



**Reimagining Property Rights  
through Environmental Justice:  
Toward Equitable Land  
Distribution for a Sustainable  
Future**

**Research Series**

**Foreword**

**By**

**Alma Rocío Segoviano Basurto**

## About the Author

Alma Rocío Segoviano Basurto, PhD, is a legal expert specializing in environmental justice, land tenure, and property rights. With over 18 years of experience, Alma has collaborated with Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and diverse communities worldwide to promote equitable resource distribution and sustainable development. She is the founder of **KHaRMAlma KALEJ (Knowledge, Humanity, and Resources for Meaningful Advocacy)**, a project dedicated to advancing equity through consultancy, advocacy, and education. As part of this initiative, Alma leads the **KHaRMAlma Journal**, a platform that bridges research and community voices to inspire innovative solutions



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# Reimagining Property Rights through Environmental Justice: Toward Equitable Land Distribution for a Sustainable Future

*Woah mercy, mercy me, yeah  
Ah, things ain't what they used to be  
Oil wasted on the ocean and upon our seas  
Fish full of mercury [...]  
Radiation underground and in the sky  
Animals and birds who live nearby are dying  
Hey, mercy, mercy me, oh  
Hey, things ain't what they used to be  
What about this overcrowded land?  
How much more abuse from man can she stand?  
Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology) Song by Marvin Gaye*

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## **Series Research Goal:**

This research series seeks to bridge the gap between environmental justice and traditional territorial rights, proposing a transformative framework to rethink property systems and advance equitable land rights for Afro-descendant, Indigenous, migrant, and vulnerable populations.

## **Series Research Powerful Question:**

*How can environmental justice and traditional territorial visions synergize to redefine property rights, advancing equitable land access?*

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## **FOREWORD**

In an era marked by environmental crises and deepening social inequalities, the limitations of current property rights systems have become undeniable. Marginalized communities—including Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and migrant populations—face systemic barriers to accessing and maintaining land and resources. These inequities perpetuate cycles of exclusion, environmental degradation, and social injustice.

This series of papers explores the interplay of historical legacies, cultural perspectives, and contemporary challenges to envision a future where land and resource distribution aligns with justice, equity, and sustainability. Drawing on the metaphor of the "Door of No Return," we reflect on the enduring impacts of historical injustices, particularly colonization, and chart a path toward transformative change.

Present-day property systems often fail to protect marginalized communities, leaving their rights to land and belonging vulnerable. When rights frameworks no longer meet the needs of our global challenges, they must evolve. This requires revisiting traditional land tenure concepts and addressing the dominance of systems that have historically excluded vulnerable populations.

The series delves into the intersections of environmental justice, traditional territorial practices, and the deconstruction of entrenched legal frameworks. It argues for more flexible, inclusive systems that respond to the realities of marginalized communities. By weaving together theory and practical examples, this work envisions new doors to justice, equity, and sustainability—critical lessons for humanity’s future.

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## **Series Structure**

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### **Paper 1: The Intersection of Environmental Justice and Traditional Land Tenure Systems: Shaping Belonging Beyond a Nation**

This paper explores the relationship between environmental justice and historical land tenure practices, highlighting how environmental justice offers a framework to redefine property rights. The focus is on enhancing land rights for Afro-descendant, migrant, and Indigenous communities. Philosophical and legal theories illuminate power dynamics and the equitable distribution of resources, paving the way for a more inclusive and sustainable future.

### **Paper 2: Migration, Belonging, and Territorial Identity: Public Policies and Case Studies Shaping Land Governance and Property Rights**

This paper analyzes how migration and displacement reshape territorial rights, belonging, and land governance, while critically examining the power relations that influence these dynamics. It argues that environmental and territorial justice can transform property systems to integrate migrant, Indigenous, and displaced communities, challenging entrenched hierarchies that marginalize these groups. Drawing on Indigenous perspectives and collective rights, the paper argues how migration not only disrupts but also enriches territorial identities. It highlights how historical and systemic power imbalances perpetuate exclusion, while legal and policy reforms can serve as tools to address these inequities. Strategies to formalize land access, foster inclusion, and promote sustainability are explored through case studies mostly from Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. These examples underscore the importance of offering a cohesive framework for equitable and sustainable land governance.

### **Paper 3: Recommendations and Policy Implications: Conclusions & Innovative Approaches to Progress**

This paper explores innovative strategies for redefining progress in land governance and environmental justice, using Bhutan as a case study and drawing inspiration from analogies like the Spirit of Haida Gwaii. These examples illustrate how fluidity, balance, and creativity can guide the transformation of legal and developmental frameworks. Revisiting the metaphor of the Door of No Return, the paper reflects on the lasting effects of historical injustices, such as colonization and forced migration, and highlights the urgent need for transformative changes that pave new pathways toward equity and sustainability. The argument emphasizes shifting away from rigid, traditional property systems toward legal theories that prioritize inclusivity, adaptability, and sustainability. By addressing historical legacies and integrating innovative concepts, the paper reimagines governance frameworks to position equitable land distribution

and sustainable development as fundamental pillars of environmental justice, equipping systems to respond effectively to contemporary challenges. By promoting collective ownership and fostering robust community networks through established community norms, these examples provide a blueprint for actionable, sustainable policies. This section concludes with specific recommendations for policymakers, focusing on equitable, inclusive, and sustainable approaches to migration governance and land distribution. These measures aim to inspire progress that uplifts marginalized communities, ensuring that justice and sustainability remain at the core of developmental priorities

