

The Creation and Recreation of Borderlands Among Indigenous Peoples

A Kamentza's Journey of Resilience

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Introduction

Our epistemic point of departure to discuss processes of survival and resilience for indigenous communities impacted by the enduring effects of colonization and coloniality is grounded in de Sousa Santos's (2012) *Epistemologies of the South*. The framework provided therein recognizes different ways to understand our existence in this world by attending to our own social locations, histories, conditions, and possibilities, yet de Sousa Santos does not claim to have arrived at a new general theory. The framework outlines trajectories for re-engaging with the experiences and knowledges of those whose who can no longer be rendered legible by Eurocentric knowledge. We, Santos Jamiyo Muchavisoy and Pilar Hernandez-Wolfe, see ourselves within that framework. We locate ourselves within the colonial history of Abya yala—named by the Europeans as Americas—(Consejo Mundial de Pueblos Indígenas, 1977). Jamiyo's primary frame of reference is that of a Kamentza Taita (political and spiritual leader), born, raised, and living in the land of Tabanok (named by the Spaniards and Mestizo¹ settlers/Colombians, Valle del Sibundoy). Hernandez's primary frame of reference is that of a Colombian Mestiza who inhabits the borderlands of bilinguality, binationality, and interculturality. In analyzing resilience, we seek to understand how knowledge and subjectivity are intertwined with modernity/coloniality. We believe that the construction of knowledges and mental health practices must be centered in processes that reorient and sustain communal practices affirming the lives and ways of being of the peoples whose lives

were disrupted by the European invasions that began in the 15th century. Herein we discuss what resilience means for the Kamentza people, thus relocating the concept to a borderlands space where Western notions of resilience can dialogue with and be transformed by the local context of this community. In this sense, our work seeks to make resilience a more systemic concept, engaging multiple sources of knowledge and both individual and collective (e.g., cultural) systems into our understanding of what resilience means to one specific indigenous people. We agree with Mendenhall and Wooyoung (2019), who, in discussing their failed attempt to standardize a resilience scale in South Africa, state that in rethinking how we approach the study of suffering and resilience it is imperative that culture be kept at the center of an understanding of how people envision themselves within the world around them. This is key to understanding how they perceive, relate, and respond to challenges from their social world.

We contextualize Ungar's (2011) definition of resilience within the history of colonization and coloniality of Abya Yala, as this point of departure takes the meaning of resilience into other levels of complexity. As researchers, and building on Ungar's work, we believe that understanding resilience in contexts of exposure to significant adversity involves examining the processes by which communities struggle, adapt, and navigate their way to a state of well-being and how they negotiate, recreate, and affirm their way of life. Resilience processes must be anchored in the multiple subjectivities of those who face adversities; embodied voices must be part of the meaning making process, along with access and opportunity for collective coping and an outlook open to possibilities. In this chapter, we will situate our analysis within an epistemology of the South; discuss resilience as a systemic process occurring in borderland spaces; offer a narrative about the Kamentza people of Colombia highlighting their interaction with larger systems, historical processes, and ways of coping with adversity; and finally, offer our view on the type of research/practice that is needed in the future from this perspective.

An Epistemology of the South: Colonization, Coloniality, and Borderlands

Our thinking about resilience is situated in our brown bodies and in the lands we inhabit in Abya Yala, as they are the sites of life that survived the genocide of the indigenous peoples of these lands. This point of departure integrates viewpoints, narratives, and ways of life that exist and develop along the margins of political and economic structures. In this section, we delineate key concepts that inform how we see the Kamentza's trajectory of resilience, as their existence must take into account how their life has changed with colonization, coloniality and the negotiation for survival in borderland spaces.

Colonization has been a key constitutive factor in shaping our world. Abya Yala was likely to have been populated by 60 to 110 million people before Columbus arrived in 1492 (Mann, 2005). According to the modernity/coloniality collective project (Grosfoguel, 2005; Quijano, 2000), colonialism refers to a form of political and judicial domination over the means of production, work, and livelihood that one population assumed over others

throughout a historical period that can be marked as ending in 1824 with the independence battles that freed Latin America from Spain. These scholars contend, however, that the end of colonialism did not end the power relationships that produce and legitimize oppressive differences between forms of knowledge, groups of people, and societies. Anibal Quijano (2000) coined the term “coloniality” to refer to the systemic suppression of subordinated cultures and knowledges by the dominant Eurocentric paradigm of modernity and the emergence of knowledges and practices resulting from this experience. However, the emergence of knowledges and practices at the margins has the potential to engender distinct alternatives, thereby fostering a pluriverse of cultural configurations. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) speak of border thinking as resulting from the wound of coloniality; that is, experiences and knowledges have emerged from differing and conflicting epistemologies from the south and Eurocentric thought. For Mignolo (2011) border thinking allows us to draw different paths and to enunciate other knowledges after having recognized inequality and accepted the wound inflicted by coloniality. Two interrelated aspects of coloniality are the systemic suppression of local knowledges and the emergence of alternative knowledges resulting from this oppressive experience. It is within this interstice that we locate the resilience of the Kamentza people who have experienced a constant pulling and loosening of relationships through negotiations with the European and Colombian settlers, as well as protection and affirmation of their territories and culture.

