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Territories in contestation: Relational power in Latin America

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Abstract

Situated in geography's recent territorial (re)turn, and drawing on Latin American theory and research, this paper examines the relational and contested nature of territories and territorial praxis. Engaging with contemporary literatures, we note the centrality of power to territory. However, as we explore in this paper, many analyses of power are too simplistic, with a latent attachment to sovereignty which can marginalise counter-hegemonic territorial politics. To combat this we explore two conceptions of power, as found in open and autonomist Marxism – *poder* (understood as power over) and *potencia* (understood as power to) – and how they function territorially. While such an understanding of power frames the complex production of territories, it is important to also reflect on how movements intervene in producing their own territories. Accordingly, the paper examines the territorial struggles of the Zapatistas, and, drawing from original research, explores how territorial ideas operate in everyday contexts in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Across these examples the paper illustrates the potential of 'territories in resistance', but also engages in how these are also contested. Led by our cases we emphasise the relational and contested construction of territory, ultimately developing a more nuanced understanding of territory and territorial praxis

Introduction

This paper draws on Latin American territorial literatures and practices to demonstrate how territory can be understood as a 'political technology' constituted by more-than-state powers. By engaging with practices exemplified by Zapatista organising and research carried out in Buenos Aires, we highlight the contested construction of territories. In particular, we develop an analysis of power that underpin the construction of territories by exploring the relationship between the two Spanish words for power – *poder* (understood as power *over*) and *potencia* (understood as power *to*). These conceptions of power explore the capacities of radical (territorial) movements to constitute change, yet avoid simplifying the difficulties of this organising. Furthermore, we demonstrate that territorial analyses must pay particular attention to the interplay between *poder* and *potencia*, demonstrating the multiterritorial practices of both 'sovereign' and 'autonomous' territories. This paper contributes to debates around the spatial politics of autonomy and the state, proposing the possibilities and the tensions that arise with this idea of territory as radical praxis.

Instead of attempting to synthesise all of the vast geographical literature on territory - work that has been well done elsewhere (e.g. Delaney, 2005; Elden, 2010; Murphy, 2012b; Painter, 2010) - this paper focuses on the relationship between power and territory, as well as territory's place in an increasingly polymorphic spatial debate. After periods of sustained interest between the 1960s and 1980s, a focus on space and place relegated territory to the peripheries of geographical scholarship (see Delaney, 2005). Exacerbated by the 'relational turn' and a general focus on mobilities, networks, and open-ended processes of becoming (for a review see M. Jones, 2009), territory's seemingly static and bounded nature was deemed increasingly outdated and anachronistic - even described as 'reactionary' (Painter, 2010). But territory is now firmly back on the agenda, with contemporary work proposing nuanced,

relational approaches (see dell'Agnese, 2013), as well as the importance of 'multi-territoriality' (Haesbaert, 2013a). While great strides forward have been made in territorial theorisation, much Anglophone literature is too narrow, Eurocentric, and retains a residual statism caused by one-dimensional understandings of power. Such works risk missing the multiple ways in which territory is constructed and the role of non-state actors, and the myriad of alternative practices of territory developed by social movements around the world.

The paper begins by situating territory within wider spatial debates, exploring the contemporary literature's richness. We highlight a latent attachment to sovereignty which problematically marginalises other forms of territorial politics, demonstrating that power is immanent to territory *qua* 'political technology'. Given the lack of attention paid to understandings of power in territorial literature, highlighting the relational connections between *poder* and *potencia*, and how they are mobilised territorially, is one of the crucial contributions of this paper; a contribution made through a critical review of literatures that explore both territory-as-*poder* and territory-as-*potencia*. While important issues are raised by these literatures, we emphasise the importance of the concept of 'territories of contestation', noting that territories are composed by both *poder* and *potencia*. Armed with this framework, the paper focuses on Latin America - drawing on theoretical work, social movements' praxis, and our own research. Two case studies demonstrate these 'territories in contestation': the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, and urban territorial movements in Buenos Aires. Both cases demonstrate multiterritorial organising through *poder* and *potencia*, and complicate the different geographies of urban and rural movements. We demonstrate that these territories do not exist purely 'outside' of dominant state-capital nexuses, yet they offer alternative ways of organising socio-territorial relations, in contention with other powers. This demonstrates the need for consistent engagement with the territorial practices of social movements.

Territory as part of the spatial debate

Territory's role in the polymorphic spatial debate is crucial, with work focusing on territory as a 'political technology' (e.g. Bryan, 2012; Elden, 2010; Roy, 2013), and thus its relationship to power. Yet, territory has incredible obfuscatory ability to make the contentious and contingent seem necessary (for example individual property rights and national sovereignty) (Murphy, 2012b; Sack, 1986). As Delaney notes: 'territory commonly works precisely through the tendency to take power...to be simply self-evident and rather nonproblematic' (2005, p. 18). Territory is thus a form of political technology, but critically is reflective of the social, political, economic, and cultural context within which it is enacted and theorised (cf. Soja, 1971), and, *contra* Sack (1986), can never be neutral. Crucially, power is immanent to territory, and it is precisely this power that territory can obfuscate: '[t]he control of territory is a source of power; the control of power is a source of territory' (Larson, Cronkleton, & Pulhin, 2015, p. 230). Power is therefore fundamental to an understanding of territory (Keating, 2014): 'territory is no doubt a geographical notion, but…first of all a juridico-political one: the area controlled by a certain kind of power' (Foucault cited in Crampton & Elden, 2007, p. 176). However, despite some focus on its relational nature (e.g. Minca, 2012; Murphy, 2012a; Raffestin & Butler, 2012), much territorial work leaves theories of power surprisingly untouched. Instead, the conception of power typically mobilised in discussion of territory revolves around sovereignty, thus marginalising a range of territorial theories and practices. These ideas are explored in depth below, but before this it is important to consider other recent theoretical developments.

