

## MULTI-SITE EVALUATION TO RE-EVALUATE LIFE WITH, FROM AND FROM INDIGENOUS NETWORKS AND COMMUNITIES

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### ABSTRACT

This document analyzes the gap between government evaluation and the ways of life of Indigenous peoples in Mexico. From a life-revaluation perspective, it explores how hegemonic evaluation models, rooted in state, technocratic, and colonial logics, have reduced the complexity of community life to fragmented indicators, prioritizing administrative efficiency over dignity, mutual care, and the sustainability of multispecies life. Multi-sited evaluation is proposed as a method to decolonize public evaluation by focusing on situated, relational, and ethical processes that respect the autonomy of Indigenous peoples. In this way, it ceases to be merely technical and becomes a reflective practice that considers violations, memory, and ecosystemic needs throughout the life cycle. From this perspective, the analysis is structured with a multi-sited approach that integrates experiences from two contrasting yet complementary contexts: the Nahuatl community of Santa María Ostula, located in the coastal-mountain region of Michoacán, and an intercultural network of Nahuatl and Otomi women embroiderers living in the Monterrey Metropolitan Area. These experiences reveal the limitations of standardized evaluation models, highlighting diverse realities beyond comparative studies. The conclusion is that decolonizing evaluation involves shifting it from the exclusive domain of the State and private consultancies to a dialogue with the knowledge, practices, and experiences of Indigenous peoples, thus opening pathways for evaluation processes that are consistent with the plurality of life, autonomy, and sustainability in contemporary Mexico.

**Keywords:** Coloniality, situated epistemologies, collective autonomy, multispecies care.

### INTRODUCTION

The realities experienced by Indigenous communities and networks in Mexico, government action, and institutional evaluation processes have historically followed divergent paths and logics. This disconnect is neither minor nor accidental:

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it reflects a structural fracture that has resulted in a sustained erosion of the balance between how public problems are addressed and the concrete conditions that sustain the lives of people and ecosystems. Within this framework, the evaluation of public action has been largely conceived from administrative and technical perspectives that remain detached from the human and multispecies bodies that experience the effects of these actions in their daily lives.

The underlying problem in this essay is that evaluation, far from being a process aimed at dignifying and protecting life, has operated as a tool for state management and, in many cases, for private economic interests. This orientation has limited its capacity to recognize the plurality of ways of life, community rhythms, and the trajectories of vulnerability experienced by Indigenous peoples in both rural and urban contexts. As a result, evaluation has become a distant, incomprehensible, or even suspect exercise for those who have been historically deprived of the possibility of deciding on their collective lives.

The difficulty in recognizing Indigenous peoples in assessments is linked to a broader pattern of colonial classification. As Bonfil (1972) pointed out, the definition of Indigenous has rested on contrast with a dominant culture, producing a distinction that seeks not to understand cultural diversity, but to manage it. In the Mexican context, this process deepened with the construction of a national identity based on *mestizaje* (racial and cultural mixing), which relegated Indigenous peoples to a pre-Hispanic past and denied their living presence in the present, especially in urban spaces (López, 2014). This denial translates into practices of assimilation, acculturation, and racialization that continue to shape how public policies are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

From this perspective, evaluation cannot be understood as a neutral exercise. On the contrary, it forms part of a power structure that, as Inclán (2018) warns, transforms specific communities into manageable populations, controlling their lives and deaths through complex bureaucratic mechanisms that expropriate their ability to decide on the meanings and forms of collective life. Within this framework, even participatory evaluation models often reproduce an instrumental logic: participation is limited to specific moments, without altering the priorities or criteria used to judge the value of a public action.

The tensions faced by Indigenous peoples in contemporary Mexico—armed conflicts, militarization, territorial dispossession, racialized displacement, multiple forms of violence, and urban precarity—reveal the limitations of these evaluative models. As documented by the Global Initiative for Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Mexico, these are processes of military and economic colonization sustained at the expense of Indigenous lives (IRPI, 2023). In parallel, as Mokrani (2011) warns,

neoliberal policies have contributed to a depoliticizing homogenization that renders invisible the distinct experiences of women, Indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups, thus exacerbating their vulnerability.