According to Anzaldúa (1987), the borderlands are the places in between; the spaces in which border knowledge and border identities are constructed; the gaps, fissures, and silences of hegemonic narratives; and the overlapping border spaces and cultural representations that those who inhabit these spaces negotiate to exercise personal and collective agency. The borderland concept is transnational; it can be applied to the multiplicity of borders present in Abya Yala, and is consistent with Lionnet and Shih’s (2005) view of the transnational “as a space of exchange and participation wherever processes of hybridization occur and where it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation from the center” (p. 5). Borderland spaces emerge out of coloniality.

What allowed the survival of the Kamentza people in spite of the deliberate effort to exterminate them? How did border spaces emerge out of their survival? How did resilience develop in these spaces? The answers to these questions are multiple and should be addressed from an interdisciplinary perspective. However, for the purposes of this chapter, we will limit our focus to resilience as a response to colonization and coloniality, as embedded in border spaces, and as possibly operating through autopoiesis and structural coupling (Maturana & Varela, 1980; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 2016).

Similar to other indigenous peoples in Abya Yala (Deloria, 2006; Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011; Rocha Vivas, 2012), the Kamentza’s notion of community and personal identity is rooted in their connection to the land and the environment as a whole, which includes a recognition of nonhuman beings and a spiritual world. They see being in relationship as the way in which all of us exists, with no opposition between nature and culture because humans and other beings do not simply occupy the world; instead, they constitute each other’s conditions for existence. As Escobar (2018) explains, “non-moderns dwell in places by moving along the lines and threads that produce the place” (p. 87). They

do not separate themselves to control, take from, and subjugate other beings, but co-exist with them. This view is akin to Bateson's view of the "subject" and "object" as co-arising and of knower and known as standing in relation to each other through mutual co-origination. Escobar argues that nature is a recursive, mind-like system, with information its unit of exchange; mental activity occurs in all living organisms and nonhuman processes. The mind is a set of integrated and interacting parts that can process information by identifying differences that make a difference; it is the totality of conscious and unconscious processes that interact in a recurrent and recursive fashion. Thus the mind can be seen as a process shared by all beings—not only humans. The human mind/brain–body is itself situated within a complex web of life and consciousness, interacting with other mind/brain–bodies and with nature and nonhuman beings. Maturana and Varela (1987) state, "all doing is knowing and all-knowing is doing" (p. 27), to underscore that the world is created through interaction of the senses and through language.

According to Varela (1979), an autopoietic system is a network of processes of transformation in which its components continuously regenerate, maintain, and change while constituting a concrete unit in space. An autopoietic system is a living system that maintains its own organization, that is, the preservation of the relational networks that constitutes its unity. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (2016) explain that the concept of autopoiesis relies on a conception of the universe as in flux; autopoietic entities are mutually constituted according to their own processes and rules and are actively engaged with other beings. The Kamentza, an autopoietic system, can be seen as an information system and as a material entity (people, land, culture) with its own operational mechanism that folds recursively back upon itself while having to adapt to and cope with historical and structural violence. This process of adaptation is a form of structural coupling in which the Kamentza have had to engage with other systems such as European colonizers, the Colombian state, mestizos migrating into their territory, that have perpetrated violence on them at multiple levels, territorial, physical, psychological, and ontological. The historical trajectory of the Kamentza has been impacted by the constraints placed by colonization and coloniality. As a system, they had to undergo structural changes and adopt various structures in response to interactions with the environment; they had to negotiate their continued existence by letting go of territory, traditions, and ways of being. We argue that, in spite of significant adversity, the Kamentza have maintained themselves as an organized system. The Kamentza constitute an autopoietic system; for them, autonomy means that everything is mutually dependent. Escobar (2018) argues that "Latin American conceptions of autonomy are predicated on relationality" (p. 171). That is, first there is an understanding that we are all related and in relationship; second, the conception of the other is always a part of a relationship, not merely the other. In this relational ontology, territories/communities are seen as whole, living entities with memory. We are not individual systems fundamentally separated from what we commonly think of as external reality; instead, such reality comes into being moment by moment through our participation in the world (Escobar, 2018; Sharma, 2015). Thus, a Latin American indigenous view of autonomy and our understanding of autopoiesis elucidate the conditions that have prepared the Kamentza as a community for relating with each other and to the waves of newcomers into their lands. In the next section we outline key historical events in the history of the

Kamentza while illustrating how the processes of autopoiesis and structural coupling evolved from the colonial wound (coloniality) in borderland spaces.