As Painter notes, 'territory is back' and no longer simply the 'poor relation among spatial concepts' (2010, p. 1090). A plethora of papers and books have put forward variations of dynamic, networked, and relational understandings of territory (e.g. Antonsich, 2009, 2011;

Brighenti, 2010; Bryan, 2012; dell'Agnese, 2013; Escobar, 2008; Haesbaert, 2013a). This relational turn means territory need no longer be in tension with advances in spatial theory (see M. Jones, 2009; Nicholls, Miller, & Beaumont, 2013). Similarly important is 'multi-territoriality' (Haesbaert, 2013b), which underpins much Latin American scholarship on territory (e.g. Agnew & Oslender, 2013; Fernandes, 2008; Haesbaert, 2004, 2013a; Schneider & Tartaruga, 2006), and demonstrates how multiple territories exist and overlap within the same area, be it at a neighbourhood, city, or state level. While not unique to Latin American readings (see Delaney, 2005), such a position avoids the 'territorial trap' (Agnew, 1994), is sensitive to a range of territorial claims, and allows us to consider these types of territory differently.

Key to these theoretical developments has been the challenging of borders/boundaries as fixed (e.g. Antonsich, 2011; Brighenti, 2006; Faludi, 2013; Novak, 2011; Paasi, 1998, 2009), and thus the concept of territory becoming a container (see Agnew, 1994; R. Jones, 2009, 2010). Instead, boundaries/borders can be understood as 'soft', dynamic, processual, networked, and fluid: they are social processes that are constantly being made, challenged, and remade by a variety of actors and actions - as illustrated by a range of indigenous groups in Latin America (Mollett, 2013; Sletto, 2009). Such territorial analysis complement and extend broader socio-spatial debates (see Jessop, 2016; Jessop, Brenner. & Jones, 2008; MacLeod & Jones, 2011), in particular emphasising polymorphic (political) geographies (Blank, 2016; Jones, 2016).

While geography as a discipline has 'undergone a series of spatial emphases' which have, at times, led to the eruption of major debates, it is important not to always see these as 'zero-sum intellectual choice[s]' (Nicholls et al., 2013, p. 2). Instead we hope to consider how overlapping and complementary spatial ontologies and epistemologies can help combat

theoretical weaknesses. In writing this paper we contribute to not only to this debate, but also the way in which territory, as one of a number of relational spatialities, can 'play [a] distinctive yet interlocking role in shaping the structures, strategies, dynamics and power of social movements' (ibid); that is, to understand territory as radical praxis (Ince, 2012). In short, recent work on territory has expounded ways in which territory is relational, dynamic, processual, and fluid 'political technology'. This paper is therefore arguing for both a theoretical engagement with complex, relational, and territorially-instantiated powers, as well as an exploration of the types of organisation and action that such an approach can embody. In order to develop these ideas we now turn to a discussion of power.

Poder, *Potencia* and territory

In this section we disaggregate the two Spanish words for 'power': *poder* and *potencia* and how they relate to territory. Having explored the differences and relationship between these two terms, we then focus on how different understandings of power produce different types of territory and consequently different spatial relations - but note that both of these powers operate simultaneously in the same territories. Influenced by autonomist and open Marxism, struggles in Buenos Aires, and the Zapatistas (e.g. Negri, 1991; Colectivo Situaciones, 2002; Holloway, 2005), critical work translates *poder* as statist 'power *over'* which tends to be seen as a controlling, unidirectional, and a potentially repressive power of domination. On the other hand, *potencia* is a 'power *to'* act, that is dynamic and constantly in a state of becoming. Michael Hardt, in his Translator's Introduction to Negri's *Savage Anomalies*, describes the difference between *poder* and *potencia*:

> [*Poder*] denotes the centralized, mediating, transcendental force of command, whereas [*potencia*] the local, immediate, actual force of constitution. It is important from the outset that this distinction does not merely refer to the different capabilities of subjects

with disparate resources and potentialities; rather, it marks two fundamentally different forms of authority and organization that stand opposed in both conceptual and material terms, in metaphysics as in politics – in the organization of being as in the organization of society (1991, p. xiii).

The relationship between *poder* and *potencia* (and how this is manifested territorially) is not a simple binary opposition, rather a negative dialectical relationship: 'we find that...*poder* and...*potencia* are never related in simple static opposition; rather, the relation between the two concepts moves progressively through several complex transformations toward a destruction of the opposition between them' (ibid.). Hence it is not that these two different understandings provide an understanding of how power operates in and through territory.

Understanding power as *potencia* is the basis for the autonomous politics practiced by many social movements in Latin America (Colectivo Situaciones, 2002; Sitrin, 2012; Zibechi, 2012). Given the centrality of power to understandings of territory as a political technology, it is necessary to highlight how *potencia* can therefore be immanent to, and shape, alternate understandings of territory – something we do below through a close engagement with Latin American literatures. This focus on *potencia* allows us to recognise the different forms of authority operating in different territories, as well as the non-state practices that construct territories, ultimately emphasising the potential of these different territorial forms. However, as noted above, the relationship between the two types of power is more important than simply the powers themselves. Therefore, when engaging with how territory is produced and who produces it, it is necessary to conceptualise the multiple, relational powers of *poder* and *potencia*.

This focus on relationality foregrounds an examination of the types of power that are produced through enacting and contesting territories, challenging the dominant idea (explored

below) that *poder* is the only form of power operational in a territory. Multiple spatial relationships and relational constructions of power are produced within territories - even within a sovereign territory. Sovereign territories will be comprised of multifaceted, complex, and interrelated powers, situated and functioning within and beyond the state. The non-homogeneous nature of sovereign territories is demonstrated through their multi-scalar construction by multiple actors and through different powers.