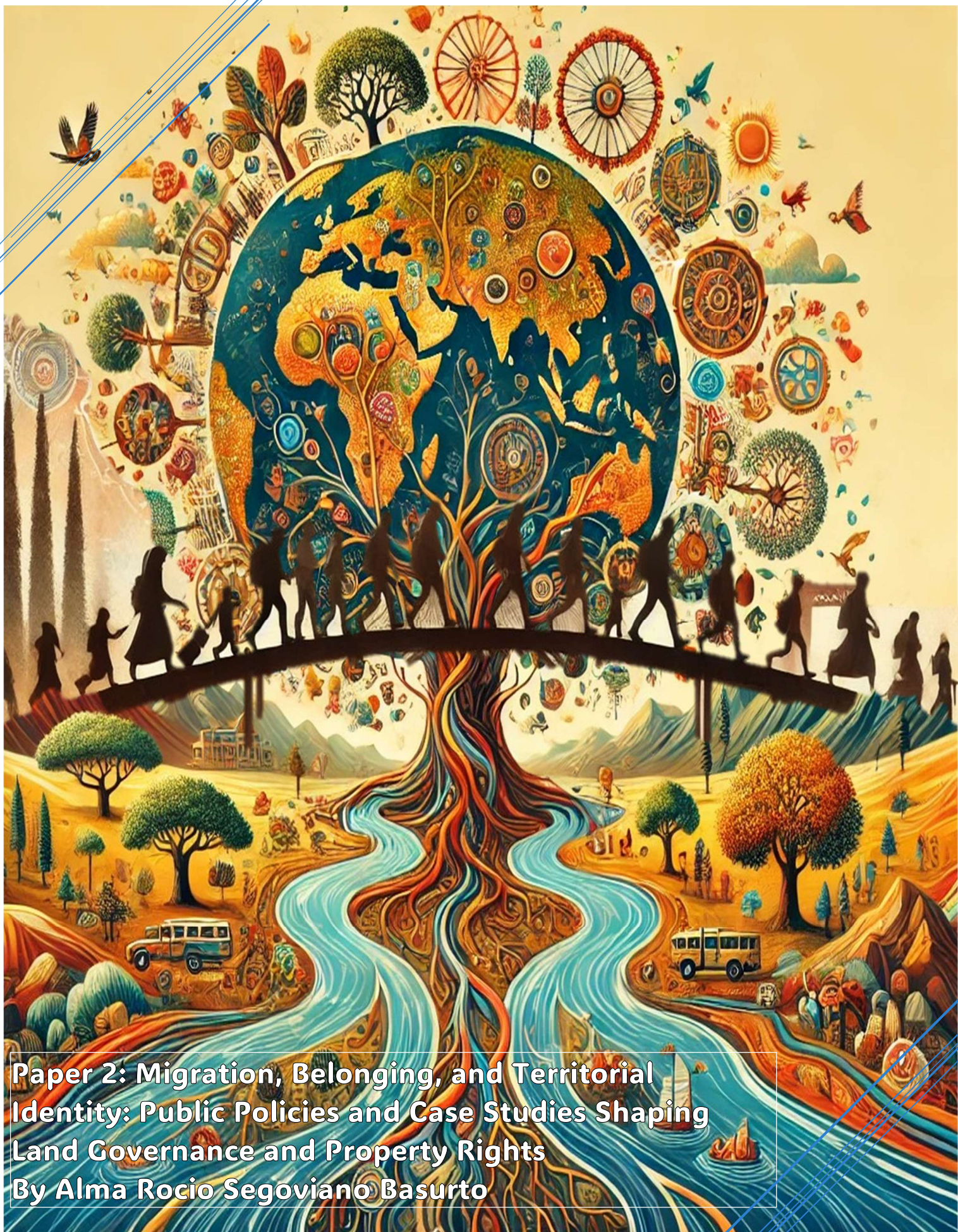
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### **Connecting the Series**

This series connects historical perspectives, migration dynamics, and innovative legal theories to reimagine property systems for a just and sustainable future. Each paper builds upon the last, weaving together philosophical insights, practical examples, and forward-thinking strategies to address the pressing need for equitable land governance. As **Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso** reflects, *"The mind has the extraordinary quality of first creating objects through imagination and then transforming them into a reality of our daily life. In fact, everything originates in imagination. If no one had imagined our house, it would never have been built. The mind is the creator of everything we experience."* This vision of the mind's transformative power underscores the necessity of imagining and creating equitable systems that address today's challenges and shape a sustainable future (Gyatso, 2017).



**NOTE: I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to those who generously responded to the questionnaire. For privacy reasons, their identities remain anonymous, but they know who they are, and I deeply value their contributions. I also wish to thank the photographers who selflessly share their work for free, allowing me to give face to those who endure the greatest struggles.**



**Paper 2: Migration, Belonging, and Territorial Identity: Public Policies and Case Studies Shaping Land Governance and Property Rights**  
By Alma Rocio Segoviano Basurto



Alma Rocío Segoviano Basurto, PhD, is a legal expert specializing in environmental justice, land tenure, and property rights. With over 18 years of experience, Alma has collaborated with Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and diverse communities worldwide to promote equitable resource distribution and sustainable development. She is the founder of **KHaRMAlma KALEJ (Knowledge, Humanity, and Resources for Meaningful Advocacy)**, a project dedicated to advancing equity through consultancy, advocacy, and education. As part of this initiative, Alma leads the **KHaRMAlma Journal**, a platform that bridges research and community voices to inspire innovative solutions

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## **Paper 2: Migration, Belonging, and Territorial Identity: Public Policies and Case Studies Shaping Land Governance and Property Rights**

### **Introduction**

Building upon the arguments introduced in *Paper One: The Intersection of Environmental Justice and Traditional Land Tenure Systems: Shaping Belonging Beyond a Nation*, this paper continues exploring land governance through principles of equity and sustainability. *Paper One* established how environmental justice (EJ) and traditional land tenure systems can redefine property rights, advocating for equitable access to land and resources for Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and migrant communities, whose rights have historically been marginalized under dominant property regimes.

Expanding on these foundations, this paper examines the role of migration and displacement in reshaping territorial rights, belonging, and land governance. Migration has been a defining force throughout human history, reshaping economies, cultures, and territorial dynamics. From European colonization of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania during the colonial period to contemporary movements of people fleeing crises or seeking better opportunities, migration has persistently transformed societal landscapes.

Despite its transformative impact, migration is often portrayed through polarized and racialized narratives. Historically, European migrations were celebrated as drivers of progress and development, while contemporary South-to-North migrations are frequently framed as crises. These narratives expose deep-seated geopolitical and racial biases that overshadow migrants' contributions and reinforce systemic inequities.

This paper posits that integrating environmental and territorial justice principles into governance frameworks can address these inequities by transforming property systems to include migrant, native, and displaced communities. Indigenous perspectives and collective rights are central to this analysis, demonstrating how migration simultaneously disrupts and enriches territorial identities. This duality challenges exclusionary power structures and creates opportunities for shared governance and collaboration.

Public policies and legal reforms are explored through case studies from Mexico, the United States, and Canada, highlighting actionable strategies for fostering inclusion, sustainability, and equitable land governance.

Ultimately, this paper calls for a paradigm shift: reframing migration not as a crisis but as an opportunity to reimagine territorial identities and property systems. By embedding environmental and territorial justice into public policies, governance frameworks can evolve to create inclusive systems that ensure equitable participation and resource distribution for all communities, both present and future.

