Defending the Commons: New Frontiers in Latin American Perspectives on Environmental Justice

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Abstract
Environmental Justice scholarship and action have different histories and genealogies. In this article, we combine our interdisciplinary formations in philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and feminist political ecology to examine three case studies that show how place-based communities understand, enact, and embody their struggle for environmental justice. We draw from Latin American and Caribbean scholarship on these issues and our experience in the field in Argentina, Chile, and Colombia. Our cases reveal that environmental-driven grassroots organizing has a territorial inscription articulated around the defense of the commons and life itself [the right to existence, as many communities frame it]. The cases reflect communities' complex histories of colonial occupation, capitalism, and development. At the same time, they shed light on the transformations people envision. Thus, while some of the communities' actions enact decolonial practices, others inhabit a more fluid space of political contestation.