



FROM ANTHROPOCENE TROUBLES TO UTZ 'K'ASLEMAL: INDIGENOUS ECOLOGIES AS BIOCULTURALLY- DIVERSE PATHWAYS BEYOND A WORLD OF CRISES

**SEPTEMBER 26, 2018
1:00-3:00PM**

**Orozco Room
66 West 12th Street
Room 712**

RSVP: bit.ly/beyondcrises

By Leonardo E. Figueroa Helland

As we plunge into the uncertain times of the Anthropocene (a geological epoch dominated by humans) we face a convergence of global crises: from the breaching of planetary boundaries like climate change and biodiversity loss, to crises in energy and resource extractivism, food systems, economic inequality, security, health and demographics—especially migration and urbanization. Responses to these crises by dominant actors and institutions have often been superficial, delayed, fragmentary and even reactionary. They fall short of addressing the systemic dimensions of the crises, their interconnected complexity, their root causes and the intersectional forms of power and injustice enabling their hegemonic reproduction. Instead, they often replicate the logics producing the crises, thus failing to embody the systemic alternatives and “great transitions” we urgently need. Beyond the “paralysis above,” we can find promise in the groundswell of counter-hegemonic “movements below” who embrace systemic alternatives like just transitions, postdevelopment, degrowth, sufficiency, post-capitalism, the commons, food sovereignty, (eco)feminism, decoloniality, Mother Earth jurisprudence, and others. Among these, we find *indigenous*

knowledges and practices, whose biotically-tailored social ecologies underpin non-anthropocentric communities that have enabled indigenous peoples to nurture the majority of the world’s *biological diversity* and embody most of its *linguistic-cultural diversity*. Both types of diversity are co-dependent; hence “biocultural diversity.” Indigenous peoples have defended biocultural diversity against (ongoing) colonialism and imperialism—including ecological imperialism, which often sacrifices diversity at the altar of “modern civilization”. As we stand at the ecological edge of an epochal cycle facing the Anthropocene crises, indigenous movements are challenging the long night of coloniality by offering alternatives that address multiple crises through the revitalization of globally-complementary, locally-adapted and bioregionally-differentiated praxes rooted in the defense and nurturance of biocultural diversity. By revitalizing indigenous alternatives and fostering their complementarities with other systemic alternatives we can prefigure lifeways that enable the lush biocultural diversity of life as a whole—the *Utz 'K'aslemal* (Maya) that, beyond the age of Man and his mastery of nature, can make more just and sustainable worlds possible.

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