The Kamentza

The Kamentza indigenous people are among the most resilient peoples in southwestern Colombia. Their ancestral knowledge, leadership, and ability to adapt throughout waves of invasions by Spaniards, Colombians, and other colonizers is a testament to their strength under prolonged adversity. Their resilience draws from traditional knowledges, values, and practices as well as from the ongoing challenges posed by evolving relationships with the dominant society and relationship networks with other indigenous peoples in the area.

The Kamentza inhabit their ancestral territory in Tabanok, or the valley of Sibundoy, in the middle of the eastern mountains of the Colombian Andes, in a space of transition and integration of the Andean and Amazonian worlds. The valley of the Sibundoy and the high mountains that surround it are part of the most important Colombian water source, with rich ecosystems full of flora and fauna and a complex system of lagoons and moors. With the Inga people, who are settled in neighboring municipalities, the Kamentza share territory, culture, and a struggle for identity and survival. In 2014, 6,029 Kamentza people lived in the municipality of Sibundoy, distributed as 1,476 families, comprising 58% of the total Kamentza population, as well as 42% of the municipality's population (Life Plan, 2015). Their self-government is recognized by the Colombian government through the concession of their own councils of Indigenous Traditional Authorities. These councils are the legal representatives and governmental authorities dealing with the affairs of each city or town.

The Kamentza people survived genocide and have suffered various forms of loss of land and displacement over time. Historically, while the colonization of their territory began later than in other parts of Colombia, because of its strategic location it has served as a corridor for different goods, resources, and the transit of peoples from other parts of the country, conquistadors, missionaries, encomenderos,² settlers, merchants, and groups outside the law have taken away their lives and lands and disrupted their way of life. They were systematically stripped of their physical and symbolic territory, and other forms of life have been violently imposed since the arrival of the catholic missions in 1542. According to Santos Jamioy, the oral history of the Kamentza documents how community members abandoned their customs, traditions, language, and beliefs to survive. Others chose to take their own lives, hoping to appease the violence to which the elders were subjected. Yet others chose to keep their culture hidden, or moved to distant places that were alien to the settler to preserve their identity and culture.

Augustinian, Dominican, Jesuit, Franciscan, and Capuchino priests stripped the Kamentza of their best lands to build missions and schools. Overall, the strategies used by the Spanish were those of punishment, forced labor, public mockery, excommunication, and exile (Bonilla, 2006). Initially, the Kamentza community resisted colonization from education; there are records of resistance indicating that when the first school in Sibundoy opened around 1902, it did not have students: "It opened with only one student after many

announcements and notifications to the parents” (Bonilla, 2006, p. 72). The parents hid their children to prevent them from attending the catholic school and chose to take them to work while doing their daily chores. Later the colonizing establishment used law enforcers to persecute the families and force them to send their children to school. Even in the 1970s when Jamioy attended the local Marista school, he was forbidden from speaking Kamentza and severely punished when he did so. As a child, his own family taught him the Kamentza language, but discouraged him from using it in public spaces after he began elementary school. According to Avila (2004), today, 60% of the population is fluent in the Kamentza language; a smaller group (40%) is able to speak both the formal and informal forms of the language; 20% of the community is able to understand the language, and 20% has no knowledge of it. Today there are different educational spaces such as a Kamentza nursery, a Kamentza/Spanish bilingual school, and Spanish speaking schools.

In the 16th century, the Kamentza fell prey to the consequences of the gold rush and were infected by diseases, such as smallpox, which together with forced labor created a humanitarian crisis that caused their population to decline. According to Córdoba (1982), in 1558 there were 9,000 inhabitants in the valley; in 1582 the population declined to 1,600 inhabitants, and by 1691 there were only 150 survivors in the community. At the end of the 17th century, when the mines were closed and the exploitation of gold moved to the Pacific coast of the country, the region fell into a kind of isolation from the colonial regime and communities slowly began to recover their population and their ancestral traditions (Gómez López, 2005). However, between 1879 and 1912 the rubber rush in the Amazon brought another wave of indentured labor, disease, and hardship. The decline of the rubber rush allowed isolation again and the recovery of the population. In the 1960s Americans arrived in the region through the Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. According to Barrera (2011), their presence impacted the local production of arts and crafts, making their products commodities for sale. The artisans were asked to introduce designs suggested by the foreigners and to produce larger quantities of a similar product for commercial purposes that encouraged the adoption of capitalism as a way of living. This generated a loss of the symbols that narrated their local beliefs and stories. In her research on the resistance of the Kamentza to colonization, Barrera (2011) states that while they responded with submission to the decisions of these external actors, they also resisted by slowly neutralizing and erasing designs suggested by the foreigners. Over time, they reclaimed their own designs and brought them back into their arts and crafts.

