion (see Allen and Jobson 2016). A group of Black scholars, dubbed the “Decolonizing Generation,” developed a powerful critique based on their own research and experiences within U.S. academia (see Lewis 1973; Willis 1972).¹ Presaging Povinelli’s focus on the broom closet by nearly four decades, William Willis (1972) argued for recognition of the “skeletons in the anthropological broom closet.” “Anthropologists have been ‘penny imperialists,’” he said, “making modest profits from studying dominated colored peoples” (Willis 1972: 126). Diane Lewis suggested that the prestige early anthropologists gained created a fundamental paradox, “for no matter how great the anthropologist’s aversion to the colonial system, he was, as a fieldworker, unable to function outside of it” (Lewis 1973, 583). A foundational text from the Native American perspective was Vine Deloria’s *Custer Died for Your Sins* ([1969] 1988), which excoriated the work of anthropologists studying Indians in the United States. Lumping them together with missionaries and government bureaucrats, Deloria argued that

anthropologists' studies only lead to further funding and employment for the out-of-touch White intellectuals he called "ideological vultures" (Deloria [1969] 1988, 95). Deloria showed how early anthropological analyses essentialized Native cultures as pre-modern, justifying white domination and creating a monopoly on knowledge. Here, we see a clear articulation of the paradox of the broom closet, whereby anthropologists benefitted from the suffering of Others.

These critiques went beyond calling out the privileges researchers enjoyed as a result of their historical role in processes of colonialism. They also showed that researchers developed flawed theoretical models as a result of this positioning. Perhaps Willis's discussion of the turn toward cultural relativism promoted by Boasian anthropologists best illustrates this point. Willis argues that, as scientific racism lost popularity, it was replaced by the concept of culture, which naturalized sociocultural inequality through the "dignity" that was accorded to [Others] by cultural relativism" (1972: 126). Despite good intentions, he adds, the culture concept masked anthropologists' inability to see the structures of power and racism in which both anthropologist and subject are situated. This was Deloria's point, too: the anthropologists studying on American Indian reservations could not see the destructive effects of their theorizing; instead they thought they were finding the "ultimate truth" ([1969] 1988: 100).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori organizing in the 1970s and 80s led to important cultural and political projects. After a 1971 report warned that Māori language was near extinction, Māori communities began to set up their own immersion schools, called Kura Kaupapa Māori. These were based on Māori culture and knowledge, and were intended as a way of affirming cultural identity and community involvement. (Pihama, Cram, & Walker 2002; G.H. Smith 1990; L.T. Smith 2000). As GH Smith suggested, "Māori communities armed with the new critical understandings of the shortcomings of the state and structural analyses began to assert transformative actions to deal with the twin crises of language demise and educational underachievement for themselves (1997: 171; see also Bishop, Berryman, & Wearmouth 2014). This was followed in 1982 with the establishment of Te Kohanga Reo, a National Trust Board focused on the revitalization of Māori language and philosophies. LT Smith et al. suggest that these initiatives made it critical for the development of mātauranga Māori, often translated as Māori knowledge as the "philosophical platform to support and sustain Māori contemporary initiatives," because "Kaupapa Māori theory research brought together the mātauranga required to undertake Māori research that had cultural integrity, met ethical expectations, was positive in purpose, and led to outcomes that were more useful and hopeful for Māori communities" (2016: 142).

Much like the experiences of Native Americans that Deloria described, Māori found themselves the object of study, but not recognized as scholars or thinkers. "Māori are regarded as producers of culture rather than of knowledge" (Cooper 2012: 64). Similarly, Indigenous research methodologies and knowledge production is aimed at the goal of furthering Māori self-determination. As Smith et al. point out: "it is important to recognize the depth of expertise of our own community based knowledge keepers to conduct those extraordinary, metaphysical tasks, such as mediating the material and spiritual world, escorting a spirit on a physical and spiritual journey, binding ancient genealogies with contemporary realities, sustaining relationships while healing collective grief,

seeking visions and teachings from our ancestors, or cleansing people and spaces” (2016: 132). Thus, in the 1990s, as part of the move towards “Indigenous research sovereignty” (George et al. 2020: 3), Kaupapa Māori research began to be widely applied as a methodology by Māori researchers working with Māori communities in research. “Kaupapa Māori is broader than a method as it asks a number of prior and theoretical questions about research, the framing of research questions, the purpose of research, the relationships with communities, and the design and methods right through to the benefits of research” (Ibid: 132). We describe this methodology in greater depth below.

Kaupapa Māori research also makes important critiques about the ethics of mainstream research. LT Smith argues that “research ethics is often much more about institutional and professional regulations and codes of conduct than it is about the needs, aspirations, or worldviews of “marginalized and vulnerable” communities” (2005: 96). For Indigenous peoples, who have seen their trust betrayed for generations, research is “at a very basic level about establishing, maintaining, and nurturing reciprocal and respectful relationships, not just among people as individuals but also with people as individuals, as collectives, and as members of communities, and with humans who live in and with other entities in the environment” (Ibid: 97). Contrasting mainstream “top-down” ethics with what she calls “community-up” ethics, LT Smith calls for research based on showing respect, listening, sharing, being reflective, and guarding the dignity of the collaborators, and not flaunting knowledge (Ibid: 98). The goal is to have consensual and trusting relations between researchers and the communities. In their discussion of Indigenous research ethics, George et al. (2020) make a convincing point: if Indigenous communities do not feel safe or that their voices will be heard in research, they will be unlikely to pass on their knowledge to researchers. For this reason, they suggest, respectful Indigenous research ethics “makes possible the transmission of ideas from communities that were silenced by colonialism and yet have fundamental and valuable contributions to make to our understanding of all arenas of human existence” (Ibid: 5).

Indigenous scholars in Latin America have launched their own critiques. In Bolivia, Aymara intellectual Fausto Reinaga, also writing in the 1970s, launched a powerful critique against the assimilationist policies of dominant mestizo criollo classes. For Reinaga, real emancipation could only be achieved on the basis of “pensamiento amautico” or thought based on Aymara and Quechua principles and values (see Reinaga 1978). Aymara theorist Esteban Ticona lauds Fausto’s decolonial thinking, because it went beyond promoting historical consciousness of colonial conditions of oppression to construct something in its place, a logic that was built into Aymara notion of Pachakuti, of upheaval and reversal (Ticona 2010: 38). Aymara philosopher Rafael Bautista makes a similar point, arguing that the central feature of colonial domination is the still-powerful myth of white superiority that devalues Indigenous cultures, religions, languages, and ways of life. In his view, to decolonize Bolivian society is to cleanse these dangerous foundations and recuperate Indigenous pride, forms of knowledge, and practices (2010).

