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Pedro Lasch, *The Indianization of Globalization*, 2009. Courtesy the artist.

Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality

– Walter D. Mignolo

I

When I received the letter from *Afterall* inviting me to participate in this issue, the following paragraph both captured my attention and oriented what I wanted to write:

> *The impetus for this issue stems from two distinct, though not unrelated, contexts. On the one hand, the appalling rise of xenophobia and racism in Europe and the United States in the wake of divisive populist politics (read Trump, Brexit, etc.), which has exposed the colonial matrix as the untouched structure of power and knowledge – and the attendant nostalgia for empire. On the other, this issue has stemmed from conversations with Canadian Indigenous artists, curators and organisers and their insistence in emphasising indigeneity over decoloniality – that is, that the gesture of decentring and delinking must be accompanied by a process of recentring aesthetic and political indigenous structures. In this issue, then, we would like to consider to what extent these two processes of 'delinking' and 'relinking', if you will, overlap, clash or complement each other.*[1]

Both issues seem, at first sight, to be unrelated. Racism and xenophobia in Europe are manifestations of the European indigenous peoples feeling menaced by the foreigners or non-indigenous. You may be surprised at my referring to 'European indigenous peoples', and assume I made a mistake, or that I've lost my mind. This is a specific case of the virus of *coloniality* and how it infects our minds and makes us 'see' what the rhetoric of Western modernity wants us to see: that 'indigenous peoples' are somewhere over there and not here. However, if you look at the meaning of *indigenous* in modern European imperial languages grounded in Greek and Latin (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German and English), you will find that the word is an adjective referring to those 'born or originating in a particular place'. It comes from the late Latin *indigenus*, which means 'born in a country, native'.[2] So, if Europeans are not indigenous, where did they come from?

Walter D. Mignolo describes the necessary work of delinking from Western narratives in order to relink and affirm the modes of existence we want to preserve.

The problem with coloniality of knowledge, and of existing within its realm (knowing, sensing and believing), is that it makes us believe in the ontology of what the North Atlantic's 'universal fictions' have convinced us to believe.[3] In this case, that Europeans are nationals in Europe, that people of European descent in the Americas must be people of European indigenous descent (natives born in the New World), and that the people who inhabited the land before European intervention are referred to as 'indigenous' to that land and not to Europe's land. In purely etymological terms, *indigeneity* is derived from *indigenous*, and, in purely semantic terms, refers to the identity of indigenous peoples. Clear enough.[4] Now, the problem appears when signs – in this case, the adjective *indigenous* and the noun *indigeneity* – refer to people. Who decides that the indigenous are somehow of the 'national' – which is who actually counts, since Western Europeans and their Southern counterparts (in Italy, Spain and Portugal, with modern Greece falling almost out of the South of Europe) have defined themselves as 'nationals'?

With the emergence of the idea of the nation-state and the definition of the 'Rights of Man and of the Citizen', doors were closed for lesser-Man and non-citizens, that is, 'non-nationals'. Then came the significant problem of the modern, secular and bourgeois Euro-

1 Email to the author, 21 July 2016.
2 'Indigenous', *Online Etymology Dictionary* [website], available at http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=indigenous&allowed_in_frame=0 (last accessed on 23 January 2017)
3 See Michel-Rolph Trouillt, 'North Atlantic Universals: Analytical Fictions, 1492–1945', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol.101, no.4, Fall 2002, pp.839–58.

pean nation-state that propagated all over the world. What *is* the problem of the nation-state? That the nation-state cares (in practice but not in theory) for nationals and not for human beings. Non-nationals are lesser human beings; they are foreigners, immigrants, refugees, and for colonial settlers, indigenous from the land they settled in are second class nationals.

II

Before going further with this line of reasoning, I consider it necessary to be more explicit about *coloniality*. This term – in short – refers to the Colonial Matrix of Power. I understand the CMP as a structure of management (composed of domains, levels and flows)[5] that controls and touches upon all aspects and trajectories of our lives. If one looks at the transformations of the CMP since its formation in the sixteenth century, one sees mutations (rather than changes) within the continuity of the discursive or narrative orientation of Western modernity and Western civilisation: from, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christianity (Catholic or Protestant) to secularism, liberalism and Marxism (in other words, from the Christian to the civilising mission); and from 'progress' in the nineteenth century to 'development' in the second half of the twentieth.