However, while focusing on sovereign territories can marginalise counter-hegemonic territorial claims, it is important to not simply invert the binary, and celebrate territories constructed by social movements as if they occurred purely through *potencia*. Such simplistic fetishisation of *potencia* as inherently progressive is problematic (Blank, 2016), just as overly romantic and simplistic (self)analyses are counterproductive for radical political projects (Hale, 2011). This paper therefore extends the analyses of the relationship between *poder* and *potencia* that have been applied to the ideas of 'boundary making' and 'territoriality' (Halvorsen, 2015) to the concept of territory itself. To reiterate, then, this is not to say that the many analyses of sovereign territories are in some sense *wrong*, simply that they are not exhaustive in their remit. Similarly this is not to claim that the rich work on counter-hegemonic territories that we explore below has not raised many important and inspiring points. Rather, we are arguing that it is within the intersections between different understandings of power, territory, and politics that critical work should locate itself. Consequently, we continue by highlighting the crucial contributions that each understanding of territory has given us, and then use case studies to demonstrate the overlapping of both powers in territory.

Poder *and sovereign territory*

As explored, territory has returned as a key part of contemporary spatial debates, and is commonly understood as a political technology to which power is immanent. However, as this

section will explore, dominant conceptions of territory from the European literature focus on *poder* and the construction of sovereign territories. Given its dominance in contemporary territorial debates, a focus is placed on the work of Stuart Elden, who clearly highlights the connection between sovereignty and (his understanding of) territory. And while other key authors (e.g. Painter, 2010; Raffestin & Butler, 2012) propose more relational understandings of territory that overcome an obvious state-centrism, there is still a latent, undertheorised attachment to *poder* (Ince and Barrera de la Torre, 2016).

Perhaps most prominent in the English language debate surrounding territory, has been the work of Stuart Elden (e.g. 2010, 2013a, 2013b), in particular his 2013 book *The Birth of Territory*. Across these works Elden provides a genealogical analysis of the concept 'territory,' which, he argues, had been consistently undertheorised, typically playing second fiddle to territorialisation. Elden places the birth of territory in 16th and 17th century Europe, where the advent of Cartesian geometry allowed space to become calculable and therefore its politico-economic function (value) quantified. For Elden, territory emerged with the rise of the modern state, and control of the former (sovereignty) was a precondition for the latter:

> To be in the territory is to be the subject to sovereignty; you are subject to sovereignty while in the territory, and not beyond; and territory is the space within which sovereignty is exercised: it is the spatial extent of sovereignty. Sovereignty, then, is exercised over territory: territory is that over which sovereignty is exercised (2013b, p. 329).

Elden is explicit in his desire to distance himself from the idea that territory is merely 'bounded political space' (2011; cf. Antonsich, 2011), instead arguing that it is a specific form of political technology (Elden, 2010). This underpins his argument that territory, properly understood, emerged in a particular (if nebulous) spatio-temporal environment, and is a concept that should not be hyperextended, otherwise it loses any theoretical clout.

However, while this work is an undoubtedly rigorous, incredibly detailed, and high-quality exposition of *one type* of modern, European territory, presenting it as the *only* type of territory (see Elden, 2011) opens Elden up to criticisms of Eurocentrism, hyperextension, and universalism himself - despite his claims to the contrary (see 2010). He argues his narrow reading of territory is necessary in order to retain conceptual clarity and purchase, saying that if 'a "bounded political space" is sufficient to understand territory, then we can of course find these all over the place, and at a range of different times' (Elden, 2011, p. 426-427). But this is exactly the point. As we will argue, Elden's conceptualisation fails to include a range of counter-hegemonic territorial claims - such as the Zapatista's 'other geographies' (Reyes, 2015), discussed below - and consequently the universalisation of this narrow interpretation can be extremely exclusory.

But while Elden is clear not to propose some 'spatial isomorphism' between nation, state, and territory (2011: 428), his understanding of territory is fundamentally premised on the idea of sovereignty and sovereign power – *poder*. It is this singular understanding of power that we wish to problematise, demonstrating that a lack of critical engagement with power stunts the explanatory capacity of much current work on territory. In particular, in many circumstances this understanding fails to acknowledge types of power enacted in/through territory by more-than-state actors such as social movements. So while these more-than-state movements create different types of territories that can still operate as political technologies, the power immanent to them is different, yet relational. As Lopes de Souza puts it:

> territory is fundamentally seen…as a space defined and delimited by and through power relations, and it is important to see that power...[both *poder* and *potencia*]...is exerted only with reference to a territory and, very often, by means of a territory. The kind of

power exerted by emancipatory social movements does not constitute an exception to this rule (2016, p. 1292).

As such, the translation of inappropriate conceptual apparatus, through a focus on only state-based territory, limits and excludes radical potential for territorial praxis (Springer, 2014). It is therefore necessary to engage more fully with other conceptions of power and territory, and denaturalise the conception of territory as only being enacted and created through sovereign power. And while it is necessary to have an analysis of territory that includes the radical potential of social movements in constructing power, these analyses of power must explore, relationally, both *poder* and *potencia*. By failing to explicitly engage with analyses of alternative forms of power, the ability of much of the work (cited above) with more relational understandings of territory retains an unexamined attachment to the power of (state) sovereignty (Ince and Barrera de la Torre, 2016; cf. Tesón, 2015). This is in tension with alternative and non-state territorial claims (e.g. Agnew & Oslender, 2013; Bryan, 2012) - an issue even with work that explicitly seeks to challenge the connection/conflation between nation-state and territory (e.g. Sassen, 2013). As a consequence, this narrow understanding of power can serve to marginalise a number of territorial struggles and social movements (Springer, 2014). To combat this, the next section focuses on territorial conceptions and practice that are underpinned by an attachment to *potencia*.