Ticona and Bautista’s notions reflect the recent critiques coming from the “MCD” scholars of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality like Walter D. Mignolo (2000) and Aníbal Quijano (1992), among others. They point out how colonial

forms of domination obscured Indigenous ways of thinking and knowing, privileging Western categories and epistemologies—what is termed “coloniality of knowledge” (Quijano 1992). In this view, decolonization requires claiming a new epistemological relation to the state and recuperating non-Western culture, language, cosmology, and forms of being.² In North America, mainstream anthropologists also began to respond to the postcolonial position in which they (belatedly) found themselves in the 1980s.³ The seminal collection *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) used a post-modernist approach to question the authority of academic authors, arguing for an inter-subjective notion of research that eschewed scientific interpretations of the Other in favor of a constructed negotiation or dialogue between subjects (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 41). The volume provoked widespread debates about the positionality of researchers within colonial structures of race, class, and gender. Yet, to the extent that collaboration began to be accepted in the North, it has largely been understood as a way of improving fieldwork to make it more ethically grounded (Marcus 1997). It is important to note that this kind of collaboration does not have the same goal as the “politically engaged, ethically committed” research that is a defining feature of collaborative research in Latin America today, as we describe below. There were, however, a number of early proponents of more politically engaged research. Davydd Greenwood and his Cornell colleagues argued early on for the importance of Participatory Action Research (Greenwood and Levin 1988); Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995) called for a “militant anthropology”; and Ted Gordon (1991) proposed an “anthropology for liberation.”

Yet, these decolonial or reflexive critical ‘turns’ in academia do not necessarily overturn the privileges afforded to Western scholars and their theories. Indeed, many argue that this theorizing actually excludes the very people it claims to support. For instance, Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui points out that the “MCD” scholars have privileged positions in Northern institutions, which allow them to benefit from the “political economy of knowledge” (2010). She argues decolonial studies are often based on ideas that are removed from their context and thus are “devoid of the sense of political urgency” (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010, 98). Moreover, she notes that Latin American scholars tend to cite North American and European scholars to display their privilege, ignoring the ways in which Bolivian intellectuals are already theorizing about locally situated structures of oppression (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010: 104). Rosanna Barragán’s (2008) discussion of Bolivian anthropology highlights the other side of institutional barriers. While foreigners who study Bolivia have had access to jobs and funding, working conditions for Bolivian academics have been unstable and access to foreign journals is limited. Yet, she argues, along with these “chasms” are also “bridges” between research and civil society that has uniquely shaped the degree to which social sciences research and social movements are in close dialogue (Barragán 2008).

While many critiques of the politics of knowledge differ, they tend to share an approach to knowledge production that challenges the long-standing idea in Western science that scholarly knowledge depends on a sharp separation between scholar, the subject, and objects of knowledge (Vasco 2011, 28). The revolutionary Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, for example, insisted that knowledge could only be gained in an interaction between knowledge and action:

“without practice there’s no knowledge” (Horton and Freire 1990, 98). Similarly, Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda (2015) critiqued empirical scholars seeking direct and neutral causal explanations. His social action research with communities showed him that the closed systems scholars assumed were, in fact, really a complex universe of multicausality. This included the scholar, who was not outside of the system studied but an inherent part of it (Fals Borda 2015: 260). Lewis (1973) called attention to the ways in which the anthropologist’s claim to objectivity reduces those being observed to an inferior object assumed to not have a voice in how their lives are interpreted and as someone who will learn from what is being written about them. These insights echo the important interventions that emerged from feminists about the relationality of research. Standpoint theorists such as Sandra Harding (1986) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) showed that while positivism appeared to be value-free, it in fact obscured gender- and race-based inequalities. The fundamental insight of this theory is that all knowledge is “situated” (Haraway 1988); that is, rather than being neutral, all knowledge emerges from particular standpoints and their attending views of reality.

Dismantling the broom closet: proposals for decolonizing knowledge

Willis was clear about what was necessary, from his point of view as a Black scholar, to save North American anthropology: its practitioners needed to expose the skeletons in the closet, emphasizing the impacts of white colonialism. This would not only help the political agendas of those actively struggling against imperialism, but would also lead investigators to develop better theories and models they could use to analyze racism in their own societies (Willis 1972: 146). His call highlights both dimensions of decolonizing practice we mentioned above: efforts to decolonize anthropological practice by addressing the asymmetrical privileges built into the discipline, on the one hand; and efforts to harness the tools of knowledge to work towards emancipation, on the other. This section outlines some early proposals emerging out of the Americas that illustrate different dimensions of decolonizing practice shaping collaborative research today.

Some of the earliest examples of harnessing knowledge towards social justice emerged from participatory methodologies in education. One such education project in Bolivia was the *escuela-ayllu* of Warisata, a collaborative experimental school governed according to principles of the *ayllu*, a highland Indigenous territorial and governance structure, and co-administered by a parliament of *amawt’as*, or community elders, who also served as the judicial council of the community (see Pérez [1962] 2015). In the 1960s, following Frantz Fanon’s ([1961] 1963) call for an anti-colonial education, Freire (1970) argued for a pedagogy that would harness the critical perspectives of marginalized groups as a tool for emancipation and social change. His approach was two-fold: first, to use popular education to facilitate an objective view of the structures of oppression in which groups were deeply embedded; second, to generate authentic reflection and commitment to political action (Freire 1970: 54-55). Myles Horton from the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, in the United States, followed similar ideas, establishing “citizenship schools” for illiterate Blacks who were barred from voting in the Southern U.S. Like Freire, Horton emphasized the imperative to respect the knowledge of the workers and civil rights movements with whom he worked. Eschewing the role of expert, Horton declared that the whole point of the

Highlander Folk School was that the staff admitted they did not know all the answers and that the goal was that people should learn from each other (Horton and Freire 1990: 55).⁴ These important movements for popular education and social change were echoed by the work of Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, the founder of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR emphasized the importance of the “people’s power,” based on their own “experiential” methodology that provided them with a critical capacity to systematize knowledge to transform social reality (Fals Borda 1987: 330; Rappaport 2017). In his research with peasant coastal Colombian communities, Fals Borda collaborated with the National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) to produce texts for academic consumption as well as for popular education to raise political consciousness in peasant communities.