During the 1980s and 1990s, with the beginning of oil exploitation, the massive arrival of peasants displaced from other parts of Colombia, the proliferation of coca crops, and the presence of guerrillas, paramilitaries and the military brought other forms of disruption and violence to the region. Like many other indigenous groups in Colombia, the Kamentza were in the midst of a violent conflict that was not theirs but that impacted their lives and resources (Gonzalez, 1989; Medina & Tellez, 1994). In the last 20 years the arrival of Colombians and Venezuelans has increased the interdependence of the Colombian urban centers and the countryside; the use of land for cattle raising, meat, and milk production; and extensive bean, tomato, and fruit crops, with high use of agrotoxics (Preciado Beltran, 2003). The traditional farm that fed the community with a diversity of products has been

fragmented by the newcomers and their business, impacting the traditional nutritional practices of the Kamentza. In addition, biopiracy has become a tremendous concern, as Spaniards are back looting the Kamentza's plants and knowledge of medicinal plants through business deals with the Colombian government (Jacanamejoy, 2015).

The Interstices of the Kamentza's Resilience: Territory, Ritual, Medicine, and Communal Ways of Living

The continued existence of the Kamentza on this planet is itself an act of resilience. They have faced ongoing structural violence characterized by a systematic effort to take their lands, turn them into indentured labor, kill them through biological warfare, and disrupt the reproduction of their cultural knowledge and traditions across generations by religious suppression and cultural persecution. They have been forced to deal with immediate threats to their survival, as well as the prolonged challenges posed by capitalism and colonization. Notwithstanding the Kamentza's ability to survive, adapt, and generate hybrid spaces has been key to their survival. The Kamentza have affirmed their existence between the Andean and Amazonian worlds while negotiating, fending off and managing the presence of colonizers, the displaced peoples and the newcomers looking for a place to settle have been key to the survival of the Kamentza. For example, the town of Sibundoy was designed with a central square in which a catholic church and school take two sides, and homes and businesses take the other two sides following designs of colonial architecture. In the 1950s, the Kamentza acquired a property near the square's corner as a site for their own house of government, and in the 2000s they negotiated with the major's office for the presence of their culture in the central park of Sibundoy's square; they sculpted the trees with their ancestral art and created additional monuments symbolizing their community's presence and healing traditions. Their world view and spirituality are now standing next to the religion imposed through colonization. Today, the square itself is a testament to the presence, albeit unequal, and co-existence of the Kamentza, the catholic church, and the Colombian settlers.

The Kamentza people call their ancestral territory "Tabanok," a place of departure, arrival, and return. In their view, their birth is linked with the womb of the earth as a living being. Another symbol of their adaptation while retaining their traditions involves the ritual of "shinyak." This ritual signals the connection of humans with the earth when the placenta and umbilical cord of the newborn is buried next to a stone, or "shachekbé." It also signals that all beings return to the earth and will continue the legacy of the elders relative to work with the land, home building, craft and art making, and the interpretation of nature, dreams, and the cycles of life. In their view, the continuation of these practices is what makes them Kamentza. They see themselves as beings from this territory which they describe as "kamuentśa yentsá, Kamëntśá biya" (people from here with their own thinking and their own language; an education project owned by the Kamentza, 2013). Their resilience is first collective and anchored in the negotiation of identity, land, government, and ways of life, affirmed by their belief systems, self-organization, and problem-solving within the community

and with outsiders. Walsh's (2016) view, that relational resilience involves organizational patterns, communication and problem-solving processes, community, resources, and affirming belief systems, only applies if the ecological context of colonization and coloniality is seen as interacting and shaping people's survival and well-being. Only then can their community narrative have coherence, and they will be able to make meaning of their existence.