**Key topics: of this paper:**

- What is Migration really? Mobilization: Adaptation, Resilience, or Conflict?
  - Migration, Identity, and Territories
  - Migration and Environmental Justice
  - Cultural Relativism: The pendulum of HHRR within flexible territorial definition and mobilization
  - Afro-Descendant Communities: Historical Displacement and Cultural Resilience
  - Practical Examples of Flexible Territorial Governance and Territory as a Dynamic Construct
-

## **1. What is Migration really? Mobilization: Adaptation, Resilience, or Conflict?**

Hein de Haas, in *How Migration Really Works: The Facts About the Most Divisive Issue in Politics*, positions migration as a transformative force shaped by systemic drivers and hegemonic narratives. Historically, European migration during the colonial era was celebrated as a harbinger of progress. Yet, contemporary migration from the Global South is framed as a crisis, underscoring racialized biases and the selective memory of migration history. De Haas highlights that while international migration has remained stable at around 3% of the global population, shifts in migration patterns—particularly Europe's transformation from a source to a destination—have fueled misconceptions that migration is at an all-time high (de Haas, 2023).

Similarly, in *Manual de Justicia Ambiental: una visión sistémica y sostenible para el ejercicio de los derechos humanos relacionados con el agua* – to which I will refer from now on only as *Manual de Justicia Ambiental*- is introduced a concept of environmentally mobilized persons. These are individuals forced to leave their homes because remaining in their place of origin is impossible due to environmental causes such as temporary disasters like earthquakes, floods, or cyclones, environmental degradation that destroys livelihoods or endangered health, or permanent loss of habitat caused by large-scale projects or irreversible environmental changes (Segoviano-Basurto, 2023).

I also emphasize how environmental mobilization is often misunderstood. Displacement due to environmental changes—whether sudden disasters or gradual degradation—frequently intersects with issues of inequity and marginalization, making it difficult to attribute displacement to singular causes. So people who have mobilized due to environmental causes, often fall into legal gaps, as they are not recognized as migrants, refugees, or internally displaced people. However, for many, mobilization is not a choice but a necessity, as climate conditions threaten their survival or destroy their livelihoods. These dynamics highlight the urgency of systemic responses that address both environmental mobilization and its root causes (Segoviano Basurto, *Manual de Justicia Ambiental: una visión sistémica y sostenible para el ejercicio de los derechos humanos relacionados con el agua.*, 2023).

Migration requires resources—financial, material, and even your physical and mental capacities, so for those who do not have those resource to mobilize, migration is not an option. So, what happens to those people when neither

staying nor migrating offers a viable solution? (Segoviano Basurto, Manual de Justicia Ambiental: una visión sistémica y sostenible para el ejercicio de los derechos humanos relacionados con el agua., 2023)

This is why public policies must approach in a more systemic way; 1. Avoiding displacement through proactive environmental management, 2. Minimizing displacement by strengthening community resilience, 3. Addressing displacement with long-term, inclusive solutions (Segoviano Basurto, Manual de Justicia Ambiental: una visión sistémica y sostenible para el ejercicio de los derechos humanos relacionados con el agua., 2023).

For these individuals, systemic inequities must be addressed to ensure that environmental mobilization does not exacerbate vulnerability but instead fosters adaptation and resilience (Segoviano Basurto, Manual de Justicia Ambiental: una visión sistémica y sostenible para el ejercicio de los derechos humanos relacionados con el agua., 2023).



Photo by Muhammad Amdad Hossain (Muhammad Amdad)



Photo by Noor Aldin Alwan (Noor Aldin)



Photo by Alan Quirvan (Quirvan)



Photo by Mykhailo Volkov (Volkov)

### **1.1. Environmental Mobilization and Socio-Environmental Conflict Transformation as a Part of Environmental Justice**

Environmental mobilization often intersects with socio-environmental conflicts, which are frequently driven by resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and unequal access to essential resources. Despite this overlap, little attention has been given to the relationship between environmental justice (EJ) and the transformation of socio-environmental conflicts.

Historically, socio-environmental conflicts have been framed as issues exclusive to developing countries, largely attributed to population growth and environmental degradation. However, the environmental justice movement, which originated in the United States, has challenged this narrative by exposing the significant environmental harm caused by wealthier nations. Developed countries, for example, consume ten times more water per person and produce substantially higher carbon emissions than poorer nations. Addressing these conflicts effectively requires confronting power imbalances and systemic inequities. The experiences of Indigenous communities in Latin America illustrate the potential of EJ to reduce asymmetries in resource governance, strengthen the strategic capacities of historically excluded actors, and promote the sustainable and equitable management of shared resources. Achieving these transformations, however, demands a multidimensional approach that integrates EJ principles with community-led solutions.

To advance environmental justice and respond to environmental mobilization, it is crucial to develop local narratives and solutions that challenge exclusionary frameworks. For communities forced to mobilize or unable to migrate, the transformation of socio-environmental conflicts provides a pathway to resilience and adaptation. The Manual de Justicia Ambiental highlights the importance of equity and inclusion in resource governance and decision-making, the revitalization of local knowledge to preserve biocultural heritage, and the development of community-based territorial management plans to sustain ecosystems and livelihoods. These transformations also depend on fostering intercultural dialogue and building networks that empower marginalized communities while prioritizing systemic change to address immediate crises and create inclusive governance frameworks.

## ***1.2. Migration, Mobilization, and the Path to Equity***

Migration and environmental mobilization are not inherently crises but responses to systemic inequalities, as emphasized by Hein de Haas and others. De Haas critiques Eurocentric perspectives that frame migration from the Global South as problematic, ignoring historical migrations such as European colonialism. Similarly, environmental mobilization reflects the deep-rooted inequities in climate impacts, resource distribution, and governance. Integrating EJ with socio-environmental conflict transformation allows for reimagining migration and mobilization as pathways to systemic equity. Policies that empower local communities and address collective resource management among host and arrival communities can transform challenges like resource scarcity and environmental degradation into opportunities for resilience and sustainability.

For many, migration is not a choice but a necessity, while others face circumstances where neither staying nor moving is viable. Hein de Haas's critique of migration myths, combined with the insights of the *Manual de Justicia Ambiental*, provides a framework for addressing these challenges. Together, these perspectives emphasize the importance of reframing narratives around migration and mobilization to highlight resilience and equity. They also call for recognizing the needs of those unable to migrate or remain through systemic protection. Transforming socio-environmental conflicts into opportunities for sustainability and justice. In a world grappling with unprecedented environmental and social challenges, migration and environmental mobilization must be reimagined as interconnected pathways toward a more just and sustainable future.

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## **2. Migration, Identity, and Territories**

*Mach mej axik' lakña'lum mi ma'añ chumulety tyi ityojlel*

*No se puede gobernar un territorio donde no se habita.*

*It is impossible to govern a territory where one does not reside.*

—Rosario del Carmen Gutiérrez Estrada, PhD Candidate, Universidad Iberoamericana

### **2.1. Questioning Polarized Migration Narratives: Colonial Constructs on Migration and Territorial Identity**

Migration is often depicted through polarized and racialized lenses, reinforcing exclusion and hierarchical ideas of belonging. Historically, European migrations were celebrated as forces of progress and development, while contemporary migrations, especially from the Global South to the Global North, are framed as crises. This dichotomy reflects entrenched geopolitical and racial biases, obscuring migrants' contributions and sustaining systemic inequities. Reframing these perceptions requires a deeper exploration of how migration, identity, and territory intersect—both historically and in contemporary contexts (de Haas, 2023).