In the Global North, the wave of critiques from Native American, Black, and feminist scholars led to new methods and research ethics. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s classic *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999a) set out a manifesto for an Indigenous methodology, which she argued should be undertaken by, for, and with Native communities and informed by Native cultures, ontologies, and politics. Aileen Moreton-Robinson suggests that the constituent elements of the critical Indigenous research paradigm that has developed over the last few decades are axiology (our ways of doing), ontology (our ways of being), and epistemology (our ways of knowing) (2013: 8). Smith (1999b) and fellow Māori scholar Bishop (1999) describe “Kaupapa Māori” research, which is informed by Māori sovereignty as well as their connection to lands, seas, and people. A crucial aspect of this research is their understanding of “relationality,” an “embodied connection to our respective countries, all living entities and our ancestors; our sovereignty” (Moreton-Robinson 2013, 7). Smith argues this method “sets out to make a positive difference for Māori, that incorporates a model of social change or transformation, that privileges Māori knowledge and ways of being, that sees the engagement in theory as well as empirical research as a significant task, and that sets out a framework for organizing, conducting, and evaluating Māori research” (2005: 90). This view resonates with the proposal of Indianista intellectuals in Bolivia in the 1970s mentioned above, who called for the critical appropriation of scientific knowledge to forge and refine their own epistemological tools for the ends of their political projects of Aymara-Quechua nationalism and sovereignty (see Ticona 2010: 37-39)

A critical consideration for these scholars – and for all of us – is standpoint. How are researchers related or situated in relation to the objects of their study? Diane Lewis (1973) suggests that the different situatedness of White and non-White anthropologist means that their interests, agendas, and accountability for their work will be very different, calling for an “insider anthropology” that could be more effective in producing knowledge directed towards emancipatory goals. Māori scholar Lily George argues that relationships based on trust are the foundation of any research project with Māori, and she calls upon researchers to first answer the question “Ko wai au?” (Who am I?) (2018: 7,8; see also Geory 2017; Gibson et al. 2020). Many Native scholars have productively combined feminist standpoint theory with critical Indigenous methodology. Native American anthropologist Kim Tallbear, for instance, brings these together to argue

for a methodology she calls “standing with and speaking with faith” (2014: 4). Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson (2014) offers another proposal emanating from insider research based on what she calls “ethnographic refusal.” For her, this implies refusing to write about and represent Indigenous cultures in ways that might run counter to Mohawk efforts to maintain their political sovereignty.

The notion of an ‘insider’ anthropologist points us to a much deeper question regarding emancipation in the politics of knowledge: if the goal is decolonization, should civil society interlocutors be refusing to work with foreign or ‘outsider’ academic researchers altogether? Certainly, this was the thrust of LT Smith’s seminal *Decolonizing Methodologies*, which called for Indigenous peoples to be at the center of researching their own communities. This was the decolonizing move: recognizing Indigenous scholars and researchers as legitimate knowledge creators. She identified a list of 25 methods that Indigenous researchers were carrying out, including storytelling, remembering, celebrating survival, revitalizing, discovering, and sharing, among others. (1999a).

Yet, this is not the only way to carry out collaborative research in Te Ao Māori. In her 2005 article on the “tricky ground” of qualitative research, LT Smith suggests that another method for building Indigenous research capability is “engagements and dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and communities” (2005: 92). Pākehā anthropologist Rachel Fabish (2019) describes some of her initial efforts to carry out Māori - Pākehā collaboration, tracing the tensions and potentials in using this approach. Indeed, New Zealand has institutionalized the question of Māori - Pākehā collaboration in the Vision Mātūaranga policy, which calls for the incorporation of Māori knowledge into the country’s science research and development infrastructure (Ruckstuhl et al. 2019). The goal is to make Māori knowledge part of the country’s innovations leading to shared economic growth. While there are many who see this as a neoliberal cooptation of mātauranga, others recognize the importance of bringing Māori understandings and entrepreneurs into the R&D project from the start, making science relevant and useful for Māori community (Muru-Lanning 2017). In her examination of the different possible articulations between mātauranga and other kinds of science, Māori scholar Ocean Mercier argues that a fundamental part of any such intercultural venture is understanding that mātauranga is not just a static box of Māori knowledge, but instead is a dynamic “knowledge generating system” in which knowledge, values, and investigative practices are interwoven, constantly adapting to new circumstances (2018: 83). Mercier concludes that the most successful projects that engage with mātauranga are those that “address a problem of shared concern so that there can be equal input from contributors; cannot be solved by one knowledge system alone; have equitable outcomes; build capability and capacity; are underpinned by Treaty principles such as protection and partnership; have Māori in leadership roles; and crucially, are injected with human values of honesty, truth-seeking, kindness, generosity and humility” (2018: 88)

The question of refusal to work with outsiders is a complicated one, however. Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kim Tallbear offers several ways to approach this important question in her work on racial politics in science in the United States. First, she notes that, having left her reservation as a teenager to study and work in universities on both the East and West coast of the country, she

is not completely an insider or outsider. Recognizing this blurriness, she refuses the “role of the Native (on Native)” anthropologist, suggesting such a positionality is only relevant to the discipline, not to the communities with whom she works (Tallbear 2013: 16). Her interest is in producing knowledge aligned with the needs and “ethical sensibilities” of local collaborators (Tallbear 2013: 16). Second, she draws from Simpson to employ a “calculus ethnography” that shifts the gaze away from Native American subjects and toward the discourses and scientific practices that affect their daily lives and the political debates among them (Tallbear 2013: 17.) Third, she recognizes that researchers engaged in Western scientific practices are increasingly also non-white, employing a decolonizing methodology that works and speaks “in concert with” the people she studies (Tallbear 2013). She argues for methods that do not assume who or what is inside or outside but rather that “begin and end with the standpoint of Indigenous lives, needs, and desires, engaging with academic lives, approaches, and desires along the way” (Tallbear 2014: 20).

We see the most recent wave of collaborative and activist research as a response to the understanding that we must all face the same colonial broom closet. Similar to Tallbear, these examples blur conventional lines between activist and academic knowledge, ‘traditional’ and ‘Western’ scientific epistemologies, and the research processes and products that may result. We now turn to some of the important tendencies of that research to show the multiple levels of collaboration that are happening in different spaces, what they produce, and what they imply for research on justice and activism in today’s world.

Tendencies of and potentials for collaborative research

Because researchers are positioned in different types of institutions, political conjunctures, and relationships to the civil society organizations with whom they are collaborating, there is no one clear method for addressing the concerns raised by the politics of knowledge. Reflecting on the different approaches to collaborative research, Rappaport (2017) suggests that we move away from measuring collaborative research solely according to traditional academic criteria and focus instead on the different ways in which locally situated actors define research and seek to put it to use, as well as how those differences are negotiated in our research relationships. So, here, rather than codify a set of techniques, we find it more useful to describe the different agendas of collaborative research and show what these agendas produce.

Collaborating as reflection and praxis: oral history and shared testimony

An important tool that has brought scholars and activists together to address conditions of discrimination and dispossession is oral history workshops, in which researchers work to record and document local histories. These might be characterized in LT Smith’s framing as “remembering” or “restoring” (1999a). This method produces subaltern counter-narratives to history and also provides a platform for communities to remember or reconstruct a collective past that allows them to organize in the present (Rappaport 2005). In Aotearoa, early Māori scholars and leaders began using the ‘whakapapa’ method of tracing relatedness and genealogies as a way to document distinctive forms of Māori thought and practice. Looking back to these early Native ethnographers’ efforts, Lythberg et

al characterize them as “practical ontologies”, dedicated to pushing back at the efforts of Western researchers to understand Māori life through non- Māori concepts (2019: 11). In their excellent special issue, the authors describe past and present uses of this whakapapa practice, demonstrating the strategic effects “not only in recording ancestral knowledge from the past but in actively revitalising it in the present” (2019: 14). One “insider” scholar, Joseph Te Rito, used whakapapa to trace his genealogy through 47 generations of ancestors, grounding himself “firmly in place and time”. This allowed him to “investigate aspects of deep traditional knowledge and to use it as a framework for further understanding” (Te Rito 2007: 9).