The Kamentza's struggle for their territory is key to understanding that their pathways to resilience are intrinsically tied to their relationship with the land. According to the Kamentza Life Plan (2015), around the 1700s Inga—another and Kamentza community leaders Carlos Tamabioy (Inga) and Leandro Agreda (Kamentza) “bought” some of their lands back from the Spanish crown for 400 pieces of gold. The territory in question included their ancestral lands in the Sibundoy valley. The community government possesses documents that attest to this deal and provide further proof that since the 1940s both the Colombian State and the catholic church accepted that the lands belonged to these communities. While today the Kamentza have a protected territory within Colombia, the struggle for their ancestral lands is ongoing and essential to their autonomous existence, their decision-making, and the survival of the system of relationships that are created and recreated between them and their environment. Their relationship with the land conditions and transforms the human experience of reality; it frames and structures it. For example, the *jajañ* or *chagra* (the farm), involves relationships with plants, including the interactions between medicinal plants, humans, and animals. The Kamentza's knowledge and relationship with their lands are valuable hubs of practice in which indigenous peoples apply and produce knowledge related to the ecological dynamics of their land. According to Fonseca-Cepeda, Idrobo, and Restrepo (2019), a vast body of ecological knowledge is contained in the relationship with the *chagra*. For example, knowledge related to careful selection of plots, accurate recognition of light intensity, soil nutrients, and diverse vegetation strata evolves in this relationship. Knowledge and management of multiple components of the environment over time and space in *chagras* make up a cyclical process of intervention that assures continuous and sustainable production of food and the regeneration of the land. *Chagras* support both the material and the spiritual existence of the community in spaces demarcated by the relationship with the ecological system. According to Santos Jamióy (2019), younger Kamentza generations, like other indigenous groups in the area, move between *chagra* and school. Borderland spaces are generated as academic knowledge from the colonizers and agricultural wisdom from their elders is utilized. The information gained through formal education and the combination of different knowledge systems has the potential to promote unique pathways for adaptation.

The Kamentza's relationship with time, like their relationship with land, also reflects the experiences of their community and of the quality of their collective lives lived together. While they conceive time as cyclical in some aspects (e.g., agriculture, rituals), there are four grand times that mark their relationship with colonization and coloniality: (i) *Kaca temp*, or time of darkness, mythological entities, and extraordinary occurrences relative to their initial origin; (ii) *Kabengbe temp*, or time of cultural flourishing and development of the community with its own ways of governance, cultural traditions, and healing practices; (iii) *Squenegbe temp*, or arrival of the colonizers, a time marked by physical, emotional, and spiritual violence; and (iv) *Shenetsa temp*, or time of scarcity when all cultures

and communities inhabited the lands and had to agree on how to share and survive over time. This general marking of times shows how the Kamentza have organized their world and maintained a sense of coherence (a factor in their resilience) out of the experience of coloniality.

Today, life is marked by risks and possibilities that the Kamentza have to navigate while negotiating their relationships with hostile environments that undermine their efforts via capitalism, expert institutions, a repressive government, and dualist rationalities perpetrated by a larger dominant culture that pushes capitalism and individualism. Bolivian scholars such as Zavaleta (1990), Rivera Cusicanqui (2014), and Tapias Mealla (2002) capture what resilience looks like in these contexts. Pathways to resilience (Wright & Masten, 2015) here involve communities' existence in spaces where there is a disarticulated superimposition of various types of societies, implying various historical times, modes of production, languages, and forms of government, among other factors. In these spaces, communities have developed a capacity to define their own ways of coexisting with modernity, with more conviviality and less competition because of the weaving of indigenous practices with those brought in by outsiders. Some of these spaces have been generated by community work systems based on "jenabuatemban" (lend a hand, accompany and teach each other at work) that preserve the collective character of activities essential to the reproduction of the communal life and "mengay," a community gathering to work on a specific activity targeting communal involvement in harvesting, construction of homes and places for rituals, and preparations for annual community rituals and festivities such as the "Bëtsknatë" (Big Day). Escobar (2018) explains that each communal way of coming together:

Can be understood only in its relation with the noncommunal exterior; that is the outside spiral: it begins with an external imposition, which unleashes, or not, an internal resistance, and develops into adaptation. This results in *lo propio* (what is one's own) and the *We*. (p. 178)

Escobar (2018) cites Oaxacan activist Arturo Guerrero to explain the meaning of making community as an opening to all beings and all forces:

Because even if the *We* comes about in the actions of concrete women, men and children, in that same movement, all that is visible and invisible below and on the Land also participates, following the principle of complementarity, among all that is different. The communal is not a set of things, but an integral fluidity. (p. 177)

This intimate connection between the Kamentza and the Land has supported a rich legacy of traditional healing practices involving plant medicine. Jamioy explains that his people hold the view that since the beginning of the human experience, plants have played a role in the evolution of humans, in the provision of food and medicine, and in spiritual experiences and the development of consciousness. For the Kamentza shamans, it was the plants themselves that taught humans how to heal and know their souls. The plants that are central to their culture are used in medicine, religious ceremonies, and rites of passage.