Potencia *and territories in resistance*

Recent works emerging from Latin America have focused on the development of more-than-state actors in creating territories. Many of these focuses on the power of *potencia* to create territories, and although they do not all overlook the potential influence of *poder*, some highlight *potencia* as the predominant source of power. Here we develop and explore these theories, but also explore how territory has been developed as praxis through what movements

have termed 'territorial organising' (see Blank, 2016; Mason-Deese, 2012; Routledge, 2015; Lopes de Souza, 2016): these 'other' ways of constructing territory from below engage with, and highlight, different sorts of power in the production of these territories. Rather than creating a division between Latin American and Euro-American conception of territories – or claiming that certain territories only exist in certain places – we explore how different understandings of territory have been (productively) advanced in both theory and practice, and seek to further the decolonisation of (territorial) knowledges (e.g. Reyes & Kaufman, 2011; Walia, 2013). Ultimately we highlight a productive opportunity to engage with these different conceptions of territorial praxis.

Many important social movements from Latin America, such as the Zapatistas, struggles in *El Alto*, Bolivia, and the unemployed in Argentina, are engaged in non-state-centric politics that expands *potencia* through creating territories (Colectivo Situaciones, 2002; Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2015; Sitrin, 2012; Sitrin & Azzelini, 2014; Zibechi, 2012), and are thus a direct challenge to sovereign territories that respond only to structures of *poder*. Acting at different scales and in different geographic contexts, these movements actively seek to construct their own territories, based not on sovereignty, but on building forms of counterpower and collective *potencia* from below (Stratta & Barrera, 2009). However, as we will argue, this does not mean that they are in some sense completely 'outside', or separate from, *poder*. Yet, these territorial conceptions of *potencia* have led to different theorisations of territory from Latin American activists and scholars, going beyond claims to land or ownership of property. This notion of territory emphasises relationships between people and land that are not necessarily based on concepts of ownership or capitalist productivity, and that territory and subjectivity are intimately linked. It is therefore recognised that territory is not only constructed by *poder* as a way of controlling and governing populations, but that communities and

'societies in movement' are also capable of building their own territories (Zibechi, 2012), thus questioning the necessary link between territory and sovereignty. To illustrate this we analyse three key themes that underpin territories of *potencia*: 1) the active reproducing of territories by inhabitants; 2) the overlapping and multiterritorial struggle by different, yet interconnected, social groups in solidarity; 3) and the new territories constructed through this process. We develop each theme below and these demonstrate the importance and use of territories constructed through *potencia*.

First, it is important to engage with Latin American movements that actively (re)produce their own territories through their everyday actions. Porto Gonçalves' (2001) work with the *seringueiros* (rubber gatherers based in the Brazilian Amazon) emphasises their radically different understanding of territory. While seen fundamentally as a relationship between people and land, there are key differences to *poder*-dominated territory. Like other movements in Latin America (and beyond), for the *seringueiros* territory is underpinned by *use* and not *exchange* value, and is understood communally not individually. Relatedly, an emphasis on changing, seasonal boundaries not only chimes with the dynamic border literature cited above, but fundamentally challenges narratives of sovereignty underpinned by *poder*. Important links can also be drawn with critical and decolonial work on sovereignty 'from below', seeing it as a form of collective self-determination (e.g. Reyes & Kaufmann, 2011; Walia, 2013). While, in keeping with Elden, this work emphasises the inherently territorial nature of sovereignty, it does not equate sovereignty (and therefore territory) with *poder*. This is neatly encapsulated by the idea that '[s]tate sovereignty is about owning land; self-determination is about defending the land…Decolonisation [of sovereignty] in many ways is an inversion: land does not belong to us; rather, we belong to it' (Walia, 2013, p. 234). Ultimately such an understanding is in tension with the dominant perspective of territory (it is

no longer a fixed entity to which one can grant or be granted rights), and this gives rise to alternative understandings of both value and sovereignty (Reyes and Kaufmann, 2011).

Second, the nature of indigenous territories also reiterates the important and mutually reinforcing relationship between territory and subjectivity/identity (Murphy, 2010) - something we explore in detail below. Given the crucial role of *their* territory in the identities of varied groups such the *seringueiros* (Porto Gonçalves, 2001), Afro-Colombians (Offen, 2004), and the Zapatistas (Reyes, 2015), and that such territorial understandings are in tension with dominant approaches that rest on *poder*, it is not only social movements but entire peoples that are marginalised by mainstream territorial analyses.

Third, an understanding of territories of *potencia* that examines a diversity of everyday social relationships can lead to claims that these are independent, entirely autonomous territories operating in resistance to territories of *poder*. Importantly this stance highlights the potential of social movements to produce differential territories through the production of counter-hegemonic social relations and subjectivities. Zibechi (2012, p. 67) highlights that these territories are crucial, as 'challenges to the system are unthinkable without spaces beyond the control of the powerful, and calls these territories built from below '*territories in resistance'*, where:

> [L]and [i]s more than a means of production...Territory is [therefore] the space
> in which to build new social organisations collectively, where new subjects take
> shape and materially and symbolically appropriate *their* space (ibid, p. 19).

Many of these recent challenges to neoliberalism have 'emerged from the "new" territories, which are uniquely autonomous and independent' (ibid, p. 67). These new territories operate as movements from below, and highlight the failure of neoliberal forms of governance and

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representation. These new social movements create territorial spaces that are autonomous from state powers (*poder*), and instead rely on collective *potencia*. Within this territory the constitution of everyday life is also essential, and a shift is made 'from a dependence on capital to control over the production and reproduction of their living conditions' (Zibechi, p. 68). As such, these autonomous territories, are produced by, and (re)produce, a 'different' kind of politics, which is seen both as a response to, and as a demonstration of, the failure of 'neoliberal' city constructions (see Pinson & Morel Journel, 2016), that do not place these marginalised groups at the centre of political strategy. This form of counter-hegemonic, subaltern territory is 'the place where culture is constructed, and intersubjectivites and visions of the world and produced and reproduced, where the social relations and possibilities for the future are developed, and as a result, where concrete examples of autonomy are realised' (Ceceña, 2004, p. 12).