A similar example of this in Bolivia is the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA), which was founded by Aymara students at the Sociology Department at Mayor de San Andrés University in 1983 in coordination with their professor Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. Through oral history workshops and innovative methods to disseminate their findings, such as the creation of pamphlets and Aymara language radio novelas, the group contributed to a revisionist history that challenged dominant assimilationist narratives based on class (see also Rivera Cusicanqui and Arze 1986; Stephenson 2002). In making their research tools immediately available to their interlocutors, THOA also provided local communities with tools to demand and later claim rights to territory and autonomy on the basis of their ethnic identity, championing the “movement to reconstitute the ayllu” in the highland region (Stephenson 2002). Barragán (2008) suggests this as an example of a “bridge” between anthropology and social movements in Bolivia, as mentioned earlier.

Similar to the emancipatory education initiatives mentioned above, collaboration as praxis facilitates a shift in the locus of data collection and analysis to the very sites where experiences are collectively shared. As Rappaport notes, for her Indigenous collaborators in Colombia, ethnography was “not simply a register of cultural practices for the purpose of intellectual argumentation, as occurs in academic settings, but a road map for future imaginaries and lifeways” (2017: 8). Xochitl Leyva (2011) noted a similar aim with the Sjalet kibeltik project, a book she co-authored with nine other members of the Red de Artistas, Comunicadores Comunitarios y Antropólogos/as de Chiapas in Mexico. The authors stress that the final product, an (audio) book written in four languages and three codes of representation (written, oral, and visual), was not the end goal of the project. Rather, they emphasize that their efforts largely focused on developing a dialogical and collective method for working together that would help them “develop a concrete collaboration with the Indigenous, artistic, academic, and political communities” to which they belong (Leyva 2011: 132). In contrast to what is commonly considered ‘collaborative research’ that operates according to academic values, the co-authors explicitly situated their project outside academia, designing their methodology to foster engagement with their communities.

However, it is also important to avoid reifying a division between advocacy and academic research. Such boundaries are very often blurred, with projects including Indigenous and non-Indigenous intellectuals who have taken positions in formal academic institutions and who carry out research in multiple arenas. The history of THOA in Bolivia provides a clear example of this. Aymara intellectuals who were mostly first-generation academics were trained in a

relatively young sociology department and worked directly with those considered to have “inside” knowledge about Indigenous histories and worldviews. Tallbear gives another example of the blurring of academic- and community-driven research. She describes tribally-driven participatory research (TDPR), or Tribal Scientific Review Boards, in which tribal officials oversee the approval or denial of formal academic research protocols and regulate publications and research contracts in the U.S. (Tallbear 2014: 22). She argues that “TDPR, like Kaupapa Māori [of Smith’s Decolonizing Methods], serves Indigenous priorities by advocating research as key to the expansion of Indigenous governance and sovereignty while not claiming to be an Indigenous epistemology or knowledge per se” (Tallbear 2014: 22). Yet such regulatory processes may take up enormous energy and time from community leaders. As Native Americans seek to exercise more agency over their own research by establishing Tribal Review Boards and receiving formal academic training, they too must engage in knowledge practices increasingly carried out in university or state agency settings. The irony, she suggests, is that “building bureaucracies and becoming experts in non-Indigenous scientific fields is done to protect the very ways of knowing that community members may no longer engage in because their energies are taken up elsewhere” (Tallbear 2014: 21). Thus, broader institutional changes to scientific knowledge practices and professional standards must be undertaken to improve working relations between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous scientists who study them (Reardon and Tallbear 2012).

Gibson et al. (2020) describe similar difficulties with the Human Ethics Committee at their university in Wellington, New Zealand. The authors joined that committee to ensure that research proposals met the responsibilities laid out in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi), the founding treaty between the Crown and the original Māori rangatira (chiefs). The Human Ethics Committee asks all researchers to explain how their research conforms with the Treaty’s principles, such as partnership, protection, and participation. Gibson et al. found limited understanding and compliance by non-Māori/Pākehā researchers. Despite this, they remained “cautiously optimistic about developing an ethics application process where Treaty principles are ‘interpreted in a manner that affirms the ethical understandings of both Māori and Pākehā New Zealanders’” (2020: 15).

Joint research: blending different types of knowledge production

Increasingly, researchers with different positions and agendas come together to combine their skills and perspectives, acknowledging their particular forms of knowledge production in the process of collaboration. Perhaps the most important and ambitious efforts towards collaboration is the Otros Saberes (OS) project sponsored by LASA (the Latin American Studies Association), the largest North American organization of scholars focusing on Latin America.⁵ The Otros Saberes (OS) project was initiated by Northern scholars but carried out as joint projects with local communities. The first stage of the OS project brought together six case studies of collaborative research across Latin America, and analyzed the results. In one of the cases, in Nicaragua, members of the Comunidad Indígena Miskitu worked with researchers from the Universidad de Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense in a land-titling project to restore and reclaim their territory. The research design they developed centered on an “ethnomapping”

project that collected a wide range of information through oral histories, archival research, and analysis of socio-economic and demographic data. The mapping project revealed the ways the Miskitu of Tuara and other Indigenous groups actually construct and live in their territories – a much different picture than that presented when mapped according to Nicaraguan Law (Hale and Stephen 2013, 13). In this way, joint research can directly address the issues most pressing to local organizations, providing them the information necessary to make land claims, for instance, or to challenge extractive development projects. This kind of countermapping has become a critical tool across the region (see Wainwright and Bryan 2009).

In these kinds of projects, we see a form of interculturalism that connects a wide network of academic activist research and allows for different tools to be brought together and appropriated towards different political agendas. However, as many of the critiques of the politics of knowledge discussed above make clear, researchers are influenced by the institutional apparatuses in which they work. For instance, research agendas tend to be determined by the interests of funding agencies, publishers, and those who are in the position to grant access to information (Greenwood 2008; Hale and Stephen 2013; Harrison 1991; Lewis 1973). Researchers such as those promoting the *Otros Saberes* initiative have looked for ways to create openings in formal academic institutions by challenging their logics from the inside, emphasizing the rigorous nature of collaborative research to counter claims from professionals who police the politics of knowledge that it is not ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ science (see Hale 2008). The lack of meaningful systemic transformation in academia makes it difficult for researchers to establish and sustain meaningful relationships with grassroots organizations if they wish to hold an academic position in a U.S. university (Greenwood 2008).

