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Book Review: Garbe, Sebastian (2022) *Weaving Solidarity. Decolonial Perspectives on Transnational Advocacy of and with the Mapuche.* Transcript Verlag

Andrea Sempertegui  ^{a b}

^a Institute for Advanced Study, School of Social Science, Princeton NJ, US; ^b Whitman College, Politics Department, Walla Walla WA, US

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Andrea Sempertegui ¹

Book Review:
**Garbe, Sebastian (2022) Weaving
Solidarity. Decolonial Perspectives on
Transnational Advocacy of and with the
Mapuche. Transcript Verlag**

Weaving Solidarity (2022) by Sebastian Garbe is a novel and potent contribution to debates on international solidarity and decoloniality. The thread that connects the book's different chapters is the author's examination of how the Mapuche, as a transnational and collective actor composed by the Mapuche living in the Indigenous territory of Wallmapu and the Mapuche diaspora living in Europe, produce their own network of solidarity. Contrary to analyses that interpret relations of solidarity in a humanitarian key, i.e. analyses that make a clear distinction between passive receivers of support who are affected by a particular conflict and active agents (external to the conflict) whose moral imperative is to give support, Garbe shows how the Mapuche are not mere receptors of solidarity. On the contrary, the Mapuche themselves have created a design of transnational solidarity since the 1970s, which has neither been fully determined by non-Indigenous givers of support located in the global north, nor fully occupied or saturated by "the conflict" with the Chilean state.

As the title of the book suggests, *Weaving Solidarity* stands for how relations of solidarity are "woven through the agency of the Mapuche delegations and diaspora" (p. 136). Inspired by the words of the Indigenous weaver María Curaqueo Loncón, the author describes how practices of "(re)producing communal bonds" are a key element in the Mapuche politics of solidarity (p. 137). This capacity to forge communal bonds has allowed them to effectively transnationalize their struggle for

¹ Andrea Sempertegui is a Visitor Scholar, Institute for Advanced Study, School of Social Science, Princeton NJ, US and an Incoming Assistant Professor, Whitman College, Politics Department, Walla Walla WA, US. Email: semperta@whitman.edu

the Wallmapu. Here, the fight for the Wallmapu should be understood as a fight for a concrete territory, colonized by the Chilean state since it violated the Treaty of Tapihue—which acknowledged the Mapuche as a nation—and militarized Wallmapu in 1883 (p. 105), and as a fight for “territoriality” (p. 113) a practice that foregrounds Mapuche’s “cultural politics of autonomy” (p. 101).

Garbe explains how the Mapuche’s capacity to build communal bonds as a transnational community has effectively translated the fight for the Wallmapu to a broader non-Indigenous audience (p. 122). At the same time, the author explains how this capacity is also marked by the Mapuche’s cultural politics of autonomy. With this, the author refers to how the Mapuche have “managed to create an autonomous space within the context of international solidarity, thus transforming it” (p. 103). In other words, Indigenous activists’ art of weaving communal bonds as a diasporic community outside of the concrete territory of Wallmapu has “stretched” Mapuche’s territoriality to the realm of transnational solidarity, forcing non-Indigenous allies to adhere to decisions produced by the Mapuche.

This analysis reveals how Indigenous autonomy, contrary to interpretations that reduce it to territorial secession, is a “centrifugal force” towards the decolonization of different cultural, social and political spaces (p. 111). Furthermore, paraphrasing the Maya K’iche sociologist Gladys Tzul Tzul (2018), this centrifugal character of solidarity also makes clear where Indigenous peoples like the Mapuche locate their political power, namely in those communal relations that make solidarity a collective political project and not a charitable individual act.

This potent analysis of solidarity of and with the Mapuche does not mean that Garbe positions himself as a neutral or detached observer. On the contrary, as the author explains in Chapter Three, his methodology is based on a situated analysis and on the conviction that “solidarity can be investigated more adequately from a standpoint of solidarity” (p. 70). The author is indeed an active participant of the broader network of solidarity that the Mapuche have built, taking part at solidarity campaigns and demonstrations organized by the Mapuche, and visiting the Wallmapu territory as a human rights observer (pp. 78-91). From this position of a “researcher in solidarity” (p. 75), as he calls it, Garbe takes his own relation with the Mapuche as an ethnographic point of departure to show the complexities that permeate solidarity ties between the Mapuche and non-Mapuche activists

In fact, the protagonist role of the Mapuche as architects of their own network of solidarity, has not prevented solidarity ties with non-Indigenous organizations and actors to be absent of conflict or contradictions. Throughout the book, Garbe

illustrates how, historically and materially, the fight for the Wallmapu has necessitated from the participation of non-Mapuche allies that have neither shared the same political agenda nor the same commitment to decolonization as the Mapuche. The author shows how the politics of solidarity among Mapuche and non-Mapuche are, paraphrasing Stuart Hall, a politics “without guarantees” (p. 44), full of “equivocations” and deeply marked by relations of coloniality.