The relationship between migration and territorial identity is deeply intertwined with the colonial construct of "the self and the other." This dichotomy, central to colonial ideologies, positioned dominant groups as the "self"—"civilized, superior, and rightful governors of territory"—while relegating Indigenous peoples and migrants to the category of "the other"—"uncivilized, subordinate, and illegitimate occupants of land". These constructs justified systems of exclusion, dispossession, and domination, embedding inequality into legal, political, and social structures (Segoviano Basurto, 2015) (Tully, 1995) (Segoviano Basurto, 2020).

In the first paper of this research series, we analyzed how Jacques Derrida's Paradox of Hospitality provides a lens to understand the perpetuation of these colonial constructs. Derrida highlights the inherent asymmetry in systems of inclusion, where the "host" (the self) holds the power to impose conditions on the "guest" (the other). This conditional inclusion reinforces the host's authority while limiting the autonomy of the guest. Historically, this dynamic was institutionalized in colonial legal frameworks that treated Indigenous peoples as guests within their ancestral lands and migrants as conditional entrants, only accepted under restrictive terms. These constructs continue to shape modern



migration policies, framing migrants as burdens or threats to the stability of the host society (Segoviano Basurto, 2025).

The first paper also examined Jorge Riechmann's ethical critique of the self/other dichotomy. Riechmann emphasizes the need to dismantle colonial narratives that dehumanize the other, portraying them as inferior or undeserving of rights. These narratives not only justified historical injustices such as slavery and dispossession but also sustain contemporary systems of exclusion. In migration contexts, Riechmann's may be the foundation to call for empathy and the recognition of shared humanity challenges the portrayal of migrants as inherently problematic. Instead, for valuing their cultural, social, and economic contributions, fostering a more inclusive approach to territorial identity (Segoviano Basurto, 2025).

Building on the self/other framework, James Tully critiques how colonialism demanded the assimilation of the other into the norms and values of the self. As discussed in the first paper, this process erased cultural diversity and imposed a false uniformity, presenting the self's way of life as the sole standard of progress. Tully's analysis reveals how this legacy persists in migration policies and social pressures that require migrants to abandon their cultural heritage to integrate into the dominant culture. Tully advocates for an alternative model of progress that celebrates cultural diversity, viewing it as a source of strength rather than a barrier to development (Segoviano Basurto, 2025) (Tully, 1995).

The self/other dichotomy is also deeply embedded in international legal frameworks, as analyzed by Sundhya Pahuja and Petra Gumplová. These thinkers reveal how colonial practices such as conquest, discovery, and occupation institutionalized the otherness of non-European populations. Legal doctrines like terra nullius framed Indigenous lands as empty and available for appropriation by the self—European colonizers. This narrative of dispossession, discussed in the first paper, established systemic inequalities that persist in contemporary governance systems. Today, migration policies often reflect similar biases, portraying migrants as undeserving of full integration or citizenship while maintaining the dominance of the self in territorial governance (Pahuja, 2005) (Gumplová, 2021).

## **2.2. Migration as a Site of Resistance and Redefinition: Deconstructing the Self/Other Dichotomy**

By revisiting the ideas analyzed in the first paper and expanding on them, it becomes clear that the self/other dichotomy is central to understanding the historical and contemporary dynamics of migration and territorial identity. The work of Derrida, Riechmann, Tully, Pahuja, and Gumplová highlights how these binaries sustain systemic inequalities and exclusion. However, they also provide a framework for reimagining relationships between “the self and the other”.

The self/other dichotomy not only perpetuates exclusion but also creates opportunities for resistance and transformation. Migrants challenge these binaries by reshaping territorial identity through their cultural, economic, and social contributions. As it will be argued below, territorial identity is relational and dynamic, shaped by the interactions and shared responsibilities of those who inhabit a space. Migrants, often positioned as the other, redefine these relationships by introducing new values and practices, fostering pluralism and solidarity. This process disrupts the dominance of the self, opening pathways for inclusive governance and equitable development.

Recognizing the contributions and agency of *the other* is not only an ethical imperative but also a practical necessity for creating cohesive and resilient communities. Migration, when viewed through this lens, becomes a transformative force that enriches territorial identity and challenges exclusionary paradigms, paving the way for a future rooted in solidarity and mutual respect.

## **2.3. What Is Territory? A Relational Framework for Understanding the Reciprocal and Interdependent Relationship Between Migrants and Territory**

Territory is more than a geographical space—it is an inclusive space of coexistence that fosters solidarity and a shared sense of belonging. It transforms into a socio-cultural and relational construct, shaped by interactions between people, shared values, and collective responsibilities. According to Capello, territorial identity emerges from the convergence of socio-cultural, cognitive, and economic dimensions, fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty. This framework moves beyond static, hierarchical views of space to emphasize dynamic processes of shared governance and collaboration (Roberta, 2019).

From the perspective of "Coincorporación," by Martínez Gil, et al., territory also serves as a site of co-responsibility. It becomes a shared space where the state, local communities, and migrants work together to address historical and structural inequities. This concept underscores that the construction and reconciliation of territorial identity rely on inclusive participation, shared narratives, and mutual adaptation (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023).

Migrants actively reshape territorial identity by introducing new cultural, cognitive, and economic elements. As Capello highlights, territorial identity thrives on shared values and collective action, which migrants enrich through their traditions, networks, and collaborations. They expand the relational space of territories, fostering pluralism and resilience (Capello, 2019) (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023) (de Haas, 2023).

The concept of *coincorporación* emphasizes shared responsibility among migrants, local communities, and the state. Migrants are not passive recipients of inclusion but active participants in the co-creation of governance structures. By fostering mutual adaptation and recognizing diverse identities, *coincorporación* promotes solidarity and a shared sense of belonging, transforming territories into inclusive spaces of coexistence (de Haas, 2023) (Capello, 2019) (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023).

The relationship between migrants and territories is dynamic and transformative. Migrants contribute to territorial identity by introducing cultural practices, traditions, and innovations that redefine belonging. Economically, they create opportunities through entrepreneurship and labor, enriching communities and expanding social networks (de Haas, 2023) (Capello, 2019) (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023).

Conversely, territories influence migrants by shaping their sense of identity and belonging. Through interactions with local norms and systems, migrants develop hybrid identities that integrate their cultural heritage with the characteristics of their new environment. This process fosters emotional attachment and strengthens communal bonds (de Haas, 2023) (Capello, 2019) (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023).