The global westernising project collapsed at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This did not mean the end of the West. It only meant the end of westernisation in its last attempt: neoliberal globalism. The westernisation of the world is no longer possible because more and more people are resisting being subsumed in it. Contrarily, people begin to re-exist. This means to figure out how to live their/our own lives instead of giving our time and bodies to corporations, our attention and intelligence to the unbearable mainstream media, and our energy to the banks, which are constantly harassing us to obtain credits and pay high interests. Reponses of different kinds and levels have become visible, including the emergence of projects of de-westernisation, amongst them: China's political re-emergence due to economic affirmation; Russia's recovery from the humiliation of the end of the Soviet Union and attempt to prevent westernisation in Ukraine and Syria; and Iran's cooperation with China and Russia. These projects have paralleled the growth of *decoloniality* following the Bandung Conference in 1955. This means that decoloniality emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, demarcating itself from decolonisation due to its wider impact. The collapse of the Soviet Union was a Russian event – yet it had significant global implications.[6]

Global history was no longer steered by Western actors and institutions, and this was manifested in general conflicts between dewesternisation and rewesternisation. We could see growing decolonial forces delinking from the state, corporations, banks and inter-state institutions. Delinking, then, means doing so from the domains of the CMP. This could not – or should not – be done all at once, in one week, given all the complicated tentacles of the CMP. It is a long process, at different levels and with different needs and preferences. It took more than 500 years for the current global bourgeoisie to control the organisation of the planet. This has generated all kinds of conflict, discontent, humiliation, anger and dehumanisation. Moreover, it opened colonial wounds.

Decoloniality, which was no longer decolonisation as it was during the Cold War, became a proliferating project and organisation of *disobedient conservatism*. Decolonial disobedient conservatism is the energy that engenders dignified anger and decolonial healing, and its main goals are to delink in order to re-exist, which implies relinking with the legacies one wants

4 To open up the conversation, I recommend Mexika.org, which digs into the memories of ancient Mexican civilisation: 'Next, let us look at "indigeneity." If it sounds like an academic construction, that is because it is. In simple terms, "indigeneity" is the combination of the words indigenous and identity – hence, indigeneity. Seems obvious enough, what else is there to say about it? Well, what is indigenous identity? Who defines it; a government, a group of people, an authoritative individual? This term is a little harder to apply because of the long settler-colonial legacy of denying indigenous people their Native ethnicity in North America, particularly in the United States with its blood quantum policies. For our purposes here, we will say that "indigeneity" is an indigenous identity particular to an individual who sees him/herself as belonging to a specific group with roots dating prior to the so-called "great encounter" of 1492. That is an extremely wide net that encompasses a diverse array of peoples, cultures and societies stretching the northern and southern American continents.' Tlakatekatl, 'Towards a "Yankwik Mexikayotl": A Definitional Essay; Part I', *Mexika.org* [blog], available at https://mexika.org/2014/07/18/a-new-mexikayotl-its-time-to-purge-the-nonsense/ (last accessed on 23 January 2017).

5 See Walter D. Mignolo, 'Global Coloniality and the World Disorder', *World Public Forum*, November 2015, available at http://wpfdc.org/images/2016_blog/W.Mignolo_Decoloniality_after_Decolonization_Dewesternization_after_the_Cold_War.pdf (last accessed on 23 January 2017).

6 What was attempted in the Obama era was to re-bump westernisation. Obama's foreign policy was marked by a consistent effort to re-westernise the planet. It has been stopped, but the US and the Pentagon, with the core of the EU, would persist in preserving their own values (which is fine, everybody has the right to do so) and in imposing their values all over the world (which is an aberration).

to preserve in order to engage in modes of existence with which one wants to engage. Thus, re-existing depends on the place of the individual in the local histories disavowed, diminished and demonised in the narratives of Western modernity. This is not to suggest that decoloniality calls for delinquency. On the contrary, it calls for both civil and epistemic disobedience, which could be enacted at different levels and in different spheres. (Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, showed the way to the Indian people.) Needless to say, the state, the corporations and banks would not be in favour of people taking control of their own destinies.

However, and this is crucial, there cannot be one and only one decolonial master plan – that would be far too modern, too Eurocentric, too provincial, too limited and still too universal. Decoloniality operates on pluri-versality and truth and not in uni-versality and truth. As mentioned above, decoloniality's first moves should be those of delinking. Secondly, it should strive for re-existence. Re-existing is something other than resisting. If you resist, you are trapped in the rules of the game others created, specifically the narrative and promises of modernity and the necessary implementation of coloniality. There cannot be only one model of re-existence.

