# A POST-NEOLIBERAL ECOPOLITICS?

## DELEUZE, GUATTARI, AND ZAPATISMO

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Between the philosophies of representation and critique in environmental politics, this essay argues that the relationship between French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of "machinic ecology" and the Zapatistas "ecological self-management" practices in the Lacandon jungle in Chiapas, Mexico, offers a compelling direction for a post-neoliberal ecopolitics. While normative theories of subjectivity, representation, and identity in environmental philosophy have been able to secure and expand the conceptual and legal foundations of environmental and animal rights, they have also come under increasing philosophical and political criticism by, what are being called, post-representational or, "non-centered" environmental philosophies, in particular those of critical theory, ecophenomenology, and poststructuralism. Broadly, these critical theories argue that the expansion of moral and political representation to the non-human world is not the solution to environmental devastation, but is rather part of the problem. It is the theoretical hubris of supposedly autonomous rational human agency and juridical representation that has subordinated the deeper network of non-human relations to human mismanagement. Without criticism of this prevalent dualism between humans and nature, environmental philosophy risks obfuscating the deeper ecological structures and relations common to the flourishing of both.

But as more and more environmental philosophers begin to draw on the works of Martin Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida, and the Frankfurt school for ecopolitical insight, I believe a certain twofold crisis is coming to the fore in this important and growing discourse. That is, despite the compelling critique of reason and representation in environmental philosophy these philosophers have given, they have so far been unable to develop a political philosophy of emancipation as a consequence of their, admittedly devastating, critique of power, subject-object dualism, hierarchy, modernist rationality, and techno-capitalism. As Kerry Whiteside remarks, such "critique becomes seriously counterproductive . . . when a fascination with incommensurable discourses takes the place of any attempt to grapple empirically with a world undergoing rapid ecological deterioration."[1] Broadly, it seems that the careful and philosophical analysis of today's already existing ecopolitical experiments have tended to be marginalized in an environmental philosophy that favors critique over construction. Additionally, by undermining the dualism between nature and culture, non-centered ecopolitics risks erasing the crucial distinction that makes environmental philosophy specifically "environmental."

Thus, one of the most important theoretical problems confronting ecopolitical philosophy today is not that it lacks the proper conceptual tools for critiquing the various mechanisms and dualisms of environmental devastation but that it has neglected the more constructive task of developing a theoretical alternative to them. That is, of developing a positive theory of how ontologically heterogenous and non-centered conditions, elements, and agencies function to form an ecopolitics without universal or dualistic foundations.

This first philosophical problem parallels a second problem in the field of politics: the apparent exhaustion of emancipatory politics. The late twentieth century has signaled a triple defeat for liberatory politics: the retreat and economic co-optation of feminist, environmental, racial, and labor struggles of the 1960s and 70s in the First World; the disintegration of Soviet-style Socialism in the industrial Second World; and the decline of colonial liberation movements in the Third World. Ecopolitics in particular, as Pierre Lascoumes argues (drawing on Foucault), has been largely co-opted into a second stage of biopolitical power that

extends beyond the surveillance and control of human society and its population to all forms of life in a "general optimization of the world."[2] "Eco-power," as Lascoumes calls it, has been concentrated into the hands of governments and corporate funded NGOs, who have, as recent scientific studies show, done a worse job of managing forest commons, hectare-for-hectare, than the indigenous populations who live in them.[3] But has the exhaustion of liberation movements, coupled with the bureaucratization of environmental policy, the patenting of genetic material, and the corporate greenwashing of vast sectors of the economy, truly marked an "end to the great emancipatory discourses," and the inevitability of green neo-liberalism as the absolute horizon for all ecopolitical thought? If not, what can ecopolitics possibly mean for us today beyond the admittedly saturated revolutionary framework of class struggle, party-state, dictatorship of the proletariat, and so on? Simply put, what are the prospects for a post-liberal ecopolitics today?

It is in this context that the present essay argues in favor of a different philosophical and political trajectory. Philosophically, I argue that the theoretical practice of "machinic ecology" developed by Deleuze and Guattari offers a new theory of ecopolitical conditions, elements, and agencies that is neither representational nor purely critical, but philosophically constructive. And politically, I argue the Zapatista's practices of autonomy, community management, and third person agency offer an exemplary direction for a post-neoliberal environmentalism that is based neither on nation-state, capitalism, individualism, nor on reactionary demonstrations, but on ecological self-management and federated autonomy. Accordingly, this essay will be divided into two sections. The first outlines and defends Deleuze and Guattari's definition of a non-dualistic machinic ecology. The second then argues for this theory and its main concepts as a coherent alternative to both normative and purely critical environmentalisms by showing its conceptual illumination of and by the post-neoliberal ecopolitical practices of the Zapatistas in their defense of the Lacandon Jungle.

## Deleuze and Guattari's Machinic Ecology

The use of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy for environmental purposes, while recent, is no longer original.[4] Similarly, other scholars have already written on the parallel between Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy and the politics of Zapatismo.[5] But none so far have brought the two together to examine how the specifically ecopolitical relationship between Deleuze and Guattari's machinic ecology and the Zapatista's ecological self-management practices might pose a new direction for environmental politics.

