

PODCAST: EMBODIED INEQUALITIES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

EPISODE 3:

"SAN MATEO DEL MAR: HOW TO REMAIN IKOOTS IN THE FACE OF DEVELOPMENT MEGAPROJECTS"

00:00:01 Juan Mayorga: Embodied inequalities of the Anthropocene building capacities in medical anthropology, a series that analyses the impacts on human and non-human well-being in this geological era of profound transformations.

00:00:21 Gabriela Martínez: How can we reconcile human well-being with that of nature? Which weighs more: national development or the conservation of nature? Individual human rights or the collective rights of peoples? What are biocultural rights? And, in any case, what are the rights of nature? Faced with the growing and ever more pressing socio-environmental crises of the Anthropocene, the responsible and sustainable sovereignty practices of indigenous peoples appeal to those concerned with human rights and the rights of nature.

This is what we will discuss today in this new episode of the Embodied Inequalities of the Anthropocene podcast, an international collaboration between University College London, the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil, and the Centre for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology, CIESAS Pacific South in Mexico.

I am Gabriela Martínez, Postdoctoral Researcher at CIESAS Pacific South, and today I have the pleasure of sharing this talk with two great women: Teacher Beatriz Gutiérrez and Professor Flavia Cuturi.

Welcome, Flavia, welcome, Bety, how are you?

00:01:37 Flavia Cuturi: Thank you, fine here, live and direct from San Mateo del Mar, Oaxaca, Mexico.

00:01:43 Beatriz Gutiérrez: And well, Beatriz Gutiérrez, good afternoon from here, I'm a native of the community of San Mateo del Mar.

00:01:49 Gabriela: Well, thank you very much, Bety. Thank you very much, Flavia. It really is a pleasure and a privilege to have you with us.

Well, to begin, I would like to introduce you to our audience. Beatriz Gutiérrez Luis, is a native of the community of San Mateo del Mar, she is a bilingual preschool teacher and for 34 years she has worked to strengthen the Ikoots language and culture through initiatives to deliver bilingual education, and more recently, as a liaison for Monapaküy, a community organisation that emerged to support the reconstruction after the 2017 earthquake, here in Oaxaca, Mexico, on various initiatives in collaboration with other organisations.

On the other hand, Flavia Cuturi is a professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Naples L'Orientale in Italy. As an Anthropology student at the University of Rome La Sapienza, she began to exchange knowledge and life experiences with the Ikoots of San Mateo del Mar in Oaxaca, which continues to flourish to this day, of course. Over the years, her commitment

to the people of San Mateo has been demonstrated through her work on collaborative projects aimed at valuing the local knowledge involved in activities such as fishing, food preparation, the art of weaving and other communicative and identity expressions such as songs, poems, murals, etc.

One of the topics Flavia has most recently addressed is the history of the colonisation of the region, up to the current forms of neocolonisation of environmental resources and the eco-socio-political effects that extractivist projects have on the Ikoos community. Well, thank you both very much, and I would like to start with Teacher Bety. Could you explain to us who the indigenous Ikoos people are, and describe where they live and what the land they inhabit is like, please?

00:03:50 Beatriz: Well, “dios ikon müm, teat najneajay apmingeayiün akas poch ningüy tiül aaga nine manchiük küy” (in the Ombeayiüts language). Good afternoon to all, and it is also a pleasure to be here to share some words with the people and the audience who will listen to us. Greetings from here, from Ikoos lands

What can I say about my people? Well, we are a people who have been on these lands for approximately 1000 years. We are a people of men and women dedicated to fishing, to craftsmanship, and who survive in these magical lands, I could say, because in rainy times everything is green and harmonious. During the time of strong winds, which we have a lot of here, many strong winds that run from October last year we even had some winds in April—and in these winds where we live, we can also find dunes, arid areas, and we coexist with flora, like different types of cacti and different types of mangroves. It is a type of land that gives us a lot, right? Much in the sense that we are also surrounded by water, from different perspectives, right? And this defines us as Ikoos, because of our coexistence with the sea, with the Pacific Ocean, with the lagoon, and with the land itself, right? The coexistence with different types of winds: the north wind, the south wind, which in our language are two people. The south wind is a woman, the feminine part that brings us fertility, brings us life, brings us shrimp, brings us fish, brings us the milpa (cornfield), the maize. On the other hand, the north wind brings us different types of shrimp as well. When everything is calm, there are fish, when there is a lot of north wind, there are shrimp, and recently, in these times, shrimp and fish harvests have been decreasing.