I would like to focus on Chapter Six, where Garbe offers an exhaustive ethnographic analysis of the role that “Maputhusiasm” plays in solidarity actions by German white allies. Maputhusiasm refers to “a representational framework activated by non-Mapuche, particularly German actors that racialises and stereotypes the Mapuche culture and society through mostly positively connoted, romanticised, and antimodern imaginaries” (p. 224). “Maputhusiasm” is a concept that the author develops in dialogue with analyses on “Indianthusiasm” that focus on Germans fascination with American Indians since the fifteen century (p. 223), linked to Germany’s “national(ist) myth” (Ridington 2004, cited in Garbe 2022, p. 223) and “embedded in national discourses of ‘Germanness’” (LaFramboise 2017, cited in Garbe 2022, p. 223). Indianthusiasm thus deeply permeates Germany’s social fabric, and is constantly reactivated in left- and rightwing circles for different ends.

Garbe traces how, what he calls the “Indianthusiastic gaze” (p. 225), permeates white German allies’ solidarity with the Mapuche. In his account of Maputhusiasm, he shows how many solidarity initiatives carried out by the German allies he interviewed were deeply motivated by idealized, colonial and racialized stereotypes about the Mapuche. Many interviewees confessed that before travelling to the Wallmapu, they imagined the Mapuche as “Indians just like in the US” “sitting around a campfire,” “technologically backward,” “living cut off from Western society and remotely in the mountains,” or “having a close connection with nature and animals” (p. 225). What is more striking about Garbe’s analysis is that after some German allies become aware of their Maputhusiasm, they transform their colonial desire for the “hyperreal Indian” into a “quest for the authentic Indian” in encounters for solidarity (Penny 2006 in Garbe 2022, p. 227). As the author explains “this quest for a real encounter with the Mapuche translates itself into attempts to make transnational advocacy or international solidarity projects as authentic as possible” (p. 227).

This problematic replacement of the “fictional Indian” by the “authentic and real Mapuche” certainly complicates relations of solidarity between the Mapuche and non-Mapuche activists, but does not make them impossible. As Garbe also examines, Mapuche activists have strategically used their representation as “ecologically conscious” (p. 221) for their own cause and have even “identified potential allies in Europe based on their ecological agenda” (p. 222). Like Astrid Ulloa (2004), Beth Conklin and Laura Graham (1995), Sebastian analyzes how allyship relations are rooted in equivocal, contradictory and even competing assumptions about what “Indigenous peoples” and “nature” are.

This contradictory feature of relations of solidarity reveals the “uncommon ground” on which the Mapuche enter relations of cooperation with their white allies (Blaser and de la Cadena 2018). While the author’s ethnography makes it clear that the Mapuche have managed to create a communal and autonomous space for themselves as a transnational community, this capacity to build communal bonds finds its limits with non-Mapuche allies. As Chapter Six illustrates, solidarity relations with German activists are deeply permeated by the country’s little or lack of engagement with its colonial history. This is why I would be curious about how Garbe sees the limits that this “uncommon ground” poses to what he describes in the book as the potential for “political encounters of solidarity” to transform “into social bonds between the involved actors” (p. 237). Moreover, I wonder whether relations of “political solidarity” between the Mapuche and non-Mapuche activists can really morph into “social solidarity,” a concept the author draws from Kurt Bayertz (1998) and others (Laitinen and Pessi 2015; Rippe 1998; Scholz 2008, cited in Garbe 2022, p.34) to refer to solidarity as a form of social, communal, and collective bonds. In other words, while Chapter Seven evinces the existence of moments of sharing and political commitment between the Mapuche and non-Mapuche allies, I wonder if the concept of “social solidarity” really captures the book’s important contribution to analyses of political solidarity from a decolonial perspective.

Overall, this book is a novel engagement with the potentialities and pitfalls of international political solidarity across colonial differences. Through his engaged ethnography in the Global South and global north, Garbe shows us that solidarity among the Mapuche as a transnational community has the potentiality of creating autonomous spaces for decolonization. At the same time, he shows that solidarity between the Mapuche and non-Mapuche activists is always partial, always contingent, always embedded in a politics without guarantees.

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