Projects of resistance have emerged from very specific geopolitical and corpo-political local histories confronting global designs. For instance, the Bandung Conference was a crucial moment that ignited the fire of the Third World that Frantz Fanon theorised in his celebrated *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961). Decolonial geopolitics refer to state politics struggling to liberate themselves from economic and political dependency. Body politics are also articulated in Fanon's response to Western racism: 'O my body, make of me always a man who questions!'[7] Where Fanon said 'man' we should read 'human beings'. Where Descartes said 'mind' Fanon said 'body'. But the body invoked by Fanon is not the body of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, a singular Roman body modelled as universal Man/Human. It is a black body in the middle of the twentieth century; it is a racialised body; it is a humiliated body; it is the despised body that he contested and rejected all through *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952). This is a different kind of geopolitics: the geopolitics of the body, which does not operate in the sphere of the state, but in the geopolitics of racialised and sexualised bodies.

Gloria Anzaldúa's influential *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), made a similar point from the experience of a lesbian *Chicana*.[8] For Anzaldúa, *la frontera* (the border) is geopolitical. The border between the US and Mexico, with all the power it embodies, is also a sexually racialised *frontera*: 'the new mestiza' is both ethnically mestiza (Mexican-American or Chicana) and sexually mestiza (a lesbian of colour).[9] This reading is not necessarily ethnographic, as these readings are frequently categorised, but political. It is an example of decolonial disobedient conservatism – wanting to preserve the legacies that secure what it means to be a lesbian of colour or a Mexican-American alongside the modes of existence that they potentially embody. Both Fanon's and Anzaldúa's analyses are necessary to thinking about delinking to re-exist by preserving the legacies that Afro-Caribbeans and lesbians of colour in the US want to preserve. Both arguments are analytic, coherent and of paraxial empowerment. Both embody decolonial disobedient conservatism: they propose to *preserve* what each community needs in order to be able to re-exist, and not to *change* following the rhetorical trap of Western modernity.

III.1

Where does this excursus on modernity/coloniality/decoloniality take us in confronting issues such as the refugee crisis in Europe?

In the current situation in Europe, human beings who are identified as immigrants or refugees not only do not have room in the media or university to make their argument, they also do not have the energy: their main concern is survival. A fragment of the civil society in European countries considers that they have been affected by the arrival of these individuals, but there are extreme limitations in what civil society can do when state politics portray refugees as a burden that obstructs their priorities, specifically domestic economic growth and inter-state relations to preserve the inter-state economic and political hierarchy. I take this opportunity to bring back the modus operandi of the CMP. It is not my intention, however, to apply the CMP structure of management in order to analyse the complex issues of

7 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (trans. Charles Lam Markmann), London: Pluto Books, 2008, p.181.
8 See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
9 Google doesn't recognise the term *mestiza*; it only recognises *mestizo*, which is masculine.

immigration, the refugee crisis or indigeneity. It is also not my intention to use these issues as illustrations of the CMP. Instead, I am attempting to articulate harmonic relationships between them. For instance, the CMP unfolds in the analysis of immigration, the refugee crisis and indigeneity, yet at the same time it impacts our way of understanding these issues in a particular way: the decolonial way of thinking.

Decolonial thinking strives to delink itself from the imposed dichotomies articulated in the West, namely the knower and the known, the subject and the object, theory and praxis. This means that decolonial thinking exists in the exteriority (the outside invented by and from the inside to build itself as inside). It exists in the borderland/on the borderlines of the principles of Western epistemology, of knowing and *knowledge-making*. The inside (Western epistemology) fears losing its status of rational mastery by promoting the importance of emotions over reason. For instance, what would happen if we articulated our decisions and our scientific premises (assumptions) as irrational and emotional? We would perhaps be considered heretics, or a similar medical or legal category used to keep people in the exteriority. Well, that is what disobedient conservatism means: to disobey 'scientific' classifications of human beings and to conserve the fundamental role of sensing (*aesthesis*) and *emotioning* in our everyday life, as well as in the high decisions by the actors leading states, corporations and banks and the production of knowledge.