Claiming and producing territory, therefore, has a strategic potential to movements (Colectivo Situaciones, 2012; Sitrin, 2012; Sitrin & Azzelini 2014; Zibechi, 2012), and there is a dual element to these autonomous territorial claims: focus must be placed on both the power, from below, to produce territories, as well as the strategies that foreground social reproduction from *within* these territories. This focus on a territorialised *potencia* thus demonstrates a challenge to the capital-centric creation of modern cities, governments, and territories that respond to narratives of profit and enclosure. Such a conception resonates with the idea of 'the commons' (e.g. Caffentzis, 2010; De Angelis, 2007, 2010; Roggero, 2010) and how resistance can emerge from 'cracks' in capitalism (Holloway, 2010), ideas which we will expand upon below, with reference to indigenous and urban territorial movements across Latin America. Recognising the potential of such territorial organising, as well as the multiple challenges it provides to dominant understandings of territory, is key. However, it is important

to pay careful attention to the relationship between the different forms of power instantiated through territories. The next sections therefore explore these points in more detail, emphasising the idea of territories as being contested, not solely in resistance.

Territories in contestation

The previous section highlighted the capacity for social movements to produce territories from below. These 'cracks' are important for the territorial organising of social movements, yet, at the same time, understanding the relationality of power in territory means also engaging with the sovereign power contesting these territories. Therefore, while we agree with Gibson-Graham's claim that 'places always fail to be fully capitalist' (2004, p. 33), it is problematic to assume that territories can be totally anti-capitalist, in the way that analyses such as temporary autonomous zones (Bey, 2003), 'Nowtopias' (Carlsson & Manning, 2010), and 'Everyday Utopias' (Cooper, 2013) are presented. By highlighting the power and capacity of *potencia* these representations do have a useful rhetorical and inspirational function. However, relational conceptions of power operate as a contrast to both the traditional sovereign understanding of territory as the *only* type of territory, as well as a simplistic inversion of this, which describe a pure, autonomous 'territory in resistance'. By stating that only one sort of power is operational in a territory, both approaches ignore the complex set of social relations that produce the territory. Yes, state territories exist, just as territories of other values, but neither of these is an 'outside', they are related and part of a complex set of relationships. As Grubačić (2014, p. 170) puts it:

> [Territorial] autonomy should not be exaggerated. [Some territories] are autonomous, but only to a certain degree. World capitalism does not allow a complete outside. As such, ['territories in resistance'] are inhabited by an interesting paradox: they are, at the same time, inside and outside of the system; they are extra-state, but intra-systemic"

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Therefore, rather than just autonomous or state-based, it is important to recognise how territories intersect and relate. Returning to the idea of 'multi-territoriality' (Haesbaert, 2013b), multiple territories of multiple types coexist, sometimes in harmony, or in tension.

The next two sections develop these ideas. First through an engagement with indigenous territories in Latin America, and in particular the Zapatistas and their 'other geographies' (Reyes, 2015). Then through an examination of urban territorial struggles in Buenos Aires. By exploring their affinities and differences, these case studies flesh out the theoretical ideas above, emphasising the richness of radical, territorial praxis. In particular, it allows us to explore the continental cross-pollination of ideas (Holloway, 2005), and ultimately challenge a fetishistic, 'Zapatista exceptionalism'. This is especially important as romanticised analyses of indigenous territories not only inadvertently (re)create Orientalist binaries between 'indigenous' and 'western' territories (see Larson et al., 2015), but thusly rearticulate a problematic affiliation between indigenous peoples and 'nature' (Haesbaert, 2013b; Hale, 2011; Wainwright and Bryan, 2009). Therefore, these comparisons afford an exploration of 'rural' and 'urban' struggles that problematise both categories. They also illustrate the contested and relational nature of territorial struggles that are, while locally instantiated, fundamentally multi-scalar. Both of these cases demonstrate the challenges of organising territorially, and the different locations, backgrounds and geographies of these movements. Together they reveal that such territorial organising operates across the rural-urban spectrum, and can have rich and widespread radical potential.

Indigenous territories, Zapatistas, and 'other geographies'

Latin American indigenous movements have had far-reaching success, causing the continent to make its own 'territorial turn' (Bryan, 2012; Hale, 2005, 2011; Offen, 2004; Wainwright and Bryan, 2009), with various states recognising indigenous groups' claims to territory - often

underpinned by communal property rights (e.g. Escobar, 2008; Porto Gonçalves, 2001; Surallés & Garcías Hierro, 2005; Wainwright, 2008). These legal and organisational shifts demonstrate the possibilities of organising *through* sovereign territories, yet *beyond* only sovereign organisational structures. By clearly challenging the idea that only *poder* can decide and control how a territory is produced, these struggles highlight issues with traditional statist narratives visible in much territorial work.

However, the territorial 'successes' of indigenous struggles have been constrained by state intervention demonstrating the messy relationship between *poder* and *potencia*, and the need not to conceive of territories as completely 'outside' of dominant power structures. Latin America's 'territorial turn' has been accused of promoting a banal form of 'neoliberal multiculturalism' (Hale, 2005), forcing indigenous groups into accepting inappropriate liberal rights discourses, and supporting hegemonic forms of accumulation (Bryan, 2012). For instance, in Belize and Nicaragua indigenous groups created maps to demand recognition and protection of their territory. But instead of facilitating indigenous self-government, these maps helped calculate and quantify, ultimately aiding the state's ability to control contested territories within their borders (Wainwright & Bryan, 2009). Consequently, indigenous groups have been further subsumed into the very power structures they sought to challenge, and forced into defending territories with recourse to (often individualised) property rights premised around ownership of land – exactly that which they were initially struggling against (Hale, 2011).