In Bolivia, where anthropology has been less institutionalized as a discipline, such debates have had less relevance, allowing anthropology to be influenced by and serve as a tool for social movements (Barragán 2008). Yet, Barragán suggests that lacking institutional stability, Bolivian anthropologists are like “nomads,” constantly juggling “between simultaneous and sequentially held positions as university professors, consultants, political militants, and state employees” (Barragán 2008: 33). This has created chasms not only between Bolivian and foreign anthropologists, she adds, but also between Bolivian researchers and local communities, as “leaders of communities and social movements have seen first-hand how many NGOs [non-governmental organizations] and their largely middle class directors and technicians make a living ‘in their name’” (Barragán 2008: 50).

This point takes us back to the question of knowledge and power. Methodological and research products oriented towards meeting institutional demands tend to overlook local notions of what counts as research or what local communities hope to get out of the relationship (Rappaport 2017). Asymmetries are even more marked in the context of activist research in support of Indigenous peoples’ claims to territorial or autonomy rights, as they often rely on anthropologists or lawyers to serve as “experts” to legitimize culture-based claims or carry out complicated legal strategies (see Aragón 2018; Loperena, Hernández and Mora 2018). Examining legal activism in Mexico, Orlando Aragón cautions

that this risks reinforcing the very thing that decolonized practice seeks to avoid: the inequalities between those who know and those who are taught they do not know. But challenging the anthropologist-as-expert would require that we face the paradox that privilege emerges in the collaborative relationship itself. This makes privilege very hard to give up.

So, how are these different constraints and agendas navigated in collaborative relationships? As Rappaport asks, “what happens during the collaborative give-and-take?” (2017: 5). Rappaport concludes that, rather than method or technique, the most critical aspect of collaboration is the relationship between the parties. “It is not only that the people we work with set the agenda at the outset, supervise our collection of data, and comment on the final product, but that through chained conversations, all of this is going on continuously, adjustments are constantly being made, and interpretation is perpetually taking place” (Rappaport 2017: 24). Jones and Jenkins (2014) provide one way to work from this space of difference. As a Pākehā scholar and a Māori scholar who collaborate frequently, they describe the way in which they “work the hyphen” that marks the colonial divide between them (Jones and Jenkins 2014: 475). As they say: “[We]... attempt to create a research and writing relationship based on the tension of difference, not on its erasure... the indigene-colonizer hyphen marks the indelible relationship that has shaped both sides in different ways, the hyphen as a character in the research relationship becomes an object of necessary attention” (Jones and Jenkins 2014: 475).

We agree that the hyphen is at the heart of collaboration—yet, we insist that it must not be taken for granted. That is, it is important to remember that indigeneity and race are not indelible categories. Instead they are relational concepts that emerge from contested social fields of difference and sameness (Friedlander 1975). As de la Cadena and Starn point out, “Indigenous cultural practices, institutions, and politics become such in articulation with what is not considered Indigenous within the particular social formation in which they exist” (2007: 4; Postero 2013). The critical question here is, how does collaboration produce specific notions of indigeneity?

In their collaborative discussions about the effects of neoliberalism and multiculturalism on Indigenous activism in Argentina, Briones et al. caution us not to reinforce what seems to be an inevitable dichotomy between Indigenous and anthropological thought and practice (2007: 73). They emphasize that, rather than assuming that they “generate unique fields of thought that must be interwoven”, anthropologists and Mapuche activists should focus on “the different ways in which, according to our social trajectories, we are all traversed by numerous heterogeneities including our personal biography, generation, and experience with historical social currents like revolution or neoliberalism” (Briones et al. 2007: 73). These reflections call attention to an often overlooked dilemma that is central to collaborative research, especially between foreign ‘outsiders’ and Indigenous ‘insiders’: the difficulty of determining what actually constitutes ‘the Indigenous perspective’ or ‘Indigenous knowledge.’ Briones et al. (2007) caution that researchers must be careful to avoid such pigeon-holing because it prevents critical insights into the historical structural processes in which we are all situated (see also Cañuqueo 2018).

Co-theorizing and co-labor

If the projects described so far have focused on negotiating the challenges of different kinds of knowledge, Briones et al. (2007) direct us to consider the increasing number of other collaborative projects that strive to create new knowledge or theory. For collaborators, this requires a step further beyond merely recognizing and respecting difference, to what scholars call “co-theorization” or “co-labor” (de la Cadena 2015; Leyva and Speed 2008; Leyva 2011; Rappaport 2005). These kinds of projects take time and patience but allow for researchers to search out new analytical approaches together, made possible by co-understanding, co-interpreting, co-producing, and co-theorizing (Leyva 2011: 120-121; see also Perry and Rappaport 2013). For instance, Rappaport describes her experience in a collaborative team made up of Indigenous, mestizo, and foreign researchers, as well as activist intellectuals from the CRIC (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca), Colombia’s oldest Indigenous organization. While team members did not always write or conduct research collaboratively, they did meet regularly to collectively analyze their findings. Over the course of five years, the team exchanged different theories that were then absorbed into their own project and political agendas. The conceptual framework of ‘inside/outside’ that we have utilized to think about collaboration in this article, for example, was an important tool used by Nasa intellectuals that also helped organization members conceptualize politicized notions of culture and adherence to a political project as an imaginary for negotiating highly heterogeneous spaces (Rappaport 2005: 211). In turn, Nasa intellectuals found W.E.B. Du Bois’s idea of “double consciousness” (1991) useful in conceptualizing tensions between identity and belonging they found in these different spaces (Rappaport 2005: 211). DuBois’s notion that difference experiences of racism and discrimination produce a “second-sight” was also a concept embraced by scholars of the Decolonizing Generation mentioned earlier (see Harrison 1991). Thus, in these examples we see how the appropriation of concepts in different contexts can not only serve as a vehicle for meaningful intercultural dialogue, but can also generate new critical insights and theories.

A similar contribution is evident in one of the *Otros Saberes* projects carried out by Wajãpi researchers in Brazil. Building on an ongoing movement to create their own curriculum in Wajãpi schools, the team of researchers, consisting mostly of teachers and students, systematically documented various Wajãpi ways of learning and teaching (dreaming, listening, visions, being attentive, etc.) (Tilkin Gallois et al. 2013). The ways of knowing that they documented covered a wide range of subjects, including nature classification systems, pest control, housing construction, and medicine. Participants then compared the findings of their own ways of knowing to knowledge about Indigenous peoples condensed in non-Indigenous Western models such as lists of objects, histories, and institutions. This led them to come up with their own concept of culture, which they defined as “an assemblage of skills, to do, explain, think, say, and represent” (Hale and Stephen 2013: 15). Hale and Stephen suggest that, in critically comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems, the Wajãpi were carrying out decolonization at a much deeper level, striving to “contaminate closed forms of hegemonic knowledge production so that they can be in dialogue with other knowledge forms and systems” (Hale and Stephen 2013: 18). Returning to Willis’s critique of

Boasian notions of culture described above, we can see that collaborative theorizing offers the possibility of producing more dynamic theoretical models.