The Berlin Conference of 1884–85 was a turning point in the history of the CMP. If from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries the Americas were the battlefield amongst Europe's Atlantic imperial states (Spain, Portugal, Holland, France and Britain), the conference turned the scenario to Africa. When you look at a map of Africa around 1900, what do you see? You see not one single corner of Africa that was not possessed, managed and controlled by a European state.[9] When several African countries gained independence during the Cold War, immigration to Europe started. (It continues to this day.) Decolonisation in Asia and Africa and the intervention of the US in Central America since the 1960s have escalated immigration also to the US, where traditionally immigrants had been white Europeans. The 'melting pot' narrative was conceived to highlight the proudness of a nation-state where immigrants were welcomed. By the 1970s, when non-white immigrants were arriving, the narrative of the melting pot mutated into the narrative of multiculturalism, and of Richard Nixon's ethnoracial pentagon, which asked the immigrant to identify him/herself in one of five categories: White, Asian-America, African-American, Hispanic or Native American (a situation that continues today).

This brief history of migration to Europe and the US is another chapter in the history of Western imperial expansion, in which the nation-state has nevertheless maintained its status.[10] The nation-state form emerged at a crucial moment of the first mutation of the history of the CMP. Historically founded in the sixteenth century, the form of governance was then monarchic, supported by the Church. The governing elites were the aristocracy in each of the forming European countries and the elites of the Roman Papacy. The criteria for preferred people as 'nationals' did not yet exist in concept in Western hegemonic narratives (and even less in narratives of non-Western civilisations). The outcasts were all kinds of 'unbelievers'. For three centuries, the main 'victims' of the Western narratives were *Pueblos Originarios* in the Americas (from Southern Chile to Canada and Alaska) and enslaved Africans. The latter were more demonised than Africans themselves at that point – for Europe, Africa was the provider of enslaved human beings. With the advent of the modern-secular and bourgeois nation-state in Europe, which displaced from governance the European monarchies and the Church, the narrative of national citizens displaced the narrative of Christian believers. The logic was the same (the logic of coloniality) but the rhetoric changed (nation-states, citizens, 'Rights of Man and of the Citizen'). As mentioned above, the nation-state form of governance is today an encumbrance because it favours nationals over humans: by its logic, non-nationals are lesser humans. As a consequence, a global atmosphere of racism is ingrained in the formation, transformation and management of the CMP. This indicates how racism is created by an epistemic classification, and not by the representation of existing racial differences between human beings. Non-nationals (immigrants and refugees) fall prey to racism due to epistemic classifications.[11]

10 In 1900, Belgium was also in the imperialist family, possessing the territory that would become the Belgian Congo.

11 Frantz Fanon understood it clearly: he knew of course that he had black skin. He did not know he was a 'Negro'. He learned he was a 'Negro' in France: walking along the street, a child pointed at him and told her mother, 'Look, a Negro.' Black skin is a matter of fact. Being a 'Negro' is a racial epistemic classification. That is racism. F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks, op. cit.*, pp.111–12.

III. 2

The next question is, where does this excursus on modernity/coloniality/decoloniality take us in confronting issues such as indigeneity? Further, how can decoloniality be conceived and enacted (for those who are interested in conceiving and enacting it) by 'indigenous' former Western Europeans and by 'Anglo-natives'? (By the former, I mean people born in the in the US of European descent.[122])

The *Pueblos Originarios*, also referred to as 'Indians', and translated as 'indigenous',[133] is a term now common in Spanish and accepted by many of these communities in the Americas. People belonging to *Pueblos Originarios* are neither immigrants nor refugees. They were on the land when *European immigrants* arrived without invitation – and without passport – and settled on the land. Histories of rebellion and discontent amongst *Pueblos Originarios* have been written by the settlers, and memories of discontent have never been forgotten in the hearts and minds of the *Pueblos Originarios* themselves. Resistance and re-existence have never stopped since the sixteenth century. Without constant re-existing, we wouldn't be able to understand the continental resurgence of *Pueblos Originarios*: their reclaiming the land and dignity that belongs to them; their affirmation of their own humanity; and their confronting the barbarism of 'Western humanism', which made them lesser humans.