Given this scenario, this essay begins with the premise that the evaluation of government action requires a profound rethinking. Evaluation is not an end in itself, but a means that can be strategically oriented to revalue the concrete lives of human and ecosystemic bodies that have been historically or circumstantially disregarded. From the perspective of the revaluation of life (Márquez, 2024), evaluation is conceived as a shared process that seeks to dismantle forms of vulnerability and multiple forms of violence, while strengthening dignity, multispecies mutual care, and the sustainability of life.

The thesis of this essay is that multi-sited evaluation, guided by a revaluation of life, constitutes an epistemological and political alternative for decolonizing the evaluation of government action in Mexico. This perspective allows for a reorganization of the criteria, observables, and meanings of evaluation, shifting it from its legitimizing function toward a situated process that engages with the living memory, knowledge, and practices of Indigenous peoples.

To develop this argument, the essay adopts a multi-sited approach that articulates experiences from two contrasting yet complementary contexts: the Nahuatl autonomous community of Santa María Ostula, in the coastal-mountain region of Michoacán, and an intercultural network of Nahuatl and Otomi women embroiderers living in the Monterrey Metropolitan Area. These experiences are not presented as comparative case studies, but rather as expressions of the complexity that characterizes contemporary Mexico and that challenges standardized evaluative models.

The aim of this essay is, therefore, to critically analyze the evaluation of government public action from the perspective of the revaluation of life, showing how multi-situation allows us to see the limitations of hegemonic models and open pathways for an evaluation oriented toward autonomy, dignity, and the care of life in its plurality. The following sections develop, first, a critique of the coloniality of evaluation; then, they delve into the revaluation of life as an epistemological horizon; and they explore the implications of multi-situation and its contributions to the evaluation of public action in rural and urban Indigenous contexts. Finally, they outline the legal guidelines that lead to the decolonization of evaluation and propose analytical categories from the perspective of the revaluation of life, derived from the analysis of the experiences mentioned.

## DEVELOPMENT

### The coloniality of evaluation and the distance from the lives of the people

Historically, the evaluation of government action in Mexico has been shaped by frameworks of rationality that prioritize administrative management, results measurement, and institutional accountability over understanding the real conditions that sustain the lives of people and ecosystems. This orientation has created a profound disconnect between evaluative processes and the everyday experiences of Indigenous peoples, a disconnect that cannot be explained solely as a technical problem, but rather as an expression of power relations rooted in colonialism.

Mexico is a country of contrasting realities; however, discontent with the design, the problematization, and the operation of public policy has been a constant shared by generations. Government inefficiencies, the distortion of the public sphere by formal or covert business interests, and the lack of resonance between policies and daily life are reflected even in international indicators, such as the Government Efficiency Index, where Mexico ranked 104th out of 193 countries in 2023. Nevertheless, as has been pointed out, a measurement of this kind says little when it is not consciously recorded in the lived reality of the people. The fundamental question is not only how efficient a government is, but for whom and at what cost to the lives of its citizens.

The difficulty in integrating Indigenous peoples into evaluation processes is closely linked to how they have been historically defined and classified. As Bonfil (1972) explained, the notion of Indigenous culture has been constructed in contrast to a dominant culture, without specifying its own content, but rather delimiting it based on what it is not. This form of definition has operated as a mechanism of exclusion that, far from recognizing the plurality of ways of life, has contributed to their subordination within national projects. In post-revolutionary Mexico, this process deepened through an identity politics based on *mestizaje* (racial mixing), which sought to generate national unity at the cost of rendering Indigenous peoples invisible and racializing them, especially in urban contexts where their living presence is denied or relegated to folklore (López, 2014).