Deleuze and Guattari's environmentalism, according to Bernd Herzogenrath, has the aim of elaborating a "generalized ecology of complex material systems, without falling into the trap of the Cartesian dualism of 'nature' and 'culture' that is still operative in much of the mainstream ecological/ecocritical approaches."[6] And according to Mark Hasley, the author of *Deleuze and Environmental Damage,* one of the strengths of this growing literature is that it has been able to, for the most part, avoid some of the typical monolithic approaches found in contemporary environmental philosophy (the irresponsible consumer monolith under liberal ecology, the capitalist monolith under ecomarxism, the patriarchal monolith under ecofeminism, the hierarchical monolith under deep ecology, and the domination monolith under social ecology). Each of these approaches, Halsey claims, shares a certain theoretical drive toward totality, each, "knows the key variables 'causing' social and environmental ruin but also has implicit within it the makings of a comprehensive, indeed transcendental solution."[7] These modernist environmental projects privilege transcendental unities (subject, object, Nature) over immanent processes (individuals, multiplicities, flows of matter-energy). They seek to establish universal grounds from which to legitimate programs of ecological recuperation (laws of Nature, God, social justice, rational stewardship), posit teleologies for the permanent resolution of environmental conflicts (sustainability, anarchism, ecosocialism), and end up reestablishing binary oppositions (culture/nature, men/women, science/opinion, capitalism/communism, ecologically significant/ ecologically insignificant).[8]

Despite some of Halsey's bolder claims, given his own seemingly totalizing critique against transcendental monoliths, it remains exciting to see the literature on Deleuzian environmental philosophy continue to grow.

There is however, a certain aspect of this approach that remains radically under-theorized. That is, while much of the work done on Deleuze and Guattari's ecophilosophy has been able to conceptually undermine various forms of power even within environmental philosophy itself, very few have followed up on what I consider to be the most politically promising and original ecopolitical contribution of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy: the deployment of an ecologic or *oiko-logos* able to understand the basic relationships and functions of specific non-representational political and ecological systems. Not as a meta-discourse, but as a creative practice with its own theoretical vocabulary. That is, while political practices may be local and particular, they also mobilize ideas with implications beyond their own limited scope. I believe the creation of these conceptual networks and their relay is the aim of Deleuze and Guattari's practical philosophical efforts. "Praxis," as Deleuze says, "is a network of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory relays one praxis to another."[9] So how then are we to positively understand the kind of environmentalism befitting such a new post-representational political sequence?

Deleuze and Guattari begin their first collective work, *Anti-Oedipus*, with the rejection of the dualism between the supposedly autonomous spheres of nature and culture. Where industry extracts its raw materials from nature, consumes them, and then returns its refuse to nature, Deleuze and Guattari argue, following Marx, that this is not the operation of relatively separate spheres (production, distribution, consumption), but rather an activity predicated on the common structural relations of the capitalist division of labor and the concept of supposedly "fixed elements" within the overall process of profit generation. Human beings do not autonomously extract raw materials from nature, nor do they autonomously decide to "save nature" from unsustainable extractions or toxic waste disposals. While there are, of course, human agents who speak of the "rights of nature" and "sustainable extraction," their

very ability to conceive of environmental protection in terms of "rights," "labor," and "value" is conditioned by an advanced technoscientific coordination of research, organization, and green capitalist industry. For this reason Deleuze and Guattari can say,

> We make no distinction between man and nature: the human essence of nature and the natural essence of man become one within nature in the form of production or industry, just as they do within the life of man as a species. Industry is then no longer considered from the extrinsic point of view of utility, but rather from the point of view of its fundamental identity with nature as production of man and by man. Not man as the king of creation, but rather as the being who is in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or all types of being.[10]

Human activity and "reason" is thus conditioned on an enormous matrix of non-human activities (economic, biological, and technological structures, etc.), just as nature is conditioned by an enormous network of human activity. To assert an independence of one from the other is sheer abstraction. Deleuze and Guattari's conclusion is thus that there are only processes of mutual production that are neither strictly human, nor strictly natural, but both, that is, artificial. Insofar as artifacts and technology are a mix between human activity and natural objects, Deleuze and Guattari claim that all processes of production (insofar as they too are always natural/human) are machines. And "every machine is a machine connected to another machine," and the multiplicity of machines connected up with one another forms the "Mechanosphere" of the earth (AO 12/6). As Guattari insists, "We might just as well rename environmental ecology machinic ecology, because Cosmic and human praxis has only ever been a question of machines."[11]

So far, much of the environmental scholarship on Deleuze and Guattari affirms this conclusion of a non-dualistic machinic ecology.[12] But, on its own, I believe this conclusion is theoretically insufficient. We are still left with the two philosophical problems we began with: (1) Given such a non-centered ecological philosophy, how can we account for the capacity for ecopolitical decision-making and valuation if everything is just a process of machines

connecting to other machines? (2) If there is no distinction between humans and nature, why then should we consider such a philosophy specifically "environmental"?