#### ***2.4. Territory: A Nexus of Conflict and Reconciliation for Inclusive and Equitable Policies***

Territories often become contested spaces, reflecting historical injustices and contemporary challenges. Capello underscores how territorial identity can mitigate tensions by fostering attachment to shared values and addressing the pressures of globalization. The concept of *coincorporación* by Martínez Gil, et al., extends this by emphasizing the creation of inclusive spaces for coexistence. Migrants and local communities engage in mutual adaptation and collaborative governance, navigating conflicts while building solidarity. These efforts highlight the importance of shared narratives, participatory decision-making, and mutual respect in fostering reconciliation (Segoviano Basurto, 2023) (de Haas, 2023) (Capello, 2019) (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023).

Strengthening the connection between identity, territory, and migration requires policies that recognize migrants as contributors to territorial identity and community resilience. Inclusive frameworks must integrate migrants into governance processes, ensuring they have a voice in decision-making (Segoviano Basurto, 2023) (de Haas, 2023) (Capello, 2019) (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023).

Intercultural dialogue should be prioritized to foster solidarity and shared belonging, while systemic inequities that marginalize migrants must be addressed. Policies must balance the convergence of individual and collective interests to support sustainable development and equitable growth (Tully, 1995) (Segoviano Basurto, 2015).

#### ***2.5. Reimagining Migration and Territory***

The dynamic relationship between migrants and territories underscores the importance of inclusion, shared responsibility, and equitable governance in fostering cohesive communities. Migrants enrich territorial identity by fostering diversity and solidarity, while territories shape migrants' opportunities for belonging and self-expression.

By deconstructing colonial frameworks and embracing relational dynamics, societies can reimagine migration as a force for resilience and progress. This vision transforms territories into spaces of collaboration and equity, where the aspirations of all inhabitants are valued, paving the way for a future rooted in solidarity and mutual transformation.

### **3. Migration and Environmental Justice**

#### **3.1. *Strengthening the Concept of Territory Through Migration, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Resource Allocation***

The convergence of migration, environmental justice, and equitable resource allocation reinforces the concept of territory as a dynamic socio-cultural construct shaped by interactions, shared values, and collective responsibilities. This perspective builds on the idea that territories are relational spaces where solidarity, resilience, and shared governance thrive, transforming them into more than mere geographical boundaries.

As Marie-Bénédicte Dembour explores in her work, rights are shaped by a pendulum movement between universalism and relativism, emphasizing their relational nature. Perceiving this interplay is crucial in understanding how migration interacts with territorial identity. Migrants bring diverse cultural practices and values that enrich territories, while territories adapt to incorporate these influences, fostering hybrid identities. This process exemplifies the balance between universal principles, such as human dignity and equality, and local contexts, where cultural particularities shape governance and resource allocation (Dembour, 2001).

Environmental justice addresses systemic inequities by advocating for fair resource distribution and inclusive decision-making, ensuring that marginalized groups, including migrants, have access to opportunities. Equitable resource allocation ensures that these principles translate into practice, creating a foundation for solidarity and shared responsibility within territories. Together, these frameworks enable a reimagining of territories as spaces of collaboration and resilience (Segoviano Basurto, 2020).

Migration, as Haiden de Haas argues, is neither inherently good nor bad, but it holds transformative potential when guided by equitable policies. Migrants contribute to the socio-cultural and economic dimensions of territorial identity, expanding relational spaces and fostering community resilience. Capello highlights that territorial identity thrives on shared governance, while Martínez Gil et al. emphasize *coincorporación*, where states, communities, and migrants share responsibility for addressing historical and structural inequities (de Haas, 2023) (Capello, 2019) (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023).

Territories are no longer static spaces, but dynamic constructs shaped by the interplay of universal values and local practices. Below in the next section

particular emphasis will be placed on the relational nature of rights, such as Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), which is crucial not only to enabling equitable participation in decision-making processes but also to safeguarding the rights of native and host communities. Strengthening these rights ensures that these communities are empowered to become better hosts, fostering solidarity and integration, while simultaneously protecting them from the risk of dispossession or exploitation (de Haas, 2023) (Capello, 2019) (Martínez Gil, et al., 2023) (Segoviano Basurto, 2015) (Dembour, 2001).

This participatory approach may strengthen the socio-cultural fabric of territories, fostering mutual respect and collaboration between migrants and native populations. By enabling communities to co-create governance systems that balance their needs and aspirations, territories become resilient and adaptive to the challenges posed by migration and environmental change, paving the way for sustainable development and equitable resource allocation.



***Territory is more than a geographical space—it is an inclusive space of coexistence that fosters solidarity and a shared sense of belonging. It transforms into a socio-cultural and relational construct, shaped by interactions between people, shared values, and collective responsibilities.***


#### **4. Cultural Relativism: The pendulum of HHRR within flexible territorial definition and mobilization**

*Life owes its existence to the interplay of differences, as life is plurality and death is uniformity. An idyllic single 'universal' society is to the detriment of humanity, for every view of the world that becomes extinct, every culture that disappears, diminishes a possibility. – Octavio Paz El laberinto de la soledad (Paz, 1972)*

Human rights oscillate between universalism and relativism, requiring a balance that respects cultural diversity while addressing global challenges like climate change, migration, and territorial governance. As argued above, territories must be understood as dynamic constructs influenced by cultural practices, ecological stewardship, and governance systems. This perspective is vital to fostering resilience, justice, and sustainability in spaces shaped by historical displacement and environmental pressures.

Makere Stewart-Harawira highlights how Indigenous communities have not only influenced international law but also achieved significant victories through frameworks like Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). Her work underscores the necessity of balance in governance—territories and human rights, like migration, are neither inherently static nor universally beneficial. Instead, justice lies in fostering diversity, rejecting extremes, and embracing flexible systems that reflect relational and cultural values (Stewart-Harawira, 2005).

The evolution of human rights into three generations reflects a growing recognition of collective responsibilities alongside individual freedoms. First-generation rights focus on civil and political liberties, while second- and third-generation rights emphasize economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions. As noted in the Rainforest Foundation UK's report *Realising the Pledge*, addressing these collective rights is crucial for empowering Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), particularly in protecting forests and biodiversity. This framework aligns with the experiences of Afro-descendant and Indigenous peoples, whose histories of marginalization highlight the need for collective governance to ensure justice and equity ( Rainforest Foundation UK , 2022) (Council of Europe , 2025).



As emphasized in *Realising the Pledge*, FPIC is an essential tool for ensuring community agency in decisions affecting land and resources. The report stresses the need for direct funding to IPLCs, alongside capacity-building efforts, to empower these communities to lead conservation and governance initiatives effectively. FPIC exemplifies the relational nature of rights, bridging cultural relativism and universalism by fostering participatory governance (Dembour, 2001) ( Rainforest Foundation UK , 2022).