I believe that living on this land defines us as Ikoos, right? Men and women who survive day by day, and who find it very difficult to sustain ourselves because our sandy lands do not allow for large-scale maize cultivation. We have squash, chilli, basil, but not on a large scale. I mean, like in the sierra where you can harvest enough to survive for almost the whole year, right? The harvest here—of watermelons, sweet potatoes, peanuts, even hibiscus—is small. This is what defines us here, the knowledge required for house construction, the preparation of traditional food, weaving, basketry—and why not say it, the spiritual connection we have with the sea and the land.

Our Ikoos language is unique in the world, and so is our way of choosing authorities, right? There are things that are unique in the world, such as the relationship we have with the sea.

From the time we are in the womb, we already have a relationship with the sea. From a young age, we already have a deep spiritual relationship. There are many things we Ikoots have that define us as Ikoots. An Ikoots without the sea, an Ikoots without being here in our own territory, well, we cannot conceive of ourselves as Ikoots, ok? We are very fortunate to be in this territory where these winds converge, which are also coveted by large companies.

00:08:26 Gabriela: Thank you very much, Bety. Without a doubt, you have given us a very enriching overview of who the Ikoots people are, right? This part you mentioned about the importance of having a territory, the south wind, the north wind, as you mentioned, the coexistence and the relationship you have with the sea, where it comes from, and this aspect of the south wind being feminine and the north wind bringing food. Also, we just heard a bird singing there where you are, so this shows us the closeness you have with nature.

Thank you very much, Bety. I have another, second question. Throughout history, for example, this region where you live has often been—perhaps unwillingly—the protagonist of numerous development projects promoted by the state and business groups, of course. Could you share with us, Bety, what event or intervention do you think has most impacted the daily life of your community?

00:09:36 Beatriz: Well, I think that, and many people might know this, the fact that the refinery was installed in Salina Cruz in the 70s, right? Since the 70s, we know that the installation of the refinery in Salina Cruz—which for the government at that time, and even now, they see it as development—well, it impacted us economically, right? Also, in terms of the environment. I know an engineer who told me that when the first breakwater was built, it affected the community of Colonia Cuauhtémoc because the neighbourhood started to flood. So, from the moment they built the first breakwater in Salina Cruz for the entry of oil tankers, it impacted life in San Mateo, right? Particularly life in Colonia Cuauhtémoc. Since then, many other impacts on the economic life of San Mateo followed, because when Salina Cruz was declared a city and a port, prices went up. This affects the lives of women because many women go to Juchitán or Tehuantepec to shop, as everything is more expensive in Salina Cruz. Also, the so-called development of Salina Cruz, and I say “so-called” because initially when the refinery was set up, there was a big boom in businesses, but now it has declined with the arrival of other transnational companies in Salina Cruz. This in some way also affects community life because it teaches us to live on credit, right? Shops offer credit and now, to buy clothes, they offer these on credit—clothes that cannot be paid for, or furniture, or some other item, and people end up in debt, this has happened more recently, right? Another impact of the refinery is the pollution of the lagoons. Oil spills from ships or the refinery itself pollute the lagoons, affecting the marine life we rely on for food. Also, the fact that the waste from the refinery goes into the sea. Our beaches used to be white, the sand was white. Now, if you go to the beach, to the Pacific, the sand is black, and this has something to do with the pollution from the refinery.