This logic of colonial classification is not limited to the cultural sphere, but rather permeates the ways in which the State designs, implements, and evaluates its actions. Evaluation, in this sense, is not neutral. As Inclán (2018) warns, modern States tend to transform specific peoples into manageable populations, controlling their lives and deaths through complex bureaucratic structures that expropriate their ability to decide on collective life, its meanings, and its forms. From this perspective,

evaluation becomes an instrument for administering social life rather than a tool for its empowerment.

Even participatory models that have sought to incorporate the population into evaluation processes often reproduce this colonial logic. Participation, while seemingly inclusive, is limited to specific moments in the process and is organized according to externally defined priorities, generally aimed at improving public policy or government action as the ultimate goal. Within this framework, Indigenous peoples are called upon to validate diagnoses, indicators, or results, but rarely to define the criteria by which the value of an intervention is judged. This form of instrumental participation perverts the very meaning of evaluation, using communities as a means to gain legitimacy without altering the structures that produce vulnerability.

The consequences of this distance become particularly visible in contexts of heightened social and environmental tension. The trajectories of Indigenous peoples in contemporary Mexico are marked by ecocidal violence, the assassination of human rights defenders, the dispossession of their bodies and territories, racialized displacement, and massacres that are frequently erased from the national memory. As the Global Initiative for Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Mexico has pointed out, these processes constitute forms of military and economic colonization of territories, sustained at the cost of Indigenous lives (IRPI, 2023). The persistence of these dynamics demonstrates that the existence of legal frameworks or affirmative action does not, in itself, guarantee effective protection or the full realization of collective rights.

In this context, evaluation has also been used as a tool to legitimize institutions, ideologies, or political figures, reinforcing their disconnect from the concrete lives of communities. Evaluation focused solely on demonstrating efficiency, goal achievement, or quantifiable impact is insufficient to account for the social and environmental suffering experienced by Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, it contributes to normalizing forms of vulnerability by translating complex experiences into decontextualized data.

As Lugones (2011) points out, the colonial classification system aims to discourage the common good and fragment the possibility of collective organization. From this perspective, the gap between evaluation and lived experience is not accidental, but rather part of a social order sustained by the dismantling of community ties and the denial of other ways of inhabiting the world. Furthermore, as Mokrani (2011) warns, there is a depoliticization of differences that homogenizes women, Indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups under a neutral citizenship, rendering invisible the specific conditions of their vulnerability.

This framework allows us to understand why evaluation, as it has been conceived and practiced, seems alien, incomprehensible, or even threatening to

Indigenous peoples. The distance is not only methodological; it is epistemic, political, and affective. Recognizing this coloniality of evaluation is an essential step in rethinking its foundations and opening the possibility of other ways of evaluating, oriented not toward the administration of populations, but toward the revaluation of life in its plurality. On this basis, the following section develops the approach of revaluing life as an epistemological horizon for decolonizing the evaluation of governmental public action.

### **The revaluation of life as the epistemological horizon of evaluation**

In the face of the colonial nature of evaluation and the distance it has created from the concrete lives of Indigenous peoples, the revaluation of life is presented as an epistemological horizon that allows for a reorganization of the meaning, criteria, and evaluative practices. This approach does not stem from the need to optimize governmental public action as an ultimate goal, but rather from the urgency of sustaining life in its plurality, dignifying human and multispecies bodies, and strengthening individual and collective autonomy in contexts marked by multiple forms of vulnerability.

Since the revaluation of life, evaluation is no longer conceived as a technical exercise aimed at producing data for state management or institutional legitimation. Instead, it is redefined as a shared process of reflection, recognition, and learning rooted in the lived experience of communities. This shift implies reorganizing the energy, time, and resources involved in an evaluation, moving the emphasis from efficiency and control toward dignification, multispecies mutual care, and the sustainability of life (Márquez, 2024).

One of the central contributions of this approach is the recognition of living memory as an indispensable component of the evaluation. The trajectories of vulnerability experienced by Indigenous peoples cannot be understood through limited timeframes or isolated indicators. On the contrary, they require interpretation across the life course, integrating past experiences, present conditions, and future projections. Evaluation oriented toward the revaluation of life thus opens itself to an expanded temporality that allows for the identification of continuities, ruptures, and accumulations of harm that are often overlooked in traditional evaluative frameworks.

