

**Ecuadorian Studies and New Electronic Ethnic Frontiers:
Indians, Indigenistas, Tinterillos, and Marxists**

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Abstract:

The Internet has irrevocably altered how social scientists conduct research. In Ecuador, Indigenous organizations have taken the lead in their use of the Internet. The first stop for virtually any researcher investigating ethnic politics in Ecuador is at the websites of these organizations. This paper explores how these new electronic frontiers have altered research patterns and influenced interpretations of ethnicity.

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Note: This essay is still very much in draft form, and I am putting these ideas out for discussion and comment. I welcome feedback, but please do not cite this paper—at least not without my permission.

In May of 1929, a group of Indigenous workers from the Zumbahua hacienda in the central highland province of León (today Cotopaxi) arrived at the offices of the Ministerio de Previsión Social y Trabajo in Quito with complaints of abuses that they were experiencing at the hands of the hacienda's bosses and mayordomos. The petitioners complained that they were forced to work on the hacienda without remuneration, assigned tasks double that of what was normally the case on other haciendas, forced to sell their eggs and sheep to the hacienda, and carry products to the provincial capital of Latacunga at reduced prices. If they refused "the mayordomo hits them and puts them in stocks," and several workers had also been expelled from the hacienda. The mayordomo also had destroyed several of their huts in which they lived, and when it was time to settle accounts with the hacienda the administrators finagled their books so that they were in debt even if they did not owe anything. In response to these complaints, the Ministerio de Previsión Social ordered local authorities in Latacunga to attend to their demands, but without even listening to their complaints the local authorities imprisoned the workers. Rather than resigning themselves to this defeat, the Indigenous workers took up a collection with the intent of sending another delegation to Quito. Finally, the delegates managed to arrange an audience with Fuentes Robles, the new Minister of Previsión Social.¹ Alberto Moncayo, the renter of the hacienda, claimed that he had made very favorable concessions to the peons, that the accusations of beatings and abuse were false, and that the leaders who were in Quito were the only Indians unsatisfied with a proposed resolution to the conflict. If left alone, these "ignorant Indians" would not be causing these problems. Therefore, it must be outsiders who were manipulating the situation for their own gain.² Under pressure from the central government, G. I. Iturralde, the governor of the province of León, arranged for the Indigenous workers and the hacienda's renter to agree on a series of reforms. These included changes in the size of the tasks (*tareas*) and how they were assigned the *raya*, the abolition of the custom of naming a sheepherder for an indefinite time, more resources for *huasicamas*, and the abolition of the forced purchase of pigs and eggs. The governor declared that any difficulty from the peons "will be severely punished and strong sanctions will be imposed against the leaders, authors, or instigators of any act of indiscipline or rebellion." Furthermore, "now the situation is absolutely calm," the governor concluded. "I have discovered the [unnamed] *tinterillo*, the instigator of this situation, and he will be punished severely."³

On December 30, 1930, the *Jefe Político* of the canton of Cayambe in northern Ecuador sent a telegram to the Minister of Government in Quito noting that the Indians on the Pesillo and Moyurco haciendas had revolted. Augusto Egas, the director of the Public Assistance program

¹"Disputa entre indígenas y patronos," *El Día*, May 21, 1929, 1.

²J. Alberto Moncayo, "Remitido," *El Día*, May 22, 1929, 1.

³Letter from G. I. Iturralde P., Gobernador de León, to Director de la Junta de Asistencia Pública, June 30, 1929, Oficio no. 150, Comunicaciones Recibidas, Enero-Junio 1929, Archivo Nacional de Medicina del Museo Nacional de Medicina "Dr. Eduardo Estrella," Fondo Junta Central de Asistencia Pública in Quito, Ecuador (hereafter JCAP), 338-39.

that administered these haciendas, denounced the presence of propagandists and bolshevik instigators who he believed were imposing communist and other foreign ideologies and manipulating the Indians into attacking the haciendas.⁴ In the months leading up to this strike, socialist leaders such as Ricardo Paredes, Rubén Rodríguez, and Luis F. Chávez had been meeting surreptitiously with Indian workers as they formed some of the first Indigenous organizations in Ecuador (El Inca in Pesillo, Tierra Libre in Moyurco, and Pan y Tierra in La Chimba). They assisted the Indians in drafting demands that revolved around land rights, access to water and pasture, salaries, education, and the ending of abuses. Urban leftists also provided logistical, legal, and moral support for Indians who traveled to Quito to present their demands to the government and the press. Claiming that the Indians had been "exploited by false apostles," elites created a scenario with a chain of command through which instructions flowed from Paredes and other Marxists in Quito to local non-Indigenous communist leaders such as Rodríguez in Cayambe to Virgilio Lechón and other local Indigenous leaders at Pesillo and finally to the peons on the hacienda.⁵ This was a bolshevik attempt to disrupt the social order of the country and create *una revolución comunista indígena*.⁶