Traditions relative to the relationship with the plant and its curative uses survived within the secret spaces of family homes. Yajé, for example, is a tea made from the vine *Banisteriopsis caapi* and the leaves of the chacruna (*Psychotria viridis*) or chagrapanga (*Banisteriopsis rusbyana*) plants; it is a potent visionary mixture that alters human consciousness and opens the person who drinks it to the experience of other emotions, thoughts, and worlds. The Kamentza and other indigenous peoples believe that a yajé purge releases “spiritual poisons” that can lead to physical illness. By clearing out the system physically and spiritually, the purge restores balance to the soul and empowers the body to fight against disease. This healing practice seems in line with an understanding of human cognition as embodied beyond the head and extending throughout and beyond the living body to encompass the world outside of the organism’s physiological boundaries and as emerging through self-organized processes that span and interconnect the brain, body, and environment in reciprocal loops of causation. The curative aspects of this tradition involve personal consciousness as intricately related to neural and somatic activity (Varela et al., 2016). Despite all this, the catholic Church made every possible effort to destroy the Kamentza’s healing traditions, shamans, and shamanic rituals (Musalem Nazar, 2017). The survival and thriving of plant knowledge and healing practices amongst the peoples of the Amazon Basin and among the Kamentza is another illustration of how a world view in which plants and humans coexist and collaborate with each other generates borderland spaces and bolsters resilience. In fact, today these practices are protected by the Colombian government and their survival has been symbolized in the monuments erected in the municipal square right in front of the catholic church.

The relationships that the Kamentza in the Andes and other indigenous peoples had in the Amazon Basin with yajé and other plants were almost certainly well-established before the arrival of Europeans in Abya Yala (Wade, 2007). Indigenous peoples believe that the medicinal work they do with yajé goes back to the earliest human inhabitants of the region. Yajé, along with many other medicinal plants, gradually became integrated into the ethnomedical traditions of the mestizo populations through colonization. Adults, young people, and children are integrated into the yagé rituals, which are directed by the “tatšëmbuá,” “maestro,” “taita,” or “curandero,” who must have learned for many years next to a teacher and who have a special recognition within the community for their healing arts and communication with the spirits of the jungle. Unlike what has happened in other places in the Amazon, where yagé is known as ayahuasca and where its traditional use has been lost or christianized, among the Kamentza it is part of a medicinal and spiritual practice in which the healer makes use of plants from the chagra that he/she knows and takes care of (Life Plan, 2015). Thus, the circulation of knowledge of life is enacted through a series of practices involving knowledge, sacred sites, seeds, rituals, and customary law. In this context, resilience is both process and outcome resulting from the interweaving of a sophisticated relationship with plants in which the human capacity to perceive the world through sensory capacities developed over evolutionary time have been extended to allow for an ongoing capacity to give rise to other ways to exist in the world (Harrod Buhner, 2014). The example of yajé also demonstrates how community healing practices that promote physical, psychological, and spiritual resilience are closely tied to institutionalized government laws and practices, the codification of morality through religious doctrine (and its oppression of subordinated cultures), and

many other social, political, and religious systems that work for or against the promotion of the well-being of indigenous peoples.

In addition to diverse and multiple healing practices that we do not have space to discuss here, the Kamentza have been able to preserve key festivities that encapsulate their identity and history such as the Clestrinye/Cabenge Bëtskнатé. According to Jamioy, Cabenge Bëtskнатé means our Big Day in relation to our surroundings. It marks the end of one span of time and the germination of another; a form of cyclical temporality, based on the restitution of the natural life forces. It is an organized ritual in which specific music, dances, and songs are prepared. Ironically, the festival begins the Monday before the christian holiday of Ash Wednesday and ends on Ash Wednesday. However, preparations and cleanup begin earlier and end later. This carnival is a call from the traditional authorities to re-encounter and to reconcile; it begins within the space of families and moves outside to the larger community and the traditional authorities to the public space. It is a way in which the Kamentza demonstrate their existence as a people and their culture in spite of the past genocide (Jaramillo Guerrero & Davila Zambrano, 2013).

Ontological Resilience

From the standpoint of the Kamentza, the survival and affirmation of their people, way of life, and territory is about being, that is, existing, and re-existing in a relational world in which every being exists because all others exist. The historical expropriation of their territories and the current occupation and continued looting is both material and ontological. Its ontological dimension involves the pressure of individualism, expert knowledge, and a capitalist economy. One strategy for responding to the pressures of the Colombian state, foreign corporations, and globalization has been to develop a place-based Life Plan (Life Plan, 2015) centered in the recovery of their territory, as this is the collective space for existence in which traditions are kept alive. During the last 10 years the Kamentza developed a formal vision for their community, to be disseminated within and outside of the community and to be used as a guide in their own voice. Their Life Plan is a narrative that makes sense of their predicament; it maps possibilities for adaptation and a positive vision for the community. Kirmayer et al. (2011) speaks of narrative resilience as having a collective dimension:

Maintained by the circulation of stories invested with cultural power and authority, which the individual and groups can use to articulate and assert their identity, arraign core values and attitudes needed to face challenges, and generate creative solutions to new predicaments. (p. 86)

The Life Plan is a narrative affirming the existence of a place-based and communal weave of life.