This approach also challenges the idea of neutrality that has historically accompanied evaluation. As noted in the previous section, evaluation has been used to manage populations, legitimize decisions, and uphold social orders that reproduce coloniality. From the perspective of revaluing life, it is recognized that all evaluation is situated and that its criteria respond to specific interests, values, and positions. Therefore, instead of concealing this political dimension, it is proposed to make it

explicit and deliberately orient it toward the dignification of life and the reduction of harm.

The revaluation of life also implies a shift in how we understand autonomy. It is not merely autonomy understood as a legal and political right against the State, but rather an autonomy that is lived and practiced in everyday life, in the collective capacity to decide how to organize life in common, how to care for bodies and territories, and how to relate to other social, state, and private actors. In this sense, evaluation is conceived as a strategic tool for strengthening autonomous processes, by offering comprehensive resources that allow for informed decisions consistent with one's own living conditions.

The emphasis on multispecies mutual care constitutes another fundamental axis of this epistemological horizon. The revaluation of life recognizes the interdependence between human bodies, territories, and ecosystems, and challenges the anthropocentric and utilitarian logics that have guided both public action and its evaluation. From this perspective, evaluation also implies questioning the impacts of governmental actions on the Earth's cycles, on ecosystem health, and on the relationships that sustain life beyond the human realm. This recognition broadens the evaluative field and connects it to the sustainability of life in a wide and relational sense.

In contrast to evaluative models that fragment reality into isolated components, the revaluation of life proposes a systemic and relational understanding. Evaluation becomes a space for articulating knowledge, ways of thinking and feeling, and practices that emerge from collective experience, recognizing that there are multiple forms of evaluation that have not always been named as such. In many Indigenous communities, assembly processes, collective deliberations, and shared decisions constitute evaluative exercises in themselves, even if they do not conform to institutional formats or have systematic documentation.

This recognition does not imply idealizing community practices or ignoring their internal tensions, but rather opening the possibility of supporting and strengthening these processes through collaboration and respect. The revaluation of life understands evaluation as a process of trial and error, where collective learning is built through doing, at the pace of each community and according to its material and emotional conditions. In contexts marked by armed conflict, clientelistic dynamics, or excessive workloads, this flexibility is essential to avoid reproducing new forms of vulnerability in the name of evaluation.

### Multi-situation as an analytical key to understanding complexity

In this essay, multi-situation is not presented as a methodological strategy for contrasting cases, nor as a comparative resource aimed at identifying regularities. On the contrary, it is assumed to be an analytical key that allows us to understand the complexity of the realities that shape contemporary Mexico and, thereby, to highlight the limitations of standardized evaluative models. Multi - situation opens the possibility of articulating experiences that, although distinct in their territorial, historical, and political configuration, share structural conditions of vulnerability produced by coloniality , racialization , and the denial of autonomy.

Thinking about evaluation from a multi-situated perspective means moving away from the logic that seeks to homogenize reality under universal categories and administrative timelines. It involves recognizing that the ways of life of Indigenous peoples are not organized according to institutional calendars or the time constraints that typically guide the evaluation of public policies. In this sense, multi-situation allows us to broaden our perspective to integrate experiences that unfold at profoundly different scales, paces, and contexts, without forcing them to fit into a single interpretive framework.

The experiences underpinning this analysis come from two contrasting yet complementary contexts: the Nahua autonomous community of Santa María Ostula , located in the coastal-mountain region of Michoacán, and an intercultural network of Nahua and Otomi women embroiderers living in the Monterrey Metropolitan Area. These realities are not presented as representative cases or comparable units of analysis. Their analytical relevance lies in the fact that, when considered together, they allow us to appreciate a mosaic of experiences that reveals how coloniality operates in different ways in rural and urban areas, and how these differences affect the very possibility of evaluating government public action.