On September 14, 1943, a group of urban intellectuals founded the Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano (IIE, Ecuadorian Indigenist Institute) as the Ecuadorian branch of the Instituto Indigenista Interamericano headquartered in Mexico City. Sociologist Pío Jaramillo Alvarado was elected as the first director of the IIE as it labored energetically to disseminate the indigenist ideal: "to liberate the Indian from the slavery in which he lives."⁷ Jaramillo and other indigenistas sought to accomplish this through such actions as sponsoring round table discussions, publishing books and a journal entitled *Atahualpa*, and agitating for the establishment of a governmental Department of Indigenous Affairs as well as other legal reforms. The most significant accomplishment of the Ecuadorian indigenistas was sponsoring the Fifth Indigenista Congress in Quito in October of 1964. A central theme of this Congress was the economic and social development of the Indigenous population. The "Declaración Indigenista de Quito" states that the "integration of indigenous groups into the economic, social, and cultural life of their nations is an essential factor for development. Therefore, to achieve this integration must be one of the principal objectives of economic and social development programs."⁸ The congress included a small Indigenous delegation, and their presence and interest shocked the white organizers. "The interest which those aboriginal delegates demonstrated for the items discussed," the indigenistas reported in the conference proceedings, "was a true revelation."⁹

⁴Letter from Augusto Egas to Sr. Ministro de Gobierno, January 7, 1931, in Libro de Comunicaciones Oficiales de la Dirección de la Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, 1931, 6, JCAP.

⁵"Los indios de las haciendas de Cayambe han tornado a sus diarias ocupaciones en el campo," *El Comercio*, February 5, 1931, 1.

⁶Letter from Augusto Egas, Segundo D. Rojas V., and Ernesto Robalino to Ministerio de Gobierno y Asistencia Pública, April 30, 1931, in Comunicaciones Recibidas, Enero-Junio 1931, 900, JCAP.

⁷Pío Jaramillo Alvarado, *El Indio Ecuatoriano*, vol. 2, 6th ed. (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 1983 [1922]), 264.

⁸Inter-American Conference on Indian Life, *V Congreso Indigenista Interamericano*, 5th volume, *Acta final* (Quito: Tall. Graf. Nacionales, 1965), 11.

⁹Inter-American Conference on Indian Life, *V Congreso Indigenista Interamericano*, 3rd volume, *Artesanía, defensa de la salud, seguro social y poblaciones selváticas* (Quito: Tall. Graf. Nacionales, 1965), facing page 32.

As can be noted in these three stories, tinterillos, marxists, and indigenistas approached Indigenous struggles in fundamentally different ways, engaging different issues and seeking to achieve different ends. Of the three, the presence of tinterillos in Indigenous communities has the longest history negotiating relationships between Indigenous peoples and the government, with its roots in the colonial period. Michiel Baud described them as writing

down the grievances of the quechua-speaking, illiterate population. They transformed local parlance in texts that were acceptable for legal or political purposes (or so they hoped). The tintilleros were a group which was frequently vilified both by politicians and landowners, because they were supposed to stir up the credulous Indian peasants.¹⁰

In 1933, Moisés Sáenz derided tinterillos as victimizing “ignorant and timorous” Indians. The tinterillos “made a profession out of defending the Indian, complicating court cases, adding to problems, swelling the bureaucracy, all with the goal of charging fees.” The Indians had become so dependent on these opportunistic and exploitative intermediaries, according to Sáenz, that the Indians would “not make a move without them for the arrangement of whatever real or supposed problem.”¹¹ The tinterillos were often local white or *mestizo* elites who lived in neighboring towns to Indigenous communities, and probably interacted with the Indians on other social and economic levels, perhaps as a shop keeper who extended lines of credit to the Indians. Because of their Spanish-language skills and some education, they were able to draft legal petitions and provide other similar services.¹²