In the next section, I argue that while it may be true that for Deleuze and Guattari ecology is only machines of machines, there are also different kinds or types of machines with different functions that qualify them.[13] "Environmental" philosophy, for Deleuze and Guattari, is thus not only distinct as a methodology (insofar as it is opposed to normative ones) but also in terms of the types or kinds of components in the machinic assemblage under analysis. The key to understanding how this non-centered machinic ecology provides an alternative to both normative and critical ecologies, while also answering the above questions, is by looking at how its three main concepts both illuminate and are illuminated by the parallel ecopolitical practices of the first "post-modern"[14] or "post-representational"[15] revolution: the ecosocial uprising of the Zapatistas of the Lacandon jungle.

## Machinic Ecology and Zapatismo

On January 1, 1994 (the day NAFTA went into effect), an armed group of indigenous *campesino's*, forced off their land to live in the Lacandon jungle of Chiapas, Mexico declared war against the Mexican government. They took back five towns and over 500 privately owned ranches in Chiapas. After several failed peace negotiations with the Mexican government and many dead, the Zapatistas began implementing their own autonomous organizations. Currently, over 2,200 communities (about 100,000 people) are federated into 32 "autonomous municipalities," each grouped into five local self-governments called the "Juntas de Buen Gobierno" (JBG) or Committees of Good Government.[16] Today, the Zapatistas remain committed to, among other things, autonomy, participatory self-government, consensus decision-making, respect for nature and life without the use of pesticides, dams, or unnecessary logging, and the inclusion of "everybody without distinctions of party, religion, sex, or color."[17] Their home, the Lacadon jungle, is located in the eastern corner of Mexico's southern-most state, and is the largest remaining tropical rain forest in North America. As habitat for 27 mammal species, 424 types of birds (both resident and migratory), 97 reptiles, 32 amphibians, and 30 genera of fish—112 species in the Usumacinta River, the Lacandon is one of the most biodiverse forests in the world and a front-line of ecological defense.

While the Zapatista's initial forced relocation into the Lacandon by the Mexican government in 1994 and their need for basic infrastructure may have resulted in the "exacerbation of already existing deforestation pressures in the Lacandon jungle," as Karen O'Brien writes in her 2000 book, *Sacrificing the Forest: Environmental And Social Struggle In Chiapas*,[18] the past seven years of Zapatista community forest management have been a different story. Despite the fact that the Mexican government was responsible for the forced relocation of the Zapatistas, into what the government decided would also be the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve (MABR), whose 3312 square kilometer zoning strategy was to maintain ecological integrity by restricting natural areas to exclusively non-consumptive uses, such as tourism and scientific research, the indigenous populations and the Zapatistas were blamed for its deforestation. Mexican governmental organizations, equating indigenous subsistence forest management with the commercial logging that devastated the Lacandon in the 1960's, used environmental policy to try and squash the Zapatista rebellion and open the area for hydroelectric dams. International non-governmental organizations like Conservation International (CI), in conjunction with Grupo Pulsar (the world's ninth largest biotechnology company), mobilized the same environmental policy against the Zapatistas to promote eco-tourism, and "biological research" stations to copy-write and privatize traditional knowledges and medicinal plants. In the words of the Zapatistas,

> We state clearly that at the center of all of this, concealed behind the masks of the environmental foundations, lie the economic interests of large multinationals involved in the exploitation of bio-genetic resources. There is also the interest of the Mexican government and foreign governments in the other natural resources, such as fresh water, oil, uranium, etc. In addi-

tion, there are the interests of the many entre-preneurs who view the displaced indigenous populations as cheap labour for maquiladora factories. . . . And there is the Mexican govern-ment's interest in extending its low intensity warfare through different means, in order, once and for all, to get rid of the Zapatista communi-ties in resistance and rebellion.[19]

This deployment of top-down science-based preservation tactics without regard for the cultural context, or traditional ecological knowledge of those who occupy the forest, has been empirically unsuccessful in the case of the Lacandon.[20] Meanwhile, the Lacandon Maya, indigenous to the forest, have been suc-cessfully managing an agroecosystem for gen-erations that both protects biodiversity and produces for their family's needs.[21] In the case of the Lacandon, the often overlooked connec-tion between political conflict and biodiversity cannot be ignored.