Also, on the other hand, the impact of wind companies, the visual impact and the environmental impact that the wind turbines have had here in the northern area of the Isthmus—from where we are to Juchitán, we can see the Tileme Sea, the Upper Lagoon, already surrounded by wind turbines, right? The wind turbines, with their noise, have affected

the life of the lagoon system we have, both visually and environmentally. Fishing has decreased, and we do not know if these blades have changed the wind direction, which may be why it hasn't rained, right? The older people think that everything happening in the northern Isthmus area, everything happening in Juchitán, in the Chimalapas, affects us directly because we are connected by the lagoons. Another visible impact is now the trans-Isthmus corridor, the trans-Isthmus train. During the pandemic, we didn't go out for two years, but now that we go out and about, we have seen that more companies have built around our town, at the exit. More companies have been built, the trans-Isthmus corridor has been implemented, and all these maquiladoras will affect the aquifer that feeds the lagoon, the lagoons we have here north of the town, which are also connected to the Río de los Perros, the Tehuantepec River, and all of this will affect us in some way, right?

One of the things that affects us is the increased cost of living, as I mentioned, and this particularly affects women because we are the ones who go out and look for food for the family. Maybe we will also start to see the environmental impact soon, right? Because life here in San Mateo del Mar is about surviving day by day. So, with the trans-Isthmus train, life in Salina Cruz will become more expensive, and cheap labour will come from here, from San Mateo, and people will go to work in Salina Cruz, which is 25 minutes to half an hour away ever since the road was paved. The elders did not want it; they resisted having a paved road, but now we see it is necessary for health reasons.

You mentioned the day-to-day impact on community life, this whole issue of children eating junk food, or that we don't encourage them to eat the local sweets we produce in the community. All these external products that have also made us sick. Soft drinks, our way of dressing, our way of thinking, I think all of this has affected us.

00:16:30 Gabriela: That's right, Bety, thank you for this overview of big capital, because capital does not stop. As you said, during the COVID-19 pandemic, while you were responding to global health warnings, capital did not stop; it kept on going and it continues to impact human and non-human health. You mentioned very well how it has impacted your socio-economic life, your way of living, dressing, what you eat, what you consume, and how it has changed the environmental landscape that you have there. So, it is clear that large projects, or “megaprojects” as they are called, have tended to negatively affect human health, right? And you are experiencing it directly, to the point that, as you mentioned, you are subsisting—not living, but subsisting. Thank you, Bety.

Well, now I will continue with Professor Flavia. Flavia, you have been working for more than 40 years as an anthropologist in the Ikoots region, where Bety is from. Over this time, what has the Ikoots culture taught you? And what have you tried to convey to the non-Ikoot world through your work?

00:18:14 Flavia: Thank you, Gabriela, thank you for inviting me to this conversation—let's say, this dialogue. What you are asking of me is almost a synthesis and an assessment of my life, which, of course, I cannot do in this context, at this moment. Because, as you say, the years I have dedicated to here—not to work, because I wouldn't use that word in this context to describe my activities—have been very intense. Arriving here at 21, I think the most important

thing for me is that I grew up, in a certain sense, with women and men of different ages who have always accompanied and supported me on this path, they have supported me and this has been a great privilege. We have shared countless dialogues and exchanges, and I think perhaps the most interesting and important thing is that we have built a mutual awareness of some of the different aspects of the life of the Ikoots of San Mateo. And one of these, which has not really been addressed in the research—but I don't like to talk about it in that sense—is, for example, having explored the relationship between writing and orality—and I am also going to explain what this has to do with the topics we are discussing at the moment, and also its potential—the power of writing, with which people here have increasingly engaged over time, dedicating more and more time to writing—obviously in their language—and this has become a very important instrument of power, especially in terms of creativity and identity recognition. For this reason, I started exploring this topic with relevant figures for the history of the town, for example with a fisherman who has since passed away, Juan Olivares, who was the first to start writing, more or less on his own. But he was the one who, in a certain sense, broke this silence and fear of writing, showing that it was possible to write in his language. He did it particularly as a private form of writing. But what he wrote about, in most cases, was precisely to describe his culture and the discourse he heard. So, this is already a very important testimony.