Human and *humanism* are keywords in Western narratives that articulate concepts of both the human and humanity. These concepts corresponded with the image that those who asserted and reproduced these narratives had of themselves. Racial classifications were necessary to be able to identify and distinguish what being human (looks, origins, practices, etc.) entailed. Humanism became the project that strived to humanise people on the planet who were previously understood as lesser humans (indigenous, immigrants, refugees). Now the fiction has been disclosed. The hegemonic narratives that made a vast portion of the planet's population lesser humans (because of ethnicity, skin colour, blood, gender and sexual preference, language, nationality or religion) are seen in today's narratives of barbarism: not because there are ontological barbarians but because the authors of the narratives are indeed barbarians in the act of inventing difference to classify equal living organisms as lesser humans.

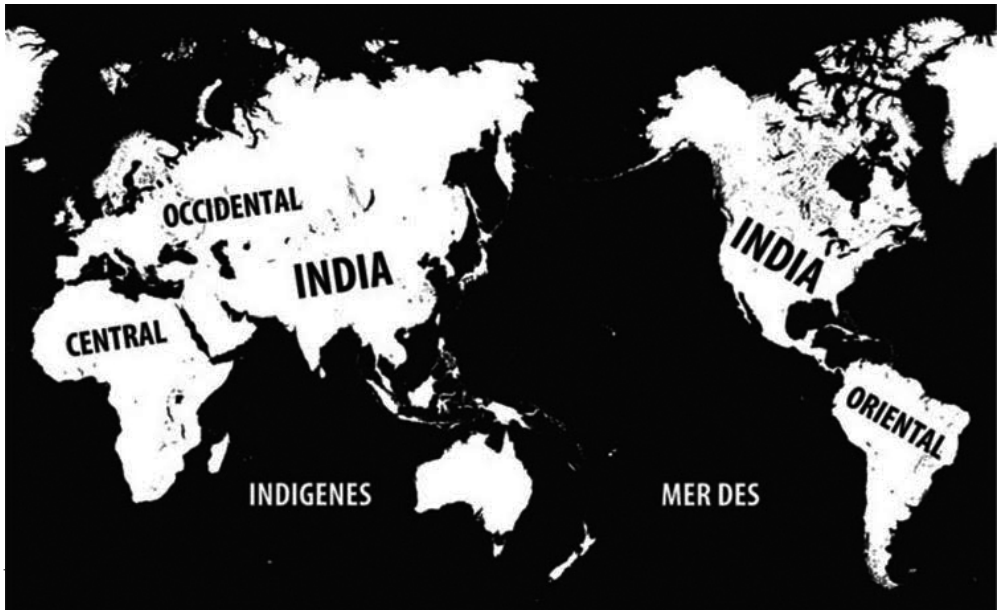
III.3

There are, then, good reasons why indigeneity may be preferred over decoloniality. Indigeneity, like national or religious identifications (French, German, American, British, Christian, Muslim, etc.), is a heterogeneous identification. There are debates, positions, conflicts in each identification. Christians may be Catholic or Protestant, but still they see themselves as Christian. Muslims could be Sunni or Shia, they still they see themselves as Muslims. There is a line, however, that cannot be crossed: no Christian would see herself as Muslim unless she converts. No Muslim would see herself as Christian unless she converts.[144] I have been learning myself from the struggles of indigenous peoples in the Americas – from the Mapuche in Chile, the Aymara in Bolivia, the Quichua in Ecuador, the Maya-Quiché in Guatemala, the Osage in the US and Nishnaabeg in Canada, to name a few. In each nation and project, there are thinkers and activists from all walks of life, including curators, artists and scholar-intellectuals. I am learning from their arguments: oral, written, visual and aural. I am not an anthropologist who 'studies the other'. I am learning from them as I once learned from Aristotle, Kant or Marx. Being myself neither Greek nor German I was then indeed learning from 'my others'. I am attentive to how indigenous people carry their fight in order to orient my own in the racialised ethnic and sexual spheres I am fighting. What is common to all the diverse indigenous inhabitants of the world is the need for affirmation to resist the imperial/colonial powers. Author, educator and activist Taiaiake Alfred captures this idea as follows:

12 Such as Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump.

13 The denomination 'Indian' honoured Christopher Columbus's mistake - he originally thought he was travelling to India. The denomination *indigenous* was created later on, when the word entered Western classifying vocabulary. Following their own definition, as I mentioned before, Europeans are also indigenous. However, the word was invented and used to classify the difference. If they recognised themselves as indigenous, then indigenous could not be different.

14 As a Third World intellectual and immigrant in Argentina, France and the US, I have the immigrant consciousness in common with immigrants around the world - the experience of dwelling and thinking in the borderland/borderline.