According to Jacanamejoy (Life Plan, 2015), this life vision is about re-existing, that is, challenging and coping with various ways in which the dominant culture affects the Kamentza while maintaining a way of life that is differentiated from the dominant culture.

It is about sustaining their social, political, cultural, and economic fabric. The community's vision is called "Benge luarents sboachanak mochtaboashents juabin, memoria and beyan," which means "Let's plant with strength and hope the thought, memory and language in our territory." It seeks through legal and practical efforts to protect their lands, sources of food, and traditional knowledge of ancestral agriculture, education, culture, and artistic and spiritual knowledge and practices.

This vision for the community was created with a methodology faithful to their ways of constructing knowledge, "Jenebtbiaman y Jenoyeunayam," in which community held discussions and generated consensus and decisions, going back to their beginning as a people and through their connection with their territory. This is an example of what Tuhiwai Smith (2012) calls decolonizing methodology; for the Kamentza, it involves the following processes of knowledge building and decision-making:

1) JENOJUABOYAN: devising, thinking, organizing, planning, and identifying needs, opportunities and actions; 2) JOTSANAN: taking the step, getting closer to where perspectives and experiences can begin to connect; 3) JENCHUAYAN: the respectful greeting that acknowledges the previous dialogic encounters; 4) JOBJAN or JENOBJAN: attention, invitation to enter, to share; 5) JENEFTBIAMAN: the dialogic encounter where children, youth, and adults have the opportunity to share their knowledge, and experiences; 6) JOUENAN, JOYEUNAYAN: the process of listening to each other, responding spontaneously, and understanding; Jouenan refers not only the human word but also communication between all living beings (plants, animals, rivers, etc.); JOYEUNAYAN: listening with all the senses, sitting with what is heard, and digesting it; 7) JENANJAN: providing food; 8) JENJUAN: allowing conversation on topics where there isn't agreement or disagreement; it is a process that results from spontaneous and ongoing conversation in which the words are heard, interpreted, and reinterpreted in the light of experience, feeling, history, and tradition; 9) JENOYEUNAYAM: agreement between the parties through dialogue outside of the binary good/bad; 10) JTISENOBJAN: the spirit of creating a space and invitation to future dialogue; 11) JTOCHUAYAN: appreciation for the opportunity to share the word (Jacanamejoy, 2015, p. 30).

This methodology gives new meaning to Bakhtin's (1990) understanding of dialogue as a discourse that allows for, encourages, recognizes the appropriation and adaptation of other voices, and is characterized by a polyphony of voices. Here, the act of speaking, naming or articulating one's experience with words is intimately connected with the flow of emotions and experience as the basis for the recursive coordination of behavior. It also shows the self-other co-determination that Varela, Thompson, and Rosh (2016) explain as resulting from open boundaries that exist at all levels through ongoing, dynamic interaction in which self and other create one another at the most fundamental levels.

According to Masten (2011), Theron and Liebenberg (2015), and Ungar (2018), in examining resilience in contexts of high exposure to stress, the impact of social policies, community supports, schools, and families counts more than individual biology or

temperament in psychosocial outcomes. Canadian scholars (Kirmayer et al., 2011) proposed a social-ecological view of resilience to address the distinctive cultures, geographic and social settings, and histories of adversity of indigenous peoples. They identified the following processes of resilience: regulating emotion and supporting adaptation through relational, ecocentric, and cosmocentric concepts of self and personhood; revisioning collective history in ways that valorize collective identity; revitalizing language and culture as resources for narrative self-fashioning, social positioning, and healing; and renewing individual and collective agency through political activism, empowerment, and reconciliation. Fikret and Ross (2012), for example, proposed addressing resilience as a systems concept dealing with adaptive relationships and learning in social-ecological systems across nested levels and as a process whereby community strengths are identified and fostered in indigenous communities. In cultural studies, Mohanty (2003) speaks of similar processes in which the sources of connection, support, liberatory meaning-making, and change stem from creating, recreating, and maintaining community. However, she considers these processes to be forms of resistance that are not always identifiable through organized movements and that are encoded in practices of remembering, alternative forms of family life, and in writings such as testimonials. Feminist queer Chicana scholar Pérez (1999, 2003) speaks of the decolonial imaginary as a space in between, where systems of domination are negotiated, a space to inhabit and hold while at the same time challenging those systems. Pérez (1999) explains that social positioning should not be read as a binary, describing, on one end, oppression and victimization and on the other privilege and perpetration. She insists that multiple social positions are always at work, and this creates a liminal identity in which “one negotiates within the imaginary to a decolonizing otherness where all identities are at work in one way or another” (p. 7). However, this position needs to go further to acknowledge and articulate the standpoints of nature and other beings. It is a human articulation of course, but it can express a standpoint from which humans are not the center of the planet but only a component in relationship with everyone and everything else.