Unlike tinterillos, indigenistas usually lived and worked in urban areas at a distance from Indigenous communities with which they had little if any contact. For example, José Carlos Mariátegui, the famed Peruvian indigenista, was confined to a wheelchair in Lima and never visited the highland Indigenous communities whose reality he critiqued in quite some detail. Almost exclusively the domain of white intellectuals, indigenistas paternalistically pontificated on solutions to rural poverty, solutions which often involved assimilating Indians into a homogenous mestizo culture. They did not view themselves as opportunistic manipulators of Indigenous communities for their own personal or political benefit, but rather social reformers attempting to end oppression and exploitation. This goal becomes explicit in Jorge Izaca’s social realist novel *Huasipungo* that depicts hopelessly miserable Indians unable to liberate themselves. Nevertheless, indigenistas’ derogatory views of Indigenous ethnicity and social structures led Indigenous peoples to “reject the presence of intermediators and deny that people who do not belong to their cultural world have the right to speak in their names or, worse, represent them.”¹³

Although contemporary elites denounced marxist activists in Indigenous communities as abusive tinterillos who exploited their marginalization to stir up social conflict and subsequent

¹⁰Michiel Baud, “Libertad de Servidumbre: Indigenista Ideology and Social Mobilization in Late Nineteenth Century Ecuador,” in *Nation Building in Nineteenth Century Latin America: Dilemmas and Conflicts*, ed. Hans-Joachim König and Marianne Wiesebron (Leiden, The Netherlands: Research School CNWS, School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies, 1998), 252.

¹¹Moisés Sáenz, *Sobre el indio ecuatoriano y su incorporación al medio nacional* (México: Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1933), 134-35.

¹²Beate R. Salz, “The human element in industrialization; a hypothetical case study of Ecuadorean Indians,” *American Anthropologist*, Memoir No. 85 57:6, Part 2 (December 1955): 133.

¹³Juan Bottasso, “Presentación,” in Various Authors, *Del indigenismo a las organizaciones indígenas*, 2d ed. (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1986), 5.

scholars spurned them as indigenistas who paternalistically attempted to assimilate ethnic populations into western notions of class struggle, in reality their relations with Indigenous communities were much more complicated. Like indigenistas, they were from distant urban centers, but like tinterillos they had direct and occasionally intimate knowledge of Indigenous communities. Like tinterillos, they helped Indigenous peoples bridge the wide gap between rural communities and central political structures, but like indigenistas they brought an ideological agenda to these interactions rather than merely seeking personal profit. In fact, in areas like Cayambe Indigenous and leftist struggles became intertwined in ways that had never happened and could not happen with either tinterillos or indigenistas. Indians needed their language skills and legal expertise to petition the government, but the urban marxists also provided infrastructure and support when the Indians traveled to Quito to petition the government directly—something the tinterillos from neighboring communities could not provide. Marxists, in turn, saw the Indians as forming the base for their social revolution. But because of the nature of their contacts, marxists gained a legitimacy in the Indians' eyes that tinterillos or indigenistas never were able to accomplish. In their interactions with each other, the Indians and marxists began to influence each others' ideologies, with the Indians in the process becoming communists and the marxists acquiring a deep respect and understanding for multi-cultural societies. Their initial motivations for interacting could be seen in turn as mutually exploitative and mutually beneficial, but in the end the two groups had dramatic impacts on each other. Together they laid the basis for what was to become one of the strongest social movements in Latin America.

Indians and the Internet

Today no respectable social movement would be caught dead without email and a web page.¹⁴ And indeed, these resources have flourished as even small, base organizations either have or show strong interest in developing these tools. Sometimes they can be little more than status symbols, but they have also become critical tools in mobilizing for social change, building links with allies, and presenting challenges to state power. But at the beginning of the twenty-first century Indigenous activists often encounter problems in accessing the Internet similar to those that limited their predecessors' access to state institutions in the first part of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the range of interactions during the first half of the twentieth century between Indians and intermediaries also characterizes Indigenous relations with the Internet at the end of that century and the beginning of the next.

Theoretically, these resources could be used as grassroots organizing tools, much as they have become indispensable for activists in the United States in mobilizing against Bush's war on Iraq. But deep digital divides between Indigenous communities and the dominant culture, both in Ecuador and around the world, make the Internet an impractical method for organizing on this level. In rural areas where basic survival issues like access to clean water all too often still dominate local concerns, other aspects of infrastructure like electricity or phone lines which are necessary for an Internet connection remain on the back burner. Furthermore, computers remain far beyond the budgetary capabilities of most rural households. A computer that costs the

¹⁴Issues that social movements encounter in using computer technology are discussed in Osvaldo León, Sally Burch, and Eduardo Tamayo, *Social Movements on the Net* (Quito: Agencia Latino Americana de Información, 2001); also published in Spanish as *Movimientos sociales en la red*.