## **5. Afro-Descendant Communities: Historical Displacement and Cultural Resilience**

*Through the Door of No Return, they were cast adrift, dispossessed of home yet carrying the seeds that planted life and resilience in the soil of foreign lands, where their spirit forged unyielding roots of strength and renewal.- Alma Segoviano<sup>1</sup>*

Afro-descendant communities, particularly in the Americas, have faced systemic dispossession of land and resources, rooted in slavery, colonialism, and racial discrimination. These historical injustices have significantly influenced their socio-economic and cultural realities. Despite these challenges, Afro-descendant communities have maintained a deep connection to land, often as stewards of ecological and cultural resilience.

### **5.1. Historical Context and Contemporary Challenges**

The historical context of land dispossession, as explored in "A Brief History of Black Land Ownership in the U.S." and "The Color of the Land," reveals how Afro-descendant communities faced structural barriers, including discriminatory laws, violent displacement, and inequitable economic systems. These communities lost vast tracts of land during the 20th century due to mechanisms like heirs' property laws and predatory practices. Such loss undermined their ability to build wealth and maintain cultural ties to the land. Today, initiatives like the Justice for Black Farmers Act and grassroots movements aim to address these inequities by restoring land rights and ensuring equitable resource distribution ( Waterkeepers Chesapeake, 2021) (Chang, 2010).

As highlighted in "Land: Black & Indigenous Experience," there is an emerging solidarity between Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities in reclaiming stolen lands. Both groups advocate for "land back" initiatives that integrate cultural preservation with environmental stewardship. These efforts underline the necessity of community-driven governance frameworks that respect and amplify local voices (Droz, 2022)

Wendell Berry's *The Hidden Wound* reveals how the historical exploitation of land and marginalized communities has fractured relationships between people and the territories they inhabit. Berry's exploration of systemic racism as a

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<sup>1</sup> This phrase was crafted from personal reflections, inspired by the ideas and works of the authors cited throughout this document, whose contributions have enriched the understanding of the topics discussed.

“hidden wound” resonates deeply with the notion that territory is more than a geographical space—it is an inclusive space of coexistence that fosters solidarity and a shared sense of belonging. Territories transform into socio-cultural and relational constructs, shaped by interactions, shared values, and collective responsibilities. Afro-descendant communities, whose histories reflect both forced migration and deep-rooted connections to the land, embody this complexity, standing at the intersection of being perceived as migrants while inherently native to the regions they helped shape through resilience and cultural contributions.

Berry’s reflections resonate with the principles of relational governance, which emphasize interconnectedness, collective decision-making, and the recognition of historical injustices. *The Hidden Wound* provides a moral and philosophical foundation for these ideas, urging societies to adopt governance frameworks that promote equity, sustainability, and healing. Berry underscores the profound interconnectedness between systemic racism, land exploitation, and the need for relational governance—insights that directly align with the principles of environmental justice and the redefinition of territories as dynamic socio-cultural constructs. By exploiting both marginalized groups and natural resources, historical systems of oppression have alienated communities from their lands and perpetuated inequities in governance, resulting in environmental degradation and social injustice (Berry, 2010).

Afro-descendant communities exemplify how territories are not merely geographical or static spaces but relational constructs continually redefined by shared histories and mutual adaptation. These communities, often viewed as migrants due to their forced displacement, are simultaneously native to the territories they have shaped through their labor, traditions, and cultural resilience. Berry’s emphasis on relational healing aligns with this perspective, calling for acknowledgment of the intertwined histories of people and land. Territories thus become spaces where historical injustices are not erased but addressed through inclusive governance that honors both native and migrant identities (Berry, 2010).

In this framework, territories are reimagined as spaces of coexistence and collaboration, where environmental justice and relational governance converge to foster equity, sustainability, and resilience. By recognizing the dual identities of Afro-descendant communities as both stewards of the land and survivors of



systemic dispossession, we can create governance models that bridge the wounds of the past and nurture shared futures rooted in solidarity and justice.

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## **6. Practical Examples of Flexible Territorial Governance and Territory as a Dynamic Construct**

*“Here we are at last, a long way from Haida Gwaii, not too sure where we are or where we’re going, still squabbling and vying for position in the boat, but somehow managing to appear to be heading in some direction; at least the paddles are together, and the man in the middle seems to have some vision of what is to come [...] So there is certainly no lack of activity in our little boat, but is there any purpose? Is the tall figure who may or may not be the Spirit of Haida Gwaii leading us, for we are all in the same boat, to a sheltered beach beyond the rim of the world as he seems to be, or is he lost in a dream of his own dreamings? The boat moves on, forever anchored in the same place.”* By Bill Reid about the Spirit of Haida Gwaii (artjouer- Art Diary, 2020)

Territories are dynamic and relational constructs shaped by interactions between people, shared values, and collective responsibilities. This section explores cases from Mexico, the United States, Canada, and other regions, demonstrating how governance frameworks adapt to the needs of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and migrant communities. These examples underscore the relevance of relational governance in creating equitable, inclusive, and sustainable territorial systems.

### **6.1. Mexico: The Ejido System and Migrant Contributions to Territorial Resilience**

*The ejido system in Mexico exemplifies flexible governance, embodying the dynamic and relational nature of territories. Alma Segoviano defines the ejido as “the Mexican legal association with full rights, legal capacity, and personality, constituted by act of the federal authority, in order to give a group of people a set of assets to constitute their patrimony, which should have a rational and comprehensive use as production units with a collective organization and with the establishment of organs for control, enforcement, and decision-making functioning under the principles of democracy, cooperation, and autonomy of association”* (Segoviano Basurto, 2015). This definition captures the essence of *the ejido* as a multi-faceted institution that balances collective ownership and individual agency while fostering inclusive governance and sustainability (Segoviano Basurto, 2015).

The thesis *The Protection of Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the Conservation of Natural Resources: Is there a place for a new philosophy of property rights?* argues that the ejido system represents a dynamic and complex framework challenging conventional notions of property rights. The ejido has proven remarkably resilient, adapting to diverse socio-economic and environmental needs while maintaining its communal ethos. The 1992 constitutional reforms introduced market-oriented principles, allowing the privatization of ejido lands. While these reforms created opportunities for economic flexibility, they also introduced risks of fragmentation and commodification, underscoring the importance of safeguarding the ejido's communal structure (Segoviano Basurto, 2015).