Given this standpoint, specific initiatives have been developed within the Kamentza community targeting actions within and outside their territory that can lend themselves to expansion and increased sophistication for the benefit of the community involved. For example, a youth project in which there is a continuous and coordinated set of activities that foster learning, valuing, and affirming material and spiritual connections with the land through film clubs, recreational activities, reading rooms, rituals, and dance and music groups. Jamioy explains that field trips involve observation and dialogue about how their land and livelihood have been negatively impacted and how they can keep and strengthen them by developing a sense of self, belonging, and connection with other beings. These initiatives engage the youth in accompanying the elders such as Taitas and government leaders into negotiations and mobilizations relative to the rights of their people. Reading and conversation with adults designated by the community emphasize recovering the memory of their wisdom and customs. At the same time, the ongoing fight for their territory is the most important site of resilience, as this territory is the living container for life interconnected with all beings:

For us, the territory goes beyond the occupation itself. That is, if the land with all its life is there, if the earth is there, intact and natural, that is also territory for us. Let it

be there, let no one touch it, if the water is there, let it be there. That if the mountains are there, without being inhabited, if there is not bean cultivated there, corn, whatever, but they are there. Because there, life is being guaranteed. It is as if we were saving for ourselves, for our children. But if that land is paved then it would no longer make sense and it would lose all that spiritual value. . . . For us that has been taught to us by our elders, that is, the fact that you are stepping on the earth, that is more valuable, the direct contact with mother watsana is more important. (Jacanamejoy, 2015, p. 35)

Conclusion

If we think of resilience from the practices of subaltern groups, we have to acknowledge and validate the legacies of colonization and the struggle to keep alive and expand borderland spaces where ontological resilience is at stake today. This involves moving away from purely internal cognitive processes to account for the complexity of environmental influences within models that integrate the impact of colonization, coloniality, and the interstices where resilience dwells. For the Kamentza, this means support from the international community and the academy in recovering and protecting their ancestral lands from private hands and the Colombian government; and an active stance to protect their territory from international corporations mining and destroying their sources of water, and looting their traditional knowledge of medicinal plants; material support to sustain and expand the learning of the Kamentza language and the bilingual and intercultural schools that center their ways of life while addressing how to understand, interact, and negotiate with Colombians and the foreigners who visit and settle in the area and initiatives that generate economic pathways to sustain well-being in relation to the modern world.

Research initiatives should be based in decolonizing methodologies (Glidden, 2011; Kovach, 2010; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) that claim, reclaim, and name a relational sense of self-inclusive of land and all other living beings, testimonials to bring in the memories of their pathways to resilience throughout history, storytelling, and narrative (Denborough, 2014; Jupp, Berumen, & O'Donald, 2018; Polanco, 2011). These projects are key to addressing resilience from the ways in which people narrate their lives, making sense of their own predicaments and mapping possibilities and visions for being. However, they must be integrated with actions involving processes of indigenizing, revitalizing, restoring, and protecting in concrete material ways the lands, homes, schools, native agriculture, and local economy. Resilience scholars can play an important role in calling for the mobilization of accountability from the dwellers of the modern world to take responsibility and extend their respectful support for a way of life to be solely determined by the Kamentza people (Reynolds, 2013).

Key Messages

1. Resilience is local and specific to the intricacies of systems of living of indigenous peoples.
2. An explicit epistemological point of departure is key to understanding the complexities of resilience processes in an ethical and socially just manner that addresses legacies of colonization and conditions of coloniality for indigenous peoples.

3. Understanding resilience in contexts of exposure to significant adversity involves examining the processes by which communities struggle, adapt, and navigate their way to a state of well-being and how they negotiate, recreate, and affirm their way of life.
4. Decolonizing methodologies should be integrated in the study of resilience to address larger context issues that shape people's ability to survive and thrive.
5. Resilience processes must be anchored in the multiple subjectivities of those who face adversities; embodied voices must be part of the meaning making process, along with access and opportunity for collective coping and an outlook open to possibilities.

Notes

1. This term usually refers to people of mixed racial or ethnic ancestry, especially, in Latin America, of mixed Indigenous and European descent.
2. "As legally defined in 1503, an *encomienda* ("to entrust") consisted of a grant by the crown to a conquistador, soldier, or official of a specified number of Indians living in a particular area. The encomendero extracted tribute from the Indians in gold, in kind, or in labor and was required to protect them and instruct them in the Christian faith. The *encomienda* did not include a grant of land, but in practice the *encomenderos* gained control of the Indians' lands and failed to fulfill their obligations to the Indian population" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2019).

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