> *Under colonisation, hundreds of indigenous nations that were previously autonomous and self-governing suffered a loss of freedom. Even today, the lives of their people are controlled by others.*[155] *The problems faced by social workers, political scientists, physicians and teachers can be all traced to this power relationship, to the control of Native lives by a foreign power. In the midst of Western societies that pride themselves on their respect for freedom, the freedom of indigenous people to realise their own goals has been extinguished by the state in law and, to a great degree, in practice*. Above all, indigenous nationhood is about reconstructing a power base for the assertion of control over Native land and life. This should be the primary objective of Native politics.[166]

What Alfred describes corresponds to what I have called the Colonial Matrix of Power. Delinking from foreign powers' control over lives goes hand in hand with rebuilding and re-existing under new conditions and modes of existences that are your own.

Whereas it is true that decoloniality does not equal indigenous struggle (thus I understand that for some people indigeneity has priority over decoloniality), the act of rebuilding indigeneity implies decolonial delinking from settlers' control of lives. Decoloniality is not an ethnic, national or religious identification. It is a political project, and as such, indigenous people may inhabit it differently from other non-indigenous communities (be they immigrants, Muslims, members of the LGTB community, transnational queers of colour, Third World women, Latinas and Latinos, indigenous people from the Urals or Black Africans in South Africa) and at the same time may inhabit it differently from each other. Since I am not indigenous myself, I have neither the right nor the authority to decide what indigenous people themselves should do to protect their interests and advance their struggle for affirmation and re-emergence, to re-exist and liberate themselves from centuries of settler colonialism. What is relevant is an understanding of the trust of diverse projects around the world that are not initiated by the state, corporations, banks or by Nobel Prize nominations but by people themselves. People organising themselves all over the world to delink from the fictions of modernity and the logic of coloniality find the vocabulary and the narratives that afford

Decolonial thinking strives to delink itself from the imposed dichotomies articulated in the West, namely the knower and the known, the subject and the object, theory and praxis.

15 Notice that Alfred is indigenous himself, and he, like Fanon, uses the third person in talking about the first.
16 Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp.70-71. Emphasis mine. A similar argument in the South American Andes has been made, see Fernando Huanacuni Mamani, *Vivir Bien/Buen Vivir: Filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias de los pueblos ancestrales*, La Paz: Instituto Internacional de Integración, 2015.

them affirmation; they are delinking from modernity/coloniality to relink with their own memories and legacies, thereby securing modes of existence that satisfy them. These modes of existing cannot be thought of as uni-global, uni-form, homo-geneous. All these claims are modern imperial claims: uniformity according to global designs intending to homogenise the planet. That is over. Decoloniality is neither a 'new' nor a 'better' global design that will supersede previous ones.

To conclude, Western civilisation, the visible narrative sustained by the invisibility of the CMP, has affirmed itself during the past five hundred years of global histories and extended its tentacles all over the world. Although the West is not homogeneous, there is something that holds it together and distinguishes it from other civilisations: the narratives and rhetoric of modernity, including the variation of postmodern narratives and the logic of coloniality (e.g. the modus operandi of Western expansion and management). Consequently, the westernisation of the world touched upon many different histories and memories. Each local history and memory was disturbed by the intervention and domination of Western civilisation, with the collaboration of elites in each local history. The process of coloniality decayed from the emergence of decolonial responses, that is, responses from people who were not happy to be told what to do and who they are. Today decoloniality is everywhere, it is a connector between hundreds, perhaps thousands of organised responses delinking from modernity and Western civilisation and relinking with the legacies that people want to preserve in view of the affirming modes of existence they want to live.

Pedro Lasch, *The Indianization of Globalization*, 2009. Courtesy the artist. This map merges English, Spanish, and French to produce a new cartography based on the meanings of the words *Indian* and *Indigenous*. Providing the foundation for our current processes of globalisation, the map returns to the image of extreme ignorance and confusion experienced by Europeans during their arrival to the Americas. As a future or contemporary world order implied by the renaming of the continents, however, the map also registers the epic growth of cultural and political power accomplished by the very populations who have been accurately and mistakenly defined by the idea of the *Indian* and the *Indigenous*. Often presented in books and other publications, the map also exists in the form of ephemeral large-scale paintings for walls of community centres, schools, social organisations, art galleries, museums and other sites for which the map's content might seem relevant. Scale and colours are adaptable to the context.