In the case of Ostula , community life is shaped by an active armed conflict, protracted legal processes, and a constant defense of their body-territory. These conditions create an environment where the priority is the preservation of life and collective integrity, and where the time available for external processes, such as institutional evaluation, is limited and contingent. Evaluation, understood from traditional frameworks, is alien to this reality, as it fails to capture the complexity of the decisions made daily to sustain life in a context of constant risk. From a multi-sited perspective, this experience demonstrates that evaluating without considering the conflict, militarization, and history of dispossession leads to partial interpretations that obscure the real conditions under which public action unfolds.

Meanwhile, the experience of the network of Nahua and Otomi women embroiderers in the Monterrey Metropolitan Area reveals another form of vulnerability, marked by urban racialization and the denial of Indigenous roots in a

region where the founding narrative is constructed from the Spanish colonial period. In this context, community life is woven under conditions of temporary insecurity, excessive workload, and institutional distrust, the product of trajectories of exclusion and the instrumental use of participation. This multifaceted situation allows us to recognize that, even in the absence of a visible armed conflict, urban dynamics produce forms of erosion and vulnerability that also affect the possibility of participating in and taking ownership of evaluative processes.

Taken together, these experiences show that there is no single valid way to evaluate, nor a universal model capable of responding to the plurality of realities experienced by Indigenous peoples. Multi-situational assessment does not seek to establish equivalencies or hierarchies between contexts, but rather to recognize that each experience embodies specific conditions that require their own criteria, rhythms, and languages. From this perspective, standardized assessment proves insufficient not only because of its technical rigidity, but also because it presupposes a homogeneity that does not exist in the real lives of these communities.

The multifaceted nature of the situation also highlights how evaluation has historically been a distant and, at times, incomprehensible exercise for Indigenous peoples. In both contexts, difficulties emerge in understanding the true scope of an evaluation, linked to a history of vulnerability that includes clientelism, institutional deception, mistreatment, and symbolic violence. The expectation that an evaluation will produce immediate changes coexists with the repeated experience of processes that do not lead to substantive improvements. This tension reveals that evaluation, as it has been practiced, has not taken root in daily life nor generated trust as a tool for collective decision-making.

From the perspective of revaluing life, multi-situation becomes a way to integrate what is often overlooked in evaluative exercises. It allows us to recognize that rural and urban experiences are not opposites, but rather part of a network of realities that share structural challenges, even though they are experienced differently. This integration of the excluded enables a broader understanding of social complexity and opens the door to evaluative processes built on the acceptance of plurality, instead of imposing a single set of criteria.

In this sense, multi-situational assessment is not a resource for accumulating information, but rather a way of interpreting reality that demands flexibility, listening, and openness to learning. It implies recognizing that evaluation processes must adapt to the rhythms of community life, not the other way around, and that the viability of an assessment aimed at revaluing life depends on the capacity to generate a common ground of understanding, trust, and shared meaning. This analytical framework ultimately allows us to situate assessment as a relational practice that is built in dialogue with the bodies, territories, and living memories of communities.

On this basis, the following section addresses the implications that this multi-sited approach has for the evaluation of government public action, particularly with regard to the reorganization of criteria, analytical units and decision horizons oriented towards the dignification, mutual care and sustainability of life.

### **Legal and political support for decolonizing evaluation**

The proposal for a multi-sited evaluation aimed at revaluing life does not arise in a normative vacuum. On the contrary, it is embedded in a legal and political framework that recognizes, at least formally, the collective rights of Indigenous peoples and their right to self-determination. However, as previously noted, the existence of this normative framework has not been sufficient to transform the practices through which the State designs, implements, and evaluates public action. In this sense, the law operates here not as an automatic guarantee, but as a strategic support from which it is possible to contest the meaning of the evaluation and reorient it toward the dignification of life.

In the Mexican context, Indigenous peoples have a constitutional framework that articulates individual and collective human rights. Among these, the right to self-determination occupies a central place. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples establishes that “Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (UN, 2008, Article 3). This recognition is not limited to a symbolic dimension, but rather implies the real possibility of deciding on processes that affect collective life, including those linked to governmental public action.