It is at these frontiers of ecological defense that the Zapatistas have had to invent another way of doing ecopolitics that I believe offers an excellent model for a post-neoliberal envi-ronmentalism based on self-management and autonomy. Neither reducible to romanticized traditional indigenous struggles for territory, nor to liberal democratic environmental par-ties, rights, or pleas for personal responsibility, nor to Marxist revolutionary ideologies of a communist state, the Zapatistas have formed their own autonomous federation of villages based on participatory and democratic coun-cils for ecological self-government. Their re-jection of state representation, political par-ties, neoliberal "conservation ethics," and personal consumer responsibility narratives makes them difficult, if not impossible, to un-derstand in the terms of normative environ-mental philosophy. Thus, in the subsections that follow I would also like to argue that Zapatismo is best understood in terms of the machinic ecology of Deleuze and Guattari. In particular, by three concepts that explain its basic conditions, elements, and agencies: its abstract machine, its concrete assemblage, and its personae, as Deleuze and Guattari call them.[22]

## The Abstract Machine and Zapatismo

Where one might locate the concept of an ethical "norm," "law," or "condition" in envi-ronmental philosophy that allows disparate human voices to come to a common prescrip-tive agreement on a dispute, Deleuze and Guattari instead propose the alternative con-cept of an "abstract machine." A norm does not describe the world the way it "is," but how it "ought" to be. A norm is thus a transcendent el-ement intended by an autonomous form of consciousness or sovereign state unhindered by existential bias. For instance, the prescrip-tive value of "ecological diversity" is defined in conceptual or legal terms, prior to or inde-pendent from any specific thing that might be described as realizing that value. Something either realizes biodiversity and is right or it does not and it is wrong. "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise," as Aldo Leopold as-serts in his land ethic.[23] Difference is thus only a difference from the same, e.g., the norm which represents the independent unity of the diverse.

Opposed to this, the abstract machine is an event or shared condition for action and evalu-ation only insofar as it is immanently trans-formed by the concrete elements that realize and differentiate it. There is thus a "coadaptation" or "reciprocal presupposition" of the two that allows for their participatory transformation.[24] The event thus changes in nature each time there are "*reconversions subjectives actuelles*" (actually occurring sub-jective redeployments) of it (DRF 217/236). Subsequently, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the abstract machine is absolutely singular and unable to be deduced from either history or introspection.

> In historical phenomena such as the revolution of 1789, the Commune, the revolution of 1917, there is always one part of the event that is irre-ducible to any social determinism, or to causal chains. Historians are not very fond of this point: they restore causality after the fact. Yet the event itself is a splitting off from, a breaking with causality; it is a bifurcation, a lawless devi-ation, an unstable condition that opens up a new field of the possible. (DRF 215/233)

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The abstract machine is not deducible because it is the condition for deduction, description, and prescription itself: it is a more primary evental commitment. This machine is abstract in the sense that is not a thing among other things, but also *real* (*vrai-abstrait*), insofar as it is a condition that allows for the appearance of "new space-times" and new subjectivities antagonistic to representation and power (P 233/172).[25] However, while it may not be a thing, the abstract machine is still marked by a singular and asignifying proper name, date, and image, like the names of military operations or the names of hurricanes, as Deleuze and Guattari say (MP 51/28, 322–323/264). These names do not represent, symbolize, or refer to anything at all. Rather, they are spoken through. As a self-referencing and autonomous event independent from political representation, the abstract machine allows for the shared expression and conjunction of the various heterogenous elements that speak and exist through it (MP 177–178/142).

Zapatismo, as a non-representational political event that has brought hundreds of thousands of people together against neoliberalism and for the democratic defense of the earth, without folding to state politics, green capitalism, or environmental bureaucracy, I believe, should be considered as an abstract machine. Like the phenomena of the revolution of 1789, the Paris Commune, and the revolution of 1917, what is singular about this event is its irreducibility to social determinism and deductive causal chains: in 1994, in Mexico, Zapatismo held no resemblance to any recognizable, legal, or legitimate thing within the present "state of affairs," i.e., no political representation (party), no market representation, linguistic representation (their languages are not spoken or recognized by political representatives), or representation by the local indigenous leaders (*Caciques*). There was no causal necessity that Zapatismo should have existed, no way it could have been deduced from the domains of "rights" and "commodities" from which it emerged, and yet they "burst upon a world that denied their existence" anyway, as Zapatista scholar John Holloway says.[26]

From the representational point of view of Mexican politics, the marginalized and unrepresented Zapatistas of Chiapas have no "legitimate" existence. But what is most interesting about the Zapatista communities is that they do not legitimate their revolution strictly by presupposed norms based on identity (prescriptive requests for "rights," the overthrow of the state, a new market economy, or a new ethnic nationalism), but rather affirm a self-reference or autonomy. Instead of simply valorizing their difference and un-representability as such, as Simon Tormey has argued, the Zapatistas, I am arguing, have created a new form of ecopolitical evaluation that better allows them to realize the (self)management of forest commons.[27] Contrary to normative theories of environmental philosophy based on prescription, the Zapatistas practice a form of rotational direct democracy where members take fourteen day shifts deliberating and facilitating communal/environmental matters, where they consider the ecosystem to be inseparable from who they are as Zapatistas. As Subcomadante Marcos puts it,

> For a long time, this place has existed where men are Zapatistas, the women are Zapatistas, the kids are Zapatistas, the chickens are Zapatistas, the stones are Zapatistas, everything is Zapatista. And in order to wipe out the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, they will have to wipe this piece of territory off the face of the earth- not just destroy it but erase it completely, because there is always the danger of the dead down below.[28]

If we are to take this passage seriously, what it means to be Zapatista is also to be the stones, trees, and animals of the Zapatista autonomous zones. Participatory (as opposed to representative democracy) and collective (as opposed to personal or moral conscience) decision-making actually *is* the whole ecological system speaking through (as opposed to for) the proper name of Zapatismo expressively. "Zapatismo" is thus not a thing, or norm, that represents or signifies anything, but rather a singular and constantly renegotiated abstract machine.

