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Ecosocialism in Latin America

Ecosocialism, territorial autonomy and indigenous worldviews

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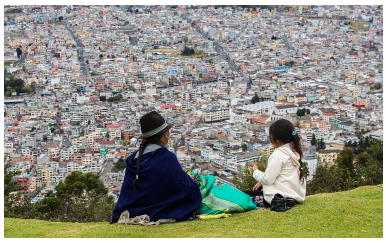

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Ecosocialism in Latin America is characterised by the development of struggles rooted in the conflicts specific to this territory. Although not all these struggles fall strictly within the tradition of the revolutionary left, they are no less radical in their approaches—especially given their recognition of the urgent need to move beyond capitalism.

If it is true that socialism seeks to protect and strengthen the communal and historical traditions forged by workers, then in Latin America—as in other parts of the Global South—this tradition extends, as a matter of priority, toward anti-colonialism and the defense of territory, encompassing ways of life and cultural expressions that do not fit the classic, mold of the working class stricto sensu.

In this sense, Mariátegui's [1] remains relevant; it must be noted that ecosocialism in Latin America cannot be a "mere carbon copy or replica" of European formulas—not least because the core issues and the praxis of the most dynamic sectors within the ecological struggle in the Global South are distinct.

For this reason, it is not uncommon to hear many collectives and communities in Latin America state that they practice ecosocialism, even though they do not define themselves as ecosocialists. Unlike those collectives that engage in popular environmentalism and advocate solely for environmental justice, the collectives that practice ecosocialism are not only critical of the prevailing model of production and committed to social justice; they are also antisystemic, rejecting the idea that mere reform should be the ultimate goal. These groups often advocate for territorial self-determination and political autonomy, question the concept of the nation-state, and place the sustainability of all forms of life at the centre of the debate.

Categories such as "terricide"—a term articulated by the weychafe [2] Moira Millán, which interweaves the manifold assaults of capital through genocide, epistemicide [3], ecocide, and femicide—not only share with ecosocialism the premise of dismantling the capitalist system, but also propose an alternative civilizational paradigm that challenges any attempt at cultural or intellectual homogenisation.

Similarly, Ailton Krenak radically questions the Western utilitarian and productivist logic, dismantling the notion that "life is useful" for the accumulation of capital. He warns that contemporary collapse stems from the separation—forged by modernity—between society and the living organism that is the Earth. In contrast to the capitalist logic that commodifies nature and promotes technological or financial stopgap measures, it champions the resistance of territorial communities that remain rooted in the Earth and preserve memories of non-predatory coexistence.

These convergences demonstrate that, as Mariátegui posited, indigenous traditions are not relics of the past, but rather living practices and ways of thinking that prefigure forms of collective organisation—grounded in reciprocity and relational ecology—as cornerstones of a revolutionary strategy. The Latin American "heroic creation" [4] cannot dispense with indigenous cosmovisions (worldviews); ecosocialist emancipation and indigenous struggles go hand in hand.

Those who dismiss these perspectives as "romantic" or archaic render alternative modes of existence invisible and overlook the specific nature of *sui generis* capitalism [5]—as Marini observed—as well as the enclave economies that also position the region in a distinct way within struggles within the international division of labour.

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The construction of an ecosocialist project based on democratic planning must be accompanied by a radical critique of ecological imperialism—as Vega Cantor points out—as well as of unequal ecological exchange, environmental racism, and the marginalisation or erasure of indigenous peoples. To forgo this diagnosis—while also failing to establish a clear hierarchy of struggles—risks promoting solutions that would reinsert Latin America into a subordinate position within the world-system.

As a radical alternative, ecosocialism must build a deeply diverse internationalism—one that possesses not only a geographical dimension but also engages in dialogue with all the traditions that propose a way out of the civilisational crisis and capitalism.

16 November 2026

Translated and annotated by David Fagan for ***International Viewpoint***.

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[1] José Carlos Mariátegui (June 14, 1894 – April 16, 1930) was a Peruvian Marxist. He founded the Peruvian Socialist Party in 1928. A heterodox Marxist, he placed the indigenous and agrarian questions at the heart of Peruvian socialism, which set him at odds with the South American Bureau of the Communist International.] epistemological subversion[[Epistemological subversion refers to the deliberate undermining or overturning of how a society defines, validates, and trusts knowledge and truth.

[2] Weychafe is a Mapuche term from Wallmapu (Patagonia) meaning warrior, fighter, defender, or guardian of territory, people, and life. Moira Millán is an indigenous Mapuche activist from Argentina.

[3] Epistemicide refers to the destruction, marginalization, or erasure of non-dominant knowledge systems—especially Indigenous, traditional, or colonized ways of knowing—often carried out through colonialism and replaced by dominant Western or colonizer knowledge systems.

[4] The phrase "heroic creation" (creación heroica) is a famous political concept coined by José Carlos Mariátegui in 1928. Writing "Aniversario y balance", published in the journal *Amauta*, he argued that Latin American socialism must be an original movement rooted in the region's specific historical, cultural, and indigenous realities rather than a blueprint imported from Europe.

[5] ‘Capitalism sui generis’ is a term coined by Ruy Mauro Marini. Rejecting the thesis of a Latin American ‘pre-capitalism’, he uses it to describe a specific form of capitalism that only makes sense when viewed within the context of the global system as a whole.

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