The other key figure related to this topic of communication was the weaver Justina Oviedo, who, through her looms and her works—which are well known not only in the region but especially in Oaxaca and many parts of the world, because she is an absolutely brilliant weaver—her woven texts tell the story of her people. She was one of the first women to communicate with the world by describing *her* world from *her* perspective. Through her textiles, we read how she saw society, how she saw her people and her town, and how she wanted to convey them. Therefore, communication is important. The third area where this link between orality and writing is demonstrated is in descriptions of how food is prepared. Here I'm talking about a collection of oral testimonies by many women who, for the first time, described in their words how to cook, how to prepare food. Apart from being obviously an important role that women play, I want to emphasise that maybe this is an aspect of society shows the relationship of interdependence between men and women. The transformation of men's work, of fishing, but also that of the women, whether it is work in the fields, and each recipe, each food preparation, illustrates, in a certain sense, the link between men and women, the link with the territory, the link with its resources, and the sustainable way of transforming these resources.

And so, in the end, apart from the interdependence between men and women in each preparation, there is also the fulfilment, so to speak, of the interdependence between humans and non-humans. This is what is most important. As these recipes and preparations have been published with glossaries and many other things, here we can see, as Bety mentioned, how the local diet has changed. In a certain sense, some families have moved away from consumption based on local resources, and as a result, the quality of their diet has deteriorated over time, including store-bought tortillas and imported fish. This is what I wanted to convey, some of the things I wanted to share with the world beyond San Mateo, but also within San Mateo itself. That is why I spoke earlier about mutual awareness, because

everyone eats, everyone appreciates the weaving, but how can all this be valued more, starting from within, within the same community, but not just by talking to people from outside? All that I tried to do was to communicate this, speaking also and above all, with my friends and colleagues here in San Mateo to start with. Beyond that, in this sense, on many occasions, I found myself taking responsibility in all this, and started acting as a spokesperson for Ikoots knowledge, especially through their language. This is very important. Another element that anthropologists sometimes easily forget is their history—the history of dispossession, rejection, and marginalisation, which perhaps instead of diminishing, I believe has increased, because the demographic growth in San Mateo does not allow all young people to stay in the village. Therefore, living outside, studying outside, and finding work outside the community, one can certainly encounter many problems. With that, I hope I have answered the first question.

00:26:44 Gabriela: Of course you did, and you answered it very well, Flavia, thank you very much. Indeed, you started very young to live with and witness, as you say, and then you became a spokesperson for this community, and you are able to tell us how this interdependence exists, as you said, between humans and non-humans, and how identity is constructed in the relationship that is woven between writing and orality in this community. So, we will obviously learn more about your work in-depth. In one of your most recent books, Flavia, you and other authors have engaged in a dialogue between anthropology and law to discuss nature, to consider nature as a possible subject of rights. So, what has led you to weave this dialogue, which is an interdisciplinary dialogue, and what have you learned from this?

00:27:54 Flavia: Thank you. As you can imagine, this could be a very long discussion, but I will start with the end of the previous request and say, for example, that one of the things that has brought me closer to this topic is precisely what being here has taught me. Here, over time, I have seen territorial conflicts, whether between neighbours or political conflicts within the same village. Now, as Bety mentioned before, through the megaprojects, and how this has triggered many socio-economic conflicts. So, precisely from this perspective, I have seen how the village—not in a compact form but through many different people—has tried to maintain, despite all these complicated and sometimes tragic dynamics, to find in its own history and in its own way, something like a guiding axis that has always been there in times of crisis—and not only in times of crisis. These axes, both collective and community-based, are based on some very clear principles, which are tentative: attempts to maintain, for example, the village within a framework of socio-economic equality; the second, an authority that is not authoritarian; the third, to be, in any case, an inclusive and quite tolerant community. Their name, Ikoots, means "We inclusively." So, there is a story to tell here, but this is just to highlight some main ideas. And then, precisely, the interdependence between humans and non-humans. Perhaps seeing all this in crisis or, in any case, in an effort to try to remain faithful to these different forms or these axes, I asked: "Why do they make such an effort? They are doing their own thing, and they also have historical guarantees, right? This is an autonomous village, which is recognised in the Constitution. But despite this, it continues daily, right? There are moments when all this finds itself in a push towards a change that is not theirs, a transformative and possibly destructive change. So, it was precisely this concern that pushed me towards a dialogue with the legal world to ask, in a very simple but hopefully effective

way, why does the law not provide any guarantee? What must be done to know more about the link between public life and the legal context in which these people are offering the rules and criteria for good living, for community living, so that a village like this can live and contribute to the nation? So, there, especially on the subject of rights that are related to these conflicts, the legal world has shown its history, the weight of its history, a history that is anthropocentric.