## The Concrete Machinic Assemblage and Community Forest Management

So far we have seen how the abstract machine of Zapatismo provides an alternative condition to the norms of state law and moral

conscience as well as the affirmation of machinic multiplicities in general. But what is the theoretical alternative to the concrete elements that are supposedly intended by consciousness or legislated by state policy? Where one would typically find the concept of "goal oriented" actions and elements, whose being is represented in advance by their biological or moral purpose, or by human deliberation, Deleuze and Guattari propose instead the concept of the concrete machinic assemblage.

First, the elements of a machinic assemblage cannot be considered as "normative" or "goal-driven" actions since they are continually transforming the conditions or goals that are supposed to normalize and direct their actions. Such mutual transformations though should not be mistaken for a kind of pragmatic "revisionism," where a hypothesis is "tested," found to work or not work, and then rationally (or otherwise) revised accordingly, in order to ground a narrative of political "progress."[29] Rather, ecopolitical problems themselves transform and are transformed simultaneously by those who effectuate them and who are effected by them (without knowing ends in advance). "When people demand to formulate their problems themselves," as Deleuze and Guattari say, "and to determine at least the particular conditions under which they can receive a more general solution," there is a specifically non-representational form of self-management and democratic participation (MP 589/471; DR 205/158).

But the concrete machinic assemblage that Deleuze and Guattari develop is not simply synonymous with the kind of procedural practices found in environmental justice movements either. Where the concept of procedural justice still relies on the participatory capacity of all rational human subjects, who would be effected by the outcome of an ecopolitical dispute to represent the plants, animals, and ecosystems at stake, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the machinic assemblage is a purely affective or expressive political procedure.[30] Affective decision-making is a procedure whereby the collection of the situation's capacities to affect or be affected by the other elements are determined. Each machine may certainly have different capacities to be affected, but there is no single machine or affect that is independent from or in charge of representing the others. So while there are certainly those who speak (human language), speech does not necessarily mean "speaking for." As Bruno Latour argues, certain kinds of speech should be considered as "speech prostheses," i.e., not as representational acts but rather as spoken extensions of the plants, animals, and ecosystems themselves (like functional and expressive prosthetic appendages).[31]

But lest we fall back into affirming an undifferentiated multiplicity of such machines all speaking through each other (and losing the specificity of the concept), it is important to note that not all machinic assemblages function in the same way. One must "count its affects," (*on cherche á faire le compte de ses affects*) (MP 314/257). In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari give the example of the "draft horse-omnibus-street" assemblage as such a specific collection of non-representational affects.

> It is defined by a list of active and passive affects in the context of the individuated assemblage it is part of: having eyes blocked by blinders, having a bit and a bridle, being proud, having a big peepee-maker, pulling heavy loads, being whipped, falling, making a din with its legs, biting, etc. These affects circulate and are transformed within the assemblage: what a horse "can do." (MP 314–315/257)

The procedure of counting the affects of the situation thus decides what can or will be done in the assemblage. There are no universal ends or values that inhere in things themselves, only their immanent capacities to be assembled and reassembled in a continually renegotiated and expressive machinic assemblage or relation.

Insofar as the Zapatistas practice such a continual and affective renegotiation of their ecological assemblage, without drawing on the concepts or practices of state-based or universal environmental rights, they effect a concrete machinic assemblage. That is, the Zapatista communities practice a form of collective valorization that refers back not to the sovereignty of the state, or the intrinsic value of nature, or any other pre-given teleology, but to the immanent act of determining in each case what their collective ecological body is capable of. Assembled in a heterogeneous mix of NGOs, diverse indigenous traditions, and in-

ternational influence, the Zapatistas have had to learn how to manage the environment.

This commitment takes the form of several specific forest management affects: to be able to cultivate the land by the no-till method, to be able to ban slash and burn practices, to be able to take a limited amount of trees from the forest or be penalized by having to plant and care for two more for every one taken in excess, and to be able to ban agrochemical use. As a Montes Azules resident explains, "we have been accused of destroying the jungle. But we as indigenous people are the true guardians of the environment, we live together with the jungle. If the jungle dies, we die with it."[32] The Zapatistas do not speak *for* the forest, because they *are* the forest, or rather, their life is an affect of the forest, "to be Zapatista in the Lacandon." Their political practices express the life of the forest and exist as so many affects within its collection. Even their relations of production are owned in common and practiced sustainably. The workers' cooperatives (honey, coffee, textiles, etc.) in Zapatista territory are based on collective or common (not private, or public) property, worker control, and self-management. While Zapatismo may have its flaws, the spirit of these institutions (the schools, the hospitals, the homes, the farming, etc.) is, as Guattari would say,

> to set up structures and devices that establish a totally different kind of contact. A kind of self-management or self-organization of a set of problems which does not start from a central point that arranges elements, inserts them into a control grid, or establishes an agenda, but that, on the contrary, allows the various singular processes to attempt a rhizomatic unfolding. This is very important, even if it doesn't work.[33]

Zapatismo is thus a struggle for the creation of a maximum of participation, both human and natural, in achieving an ecological "self-management conceived outside the criteria of a formal democracy that has proven to be sterile," as Guattari puts it (MRB 391).

