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Resource Radicals: From Petro-Nationalism to Post-Extractivism in Ecuador: By Thea Riofrancos Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020.

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Resource Radicals examines how, during the leftist governmental wave in early twenty-first century Latin America, the question of what to do with natural resources, in particular hydrocarbons and ore, split the Ecuadorian Left in two. Radical resource nationalists, including president Rafael Correa and most academics, activists, and bureaucrats within his administration, favored either resource nationalization or private exploitation taxed and coordinated by a strong, technocratic and redistributive *post-neoliberal* state. Meanwhile, antiextractivists, including indigenous and popular leaders, and dissident militants and academics argued for the end of resource extraction and a social, cultural, and political reinvention of Ecuador through alternative economies.

Both sides began as variations of a broad rejection of a vaguely defined neoliberalism in a country historically defined by the tensions between political economies of resource governance and mass exclusion and inequality. Correa's accession to power in 2007 and his constitutional reforms attuned the state apparatus to the rhetorical and institutional inclusion and protection of indigenous, rural, Amazonian, and otherwise politically and economically vulnerable communities. In practice, Riofrancos argues, both events also consolidated the extractive model that, as it lifted many out of poverty, fostered a sort of no-nonsense rhetoric that sidelined and pathologized opposition to extraction as naïve, fanatical, or otherwise missing the point and temporalities of developmental urgencies. Casting Correa's electoral victory as the foundational triumph of a unified national teleology, the government unmoored its legitimacy from the plurinationalism that brought it to power and that it itself had enshrined in law. The practicalities of vote casting and counting, strategic interpretations of the Constitution, and the spatialization of the conflict in remote mines and central Quito squares fueled an asymmetric tussle concerning who counted as *the*, or even *a*, people, when, how, and what for. As Correa's post-neoliberal government reduced resource extraction to a technical, de-politicized affair to be solved by strong state presence and information campaigns, what resurfaced in leftist guise was, ironically, the canonical, age-old neoliberal project: a proper and properly guarded distribution of rights and political certainties so that markets can thrive.

Studies of the so-called Pink Tide in Latin America are becoming a subgenre on their own. Amongst their authors, ethnographer-cum-activists like Riofrancos found in the historic coincidence of these administrations (and in the epochal prominence of a staunchly activist Latin American intellectual class peopling and providing rhetorical scaffolding to both governments and militant dissidence) the legitimation and litmus test for a government-as-critique of a presumably exhausted neoliberal order. Riofrancos's originality is to write about, and from inside, the fault line within this triumphant Left, tracing across archives, interviews, and protests the critical repertoire of both positions. Her forensic meticulousness is indispensable to understand, for example, the historic, cultural, and rhetorical borrowings that transposed an amalgam of divergent interests into a homogenous Ecuadorian *public*, or how prior consultation of vulnerable communities as a condition of democracy found its limit when mass Ecuadorian democracy framed it as a tyranny of the minority. The author is particularly good at territorializing politics and rhetoric, exposing the difficulties an antiextractivist agenda has to persuade Quito, where royalties reduce poverty and

extraction pollution is minimal, the occupation of space that concretized indigenous and Amazonian interests as constitutional subjects, and the material and infrastructural work required to repoliticize extraction.

These administrations' revolutionary and populist undertone activated a Manicheanism in these societies that enhanced and legitimized through resonance activist ethnographers' propensity to organize their epistemology in the key of resistance. This comes at a cost. For example, Riofrancos approaches social activism in the form of community-led popular consultations as "non-state democratic practices" (p. 117) challenging the state's monopoly over *democratic* decision-making. Yet, from her analysis of vote allocation in these movements emerge a fascinating distribution of hierarchies and senses of fairness, inclusivity, and representativeness that render *democracy* as a category of analysis far too unstable. Certainly, activists harness the term *democracy* on paper and on the ground to interpolate the state in terms it will recognize, and reclaiming the category reappropriates the terms of contention. But the point seems to be that competing logics of representation were jostling for recognition. Whereas epistemologically equalizing the state's use of the term to the opposition's appropriation honors the resistance of *the little people*, what appears as an alternative ontology of legitimacy superseding canonically or otherwise understood democracy is now harder to flesh out. Ironically, this very reappropriation also enables Correa's perhaps unreformed critique that, at the end of the day, allowing the same person to vote six times in the same election is a perversion of democracy.

This epistemology can still articulate Riofrancos's argument to the extent that, as she argues, this is a book on the Left, by the Left: readers of any persuasion will understand both versions of resource radicalism, and their critical repertoires are *already* inhabiting the author's own rhetorical bandwidth and buffer accordingly. After all, as said earlier, this endogeneity produces the book's strong suit. When the chapter-long conclusion attempts a regional answer to what went wrong with the Pink Tide, however, this epistemology struggles to transcend the morally intractable eulogy written inside questions like "was the aspiration to capture state institutions, democratize them and redeploy them to serve the interests of the oppressed (...) already fated to fail (...) by the iron law of oligarchy (...)?" (p. 166). In this vein, Riofrancos explains Bolivians' refusal via referendum to allow Evo Morales to change the national constitution (again) to run for office for a fourth consecutive time as a result of "declining popularity and the disaffection of parts of his base" (p. 173). Whereas this might indeed be a reason, the author completely forecloses the possibility, however abstract, that at least some Bolivians may have imagined a prosperous, fair, inclusive, leftist—or not—Bolivia without Morales, or rejected indefinite presidential reelection as a matter of principle irrespective of Morales, or many possibilities beyond the somewhat stunted hermeneutic universe this authorial Left has given itself—and now its readers.

In both, its successes and self-imposed constraints, *Resource Radicals'* surgical take captures what Riofrancos rightly defines as one of the greatest contributions to critical theory to come from this part of the world: the political economy of postmillennial extractivism and the capacity of an increasingly global, globalizing Left to imagine itself beyond it. Perhaps pitched at a level beyond general audiences, this rigorously researched, fundamentally interesting book would make excellent course reading from intermediate undergraduate level upward across social sciences.