So, I immersed myself in a dialogue with law professors from various legal disciplines, because they all have their own area of expertise—constitutional, administrative, private law. Each plays a role in this complex web of problems, and each, in a certain sense, has stated that the socio-environmental conflicts we are experiencing are precisely a long-standing inheritance of a perspective where society and nature, society and environment are seen as divided. Here we are talking about an understanding of nature—one that perhaps not all the peoples of the world share—but one that is a very old inheritance from the ancient Mediterranean world where, in a certain sense, the dominion of man over nature was established, where nature is understood to be at the service of man, within his reach, made precisely so that humans can live enjoying the environment—not with the environment, but by appropriating it. Clearly, we are simplifying the discussion here, because it is very complex, with a whole theological and philosophical history that we have inherited. The legal framework is based on this anthropocentrism. For example, the concept of legal personality states that it is much easier to recognize a legal personality in humans who can interact directly with the law, the state, and institutions. How can a tree, a sea, the wind, etc., do that? So here we can see that even though states are multicultural, like Mexico, for example, they are not "multi-juridical." They are not based on a legal system that also takes into account the laws that indigenous communities promote through their ontology, their perspective on the link and the pact that binds humans and non-humans.

We can't delve further into this dialogue right now, but it is true that it is not enough, for example, like the Constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, which in 2009 were modified to include a right that recognizes nature precisely as a protagonist, a subject to be consulted and defended. Moreover, if one reads especially the Bolivian Constitution, here we can see that nature refers to all the points of view of Bolivia's indigenous groups. Nature is understood as something like "Monapaküy," as Bety might tell us a little later on—not simply the right, the recognition of nature as a subject, but what this notion means within a very complex worldview, where territory, people, climate, atmospheric events, stones, etc., are all included. One thing we have learned from this connection is that there is an increasing sensitivity in this dialogue where it is very difficult for the so-called "Western world" —but practically the whole world where there is a state, to recognize a legal personality beyond being human—there is certainly a growing sensitivity. For example, there is an increasing emphasis on fostering not just individual responsibility but collective responsibility, and on re-centering our position in the world. This strengthens the dialogue with all the legal philosophies of native peoples of Oceania for example, where the idea of responsibility, specifically in human-non-human relationships, can provide some clues to renew our legal structure and, above all, our position on the planet. Because the main problem at the root of all this environmental dispossession, which consequently proves that this problem cannot be separated from human dispossession,

is that when there is environmental dispossession, there is also human dispossession, dispossession of women and children, etc.

So, I do see a lot of sensitivity coming from the legal world with which I have engaged. I have exchanged ideas precisely on overcoming this anthropocentrism and to find ways to change it, to turn it in favor of what native peoples suggest, especially through their history. They have resisted both ancient and new colonization, and without falling into the paternalistic view of seeing them as guardians of nature—which is an error, it is another factor that does not allow for an equal dialogue between state structures, or even worse, companies, and citizens of the planet, which includes the many native peoples we know and who still have much to teach us in this regard.

00:38:47 Gabriela: Once again, let's address the complex relationship between the rights of nature and the rights of societies, as you said, or the rights of nature and the environment, right? Or this great paradox that exists between how communities like the Ikoot community, approach this from a position of “we,” from inclusivity, as you mentioned, and how then Western or Westernized law is or can be exclusive through dispossession, for example. And here we are talking about the dispossession of everything, as you mentioned, which implies even the disappearance of both humans and non-humans.

The way we have treated nature as if it were a manipulable object at our whim has led us to extreme levels of exploitation, violence, and unsustainability. These global processes have repercussions on the lives of real people. Teacher Bety, how has this logic of death manifested in the health of the Ikoots and in the health of the sea and the Earth that you inhabit and share with other beings? And how do you manage to promote the opposite: health, or what you call “Monapaküy?”