equivalent of two weeks of salary working at a minimum wage in the United States would take six months of earnings in Ecuador.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this situation has begun to change during the last several years as cybercafes flourish throughout Ecuador—and not only in large cities. Provincial cities like Cayambe now have cybercafes with relatively new computers and a surprisingly fast Internet connection. With globalization and international migration, use of these resources continues to grow quickly as email provides a cheap and efficient means for long distance communication, particularly with relatives in Spain or the United States. In the foreseeable future, however, it will not be an effective tool for organizing rural populations as users need to travel to an urban center to read email or browse a web page, making the communication not nearly as instantaneous as it is for those of us who live a borg-like existence spending entirely too much time in front of our computers that are hardwired with a broadband connection into the Internet.¹⁶

Because of these limitations, computers and the Internet in the Indigenous world are still largely the domain of organizations rather than individuals. Although the dominant culture's class structures are largely reproduced within Indigenous organizations and in their access to technology, many of these organizations have use of relatively modern equipment. (The idea of "recycling" an old Apple IIe or 8088 IBM clone by shipping it off to some poor bloke in Ecuador to assuage a northern liberal guilt complex is not only hopelessly paternalistic but also would be a relatively worthless and unwelcome "gift."): Nevertheless, connecting to the Internet from within an organization's office can still be rather difficult. Under the current neo-liberal regime local calls are expensive, installing additional phone lines is difficult and expensive, and broadband connections through cable and DSL lines are non-existent. As a result, a good deal of pressure is placed on a few phone lines that are shared between voice, fax, and Internet connections. Furthermore, the culture of constantly (and neurotically) checking an email account has not become part of the Ecuadorian culture. As a result, the Internet has not become a dominant or perhaps even a preferred means of communication within or among Indigenous organizations.

On an international level, however, the Internet has provided a more efficient and effective tool for communication for Indigenous organizations, especially since phone calls are expensive and mail can be slow and unreliable.¹⁷ It is also in this international electronic communication where intermediaries play a role, especially in helping Indigenous communities convey their concerns to foreign governments, international organizations, and the public in general. International electronic communications face some of the same barriers and dynamics that challenged rural-urban communication a century earlier. As a result, the challenges and hurdles which activists today face are not that different from what their counterparts faced in earlier periods.

Language continues to be one of the main problems facing Indigenous communities as they interact with the dominant culture through the means of the Internet. In the early twentieth

¹⁵León, *Social Movements on the Net*, 109.

¹⁶Guillermo Delgado-P. explores these issues limiting Indigenous use of the Internet in "Solidarity in Cyberspace: Indigenous Peoples Online," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 35:5 (March/April 2002): 49-51.

¹⁷For a broader discussion of organizational use of the Internet, see Susan O'Donnell and Guillermo Delgado, "Using the Internet to Strengthen the Indigenous Nations of the Americas," *Media Development* 3 (1995): 36-38 and Guillermo Delgado-P. and Marc Becker, "Latin America: The Internet and Indigenous Texts," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 21:4 (Winter 1998): 23-28.

century, mediators were needed to bridge the linguistic gap between the mono-lingual Quichua world and that of the dominant Spanish culture. Now the divide is between the often bi-lingual Quichua/Spanish world, and the mono-lingual world of the Internet. About 5 percent of web pages are in Spanish, while over half are in English, even though only 10 percent of the world's population speaks that language. The Internet presents barriers that create "a standardizing, hegemonizing cultural industry that disregards linguistic and cultural diversity" similar to ideologies of *mestizaje* that generations of Indigenous-rights activists have long sought to overcome.¹⁸ Many resources and tools are difficult to access without English-language skills, and Indigenous activists largely rely on European or North American activists to translate documents for a global audience. A person with facility in the language of the dominant culture will more easily rise to a position of power and prestige, and that language becomes a useful and desirable skill. This becomes particularly important when the issues that an Indigenous organization or community engage extend far beyond the limits of their community or the national borders of the country of Ecuador. For example, this becomes critically important for eco or community tourism projects that rely primarily on foreign tourists, or campaigns against Texaco and other oil companies that are based in the northern hemisphere. Often this can become as much of an issue of translating cultural differences as it is translating languages. For example, many organizations tend to begin their web pages with information on their legally recognized status with a governmental ministry which is important in establishing legitimacy within Ecuador, but is largely meaningless for an international audience.