## Machinic Personae and the Third Person

Opposed to conditions based on moral and legal norms, and opposed to elements based on goal orientation and intentional consciousness, Deleuze, Guattari, and the Zapatistas

propose the theoretical practice of the abstract machine of collective/ecological autonomy, and the concrete machinic assemblage of community forest management. But what alternative do they propose to the independent subject who makes ecopolitical decisions? Where one would normally locate an autonomous (human) subject, who is able to independently discern a universal norm or environmental value in order to then apply this norm or policy implication to concrete (natural) elements, Deleuze, Guattari, and the Zapatistas propose the concept of the "machinic persona" or ecological/collective "third person." Without affirming either a dualism between humans (and their values) and nature (and its objects) or affirming an undifferentiated multiplicity of human/nature machines, machinic personae are, according to Deleuze and Guattari, specific "local operators" who "intervene" in order to establish an immanent connection between specific abstract machines and the concrete political machines that effectuate them (QP 73/75). But herein lies the difficulty: how can an agent of any kind bring about the condition for its own existence? The subject must pre-exist the event in order bring it into being but the event must also pre-exist the subject as the condition under which the subject is a subject-of-the-event. This is the paradox of ecopolitical intervention. Deleuze and Guattari's solution to this problem, however, is to say that both interventions occur simultaneously in the mutual presupposition of the other; problem and solution are co-given, as are humans and nature (QP 75/78; 79/82).

So while the first person generally indicates a self-conscious subject of enunciation who makes decisions on a "natural" set of objects independent from it, and the second person designates the projection of the first, the third person persona indicates an indefinite group-subject always in co-given adaptation with the milieu. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari say,

> We believe . . . that the third person indefinite, HE, THEY, implies no indetermination from this point of view; it ties the statement to a collective *agencement*, as its necessary condition, rather than to a subject of the enunciation. Blanchot is correct in saying that ONE and HE—*one* is dying, *he* is unhappy—in no way

take the place of the subject, but instead do away with any subject in favor of an *agencement* of the haecceity type that carries or brings out the event insofar as it is unformed and incapable of being effectuated by persons ("something happens to them that they can only get a grip on again by letting go of their ability to say I"). The HE does not represent a subject but rather makes a diagram of an *agencement*. (MP 324/265)

Thus, opposed to the "indetermination" of a pure potential machinic multiplicity, or the representational first person of enunciation (based on contemplation, reflection, and communication), third person personae are "indefinite" in the sense that they are not persons independent from the event, who look on, judge, and make decisions about how it should proceed, but they are "determinate" in the sense that they effectuate or make a diagram of the event, immanent only to the necessary condition of the collective assemblage. They are not subjects of experience, rational reflection, discourse, representation, or creativity in-itself, but are rather subjects expressive of an ecological and machinic consistency.

As an event that rejects the dualism between political struggle and ecological affect and affirms the collective third person of ecopolitical self-management, the Zapatistas effect machinic personae. Consider the figure of what the Zapatistas call the *compa* (short for *compañera/os*: partner, comrade). "Unlike any European vernacular/colonial language, Tojolabal (the native language of many Zapatistas) features an intersubjective correlation between first and third persons, that is, a code devoid of direct and indirect object, instead structured in the correlation between subjects."[34] One of the implications of this, as Walter D. Mignolo observes, is that the Zapatistas do not engage in acts of "representation," but engage instead in "intersubjective enactements."[35] When *compa* say "I," "You," or "They," these are not features of an ego or consciousness, but features of an evental consistency that expresses their entire affective or ecological situation. First and second persons still function, but only as derivative features of a more primary third person that effectuates an event. Conflicts and agreements still take place between specific "I's" and "You's" but only as

conflicts and agreements of the event they effectuate: not outside it, or upon it, but within and through it. "Because," as Subcomandante Marcos says, "here in the EZLN the mistakes are conjugated in the first person singular and the achievements in the third person plural."[36]A

dditionally, consider the *compas*' use of black masks and bandanas to create a particular but "indefinite" group-subject. While Marcos has given several different reasons for these masks over the years, from making sure no one tries to become the leader,[37] to portraying Mexico's covering up of its real Mexico,[38] the collective practice of masking has produced a very specific kind of subjectivity, immanent not to consciousness or experience but to the event or abstract machine of Zapatismo itself that includes the the chickens, the stones, and everything in their affective territory. The practice of collective masking in Zapatsimo is hostile to both vanguardism and individuals who make free decisions about the situation, and instead creates a third person or *compa* who speaks as a Zapatista through the masked anonymous (*a-nomos*) ecology of Zapatismo. Rather than affirm a pure alterity or potential for "transformation as such," found in "the face" of a "Thou"[39] against a representational "I/You" opposition, the Zapatistas propose instead an indefinite but determinate third person of the event. By covering their faces as a political action, the Zapatistas are able to create a unique political anonymity (open to anyone/anything, and yet unambiguously against neoliberalism) that rejects both liberal and critical models of subjectivity, in favor of a subject of the evental ecology itself.