Similarly, the act of formal recognition has typically come at the cost of the more fluid and dynamic borders/boundaries that underpinned many indigenous territories, leading to conflicts around physical boundaries and who represents authority *over* the territory (Larson et al., 2015). This re-centres a quantifiable, Cartesian understanding of territory (and with it the predominance of *poder*), while also demonstrating the (structural) violence of 'border

imperialism' (Walia, 2013). These examples of indigenous territories thus subvert traditional sovereign narratives of territories, but also demonstrate the challenges of organising. Therefore, while radical critiques highlight that territory is a political technology undergirded by *potencia* not just *poder*, it is the (negative) dialectical relationship between the understandings of power that is crucial. Despite these difficulties, there is still great potential in such territorial understanding and organisation, something which can be seen through a focus on the Zapatistas and their 'non-separatist territorial practices' (Reyes, 2015, p. 409)

Zapatista territories are located in rural mountain foothills in Chiapas, far from Mexico's national capital. The autonomous, indigenous organising of the Zapatistas was focused around reclaiming their territory for their own use, in contrast to the national states' wishes. This can lead to the dismissal of the Zapatistas' organising capacity as a rural anomaly, only providing opportunities for people to live off the land, and thus be autonomous, due to removal from the pressures of city and state (see Vergara-Camus, 2014, pp. 81-84, 189). Yet, a more complex investigation into the form of the construction of these territories reveals two crucial elements. First, the territories are striated by military checkpoints and violent police, demonstrating that the five autonomous *caracoles* (municipalities) operate counter to, and in direct conflict with, the state's territorial wishes (Taylor 2014). Second, such territories are built relationally, not in isolation or ignoring state forces. For the Zapatistas, a crucial tactic has been building visibility through connections and solidarity with communities across the world (Zibechi, 2012, p. 146). This attempts to ensure safety-through-visibility, while providing necessary alternative resource streams grounded in a solidarity economy - i.e. cooperative coffee and textiles.

These tensions underpin a participant in the Zapatistas' university program reflections. Explicitly using the work of Holloway (2005, p.12), they note that the constant struggle between the *poder* and *potencia* manifested through, and in, Zapatista territory:

'indigenous communities' *power to* live, work, and flourish has been under constant attack by the government's *power over* their life, work, and well-being. How can resistance counter this *making* vulnerable? And what, to rephrase the Zapatistas' question to us, were we doing there? (Taylor, 2014, n.p.)

Here Taylor highlights two key aspects of this territorial organising: the capacity of Zapatistas to organise despite challenges from the state, and, emphasising relationality, the constant international interest in their practices - either in terms of other autonomous solidarity organising or/and 'Zapa-tourism'. Visible here are nuanced understandings of power, illustrating that while *potencia* organises life as Zapatistas wish, there is also a vulnerability that this attachment to *potencia* places them under. This highlights the inter-relation of the powers of *poder* and *potencia* in their autonomous territories.

Central to the building of these autonomous territories is the everyday territorial organising of the Zapatistas' *caracoles* in the face of constant and brutal military presence. Thus, recognising their own *potencia* to create territories does not mean ignoring the power of the state, a relationship has become increasingly consolidated, institutionalised, and heavily policed over time (Vergara-Camus, 2014). Further demonstrating the multiplicity of relationships between power and territorial politics, the Zapatistas have recently used the upcoming 2018 national election as a platform to put forward a candidate - while the identity of this candidate has not yet been publicised, the candidate will be an indigenous woman (Mallet-Outtrim, 2016). This reinforces the tactic of organising through *potencia* to create a territory responding to their own values while also recognising sovereign territorial organising,

an extension of the Zapatista's 'other campaign' - a 'dual dynamic' which simultaneously emphasises the 'daily continuous construction of local autonomy and the national and international struggle to change the balance of power' (Zibechi, 2012, p. 127). Described fundamentally as a territorialisation of *potencia* (Vergara-Camus, 2014), this strategy is incompatible with dominant conceptions of territory: the 'other campaign' requires 'other geographies'.

Accordingly, unlike dominant conceptions of state territory, for the Zapatistas '[territory] does not refer to the relations of a pre-existing given subject to a given demarcated spatial extension...Rather...the construction of new communities, municipalities, and zones' (Reyes 2015, p. 421). Zapatista territory therefore resonates with Stratta and Barrera's (2009) conception of 'subaltern territory' and the work of Porto-Gonçalves (2001). Likewise, Brighenti's (2010: 57) idea that territory should not be seen as some 'neutral carrier' is important here, or else territorial analyses ultimately perpetuate the idea that there is a singular form of power. Instead, the construction of new subjectivities through socio-territorial activity means that not just territory, but political activity more generally, can be:

> radically transformed in order to create another power...The Zapatista strategy…[i]s the construction of…a newly produced collective subject and space...This allows the Zapatistas to grow their idea and practice of territory quite literally side-by-side...with the overlapping and contradictory territories of neoliberal calculation and destruction (Reyes, 2015, p, 421).

Zapatista practice is thus both a radical analysis, and instantiation, of territory that emphasises its position in-against-and-beyond sovereign power. Territory that is constructed by, and reproduces, *potencia* is not separated from sovereign power, rather, radical territorial politics

are immanent, yet antagonistic, to sovereign territory. Zapatistas' territorial organising illustrates the need for critical, multiterritorial analyses attuned to the role of power.

But as demonstrated, often territorial analyses fail to analyse multiple powers. As has been argued, territory is a form of political technology: 'the production of territories...is the operation of the creation and recreation of values' (Raffestin & Butler, 2012, p. 131). However, dominant forms of territory that are necessarily linked with exchange value and sovereignty mask, and are incompatible with, radical alternatives. Beyond simply invoking an abstracted and overly-romanticised concept of territory as a *potencia*-imbued political technology, the 'other geographies' of the Zapatistas require us to look deeper and more critically at the complex, relational, and multiterritorial struggles that are taking place: they demonstrate the potential in such approaches, as well as the multiple challenges. To develop these points further, the paper now turns to urban-territorial movements in Buenos Aires that, like the Zapatistas, are engaged in the 'double movement of struggle and co-existence' (ZIbechi 2010, p. 141).