00:40:08 Beatriz: This logic of death has materialized in relation to our health as Ikoots because our diet has changed. The fact that we no longer consume local food from the community has altered our bodies. I remember older people like my mom, who was around 95 years old, they were thin people, people who didn't have much of a belly. My mom was one of those who didn't eat things from the fridge, and she didn't drink sodas, and always after eating, she would drink something warm. She tried to eat as healthily as possible without knowing it, but it has to do with flavors, the taste of food. We had a fridge, but if my mom kept food in it, she wouldn't eat it. She didn't eat farm eggs. Chicken broth, well that she would eat, and the food she made, because if you want to eat something tasty, cook it yourself, make it yourself, right? Now we see many people in the market buying ready-made food, life has changed from before to now, it has changed our diet a lot, and there's a lot of fried food, there's a lot of canned food, there are many junk products in schools, on street corners, and this has changed the composition of our bodies. Now Ikoots have a bit of a belly, we are chubbier, because of the changes in our eating habits. Also, in that aspect, things like juices, sweets and milk have changed our palate, right? These are no longer the tastes we had before. For example, we liked to eat totopo, eat epazote totopo, eat bean totopo, eat sweet potato, pumpkin. Now our palate has gotten used to sweeter products. We no longer eat that food from before, those 13 flavors that we have here in the town. Well all this has changed, the taste of our palate has changed, and that has affected the health of Ikoots a lot. As for the

health of the sea, at first glance, we can also see the garbage—I can say that on a smaller scale, we produce plastic waste, disposable plates, containers, bags—but also in the sea, when the tide rises, it brings us a whole lot of plastic that we can see on the beach, from syringes to shoes, soda caps, shampoo bottles—we can find a lot of plastic stuff on the seashore that the tide brings us.

So that's the health of the sea. As for the pollution in the sea, well, the refinery oils, right? Here on land, here where we are living, we can also see a lot of pollution—there are tyres, plastic mostly, that's what has contaminated us the most. But these are things that come from outside, and the truth is that here in the community, measures haven't been taken to say “Well, let's reduce our use of plastics a bit,” and we use less, right? There are some minimal efforts being made, but this is not enough.

Also, regarding the pollution of our soul, as Ikoots, we can talk about contamination of our being, of our spirituality as well, because the younger ones—including myself—we no longer have that respect, that reverence for nature, that spirituality, this is deteriorating little by little. So, in that aspect, I also think that there is contamination of our soul, of our essence as Ikoot, in the way we relate to our Earth, our deities, our sea. But at the same time, we are also seeing how we can confront this situation, and consider this issue of other beings with whom we share the Earth, with whom we share the sea. Turtles also come here to nest, and turtles are a sacred animal for us as well, because they come to lay their eggs, they also provide us with food. But on the other hand, we have no plans to help the conservation of the eggs of these animals. So, in that aspect, before there used to be a bit more respect towards the turtle, but now this is also deteriorating little by little, and it has a lot to do with the education people receive, it has a lot to do with the education provided in schools. I can say that the introduction of other elements that come from outside have had an effect as well. But like a lady said, well, we also take in these elements and don't assert, on the other hand, the elements we have of respect for nature.

00:46:10 Gabriela: Thank you, Beatriz, for this intervention. Flavia, based on your experience as a woman and a professional, between at least two worlds—Italy, your country of origin, and Mexico, your adopted country, so to speak—do you have any message or “rally call” regarding the possibility of sharing dialogues and actions in this moment marked by conflicts, atomization, and destruction that you want to share?

00:46:38 Flavia: Of course, to answer that is really quite difficult. But what I can say is that the whole world is experiencing a crisis, let's say, of general orientation. We can see this in our country—especially with young people between 20 and 30 years old—they are bewildered, they see the absolute inertia of politics. The world is heading towards a potent failure, which we can see in the wars we are experiencing close to our countries. It's as if the whole world—and especially some people who are taking the political stage in an authoritarian way like dictators—seem to have lost their way, they have lost the sense of the risk we are living, and that, especially scientists, for example, climate scientists and other biological sciences, not to go too deep into certainty, are precisely saying “Stop! We have to change course, let's reflect, we can't go on like this.” But it seems that this is a call to which especially young people

respond, obviously worried because they don't see the future, they simply don't see it, they don't know where to go, what to do, etc.