In addition to language, there are also technological barriers. In the early twentieth century, activists in Indigenous communities often did not have knowledge of or access to legal codes in order to frame their complaints within a formula that could be delivered to or understood by governing structures. It is not that they needed help in conceptualizing the racism and exploitation that they lived and experienced on a daily basis, but phrasing demands in a legal framework and communicating those demands to the proper authorities could often be facilitated by outsiders. Present-day cyber activists face similar barriers in accessing Internet resources. HTML and computers in general can be intimidating for those without technological aptitude, and especially for those who are unaccustomed to this technology (something, of course, that is also true in the North). Although building a web page with current WYSIWYG ("what you see is what you get") software facilitates this process, finding such software with Spanish-language interfaces can be difficult and expensive. Furthermore, registering a domain name and accessing web space on a server can be intimidating for the uninitiated. Often it is beneficial to host a web page on a server in the United States because of a stronger and redundant infrastructure and faster connections which assure more reliable service. For example, North Korea's official web page is also hosted on a server in the United States. Although it is by no means impossible for someone in an isolated part of the world to do all this, this process is greatly facilitated with external assistance. For this reason, Indigenous activists either put off building their own pages or pass it off to third parties.¹⁹

Internet communications also involve issues of cost, which raise similar parallels with earlier activists who also had limited access to funds to travel to Quito or purchase the legal paper

¹⁸León, *Social Movements on the Net*, 112.

¹⁹This theme is also discussed in León, *Social Movements on the Net*, 152f.

on which petitions must be drafted before being presented to the government. The costs for Internet communications can present even more draconian barriers for activists wishing to inform the world of the FTAA's effect on Indigenous communities. On a most simple and relatively inexpensive level, an activist can set up a free yahoo or hotmail account and pay about \$1US per hour in an Internet café to access it. For serious organizing efforts, however, this may not be sufficient, and from there the costs begin to mount. Dialup connections cost about the same as in the United States (around \$25US per month), and the additional local phone charge in Quito of \$0.01US per minute quickly adds up. Calling from the provinces can become even more expensive. Outfits like geocities allow users to set up web pages for free, but these do not present a very professional face for a political campaign. Purchasing space for hosting a web page on a server can cost about \$20US per month, and registering a memorable domain name (such as conaie.org) costs from \$15-35 per year. Purchasing a computer and software can run into the thousands of dollars. Depending on the organization, these costs may be manageable but they can limit the effectiveness of Internet communications for grassroots organizations without access to international donors or support.

The goal needs to be to strive for direct Indigenous control and autonomy over these means of communication. Learning to build a web page can be a very empowering experience that allows activists to speak directly to the world without the interference of intermediaries. At least for the foreseeable future, however, it appears that outsiders will continue to play a role in this process while Indigenous activists acquire the necessary skills to design and maintain their own websites. In the meantime, this should not be seen as a limitation but rather an opportunity to build a stronger movement that draws on the skills and knowledge of outsiders while at the same time leading to a heightened level of political consciousness.

Solidarity

Given these factors, what is the role of non-Indigenous solidarity activists within an Indigenous struggle? These issues are, of course, not limited to interactions between gringos and runas in using the Internet as a tool in an Indigenous rights struggle, but come into play whenever and wherever two seemingly unequal partners come together to struggle for social change. People coming out of the Central American solidarity movements are often well (and maybe even painfully) aware of these dynamics. In those movements, North American activists often had access to more material resources, but their political understandings and sophistication was dwarfed by their counterparts in El Salvador. Resources, although important, alone do not insure success for a social movement. At a meeting of the provincial Indigenous organization Pichincha Runacunapac Riccharimui in the fall of 1995, educator Nepalí Ulcuango reminded the audience that the illiterate, Quichua-speaking leader Dolores Cacuango in the first part of the twentieth century managed to accomplish more with little or no resources than the current organization was able to do with access to extensive resources from European NGOs. Depending on how they are negotiated, these relations can end up being mutually beneficial, mutually exploitative, or a combination of both.

Solidarity activists can become involved in the struggles of other peoples for a variety of reasons, with some being more honorable than others. Often the most annoying motivations but usually not particularly dangerous and occasionally quite helpful are those operating in an indigenista mode, where well-meaning liberals can paternalistically pontificate at length on someone else's poverty without having any extended or direct experience of that person's reality.

Websites in this mode abound on the Internet, reflecting the indignation against social injustices that drives Jorge Icaza's novel *Huasi-pungo*. While often providing good sources of information on a broader socio-economic context for a political struggle, they do little to give voice to the instigators of the social movements. These are often the types of web pages that linguistically challenged students use for classroom projects in North America, both because they are in English and also are often more easily found and digested. More broadly, much academic work on Indigenous peoples also falls into this category: there is little engagement with or support for the struggles of the subjects of these studies. Working as neo-indigenistas, such academics are often as shocked at Indigenous interest in their work as were the indigenistas who organized the Fifth Indigenista Congress in Quito in 1964.