Yet, collaborators face the critical challenge of negotiating different ways of knowing. Marisol de la Cadena offers one way to think about collaboration across ontological differences. She describes how her Indigenous friends – like all of us – inhabit multiple worlds that are in “partial connection” with each other (de la Cadena 2015). Her two main protagonists are Andean shamans who honor their relations with the earth beings with whom they share their lives and place, while at the same time, work as activists in the Western modern world of laws and political protest to assure labor rights and environmental protection (de la Cadena 2015). De la Cadena defines collaboration as “co-labor” to call attention to the fact that many of the tools of outsider (and even some “insider”) anthropologists are analytically insufficient to understand what our interlocutors already know. This offers a way to carry out respectful, reciprocal labor from partially connected worlds and learning through “not understanding.” The collaborative projects discussed by Cañuqueo (2018) offer yet another approach. She suggests that acknowledging the blurred boundaries between insider/outsider and activist/academic research demands a different approach to collaboration that could account for the heterogeneity of experiences and perspectives among research team members. As a result, they theorize at different “levels” to understand how taken-for-granted notions of what counts as politics, knowledge, research, and identity are always matters of contestation throughout individual, interpersonal, and macro political projects. They question the idea that being Mapuche, for instance, necessarily conditions a particular epistemological or political perspective ethically aligned with Indigenous “struggle,” leaving their research agendas and politics open (Cañuqueo 2018: 75). Stated in terms of the broom closet dilemma, these approaches challenge prescribed roles of Indigenous ‘resistance’ to the broom closet, recognizing instead the intersecting trajectories and experiences of those who are inside the closet theorizing about its structure and contents from their differently situated perspectives (or worlds).

Working from within the broom closet

Collaboration offers the potential to navigate one of the most difficult issues at the heart of the broom closet problem: how to collectively identify strategic political actions within the constraints of overarching structural forces. For example, White anthropologist Charles Hale and Mapuche anthropologist Rosamel Millamán (2018) describe their participation in a collaborative research project that explored corporate social responsibility as a site of potential solutions for inter-ethnic conflict in Southern Chile. In their article, the authors ask how to search for constructive solutions to a protracted conflict when there is a strong sense among the Mapuche that the very process of dialogue is predicated on a false and injurious assumption of homogeneity. In the process of exploring these questions, the researchers found they had very different interpretations and approaches. The stakes are high in such dialogues, as the Mapuche have lost most of their territory to state and corporate projects like dams and forest plantations, and militarization of their lands has meant that they have been subject to state violence and terrorism charges.⁶ Facing these tensions – for instance, when the Mapuche collaborators confessed their deep disillusionment with the research project itself – allowed the

research team to consider the real structural position of their project and embrace disagreement, or ambiguity, without defining a resolution.

Hale and Millamán suggest that this tension led them to a nuanced position they could not have reached otherwise. While they agreed that state-initiated remedies have failed and need to be fundamentally rethought, they found themselves more encouraged by ad hoc practices and improvised arrangements than (potentially hopeless) new initiatives. This pointed them to a strategic opening,

based neither on deeply shared premises, nor high aspirations for trust-building through dialogue and negotiation. Rather, it mimics and expands on the pragmatic, transactional relations between Mapuche communities and the forest companies themselves: they come into intense and sustained conflict, but at times they pause to identify immediate interests and objectives that might be met by taking certain actions, and avoiding others (Hale and Millamán 2018: 308).

This is a wager the collaborators have chosen to make in a situation where there is little hope for social transformation.

Another interesting example of collaboration within the broom closet, so to speak, is the work of Abadía Barrero and Ruiz Sánchez (2018) in Bogotá, Colombia. The authors recount their collaboration with the workers at a public Maternity Hospital scheduled for liquidation as part of neoliberal reforms. Invited by workers who were illegally fired and protesting the imminent closure of the hospital, the scholars' ethnography drew attention to the loss the workers were experiencing, as well as their efforts to keep the hospital open as a national landmark (Barrero and Sánchez 2018: 582). To create reflections about neoliberal violence and the Colombian state, they documented the graffiti the workers had painted on the empty walls and corridors, showing the emotional dimensions of the closure as a national tragedy, and invited the public to tour the space for a visual and experiential understanding of the events. Barrero and Sánchez also collaborated with the workers to conceptualize these experiences, thinking together about whether their labor conditions could be considered torture. Through these acts of solidarity and research, the workers felt recognized and heard, in contrast to their experience of being silenced by the state. Evaluating their years-long efforts, the authors acknowledge that they were unable to effect any real structural change—the hospital was closed, parts were sold to private companies, and the workers dispersed. Yet, they say, the collaboration and the art operated on an affective level, creating a new experience that opened emotional, analytical, and social justice possibilities (Barrero and Sánchez 2018: 599).

A critical juncture for collaborative research

In our summary of collaborative research and the critiques to which it has responded, we hope we have made clear that what is at stake depends on the context and political agendas of those involved. In Bolivia at the turn of the twenty-first century, the paradigm of neoliberal multiculturalism faced a crisis as waves of social organizations took to the streets to demand change, leading to the

historic election of Bolivia's first 'Indigenous' president, President Evo Morales Ayma, in 2005. Over the past 15 years, the country has undergone major cultural and structural transformations, particularly following the passage of a new constitution in 2009 that 're-founded' Bolivia as a 'plurinational, communitarian' state. Perhaps what is the most inspiring about the Bolivian context is the fact that Indigenous and non-Indigenous activist intellectuals in Bolivia are the main architects of plurinationalism and represented civil society organizations in a popularly elected Constituent Assembly. While we were initially hopeful about the promise of these changes that have so excited many other commentators, we also share with many of our interlocutors a concern that the institutionalization of these historical demands has made it difficult to address the longstanding issues of social inequality affecting the country's near-majority Indigenous and peasant population (see Postero 2017).

The contradiction lies in the fact that significant advances in Indigenous Peoples' territorial and autonomy rights have been accompanied by a state-led development project based on natural resource extraction. This has led to ongoing conflicts as Indigenous people defend their territories from mining, oil, gas, and road projects. Yet, for many other Bolivians (including many Indigenous peasants), recent economic growth and the inclusion of Indigenous symbols and leaders in the government is a considerable source of pride. For them, a new consensus around 'economic liberation' is more important than protecting Indigenous peoples' long-standing demands to autonomy (Postero 2017). Together with our Bolivian Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues, we have been working to analyze the ways that processes of decolonization and extractivism are articulated. They are not necessarily opposed, nor are they a rupture from the legacies of the neoliberal multiculturalism of the past. Rather, we see how discourses around indigeneity and intercultural dialogue and exchange often paradoxically mask the ways these processes are linked in state discourse, making it increasingly difficult to analyze the challenges facing the Indigenous movement. We turn now to both of our research projects to discuss how these recent changes affect the politics of knowledge and the potentials and limits they present for collaborative research as a tool for critique and political action.