I share that same concern, I mean, something that keeps you awake at night, and that's the truth. And here in San Mateo, it's as if it were a microcosm experiencing all this, because so-called globalization—a keyword—is concrete. I mean, nobody is outside of this rhythm towards an uncertain end, and that we see—or at least I see—very negatively for some time now. I don't know, about 3 years ago or so, a young man we talked to in Cuauhtémoc, this same neighborhood that Bety mentioned, which has been affected precisely by the port of Salina Cruz—the river Tehuantepec, for example, its estuary is not the same as before, it has changed because of the Benito Juárez Dam, which was built mainly for the refinery or for industrial purposes. Well, he asked me a few years ago: “Flavia, what do you think? Will we still be here in 5, 6 or 7 years?” I mean, I was amazed by that question. I mean, I didn't know whether to cry or what to answer, because it's a profound, radical question that all of us have to ask ourselves.

So, if one wants to make a call, send a message, it's this: the way out is a total change, precisely by taking responsibility as individuals and as people, and at the same time collectively for a change towards decentralization, let's say of our needs, and how humans, well, they were able to grow and evolve precisely because they knew how to put themselves in other people's shoes. Well, that has to be a daily political practice that we have to do, putting ourselves in other people's shoes—I mean, asking ourselves whether our needs are taking away wealth, resources, etc., from others, so changing our needs. And this starts precisely by reflecting on how to self—and I'm talking about my world—self-decolonize our knowledge. It's us who have to decolonize our knowledge first of all, and well, this is where, let's say, the alternative, “the alternative”—as much as one can play with this—I mean, the native worlds, which are also the peasant worlds of our same society, as we say in Italian, or whatever. They are still enormous treasures of coexistence, of knowledge, of knowledge that have kept us and the planet alive until now. So I say that at once, and here also the United Nations, etc., are saying to the table of political decision makers, the native populations have to be there, not just for their folklore, but be there to contribute their knowledge. I say it's time to give equal decision-making power to the populations that can show us a way out of this crisis and well, see if with this we can achieve—I'm not saying to save the planet, but to change the horrendous course it's on. And well, from our profession as anthropologists, there are many who are doing this, I mean, colleagues who are giving more and more equal space to these voices, and from here we have to start our journey again.

00:52:32 Gabriela: Of course, thank you very much, Flavia, for this intervention. Lastly, Teacher Bety, to give us a hopeful conclusion, I would like you to briefly share with us what the Monapaküy organization is about, what it does, and how, in any case, we can get in touch with and support you.

00:52:51 Beatriz: Well, to conclude on a hopeful note, I would like to talk—before talking about Monapaküy—a little bit about the school. Earlier I mentioned junk food. In the preschool where I've been working for about 20 years, we've encouraged children to no longer bring junk food to school. So gradually, we have sensitized mothers, fathers, and the School

Assembly to avoid these products, even before there was a law against junk food in Oaxaca, as now it's prohibited for anyone to give junk food to children, especially in schools. We started this 20 years ago, and children bring products like shrimp, diced fruit, tortilla, bread, fresh water, and atole. So, as something hopeful from the school, that's been done. We have also created murals and signs in ombeayiüts, and the school has promoted the elaboration and formation of the ombeayiüts alphabet. So, I believe that the school has contributed in the way it can to the strengthening and development of culture in general.

So, I would also like to talk about what Monapaküy means to us. Well, Monapaküy is a community organization that was formed after the September earthquake in 2017. In Monapaküy, firstly, due to the earthquake, some of us women who coincided on certain issues got together. We are women who, after work, volunteer our time in the evenings to support other women and the community. Monapaküy is a word that means “well-being,” “health,” “good life,” it also means “strength.” We like all the significance this word carries, especially that of health, that of a good life, this Monapaküy, this strength that we women can find among ourselves to be able to run this organization. It's an organization that is not registered, but we formed it after the earthquake. As I was saying, after the earthquake, there was the opportunity for a community dining hall to be set up at the school. Another colleague Roselia from the town council, as she was a topil [local authority], she also organized another kitchen and support from other organizations.