Much more dangerous but also fortunately much less common in Ecuador are websites run by cyber tinterillos. Operated for the (probably psychological more than material) self gain of the webmaster rather than for the benefit of the Indigenous organization or community, these can compromise or misrepresent Indigenous voices in order to advance agendas that at time can be foreign or even run counter to subaltern interests. Such Indigenous "wannabes" are more common in North America, especially among newagers who extract isolated aspects of Indigenous cultures and religions for their own selfish purposes.²⁰ They pose as Indians on the Internet, often to the detriment of Indigenous struggles. Such attempts to hijack or piggyback on someone else's struggle is also a problem in the broader activist communities, and can threaten to disrupt organizing efforts.

Respectful relationships in which people interact as equals even while understanding their differences is often the best model to follow, not only when working on Internet projects but also in broader solidarity work. The initiative and guiding force for these endeavors must come out of Indigenous communities or otherwise they are bound to fail, but that does not negate the important and often invaluable role of outsiders in these struggles. As with the marxists working with Indigenous activists in Cayambe in the 1930s, this can lead to fascinating and intellectually rewarding exchanges that are also mutually beneficial. Another more recent and better known example of this phenomena is the role of mestizo Subcomandante Marcos in the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) in Chiapas, Mexico. Marcos has described how he came to the forest as a teacher, but quickly became a student as he realized how much he had to learn from its Indigenous inhabitants. As a military leader, Marcos' role in the struggle is not denied but it is subjugated to the Indigenous comandantes. Indigenous activists gain easier access to platforms and audiences that would otherwise be difficult to realize. Leftists and the public in general gain access to voices and perspectives that otherwise would be difficult to hear given distance and language barriers. These relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds help develop coalitions that are mutually beneficial, for often it is the same neoliberal policies designed to benefit corporate elites that are equally damaging to people in both the developed and developing worlds.

It is, of course, simplistic to boil down solidarity activists' motivations into only one of these three categories. Given the complex nature of human behaviors, a person's actions can

²⁰Larry J. Zimmerman, Karen P. Zimmerman, and Leonard R. Bruguier, "Cyberspace Smoke Signals: New Technologies and Native American Ethnicity," in *Indigenous cultures in an interconnected world*, ed. Claire Smith and Graeme Ward (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 69-86.

easily cross these categories, and for most activists growth and maturity in these areas is very much an ongoing process. But as non-Indians analyze their roles in supporting Indigenous struggles, they should strive to move away from acting as tinterillos or indigenistas, and work toward the goal of assuming more of the attitude of the 1930s marxists. Activists who work on international trade issues often point out that globalization in and of itself is not a negative force; it is something that can be used for good or evil. These types of collaborative relationships are examples of the positive force that globalization can have on human relationships.²¹

NativeWeb (*this section is extracted from a communal document on which NW is working*)

NativeWeb provides one case study of how cyber activists have sought to navigate the dilemmas and pitfalls of using the Internet to make another world possible. NativeWeb is the most widely recognized site on the internet for information about Indigenous peoples. It exists to utilize the Internet to educate the public about Indigenous cultures and issues and to promote communications between Indigenous peoples and organizations supporting their goals and efforts. Its purpose is not to "preserve," in museum fashion, some vestige of the past, but to foster communication among people engaged in the present and looking toward a sustainable future for those yet unborn. With databases containing thousands of items, NativeWeb provides searchable access to materials in dozens of categories, forums for user-provided information and discussion, and a daily digest of reports about current news and events involving Indigenous peoples around the world. NativeWeb also provides selected Indigenous organizations with resources to create and maintain World-Wide Web sites of their own. This informs NativeWeb's mission statement:

NativeWeb is an international, nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to using telecommunications including computer technology and the Internet to disseminate information from and about indigenous nations, peoples, and organizations around the world; to foster communication between native and non-native peoples; to conduct research involving indigenous peoples' usage of technology and the Internet; and to provide resources, mentoring, and services to facilitate indigenous peoples' use of this technology.

NativeWeb began its existence in May of 1994 as an outgrowth of the NativeNet listserv mailing lists which Gary Trujillo began in 1989 as one of the first global listservs on the Internet. The catalyst for NativeNet was a conference "From the Arctic to Amazonia: Industrial Nations' Exploitation of Indigenous Peoples' Land" held at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, attended by people from every continent but the Antarctic. The conference demonstrated how much Indigenous peoples of the world have in common and how much they needed ways to communicate globally.