Postero's project is the beginning of an international research collaboration with Indigenous groups from three countries. She is working most closely with the Guaraní people in Charagua, where communities used plurinational laws to form the first autonomous municipality (called *Autonomía Indígena Originaria Campesina*, or AIOC) in Bolivia (see Postero 2017). This means that Indigenous people control municipal decision-making, including negotiating with state and transnational oil companies with concessions on their lands. Charagua is the most advanced of the nearly two dozen Indigenous municipalities and territories that are in the process of conversion following the passage of the 2010 Autonomy and Decentralization Framework Law. The process took many years and involved complex negotiations with diverse ethnic groups (including mestizo-whites and Andean settlers who opposed autonomy). The Guaraní have appropriated liberal institutions to construct a hybrid model of government based on their traditional customs and practices, aimed at implementing their long-standing goal of self-determination. Yet, autonomy without financial independence is not meaningful autonomy. So, a critical next step will be negotiating with transnational

corporations and the state over non-renewable resources located within their territory, over which the state maintains exclusive jurisdiction.

This collaborative project began with a meeting between outside academics and representatives of three Indigenous communities with whom the academics had longstanding working relationships. A first task involved developing a conceptual model -- what the collaborators are calling 'Indigenous resource governance'-- and determining what kinds of research might prove useful to the Indigenous communities. That co-labor showed very different understandings of resource governance. Because of the specific inter-community conflicts they were experiencing, some indigenous team members were more concerned with relations between their governing organizations and members. Other members, like the leaders from Charagua, who had already spent many years working in national-level indigenous organizations, were more focused on relations with the state. Having lived through dramatic conflicts over resource extraction, the Guaraní leader was especially concerned with the ongoing power of the state, and Postero shared this concern. The Colombian Indigenous leader and the academic who had followed that case pointed to the role of non-state actors, like paramilitaries, and the critical issue of violence. Other academic members were more concerned with global forces; this was reinforced by the Peruvian Indigenous representative who had just returned from attending the COP 21 Climate Change meetings in Paris. Attending to the heterogenous sites of difference, rather than just hearing a monolithic 'Indigenous voice' allowed the team to theorize in a more nuanced way.

The resulting working model is a comprehensive understanding of the many fields of force affecting Indigenous communities; the team anticipates that this understanding will evolve as field research continues. The Indigenous members of the team also identified sites where they felt research could help them enact stronger governance. The Guaranís argued they need more information about the environmental and climate consequences of hydrocarbon extraction. They are not opposed to hydrocarbon production; in fact, they rely on the royalties. They asked for the team to collaborate with them on a socio-environmental monitoring project. This will involve blending knowledge from hydrologists, social scientists, and community members to be able to identify areas that should be protected and to minimize ongoing environmental damage. The project is committed to epistemological balance, valuing all forms of science, but what sorts of data will be valued in formal consultation processes? Here, the issue of translation is central: how will these different ways of knowing blend or conflict?

Another challenge is deciding the structure of the collaboration: collaborating with whom? Much of the literature assumes that there is an identifiable and coherent Indigenous community with whom outside researchers can work. In the case of Charagua, power traditionally emerges from the community assemblies and is embodied in the mburivichas (leaders). The new autonomous government takes a different form, in which elected representatives are now part of the state apparatus. There is still considerable struggle over how this should work. A critical dilemma is whether the team should coordinate directly with local communities and the still powerful mburivichas, or work instead with the new autonomous government. This is not merely a pragmatic question, but one that could have serious implications for the kind of co-labor

proposed. Not only does it risk taking sides in a conflict, but it could also mean taking a position vis-à-vis the ultimate question the team is trying to investigate: what is the basis of Indigenous governance? How can traditional forms of power and decision-making be articulated with practices of governance that will allow communities to actually enforce their sovereignty when they are confronted with transnational corporations? The Guaraní are in the process of a political experiment to decide just that, but it is a process that is incomplete.

Kennemore's project emerged through efforts to strengthen Indigenous jurisdiction in response to both internal fragmentation among Indigenous organizations and the barriers many groups faced in formally accessing conversion to AIOC. State-sponsored intercultural projects have been beneficial in that they have provided some Indigenous leaders with access to legal training. Kennemore works with Indigenous human rights experts who have appropriated these tools to establish a regional Indigenous Originary Justice Court based in Sucre, where they oversee jurisdictional conflicts between Indigenous communities and also act as legal advisors to local Indigenous leaders who seek to resolve local land and resource conflicts. Together with other non-Indigenous rights advocates, lawyers, and anthropologists, a great deal of the court's early efforts focused on documenting and disseminating successful legal strategies, with the aim of making these tools more available to other communities.

However, we have also found that recent state policies promoting horizontal intercultural dialogue through the incorporation of Indigenous views and practices tend to mask ongoing (and emerging) asymmetries. This is evident in the expansion of technical and bureaucratic barriers built into recent legal reforms that were intended to 'decolonialize' the Constitutional Court (Copa 2017), as well as the use of homogenized concepts such as territory and 'vivir bien' which, like other essentialized notions of indigeneity, prevent groups that are unable to meet normative criteria from accessing collective rights (Copa, Kennemore, and López 2018). In addition, even when Indigenous leaders manage to secure some level of Indigenous autonomy, mere recognition of Indigenous jurisdiction without sufficient economic resources and institutional support rarely provides a viable tool to resolve local land and resource conflicts; these resolution efforts often fail as a result. Kennemore and her collaborators have concluded that some forms of 'dialogue of knowledges,' even those central to collaborative research, can obscure deeper forms of injustice that have not been addressed by state reforms (see also Briones 2017). This may limit the potential for certain collaborations, especially different modes of co-theorization that could offer much needed insights into the structural harm involved in complex land conflicts. Quite often, they are only successful at engaging in this type of collaborative research when distancing themselves from institutionalized spaces of participatory research and combining research methods with local community meetings to analyze local conflicts. In such contexts, words such as 'participation,' 'collaboration,' or 'interculturalism' are rarely used to describe their research, despite the fact that they form the basis of many of the ongoing efforts to theorize about Indigenous justice on the ground.