## Conclusion

Beyond representation and critique, I have shown how the theoretical and practical insights of Deleuze, Guattari, and the Zapatistas offer a compelling post-neoliberal ecopolitical vision based on machinic ecology and ecological self-management. While much of environmental scholarship on Deleuze and Guattari has aimed at affirming a machinic ecology of multiplicities, each connecting to the other in a cosmic web of non-dualistic interconnection (the "Earth" or "Mechanosphere"), I have proposed instead that their most significant con-

tribution to ecopolitics is rather their machinic eco-logic composed of three different types of machines: the abstract machine, the concrete machinic assemblage, and the machinic persona. These three structural elements work through a process of expression and affection demonstrated in the three practices of Zapatista forest management: autonomy, community management, and third person agency.

Based on their shared rejection of state politics, capitalist economics, and normative subjectivity, Deleuze, Guattari, and the Zapatistas not only critique these institutions of representational politics but have also worked hard to develop an alternative theory and practice instead based on ecopolitical autonomy, self-management, and group subjectivity "aimed at spreading forms of self-government or self-management—that are possible [in Chiapas], in a way—to other places," as Marcos says.[40] Since "eco-power" has replaced much of the grass roots environmentalism of the 60s and 70s, the Zapatistas have had to invent a new kind of ecological politics. By directly taking control over their local forests and resources and defending them democratically, they are proposing a new ecopolitical strategy irreducible to the present neo-liberal conjuncture. But while a more rigorous cartography of Zapatismo cannot be elaborated in the space of this essay, I hope that I have been able to show, at least in an introductory way, the importance of undertaking such an analysis of some of the new political experimentations that are posing alternatives to the ecological devastation we face today.

## ENDNOTES

1. Kerry Whiteside, *Divided Natures: French Contributions to Political Ecology* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 146.

2. Pierre Lascoumes, *L'Écopouvoir: environnements et politiques* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994), 313.

3. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge University Press, 1990). See also Ashwini Chhatrea and Arun Agrawalb, ed. Elinor Ostrom. *Trade-offs and Synergies Between Carbon Storage and Livelihood Benefits from Forest Commons* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). "The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said Ostrom's 'research brought this topic from the fringe to the forefront of scientific attention,' by showing how common resources—forests, fisheries, oil fields or grazing lands, can be managed successfully by the people who use them, rather than by governments or private companies. Ostrom's work, in this regard, challenged conventional wisdom, showing that 'common resources can be successfully managed without government regulation or [privatization].'" httpp://nobelprize.org.

4. Patrick Hayden, *Multiplicity and Becoming: The Pluralist Empiricism of Gilles Deleuze* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Dianne Chisholm, ed. *Rhizomes 15: Deleuze and Guattari's Ecophilosophy* (2007): http://www.rhizomes.net; Mark Halsey, *Deleuze And Environmental Damage: Violence of the Text* (New York: Ashgate, 2006); Robert Mugerauer, "Deleuze and Guattari's Return to Science As a Basis for Environmental Philosophy," in *Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Bruce Foltz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 180–204; Moira Gatens, "Feminism As 'Password': Re-Thinking the 'Possible' with Spinoza and Deleuze," *Hypatia* 15 (2000), 59–75; Andrew Lopez, "Machinic Environmentalism," presented at *Thinking Through Nature* conference at the University of Oregon, 2008; John Protevi and Mark Bonta, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Patrick Hayden, "Gilles Deleuze and Naturalism: A Convergence with Ecological Theory and Politics," *Environmental Ethics* 19 (1997): 185–204; Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., *An (Un)Easy Alliance: Thinking the Environment with Deleuze & Guattari* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008); Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., *Deleuze/Guattari and Ecology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008).

5. Simon Tormey, "'Not in my Name': Deleuze, Zapatismo, and the Critique of Representation," *Parliamentary Affairs* 59 (2006): 138–154.

6. Herzogenrath, ed., *Deleuze/Guattari and Ecology,* (back cover).

7. Halsey, *Deleuze And Environmental Damage*, 24.

8. Ibid., 34.

9. Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands: and other texts 1953–1974*, ed. Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 207.

10. Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 10; *Capitalisme et schizophrénie*: *L'anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Les Éditions de

Minuit, 1972), 14. Hence forth cited as AO with the English page number followed by the French.

11. Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (New York: Athlone Press, 2001); *Les trois écologies* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1989), 66. Hence forth cited as TO.