Urban territorial movements in Buenos Aires

Urban social movements in Buenos Aires create new territories through practices of territorial organising, which privileges the spaces of the neighbourhood and everyday life, redefining territory through practice. Developing these ideas, we examine two examples from our research: the unemployed workers' movements (MTDs) and migrant organising networks. We examine how these groups practice power as *potencia* (Colectivo Situaciones, 2002) and the relational and multiple organising of their territories (dell'Agnese, 2013; Haesbaert, 2013a), connecting these tactics to the above Zapatista case. The MTDs in the periphery of Buenos Aires demonstrate movements' capacity to create territory from below through the formation of new social relations and social reproduction. Yet these territorial organisations exist in a

contested and ambiguous way alongside the state and other modes of territorial construction. Meanwhile, migrant movements demonstrate the translocal construction of territory from below, challenging simplistic visions of the local territoriality of resistance in opposition to the global territoriality of capital. Many examples of 'territories in resistance' come from Buenos Aires (e.g. Sitrin, 2012; Zibechi, 2012), and while we build on this work, in drawing out the contested organising of these territories we demonstrate the multiterritorial organising within them. Further, exploring the specificities of urban territorial organising confronts potential criticism that multiterritorial approaches are only possible for rural groups such as the Zapatistas.

First we explore how the MTDs organised territorially in their neighbourhoods to develop their *potencia*. Initially the MTDs used *piquetes* (roadblocks) to disrupt the flows of capital, and with this found power in the post-Fordist city, most famously around Argentina's 2001 economic crisis (Dinerstein, 2003). But alongside, and after, this initial tactic they returned to their neighbourhoods to address the everyday problems that the unemployed were facing (MTD Solano & Colectivo Situaciones, 2002). Exemplified by the slogan 'The Neighbourhood is the New Factory', and focusing on collective (territorial) *autogestión* (cf. Lefebvre, Brenner, & Elden, 2009), alternative economic practices (Habermehl, 2015), and autonomous forms of social reproduction, these groups established a clear territorial presence (Mason-Deese, 2012, 2015). For example, MTDs in the neighbourhoods of *Solano* and *La Matanza* (located in Buenos Aires' urban periphery) opened up schools, health clinics, cooperatives, community gardens, and social centres (Flores, 2005, 2007; Mason-Deese, 2015; MTD Solano & Colectivo Situaciones, 2002;). What is more, antecedents to the territorialisation of the MTD movement can be found in the land takeovers and squatter settlements of 1980s Buenos Aires (Cravino, 2012).

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The MTDs were therefore attempting to develop greater control over the ways that their lives were being constructed and lived, applying, to the neighbourhood, the horizontal practices developed through protest. Importantly, MTDs are not defending already existing territories, but rather constructing new ones, and with this creating new spatial relationships and subjectivities. Through this 'reterritorialising' (Monteagudo, 2011, p. 56), the unemployed wrested control over neighbourhoods from corrupt politicians and party apparatuses, but also produced new ways of being in those very territories. Thus, they created territory from below, by building their own infrastructure, institutions, and networks of care, building their *potencia* as a movement, rather than power over other neighbourhood residents. Through these practices the unemployed workers develop(ed) their own forms of territoriality and, thus, their own forms of subjectivity and life (Zibechi, 2012). In these settlements an autonomous working-class culture developed as residents have much more control over their territories in comparison to the rest of the city. They are not subject to formal property law or building codes, constructing their dwellings where and how they want to, naming their own streets, and in some cases even having their own forms of governance and justice (Zibechi, 2003, p. 164-165).

This territorial control is, however, in a relationship of contestation with both state and capital. The state has actively sought to limit the MTDs' power, through a joint strategy of repression of the more militant movements, and attempts to co-opt those more moderate (Sitrin, 2012). With the latter in particular, this involved attempts to capture movements' territorial knowledges, with the explicit intention to use the power of movements to institute more 'effective' forms of governance; forms of governance intended to be used against those very movements. And related to this, the MTDs are faced with a state-capital nexus that is driving gentrification and the interrelated privatisation and securitisation of public space (Herzer, Di Virgilio, & Carla Rodríguez, 2015). Since a post-2001 crisis heyday, the overall number of

MTDs has thus undoubtedly diminished, as have many of their territories within/through which MTDs organised. Therefore while not underplaying the exceptional capacity of those who still organise their own self-managed territories (see Mason-Deese, 2015), we highlight this organisation as functioning within a context of contention with other powers within these (multi)territories. Moreover this is constantly unfolding in a relationship between the deterritorialising capacity of the state and capital (*poder*), and the everyday reterritorialisation of the movements themselves (*potencia*).

As well as the MTDs, the movement of migrants to, and within, Buenos Aires further disrupts dominant territorialities. The mainstream *porteño* (people/things from Buenos Aires) identity fundamentally coalesces around whiteness, and this is (re)produced and reinforced by the simultaneous whitening of public spaces, and the territorial stigmatisation of the *villas* (urban 'informal' settlements where many of the racialised urban poor - including migrants - live) (Gordillo, 2016). While the onset of gentrification and its related processes can limit the movement of migrants, it also makes the very presence of migrants in certain parts of the city all the more transgressive, seen in both everyday mobility, as well as moments of rupture - such as the land occupations that have stemmed from an acute housing crisis (Cravino, 2012). Thus, in Buenos Aires 'the migrant experience [can] disassemble the symbolic and territorial unity of the state [and city] *from below*' (Gago, 2014, p. 117). But these multiterritorial conflicts are also fundamentally relational. On the one hand, *porteños* seek to protect their fragile (territorial) identity and imagined community by portraying as 'migrants' those they racialise (irrespective of nationality), and defining themselves in opposition to neighbouring countries (Clare, 2015). On the other, many migrants retain attachment to their countries of origin, foregrounding the history and struggle of their migration stories (Colectivo Simbiosis & Colectivo Situaciones, 2011). So even if migrants are deemed to be ghettoised within the *villas*,

this is itself a relational and territorial process, intimately linked to political subjectivities. It is, however, important to extend analysis to *within* the *villas* as well.