In addition, in both of our projects we have seen funding practices change as a result of the recent shift to state-centered development in Bolivia. Over the past decade, this has meant a dramatic reduction in NGO funding that previously

supported many of the autonomy initiatives put forward by Indigenous peoples. This means that outside funding is increasingly necessary for many research projects. In Postero's project, even bringing the collaborators together in the first place required a grant. A large part of the work for U.S. and European scholars so far has therefore gone into writing a grant application. The quick deadlines and the English writing requirement have made it difficult to include Indigenous collaborators in these processes, although team members have translated and circulated summaries. Local NGO partners hope working with Postero's team will help them secure funding and jobs, and Kennemore's collaborators have occasionally offered their support on short-term projects with NGO research institutes.

In Kennemore's project, this has been positive in the sense that it provoked internal reflection on the ways that neoliberal multiculturalism and dependency on outsider technical experts have distanced some Indigenous technical advisors from grassroots struggles. Kennemore's Indigenous colleagues have noted that reducing this technical and economic dependency allows them to maintain more control of their legal strategies, and they often emphasize the importance of 'auto-gestion,' the common practice of pooling together resources to send a leader to carry out an agenda in the name of a collective project. Yet, they also struggle to maintain their political projects without the necessary funding or institutional space, transportation, and time. This asymmetry gives state authorities significant legitimacy and control. Perhaps the greatest challenge for the collaborative team is to articulate research practices committed to Indigenous sovereignty with the agendas of outside agencies. While NGOs and state programs can provide a space to channel community proposals, they often do so within frameworks of 'participation' and 'sustainable development' that fundamentally seek to mitigate the effects of the broom closet paradox, rather than enact more radical kinds of structural change.

Finally, in both projects we are already seeing that there will be multiple varied outcomes, which may or may not overlap, as well as evolving demands and expectations moving forward. The Guaraní, for example, want data they can present in state consultation meetings to confront the scientific evidence corporations use to justify extraction, in order to assist their efforts to mitigate environmental damage. The collaborators in Kennemore's projects at times write scholarly articles or produce reports, which are both individual and collective, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous members alike. They also make presentations in public and academic forums, with actors and groups sharing and rotating roles. Indigenous legal experts from the Nation Qhara Qhara sometimes present their own research to academic audiences, while at other times they prefer to serve as legal consultants for other Indigenous communities. On occasion, they are caught up in their own legal battles to defend their territory. Our projects are an attempt to decolonize research practices in support of this decentering, with the aim to better understand how we are all situated in (and affected by) what we see as a critical juncture in global struggles for justice. But will these attempts change the structural inequalities that make up the broom closet? Or will they merely reinforce the colonial categories at the heart of the broom closet?

Conclusions

Anthropologist James Ferguson ended his seminal 1990 book on the disasters of NGO-led development projects in Lesotho with a provocative epilogue. Responding to those who asked, “what should we do?” Ferguson prompted, “who is the ‘we’?” (1990: 282). He insisted that the many stakeholders in Lesotho were already working towards a better life and did not need outsiders to identify their problems or resolve them with their expertise. So, those good-hearted humanitarians hoping to help might best turn their attention to their own country and its problems. The one exception he proposed was when foreign researchers identified what he called “counter-hegemonic points of engagement,” where local people were already analyzing and proposing solutions. In such situations, local stakeholders might find outsiders’ skills necessary and invite them to collaborate in their ongoing projects (Ferguson 1990: 287).

We find that his early advice continues to resonate with today’s call to decolonize anthropology through collaborative research, and especially the call to incorporate *mātauranga Māori* and all forms of Indigenous knowledge production into our science and scholarship. Ferguson’s advice echoes the need for all researchers to ask, alongside Māori scholar Lily George, “Ko wai au?” (Who am I?) (2018: 7,8) and how do our research projects promote Indigenous sovereignty? (L.T. Smith 1999a and 1999b). In our analysis here of the various kinds of collaborative projects emerging in both the Americas and in Aotearoa and the Pacific, we have framed this ongoing challenge in terms of the broom closet dilemma. We have asked: to what extent does collaboration help analyze the structural situations of vulnerability and inequality we are calling the broom closet? Does the research help those who are struggling to break down these constraints or even to live a better life within the closet? Is this research intervening in counter-hegemonic points of engagement? We have argued that under certain circumstances, it can certainly accomplish this goal. However, we caution against assuming as much; rather, we must investigate our assumptions and our collaborative practices to see what they actually produce in each case.

Through this review of the large and creative outflowing of collaboration, as well as through our own efforts in Bolivia, we have identified several challenges. First, while many scholars advocating decolonization urge respectful dialogue across the hyphen of the Indigenous-colonizer line, we argue that, in some cases, such dialogue may obscure assumptions about how collaborators are actually positioned in relation to that line. We urge careful analysis of the multiple and changing standpoints of our many collaborators in order not to re-construct essentialized notions of indigeneity. We want to avoid predetermining all our positions so as to encourage the possibilities of finding common, although partial, ground. Second, we see the need to acknowledge the tight spaces of negotiation that we all find ourselves drawn into when we undertake collaborative endeavors. Indeed, in the present juncture radical revolutionary change in Latin America is less probable than it was in the 1970s, when early thinkers such as Friere and Fals Borda pioneered collaborative research as a tool for emancipation. Yet this acknowledgment is not a call to walk away from collaboration, nor does it imply we should erase or soften the hyphen to find a more agreeable arrangement in the face of ongoing inequalities. The exciting new research in Aotearoa is evidence of the ways that scholars can find ways to share and articulate their different forms

of knowledge (see e.g. Mercier 2018). We propose that ‘standing with’ our collaborators, we face the colonial broom closet and work together to change it, knowing that the results will always be partial and uncertain. This is the challenge of creating a commons: recognizing the potential as well as the tensions in any collaborative endeavor.

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Notes

1. This scholarship coalesced into Faye Harrison’s now famous 1991 edited volume, *Decolonizing Anthropology*.
2. Scholars motivated by this critique work to engage Indigenous worldviews, often rethinking the binaries between nature and culture that underlie capitalism and development. This is in line with the so-called ‘ontological turn’ in which scholars have argued that researchers must recognize that Indigenous people inhabit worlds marked by radically different ontologies or ways of understanding the universe (see Blaser 2013 and de la Cadena 2015). While de la Cadena emphasizes co-laboring as a form of collaborative research across ontological difference, not all approaches to ontology are collaborative. Many, in fact, are more like conventional ethnographic research.
3. See Allen and Jobson (2016), for a critique of how the Decolonization Generation we describe above was ignored or sidelined by many in anthropology.
4. For a similar analysis of pedagogy in a very different context, see Rancière (1991).
5. The Otros Saberes initiative was originally founded in 2005 at an Executive Council meeting leading up to the LASA Conference. For more on its relationship to the LASA organization and the rationale behind the initiative, see: <https://lasa.international.pitt.edu/forum/files/vol45-issue4/OtrosSaberes.pdf>.
6. For more, see the LACES Special Issue on Indigeneity and Neoliberalism in Chile, 13(3): <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rlac20/13/3?nav=tocList>.

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