12. Alistair Welchman, "Deleuze and Deep Ecology," in *An (Un)Easy Alliance: Thinking the Environment with Deleuze & Guattari*, 131.

13. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 162–64; *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 176–79. Henceforth cited as DRF.

14. Tim Golden, "Revolution Rocks: Thoughts of Mexico's First Postmodern Guerrilla Commander," *New York Times* (April 8, 2001). http://www.nytimes.com/books/01/04/08/reviews/010408.08goldent.html.

15. Tormey, "'Not in my Name': Deleuze, Zapatismo, and the Critique of Representation."

16. John Ross, *Zapatistas: Making Another World Possible* (New York: Nation Books, 2006), 194.

17. Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), trans. Irlandes, *Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle*. http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/auto/selva6.html.

18. Karen O'Brien, *Sacrificing the Forest: Environmental And Social Struggle In Chiapas* (New York: Westview Press, 2000).

19. "February 24th Statement of the Zapatistas." http://www.enlacecivil.org.mx/acciones/020327.html.

20. D. Manuel-Navarrete, S. Slocombe, and B. Mitchell, "Science for Place-Based Socioecological Management: Lessons from the Maya forest (Chiapas and Petén)," *Ecology and Society* 11, no. 1 (2006). http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol11/iss1/art8/.

21. Stewart Diemont and Jay Martin, "Lacandon Maya Ecosystem Management: Sustainable Design for Subsistence and Environmental Restoration," *Ecological Applications* 19 (2009), 254–66.

22. These are the machines Deleuze and Guattari argue are the basis of their philosophical logic developed in the first three chapters of their last book together, *What is Philosophy?* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Thomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 176; *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1991). Deleuze and Guattari additionally develop a political typology of each kind of abstract, concrete, and persona machine: capitalist, statist, territorial, fascist, and nomadic. Due to the constraints of this essay I cannot go into developing each of these machines and the way in which they both internally and

externally transform Zapatismo. This essay examines only, what I consider to be, the dominant type of machinic composition of the Zapatista's struggle: the nomadic type.

23. Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), 240.

24. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 91; *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie, tome 2: Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980) , 71. Henceforth cited as MP. *What is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Thomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 73; *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1991), 77. Henceforth cited as QP.

25. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 233; *Pourparlers* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990), 172. Henceforth cited as P.

26. John Holloway, "Introduction: Reinventing Revolution," in *Zapatista!* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 1.

27. Tormey, "'Not in my Name': Deleuze, Zapatismo and the Critique of Representation."

28. Subcomadante Marcos to *Proceso Magazine* in an interview in 1994.

29. John Dewey, "Beliefs and Realities," *Philosophical Review* 15 (1906): 113–29. "Belief, sheer, direct, unmitigated personal belief, reappears as the working hypothesis; action which at once develops and tests belief reappears as experimentation, deduction, demonstration; while the machinery of universals, axioms, a priori truths, etc., is the systematization of the way in which men have always worked out, in anticipation of overt action, the implications of their beliefs with a view to revising them in the interests of obviating the unfavorable, and of securing the welcome consequences" (124).

30. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapter II, Section 14.

31. Burno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 67.

32. Quote taken from a commentary by Edinburgh-Chiapas Solidarity Campaign, submitted by Anonymous on Thursday, 06/05/2004-04:34. http://www.indymediascotland.org/node/824.

33. Félix Guttari, and Suely Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, trans. Karel Clapshow and Brian Holmes (New York: Semiotext(e), 2008), 178. Henceforth cited as MRB.

34. Walter D. Mignolo, "The Zapatistas's Theoretical Revolution: Its Historical, Ethical, and Political Consequences," *Review* 25, no. 3 (2002): 245."This

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has important consequences. If, for instance, a given language lacks a subject/object correlation as a basis for the elaboration of epistemic principles and the structuring of knowledge, the speakers of such a language do not engage in acts of 'representation,' but engage instead in 'intersubjective enactements.' Consequenly, 'nature' in the Tojolabal language and social consciousness is not an 'it.' Further, acts of enunciation in Tojolabal not only involve the co-presence of 'I' and 'you' but also the presence of the 'absent' third person, 'she' or 'they'" (ibid.).

35. Ibid.

36. Marcos, quoted in, Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, T*he Fire and the Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2008), 307.

37. "The main reason is that we have to be careful that nobody tries to be the main leader. The masks are meant to prevent this from happening." Marcos quoted in Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 6.

38. Medea Benjamin, "Interview with Subcomandante Marcos," in *First World, Ha Ha Ha!: The Zapatista Challenge*, ed. Elaine Katzenberger (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995), 70. "I will take off my ski mask when Mexican society takes off its own mask, the one it uses to cover up the real Mexico" (ibid.).

39. Martin Buber, *I And Thou* (Tampa: Free Press, 1971).

40. "There is a clear national effort aimed at spreading forms of self-government or self-mangement—that are possible here, in a way—to other places. As far as the government or the political class are concerned, its not worth it to spend much time on them since they dont spend time on us. So better not to lose sleep over it." Marcos, quoted in, Ramírez, *The Fire and the Word*, 308.

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