One key feature of the ejido system is the *avecindados* model, which exemplifies how migrants are integrated into its governance structures. This model fosters shared responsibility and a sense of belonging, demonstrating that territories are not static spaces, but dynamic constructs shaped by collective action and shared values. The ejido system aligns closely with the principles of environmental justice and sustainable development. Its participatory governance framework allows communities to balance resource conservation with socio-economic needs, contributing to lower deforestation rates and improved natural resource management. However, challenges such as internal conflicts, governance inefficiencies, and tensions between collective and individual interests highlight the need for legal and structural improvements to maintain the ejido's viability as a model for sustainable governance.

Migration's impact on territorial development extends beyond governance frameworks to physical landscapes. In Puebla, returning migrants have transformed traditional rural housing into *neoviviendas*, modernized rural homes that blend architectural elements from abroad with local traditions. These homes symbolize cultural convergence and territorial redefinition, as they reflect the influence of migrants' exposure to foreign environments. However, their occasional misalignment with local needs or environmental considerations highlights the importance of participatory governance in territorial planning to harmonize innovation with community priorities (Juárez, Ramírez, López, & y Ortega, 2018).

The integration of social capital further enhances the potential of migrant contributions to territorial governance. The article "The Essence of Social Capital in Rural Migrant Communities: A Case Study in Tula, Tamaulipas, Mexico" by Roberto Fernando Ochoa García and Jorge Alfredo Lera Mejía emphasizes the critical role of trust in shaping social capital and its connection

to the use of remittances. The study highlights that while organized migrant associations in Tula display strong cohesion and trust in public programs, this trust often does not extend to their families and communities of origin. A lack of training and awareness about public programs limits the development of local networks and participation in collective remittance-funded projects (Ochoa García & Lera Mejía, 2019-2020).

Strengthening social capital in origin communities requires fostering trust and encouraging active involvement in productive projects. Training initiatives and improved access to information about public programs can support economic and social development in rural areas characterized by poverty and marginalization. Trust and social cohesion are vital for the effective use of collective remittances in community development, emphasizing the need for strategies that integrate families of origin into migrant associations' efforts (Ochoa García & Lera Mejía, 2019-2020).

Together, these examples illustrate the transformative potential of the ejido system and migrant contributions in redefining territories. They highlight the importance of flexible governance frameworks, social capital integration, and community-led innovation to create inclusive, resilient, and sustainable communities. By addressing its limitations and embracing collective action, the ejido system continues to serve as a blueprint for balancing migration, environmental justice, and sustainable development.

## **6.2. *United States: Territorial Reimagining***

Migration has long been a transformative force in redefining territories across the United States, with community-driven governance serving as a cornerstone of these changes. The experiences of Black West Indian migrants, as explored by Eleanor Marie Lawrence Brown, highlight the power of cultural values and strong community networks in fostering territorial integration. These migrants, through early exposure to property rights and collective action, successfully overcame systemic barriers to land ownership. By redefining their spaces as inclusive socio-cultural constructs, they demonstrate how migration, when supported by community frameworks, enriches territories, fostering resilience and equity (Lawrence Brown, 2014).

Urban initiatives like the New Roots Community Farm in San Diego further illustrate the potential of community-driven governance to reshape territories. Established in 2009 by the International Rescue Committee and now managed by the City Heights Community Development Corporation, this urban

greenspace empowers immigrants and refugees. Participants cultivate fresh produce for personal consumption and sale, preserving cultural practices and strengthening social networks. By fostering environmental justice and economic self-sufficiency, the farm transforms urban landscapes into inclusive spaces that reflect the agency and diversity of their communities (City of San Diego, 2023).

Similarly, the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC), founded in 1987, exemplifies how Indigenous-led, community-driven governance addresses historical displacement and empowers Tribal communities. Representing 574 federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Villages, the IAC promotes food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture while restoring culturally significant food pathways. Its initiative, "574+ Strong: Creating Regenerative Food Economies in Indian Country," bridges historical injustices with future sustainability. By emphasizing Tribal-led solutions, the IAC reclaims and redefines territories as spaces of resilience, equity, and sustainability (Intertribal Agriculture Council).

Historical movements provide additional context for the role of community action in shaping territorial governance. The United Farm Workers (UFW), established in the 1960s by Dolores Huerta, Larry Itliong, and César Chávez, addressed the exploitation of immigrant farmworkers through advocacy and collective action (National Farm Worker Ministry, 2020). Similarly, the Freedom Farm Cooperative, founded by Fannie Lou Hamer, empowered Black farmers in the South by promoting collective land ownership and self-sufficiency. These initiatives underscore the transformative power of grassroots efforts to challenge systemic oppression and create resilient communities (Duke University Libraries, 2025).

The Migration Policy Institute's report, *Immigrants and Homeownership in Urban America: An Examination of Nativity, Socio-Economic Status, and Place*, further explores the intersection of migration and territorial redefinition. Analyzing homeownership trends across 100 U.S. metropolitan areas, the study reveals significant disparities among immigrant groups. While immigrants from Europe and Canada achieve homeownership rates comparable to U.S.-born individuals, those from Central America, Africa, and the Caribbean face notably lower rates due to socio-economic barriers, limited access to affordable housing, and inadequate community support systems. The report emphasizes the importance of targeted programs and initiatives to encourage homeownership among immigrant populations, promoting integration and economic stability (Demetrios G. Papademetriou, 2024).

These examples collectively underscore the profound impact of migration and community-driven governance on territorial transformation. From urban agriculture and Indigenous food sovereignty to grassroots advocacy and inclusive housing policies, they illustrate how communities can reclaim and reshape territories to reflect shared values and needs. Migration is not merely a challenge but an opportunity—one that fosters shared responsibility, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. By prioritizing inclusive governance and collective action, territories can evolve into spaces of solidarity, mutual growth, and resilience.

### **6.3. Canada: Urban Agriculture and Migrant Empowerment**

In Toronto, the Black Creek Community Farm stands as a model of how urban agriculture can empower migrants and refugees. By providing spaces for farming, the initiative not only addresses food security but also reinforces cultural preservation, enabling participants to maintain traditions while contributing to sustainable practices. These activities reimagine urban territories as inclusive, collaborative spaces where diverse identities thrive (Black Creek Community Farm, s.f.) (Bessho, Terada, & Makoto, 2020).

In Calgary, EthniCity Catering similarly highlights the power of inclusive initiatives. By offering employment and training opportunities to immigrant women, it helps them overcome systemic barriers to labor market entry. Such programs not only enhance socio-economic inclusion but also illustrate how governance systems can adapt to urban settings, creating territories that reflect the diversity and resilience of their inhabitants (Calgary, EthniCity Catering, 2025).