Marc Becker, then a graduate student in Latin American History who had worked on HNSource, a pioneering history web site at the University of Kansas, began discussions with Gary Trujillo about using the technology of the World Wide Web to support and extend the struggles of Indigenous peoples around the globe. Guillermo Delgado, a Quechua Indian from Bolivia and a professor of Latin American Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, along with

²¹The relationship between the Internet and forces of globalization are explored much more extensively in Marcelo Bonilla and Cliche Gilles, eds., *Internet y sociedad en América Latina y el Caribe* (Quito: FLACSO Sede Ecuador; CIID-IDRC, 2001).

Susan O'Donnell, a staff member at Cultural Survival Canada, drafted an organizational framework for this new project. Marc began to assemble materials based on this plan on his personal UNIX computer account at the University of Kansas.

In April of 1995, NativeWeb formally separated from the NativeNet project and established its own identity as an Internet website under the auspices of a small volunteer group of native and non-native computer professionals and academics. Slowly, a system of collective webmasters evolved. Subsequently, it purchased the domain name nativeweb.org and its own server. NativeWeb has always been a labor of love, rooted in a volunteer workforce.

Since its founding, NativeWeb has strived to be a place where people on the Internet could go to find information. A resource database with links to over four thousand sites that contain information for, about, or important to Indigenous cultures remains the heart and soul of the NativeWeb project. This browseable and searchable database is organized by Indigenous nations, geographic locales, and thematic content.

In addition to the resource database, NativeWeb has engaged in a variety of other projects. One of the most important is the hosting of web pages for Indigenous organizations and groups which do not have resources to do this on their own. Since NativeWeb's beginning in 1994, the South and Meso-American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC) supported the NativeWeb project and in turn NativeWeb hosted their web page as well as that of their sister organization Abya Yala Fund. SAIIC, based in Oakland, California, existed to ensure that the struggles of Latin America's Indigenous peoples for self-determination and respect were heard in the U.S. and internationally, and to support Indigenous peoples' organizing.

Although open to all Indigenous organizations, most sites hosted on NativeWeb are a result of personal contacts with NativeWeb board members. In particular, there are a large number of sites from Ecuador. The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), a pan-Indian organization representing Indigenous nations in Ecuador, was one of the first such sites to come on line. Subsequently, many other organizations have also worked with NativeWeb to set up their own websites. For example, the Instituto Científico de Culturas Indígenas (ICCI), a scientific-technical center which brings together the thought and experiences of struggle connected to the organizational process of the different indigenous organizations, publishes its monthly bulletin *Rimay* and journal *Yachaykuna* online at NativeWeb. The Universidad Intercultural de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas (UINPI), an Indigenous university in Ecuador, also maintains its web page at NativeWeb.

As a pilot program, NativeWeb is currently exploring developing a series of seminars and workshops in the South American country of Ecuador to help Indigenous organizations and peoples develop the skills to design and maintain their own presence on the Internet. NativeWeb board member Marc Becker launched this project while in Ecuador during the fall of 2002 on a Fulbright fellowship. Until this point, as the hosted sites manager for NativeWeb, Marc has designed and maintained many of these websites and it is time to pass control of them to people within the organizations. The workshops are designed to provide both a political formation as well as technical skills necessary to exploit this medium of communication. The ultimate goal is to use the Internet as a means for Indigenous empowerment.

This project started out small, with four organizations renting a cyber café in Quito for a one-day workshop to discuss what is the Internet, how to set up a free email address, what are the possibilities and limitations of using the Internet to broadcast an organizations' concerns, and a basic introduction on how to create a web page. Together with a local NGO called Minga Social,

this group continues to meet in a series of workshops designed to advance this skill level. The possibilities for this project are quite exciting. The Internet continues to grow rapidly in Latin America and is expanding into rural communities, which every day makes this technology more accessible both in terms of cost and access to technology. In turn, this means that Indigenous peoples and organizations are increasingly eager to embrace the possibilities of this mode of communication. A single workshop is quite easy and inexpensive to sponsor. Renting a cyber café in Quito for 6 hours cost \$50, an expense which the Instituto Científico de Culturas Indígenas (ICCI), one of the sponsoring organizations, underwrote. But to conduct a series of workshops involves developing and reproducing training materials, hiring trainers for the workshops, securing a locale, and conducting followup work.