Visible in the *villas* are complex relationships that see residents campaign for greater provision from the state, while also engaging in anti-/non-state campaigns to attend to their own needs (Vitale & Ramos, 2011). There are thus multiple examples where migrant residents construct their own territories in the *villas*, not only through land occupation and building their own housing and infrastructure, but also by mapping and taking censuses to create their own forms of governance and authority (Gago 2014; Hacer Ciudad Collective 2011). The latter is exemplified by neighbourhood mapping such as the *Caminos de la Villa* project, carried out by *The Civil Association for Equality and Justice* and residents of Buenos Aires' largest *villa*. This is especially necessary as *villas* are often not recognised on official maps of the city, and it thus provides a platform to allow residents to upload provision failures (see Caselli, 2016). However, as with the indigenous examples discussed above, mapping projects have the potential for the capturing of radical territorial knowledges. This further emphasises the complexity of the interplay between *poder* and *potencia*, exemplified by the actors that are contesting and redrawing territorial relationships, through complex relationships between *villeros* (villa dwellers), NGOs, the state, and capital.

Furthermore, it is important to explore the heterogeneity of the *villas*, and the relationship *between* and *within* migrant groups that live there, examining the insidious practices and necessities of state and capital, as well as the contestations by actors both inside and outside these neighbourhoods. Racist, middle-class *porteños* and real estate speculators fight to have the settlements evicted, police repress *villeros* (people living in the villa), and federal government provides benefits and housing benefits in a more subtle form of governance (Gago, 2014). But within the *villas* there are numerous examples of co-operatively run schools,

health clinics, workshops, and radical radio stations. Especially important resources for migrants who lack documents (Hacer Ciudad Collective, 2011), these examples of territorial organising are taking place not just in Buenos Aires' urban periphery, but also in the *villas* in the centre of Buenos Aires. This organisation has led to the emergence of territorial subjectivities that transcend national divisions, strengthening a movement grounded in a sense of relational multiterritory (Clare, 2015).

However, gentrification is also taking place within the *villas*. While the 'informal' housing market is invaluable for undocumented migrants, prices now match those in middle-class neighbourhoods (Cravino, 2012), often leading to ghettoisation and inter-migrant conflicts (Clare, 2015). Similarly, countless textile workshops provide employment, but are also sites where some residents exploit others, in what Gago (2014) terms a neoliberal logic from below. Therefore not all *villeros* operate creating only *potencia*, but due to the precarity of everyday (urban) life, must themselves operationalise some of the neoliberal logics of capital. The *villas* demonstrates an understanding of territory beyond sovereignty and *poder*, and show how territory is also constructed through *potencia*. Yet simultaneously they highlight the contested, relational, and overlapping practices of (multi)territorial politics.

The MTDs and the migrant movements of Buenos Aires demonstrate the complexities and potential of territorial organising. These movements recognise that building territory from below does not make them separate to the surrounding organisation of *poder*, and the cases demonstrate the capacity for groups to build territories through *potencia* against-and-beyond *poder*. In highlighting the overlapping organisation of capital, state power, and NGOs in such territories, we demonstrate the need for a nuanced understanding of territory and power; something that these movements themselves share. Consequently, recognising the different powers operating in these territories demonstrates the powerful strategic organisation of

movements, emphasising their ongoing challenges, rather than failure. The territorial strategies they pursue also therefore share obvious similarities with the Zapatistas' 'other geographies', transcending rural-urban divides and illustrating the applicability and importance of such approaches.

Conclusion

By engaging with a wide of range of literature, examples of territorial organisation in Latin America, and our own ethnographic fieldwork, this paper has developed a more nuanced reading of territory. Situated within a polymorphic spatial debate, it has built on established conceptions of territory and territorial organising to explore territories that are in contestatory relationship with the state. To develop these contested understandings of territories we explored the relational organising of power, engaging in how power is produced differentially in the form of *poder* and *potencia*. But these powers should not be separated, instead understood to be operating in a layered and overlapping context. This establishes the importance of nuanced understandings of territorial theory, but through a focus on Latin American territories we also emphasise the importance of territorial praxis.

This paper underscores the capacity of residents and activists to develop *potencia* by (re)creating the territories in which they live. But our insights here do not privilege this as the only site where power is produced. Instead, using the cases of the Zapatistas and territorial movements in Buenos Aires to note the successful territorial organising of local actors, we also emphasise how this *potencia* occurs relationally and in strategic resistance to organisation premised on *poder*. We therefore highlight the capacities for neighbourhood action, without simplifying this action as being outside the knowledge, or influence of the state. Instead we identify strategic resistances and overlapping of these multiple powers.

This paper demonstrates the need to expand the body of work on territory in terms of both its theoretical and organisational potential. Expounding the necessity for this research, we thus call for more research that engages rigorously in grounded cases of territorial organising in Latin America and beyond. Having established the conceptual merit of these theories it is necessary to explore them further, and identify the contentious, difficult, and overlapping nature of real territorial organising. Key to this is embedded ethnographic research that develops the productive potential of territorial concepts, without necessarily establishing a singular definition of territorial research. Instead we note the need to establish, challenge, and engage with how territory can have both organisational and theoretical rigour. Ultimately, more grounded and embedded research is essential to help contextualise these interventions, and demonstrate the complex nature of territorial organising. We therefore see the territorial (re)turn as something to be further employed and extended to develop more in-depth understandings of how to reorganise everyday life.

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