Following the formation of Monapaküy, we were integrated with the support of the Tepeyac Human Rights Center at that time, and subsequently by the Center of Support for the Oaxacan Popular Movement (CAMPO), who have accompanied us during these years for the work we are doing in Monapaküy, the volunteer work we are doing in Monapaküy, together with other organizations such as COPEVI, community cooperation, and individuals who have supported the reconstruction with their hands and their volunteer work and with some money as well. Well, also in terms of the support we provide in Monapaküy, we also supported and worked liaised to help build 27 dry toilets between 2018 and 2019. Another organization also supported us to help construct 18 earthen kitchens. These dry toilets were built with palm roofs and earth, and similarly, these kitchens, some were built with palm roofs, others with tile roofs, with earth, so that they would be in harmony with the environment—sustainable constructions that don't generate as much waste as cement does. So, with that vision of also supporting the environment by reducing our carbon footprint a bit, the earth kitchens were promoted in collaboration with Community Cooperation and the dry toilets in collaboration with COPEVI, another organization that has supported us. And more recently, we have started building a center, the Monapaküy Center, which is also a center for alternative energies, and for this project, CAMPO has donated us a whole solar panel system. These solar panels that CAMPO has donated have allowed us to have a sewing workshop, a cutting and sewing workshop that is given together with the community high school to the community high school students. And this has allowed 9 young people to work with their sewing machines, they can use the iron, charge their cell phones, have the fans on in this space, and this has contributed a lot to these young women who are not only trained academically in school, but also in the fact that they can have a trade later on. There's also a carpentry workshop that is being supported by other organizations that work with us, where more recently they have

made signs for environmental care in ombeayiüts. Apart from this sewing workshop and the carpentry workshop, we have an ombeayiüts language workshop to promote the oral tradition of ombeayiüts with children and young people who are not speakers, but who can learn ombeayiüts as a second language. These solar alternatives have also allowed 11 families to have solar panels in their homes. Families who don't have electricity, who live almost right by the sea, have also been provided with solar panels. Smokeless stoves have also been provided that help prevent women from developing respiratory illnesses, and these are also wood-saving stoves, all of this has been possible with the support of CAMPO. I feel that all these things, all this support that has been given, give us hope, and the fact of being in Monapaküy, well, this gives us hope that things can change, that in some way, the way of life of people can be supported or changed—minimally, or as much as is possible—to ensure their well-being.

Regarding the issue of ombeayiüts, we are also collaborating to create educational resources at the school to strengthen ombeayiüts, and all these things that are being done, well, what moves us is the hope that we can build another world. Within all this that happens to us, within the tragedies, hope is what lifts us up. Hope is what allows us to walk, but also the solidarity of organizations and the solidarity of the people. That's what makes us walk. We appreciate the attention given to our conversation, to our dialogue, we are very grateful for the invitation, for this opportunity to be here and to share something from our community with those who will listen to us. Thank you very much.

1:01:46 Flavia: Well, yes, likewise, thank you very much for this space, and we hope it will be interesting to bring more and more interested people to reflect on these problems and also to get to know other realities that, as you have heard, are trying to defend themselves, to solve problems and above all, to give hope for the future. I share that same hope and that's why I'm here too, to accompany them as much as I can within my limits. Thank you and see you soon.

01:02:26 Gabriela: Well, we thank both of you very much for being here with us. As I mentioned at the beginning, it's a luxury to have had you here to give us this perspective, to share this reality of this very specific area of the state of Oaxaca, and at the same time you have given us hopeful perspectives. With that, we are sure that our audiences will not only be interested in these realities, but in general in others that we currently share. And well, from our side, we also thank the listeners who have given us their attention. We invite you, of course, to continue reflecting with us in the upcoming episodes that we are sure will bring perspectives from other disciplines and initiatives on the challenges posed by the Anthropocene and the embodied inequalities in the health of humans and non-humans. Thank you.

01:03:32 Juan Mayorga: This episode was recorded virtually between the city of Oaxaca and San Mateo del Mar, in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. The general production and interview were carried out by Gabriela Martínez. The editorial direction was by Laura Montesi and Paola Sesia, and the audio editing and post-production was done by Juan Mayorga. This podcast is

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