In addition, Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization, ratified by the Mexican State, states that “special measures shall be taken as necessary to safeguard the persons, institutions, property, labour, cultures and environment of the peoples concerned” (ILO, 1989, Article 4.1). This provision underscores that the protection of indigenous peoples cannot be reduced to formal inclusion in public policies, but rather requires specific measures that recognize their own ways of life, organization, and relationship with the land. From this perspective, the evaluation of public action should constitute one of these special measures, aimed at ensuring that state interventions do not perpetuate harm or violations.

However, as Inclán (2024) has warned, in institutional practice a logic of “inclusion by exclusion” persists, whereby Indigenous peoples are incorporated into participatory processes without this implying a real redistribution of decision-making power. This dynamic is also reproduced in evaluation, where participation is often limited to validating predefined diagnoses or results, without opening up space to

question the criteria used to assess the merit or value of a public action. Thus, the legal framework coexists with practices that continue to manage the lives of Indigenous peoples from external and hierarchical positions.

Legal support is especially relevant in contexts where violations are persistent and manifest in multiple dimensions: militarization, territorial dispossession, racialized displacement, violence against human rights defenders, and urban precarity. As has been documented, these processes not only violate specific rights but also comprehensively affect the possibility of sustaining life with dignity. In this scenario, evaluation focused on the revaluation of life is presented as a way to translate legally recognized rights into concrete practices that allow for the identification of harm, the prevention of further violations, and the strengthening of collective autonomy.

From this perspective, evaluation ceases to be a technical exercise subordinated to the logic of institutional accountability and becomes a political space where the very meaning of rights is contested. Evaluating from the perspective of revaluing life implies asking whether a public action effectively contributes to guaranteeing dignity, multispecies mutual care, and the sustainability of life, beyond its formal compliance or administrative efficiency. This question finds support in the regulatory framework, but it demands a situated reinterpretation that engages with the specific conditions of each community and territory.

The right to self-determination, understood from this perspective, is not limited to autonomy in legal and political terms vis-à-vis the State, but extends to the capacity of Indigenous peoples to define the criteria by which public interventions are evaluated. Multi-sited evaluation aligns with this principle by proposing that Indigenous peoples participate not only as informants or beneficiaries, but as active subjects in constructing the criteria, observables, and interpretations that guide the evaluative judgment. In this way, evaluation becomes a tool for exercising self-determination in everyday practice.

Furthermore, the regulatory framework allows for broadening the discussion to include other groups that, while not enjoying the same level of constitutional recognition, face similar forms of systemic vulnerability. Displaced persons, Afro-descendant communities, stateless persons, and other marginalized groups share the experience of being evaluated using frameworks that fail to acknowledge their specific living conditions. The proposal to decolonize evaluation, already supported by law in the case of Indigenous peoples, thus opens the possibility of rethinking evaluation as a broader collective right, linked to the protection of life in contexts of diversity and inequality.

### **Implications for the evaluation of public action: analytical categories from the revaluation of life**

The analytical journey developed thus far allows us to argue that the decolonization of the evaluation of government action is not limited to conceptual critique or normative reconfiguration. It also requires translating into analytical criteria that allow us to reorganize how public action is perceived, interpreted, and valued in relation to the concrete lives of Indigenous peoples. From the perspective of revaluing life, these categories do not operate as closed technical indicators, but rather as analytical frameworks that guide the evaluative gaze toward dignity, multispecies mutual care, and the sustainability of life.

The categories developed below are not presented as empirical findings or as the conclusive results of a specific project, but rather as conceptual contributions that emerge from the dialogue between the critique of the coloniality of evaluation, the multi-sited approach, and the previously reviewed legal and political framework. Their value lies in their ability to broaden the evaluative field, shifting it from an instrumental logic toward a relational and situated understanding.