Ideally, and in the long term, the project needs a permanent computer lab in which to conduct the workshops and followup training. Given the centralized nature of Latin American societies, the lab would logically be located in the capital city of Quito. The project also needs staffing for the lab and to conduct the workshops. The lab would be open on a daily basis and provide a space where social organizations access equipment such as programs, scanners, digital cameras, etc., to develop their web pages. Staff in the lab would provide troubleshooting assistance as well as additional individualized hands-on training.

One possibility would be to staff the lab with students from Indigenous communities studying computer science at universities in the city. This would not necessarily be considered long-term employment, but a type of training internships which would give the students much needed experience in order to secure employment after finishing their studies. Such gainful employment is often critical in allowing students from financially strapped families to finish their studies. Working in this environment would also help the student interns develop a political consciousness that would subsequently be of use to grassroots organizations. A further advantage of staffing the lab with interns would be to avoid problems of racism.

Furthermore, it would be good to organize a team to travel to the offices of the Indigenous organizations so that they can train them on their own computers. Therefore, a part of this project would be to provide equipment and programs to organizations with the goal that they can become self sufficient in the designs and maintenance of their own web pages. The process of learning these skills will prove to be very empowering. Pending success of these initial stages in Ecuador, the program would be expanded to other Indigenous organizations in Ecuador as well as to other countries in Latin America and throughout the world.

NativeWeb faces numerous challenges as it endeavors to continue and extend its services. NativeWeb is conceptualized as a global endeavor, yet most of our material continues to focus on the Americas. We continue to look for ways to extend our work into new areas of the world. A much more persistent issue is the "last mile" problem of extending technological resources to some of the most isolated and under-served people on the planet. How do you provide the technological benefits of the Internet to Indigenous peoples living in areas without electricity, much less the phone lines necessary to connect to the Internet?

NativeWeb has always been based on a volunteer workforce, but it has grown to the point where it is difficult to function on a solely volunteer basis. The principal organizers are providing NativeWeb with as much support as possible within the constraints of their various employments. Our present strategy to survive and grow, is to find funding through grants and donations for the various components of the site and for new ventures or projects.

Websites

Indigenous websites

Asociación de la Nacionalidad Zápara de la Provincia de Pastaza (ANAZPPA)

<http://www.llacta.org/organiz/anazppa/anazppa.htm>

Cofan, Guardians of the Rain Forest

<http://www.cofan.org/>

La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE)

<http://conaie.nativeweb.org/>

<http://www.conaie.org/>

Confederación de Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kichua del Ecuador (ECUARUNARI)

<http://ecuarunari.nativeweb.org/>

<http://www.ecuarunari.org/>

Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana (CONFENIAE)

<http://www.unii.net/confeniae/>

Escuela de Formación de Mujeres Líderes Dolores Cacuango

<http://mujerkichua.nativeweb.org/>

Federación de Comunas Unión de Nativos de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana (FCUNAE)

<http://fcunae.nativeweb.org/>

Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangélicos (FEINE)

<http://feine.nativeweb.org/>

Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Faldas del Chimborazo (FOCIFC)

<http://www.interconnection.org/focifch/>

Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras (FENOCIN)

<http://www.fenocin.org/>

Federación Indígena y Campesino de Imbabura (FICI)

<http://fici.nativeweb.org/>

Instituto Científico de Culturas Indígenas (ICCI)

<http://icci.nativeweb.org/>

Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik - Nuevo País

<http://www.pachakutik.org.ec/>

Otavalos OnLine

<http://www.otavalosonline.com/index.html>

Pueblo Kayambi

<http://www.kayambi.org/>

RICANCIE

<http://ricancie.nativeweb.org/>

Salasaca

<http://salasaca.runakuna.org/>

Saraguro

<http://www.saraguro.org/>

Sarayacu

<http://www.sarayacu.com/>

Tigua Painters

<http://www.tigua.org/>

Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza (OPIP)

<http://www.unii.net/opip/>

Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas Indígenas de Cotacachi (UNORCAC)

<http://unorcac.nativeweb.org/>

Universidad Intercultural de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas (UINPI)

<http://uinpi.nativeweb.org/>

Websites about Indigenous peoples

Centro Cultural AbyaYala

<http://www.abayala.org/>

Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (DINEIB)

<http://www.hoy.net/dineib/>

Indigenous Peoples in Ecuador

<http://ecuador.nativeweb.org/>

Llacta

<http://www.llacta.org/>

Minga Social

<http://www.mingasocial.org/>

<http://www.nativeweb.org/minga/>

NativeWeb

<http://www.nativeweb.org>

TexacoRainforest

<http://www.texacorainforest.org/>

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