

AGAINST A GEOPOLITICS OF DEATH, A GEOGRAPHY FOR LIFE

Ngulumapu, Pewü, 2018

Mapuche Territories in Chile, Spring, 2018

As geographers, who work in the territory of Wallmapu (Mapuche Territory) alongside the Mapuche people, we share in the pain of the family and the Lof of our peñi/lamngen (brother) Camilo Catrillanca who was shot in the head, in a cowardly act of murder by the Chilean police on Wednesday 14th of November in Temucuicui. This episode occurred within a framework of political and police violence, which the Chilean state are exerting over the Mapuche Lof (Mapuche territorial organisation) in the Commune of Ercilla (Malleco Province, Araucania Region) because the community is in resistance and now exercise control over their own territories. We express our opposition to the unnecessary use of police force in the community of Temucuicui, which violates the rights of children and adolescents by exposing them to constant raids and violent police operations. For this reason, we demand the demilitarization of the commune of Ercilla, the departure of the Jungle Command from the Araucania region, as well as the resignation of Luis Mayol, the superintendent of the Araucania Region, and Andrés Chadwick, the interior minister of Chile, who we hold responsible for these events.

Since its beginnings, colonial violence in Wallmapu has been exercised by the national states of Argentina and Chile, through accumulation by dispossession, derived from the appropriation of Mapuche territory by the armies of sovereign powers and instrumentalised according to the guidelines of marketisation and modernist thinking in order to convert it into private property. Today, the continuing practice of internal colonialism which continues to oppress the knowledges and territorial practices of our people by imposing, through force, a politics of denial, which imprisons and murders our young Weychafe (warriors) and Mapuche authorities – Logko (Political Leader), werkén (messenger), machi (Spiritual Leader).

The community of Temucuicui, in the territory of Huequén, in the current Commune of Ercilla, is an example of territorial resistance in Wallmapu, as it is the community which has recovered the greatest amount of land in the last few decades, beginning with the Alaska Estate and later with the recovery of the Romana and Montenegro Estates, which were previously under the control of forestry companies and land owners. The peñi/lamngen Camilo Catrillanca, was one of the Weychafe who gave his life in this process of territorial recuperation. Once this territory had been recovered, it was promised that neither the police, nor the State, would re-enter these territories. For this reason, despite the police repression that was occurring on that tragic day within the territory, the peñi/lamngen Camilo Catrillanca continued to advance with his tractor, thus exercising with his own body his territorial control and his right to autonomy.

We believe that the systematic police repression carried out by the Police Special Operations Unit “The Jungle Command” in Wallmapu, not only hinders the constant efforts for a dialogue between the Mapuche communities, Chilean Society and the State, but also incites violence in a territory that has been historically intervened with and impoverished by the dominant society, creating a geography of terror, similar to that which has been done in Colombia to the indigenous and afro-descendant peoples who have exercised their right to territoriality and self-determination. On the other hand, the extractive model promoted by the State of Chile over our territories can be seen as a geopolitics of death, which goes against *ixofillmongen*, that is to say against all forms of life without exception. *Ngen* (Spirits of Nature), *leufu* (River), *lemu* (trees), *uñum* (birds), *wingkul* (mountains), *mallín* (wetlands), now find themselves threatened, along with many other entities which have a relationship with the Mapuche existence, thus generating a structural, epistemic and ontological violence. This affects *Az Mapu*, the Mapuche territorial order, by affecting the existence of our people. Added to this are the actions of the official media who have constructed a geographical imaginary around the “red zone of the Mapuche conflict” and ethnic terrorism, thus promoting a symbolic violence that criminalises the legitimate right to the resistance of a people and incites racist discourses in Chilean society. The fight for our territory is not terrorism, the fight of our people is territorial not terrorist.

Geography, as a social science has an outstanding debt with the Mapuche people, having been in complicit silence in the face of an historical territorial dispute in Chile. This resistance to the opening up of these themes within geography, which are both urgent and intimately linked to our task, is problematic. Although there are geographers who have been working with Mapuche communities in the last 20 years, whose work has been published and exhibited in congress, for the large part these discussions remain a marginal sphere of Geography. Meanwhile, we see how within geographical teaching a descriptive reading of space inherited from the military regime prevails, which eliminates Mapuche territories in resistance from the map and promotes discourses of territorial development which are capitalist in character and are not critical with respect to the recognition of territorial rights of Mapuche communities in the South of Chile.

We believe it is important to note, the need to move towards a geography which recognises differences, through a dialogue between knowledges within Chilean society, this is necessary for building a path towards a geography of peace. For this, it is essential to train students, professionals, academics and researchers with a sensibility to the reality and territorial knowledges that emanate from indigenous/ native peoples. We have several important tasks: firstly, to discuss the policies of neoliberal development which are imposed through instruments such as the Araucania Plan, which seek to modify the Indigenous Law to facilitate the lease or sale of indigenous lands to individuals without seriously addressing the background of the territorial demands of indigenous peoples. In second place, to make visible the geographical, social, historical and political context of the demands of indigenous peoples, which are transversal to many of the topics which are studied and taught in schools of geography throughout the country, which permit us to nurture a more critical reading with respect to these situations and to contribute to possible

solutions. In third place, to question the monocultural curricular model with which geography is taught in school and university classrooms, tending to homogenise spatial categories relating to the indigenous world, thus limiting understandings of space culturally. In fourth place, to strengthen our commitment to indigenous communities, through serious cooperative work which requires us to renew our methodologies within a framework of ethical research responsibility.

We want to make a call to the geographical academy to pay greater attention to the territorial demands of indigenous peoples, who have been marked by poverty and dispossession, and for whose resistance and struggles we must now take responsibility. We believe that Geography is a relevant discipline for social transformation and to build more hopeful worlds that will allow us to confront the aggressions of the neoliberal and modernist project. And because, as Daniela Catrileo says:

“Today we can show that this is a political act and not a mere epistemological extraction. Today we need everyone to leave their comfort zones, because they are killing us, and no mere article can withstand that pain.”

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Link of Signatures:

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