#### **Comprehensive care for multispecies life**

The first analytical category proposes placing the holistic care of multispecies life at the center of public action evaluation. From this perspective, evaluation involves questioning how government interventions impact health, nutrition, earth cycles, ecosystem balance, and the care practices that sustain daily life. This category challenges evaluative approaches that fragment reality into isolated sectors—health, environment, and social development—without recognizing the interdependencies that exist among them.

The holistic care of multispecies life also incorporates the recognition of living ancestral knowledge and practices, which have allowed Indigenous peoples to sustain their relationship with the land and ecosystems over time. From this perspective of revaluing life, this knowledge is not seen as secondary cultural inputs, but as fundamental for evaluating the coherence of public action with the conditions necessary for life. In this sense, evaluation shifts its focus from quantifiable results to relational, sensory, and symbolic dimensions that are often overlooked within institutional frameworks.

#### **Care-oriented communications and transportation**

A second analytical category refers to communication and mobility conditions as central components of life care. From this perspective, the evaluation of public

action incorporates an analysis of the languages, formats, and channels through which information is communicated, as well as the transportation infrastructures and practices that facilitate, or hinder, access to services, rights, and spaces for participation.

This category allows us to question the neutrality of communication and mobility designs, by highlighting how linguistic exclusion, the digital divide, and transportation insecurity affect women, older adults, people with disabilities, and other groups differently. Evaluating from a care perspective involves assessing whether communication and transportation systems promote dignity, accessibility, and equity, or whether they perpetuate conditions of vulnerability and risk.

From the perspective of revaluing life, this category broadens the evaluative field by recognizing that the possibility of participating in collective processes, including evaluative ones, depends largely on these material conditions. Thus, evaluation shifts from a focus on operational efficiency to a broader appreciation of the conditions that enable or restrict the exercise of autonomy in everyday life.

### **Harm reduction and violation prevention**

Harm reduction is presented as a third key analytical category for evaluating public action. This category stems from the recognition that many government interventions, even when presented as beneficial, can generate unforeseen negative impacts or exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. Evaluating from the perspective of revaluing life implies developing a particular sensitivity to identify these risks and to analyze the capacity of public actions to prevent, mitigate, or repair harm.

Harm reduction incorporates active listening and shared analysis of the experiences of those who live with the consequences of public action. From this perspective, evaluation is not limited to measuring positive impacts, but rather extends to recognizing tensions, conflicts, and unintended consequences that affect the dignity and sustainability of life. This category is especially relevant in contexts marked by armed conflict, militarization, or dynamics of multiple forms of violence, where any intervention can have profound repercussions on the social fabric.

Furthermore, harm reduction is linked to the ability to establish preventative agreements and early warning mechanisms that allow for anticipating conflicts and addressing them before they escalate. In this sense, assessment becomes a tool for strengthening shared responsibility and collective care, rather than simply operating as an ex-post exercise in accountability.

### **Social reorganization of care and autonomy**

A fourth analytical category focuses on the social reorganization of care as a condition for individual and collective autonomy. From the perspective of revaluing life, evaluating public action involves analyzing how care work is distributed, recognized, and valued in community life, and how public policies influence this organization. This category challenges evaluative models that ignore care burdens or treat them as variables external to the analysis.

The social reorganization of care makes visible gender inequalities and the specific conditions faced by women, older adults, and people with special needs. By incorporating this dimension, the evaluation focuses on assessing whether public action contributes to strengthening autonomy and dignity, or whether it reproduces systems that overburden certain bodies and groups. This perspective aligns with the recognition of the plurality of experiences and the need to create differentiated conditions for achieving a dignified life.

### **Documentation, living memory and decision-making**

Finally, a fifth analytical category refers to documentation and living memory as central elements of decolonized evaluation. From this perspective, evaluation is not only about producing data for the present, but also about building records that allow us to sustain the historicity of experiences and support decision-making over time. This category challenges the short-term nature of many institutional evaluations and proposes a perspective that integrates past, present, and future.

Situated documentation, guided by a revaluation of life, is conceived as a tool to strengthen the voice of Indigenous peoples and to collectively validate the analyses that emerge from experience. By recognizing living memory as a legitimate source of knowledge, evaluation becomes a process that contributes to autonomy and the collective capacity to influence decisions that affect communal life.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This essay began by recognizing a structural gap between the evaluation of government action and the ways of life of Indigenous peoples in Mexico. Throughout its development, it was shown that this gap is not a technical or circumstantial problem, but rather the result of a historical configuration rooted in the coloniality of the state, the racialization of bodies, and the subordination of life to administrative, instrumental, and utilitarian logics. From this perspective, evaluation

has functioned more as a mechanism for institutional management and legitimation than as a tool aimed at dignifying and protecting life.

The first analytical conclusion drawn from this work is that hegemonic evaluation models are insufficient to understand and value the complexity of Indigenous peoples' lives. By prioritizing fragmented indicators, short timeframes, and externally defined criteria, evaluation has rendered invisible trajectories of vulnerability, living memories, and fundamental ecosystemic conditions essential for sustaining life. This inadequacy cannot be remedied with technical adjustments or the superficial incorporation of participatory mechanisms, as the problem lies in the epistemological assumptions that guide the evaluation itself.

Secondly, the analysis suggests that revaluing life constitutes a viable epistemological and political horizon for decolonizing the evaluation of government action. By reorganizing evaluation around dignity, multispecies mutual care, and the sustainability of life, this approach shifts the focus of evaluative judgment from institutional efficiency to the concrete conditions that enable or hinder living with dignity. Evaluation thus ceases to be a means of optimizing policies and becomes a relational, situated, and ethically oriented process capable of recognizing harm, preventing further violations, and strengthening collective autonomy.

A third conclusion relates to the contribution of multi-situation as an analytical key. The essay showed that considering evaluation from a multi-situation perspective allows us to understand the complexity of contemporary Mexico without homogenizing or hierarchizing experiences. The rural and urban realities of Indigenous communities cannot be addressed from a single, standardized evaluative framework, since each context is shaped by specific historical, territorial, and political conditions. Multi-situation does not operate as a comparative technique, but rather as a way of interpreting that integrates what has been excluded and expands the field of what can be evaluated, revealing the limitations of universal models.

Fourth, the normative analysis concluded that the proposal for a multi-sited evaluation aimed at revaluing life has significant legal and political support, particularly regarding the right to self-determination and the State's obligations to adopt special measures to safeguard the lives, institutions, and territories of Indigenous peoples. However, the study showed that this normative support does not automatically translate into evaluative practices consistent with these rights. Therefore, decolonizing evaluation implies challenging the meaning of its application, reorienting it toward the effective exercise of autonomy and not merely toward formal compliance with the law.

A fifth conclusion concerns the essay's contribution to the field of evaluation, expressed in the formulation of analytical categories oriented toward the revaluation of life. Categories such as the holistic care of multispecies life, harm reduction, the

social reorganization of care, and situated documentation broaden the evaluative horizon and offer conceptual tools for reinterpreting public action from the perspective of concrete life. These categories are not fixed indicators or operational formulas, but rather analytical frameworks that can guide evaluative processes sensitive to plurality, community rhythms, and ecosystemic conditions.

Furthermore, by explicitly stating the epistemological and ethical stance from which the analysis is constructed, the essay avoids the illusion of neutrality and assumes the responsibility of producing knowledge committed to the dignification of life. This approach does not seek to replace the autonomous evaluations carried out by the people themselves, but rather to engage in dialogue with them and contribute to the construction of shared meanings. Consequently, decolonizing evaluation is considered an open, transitional, and necessarily collective process. It is not about replacing one model with another, but about opening pathways so that evaluation ceases to be an alien practice and becomes a tool at the service of life.

In a context marked by socio-environmental collapse, violence, and the fragility of institutional frameworks, multi-sited evaluation oriented towards the revaluation of life is presented as a seed to strengthen autonomy, repair damaged bonds, and sustain life in common with dignity.

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