Further west, Jianyi Dong's innovations in Alberta's agricultural sector exemplify the transformative potential of migrant contributions. Dong, a Chinese immigrant, introduced passive solar greenhouses to the region, revolutionizing local farming practices. These greenhouses leverage solar energy, insulation, and thermal mass to extend the growing season and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, demonstrating a clear path toward sustainable agriculture. Dong's transition from geologist in the oil sector to a pioneer in sustainable vegetable farming underscores the valuable role immigrants play in driving innovation and fostering environmental stewardship. His efforts highlight how diverse skills can reshape agricultural systems, fostering resilience and adaptability within farming communities (GCMS Notes Request News, 2024).



Together, these cases illustrate how immigrant-driven initiatives redefine territories in Canada. They showcase the potential of inclusive governance and collaborative action to create spaces that not only embrace diversity but also promote sustainability, economic growth, and cultural preservation.

#### **6.4. *Zimbabwe: Nimble Peri-Urban Land Transactions***

Johannes Bhanye's concept of "nimble peri-urban land transactions" in Zimbabwe underscores the adaptability and relational nature of territories shaped by migration and informal governance. Malawian migrants in peri-urban Zimbabwe secure land for settlement through social networks and informal mechanisms, bypassing rigid legal frameworks that often exclude marginalized populations. This structured informality reflects conviviality and collaboration as key elements in territorial redefinition (Bhanye, 2024).

These transactions reveal how territories evolve in response to the socio-economic realities of those inhabiting them, challenging the assumption that formal legal structures are the sole means of ensuring governance and access to land. Migrants, often excluded from official frameworks, instead create alternative systems that reflect their cultural values, economic circumstances, and social relationships. This case highlights the potential of inclusive and flexible governance mechanisms that align with local realities, supporting marginalized populations while fostering resilience and adaptability. By recognizing the relational and fluid aspects of territory, governance frameworks can better accommodate the contributions of migrants and indigenous populations, aligning with broader principles of environmental justice and equitable resource allocation.

#### **6.5. *Transnational Perspectives: Poland and Romania***

The experiences of Polish and Romanian migrants in Barcelona and Oslo provide a transnational lens for understanding the relational nature of territories. These migrants frequently invest in properties in their home countries, not as preparation for return but as an expression of cultural continuity and transnational identity. This behavior illustrates how migration reshapes territorial concepts, intertwining individual life courses with collective cultural ties (Bertelli, y otros, 2022 )

These investments represent more than economic transactions—they are socio-cultural acts that maintain a connection to home while navigating the realities of mobility. Migrants redefine their territories by integrating their current

and historical contexts, highlighting how property ownership becomes a bridge between their countries of origin and their host communities. This dual engagement with multiple territories demonstrates the need for governance systems that recognize the complexities of transnational identities and the fluid boundaries of modern migration.

By framing territories as dynamic socio-cultural constructs, shaped by both physical and symbolic connections, this case underscores the importance of governance frameworks that respect and adapt to migrants' diverse identities. Such an approach aligns with inclusive governance principles, enabling sustainable development, equitable resource distribution, and the preservation of cultural diversity in an increasingly mobile world.

These cases demonstrate that territories are not static spaces, but dynamic and inclusive constructs shaped by the interactions and contributions of diverse communities. Flexible governance frameworks, such as Mexico's ejido system or urban agriculture initiatives in Canada and the United States, highlight the potential of relational governance to foster equity, sustainability, and resilience. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of people, culture, and land, these initiatives offer pathways for creating territories that honor both native and migrant contributions, fostering a shared sense of belonging and collaboration.

### ***6.7. Insights on Identity, Belonging, and Governance: Interviews***

This section delves into recurring themes identified through interviews with individuals of diverse backgrounds, combined with the practical examples of flexible territorial governance explored earlier. These perspectives illuminate how identity, belonging, and governance are interwoven, particularly for those navigating the complexities of cultural heritage and migration. By examining shared experiences and reflections, we uncover valuable insights into how communities and individuals redefine their connection to land, culture, and society in a dynamic and inclusive manner.

This synthesis combines insights from diverse interviews and case studies to highlight shared experiences and reflections on identity, belonging, and governance. Across different contexts, several recurring themes emerged:

#### **a. Identity and Belonging**

Participants frequently expressed a dynamic sense of belonging, often tied to movement or a blend of cultural influences. For the majority there was a profound connection to their heritage and personal identity.

- **Connection to Place:** A common sentiment was that identity transcends geographical boundaries. While individuals felt rooted in their parents' culture and values, they also found belonging in the broader global landscape.
- **Cultural Influence:** Family traditions, customs, and values from ancestral lands played a pivotal role in shaping personal identities. These elements often instilled a strong sense of purpose and resilience.
- **Rights and Recognition:** Many participants felt they held cultural, social, and territorial rights in their parents' places of origin. This recognition was tied not only to legal frameworks but also to cultural heritage, emphasizing how identities can transcend physical territories.

These findings align with the dynamic and relational nature of territories seen in cases like the ejido system in Mexico, where cultural identity and shared values foster a sense of collective belonging.

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## **b. Territorial Connection and Decision-Making**

The interviews revealed how connections to ancestral lands shaped individuals' sense of responsibility and participation in community decision-making processes.

- **Sense of Belonging:** Many described a deep connection to their parents' places of origin, rooted in shared culture, family ties, and collective memory.
- **Voice in Governance:** Several participants felt they had a meaningful role in supporting traditions and sustainability efforts in their ancestral communities. This engagement was seen as both a responsibility and a source of personal enrichment.
- **Migrants' Contributions:** Similar to the *avecindados* model in Mexico, these findings highlight how migrant communities actively contribute to the resilience and sustainability of their ancestral territories.

### c. Inclusion and Belonging in Current Communities

Participants generally felt accepted in their current communities, citing diversity and opportunities as key factors that facilitated inclusion.

- **Experiences of Diversity:** Growing up in multicultural environments often diminished the impact of discrimination, fostering resilience and adaptability.
- **Strengthening Inclusion:** Suggestions for improving belonging included fostering hard work, focusing on positive community aspects, and engaging in self-reflection to bridge cultural differences.

These insights echo the success of inclusive initiatives like the New Roots Community Farm in San Diego, where migrant contributions enrich urban landscapes and foster belonging.

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### d. Cultural Diversity and Intergenerational Dynamics

The blending of cultures between ancestral and current communities was seen as a unique gift that added depth to personal identities.

- **Blended Identities:** Participants valued the dual perspective offered by cultural blending. This experience enriched their relationships and understanding of territorial rights and responsibilities.
- **Impact of Upbringing:** Personal histories of displacement, shaped by wars or migration, often fostered empathy and a deeper appreciation for resilience and continuity.

These reflections align with cases like Zimbabwe's peri-urban land governance, where migrants redefine territories by integrating cultural values with socio-economic realities.

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### e. Proposals and Future Perspectives

When envisioning better integration and connection between migrant communities and their ancestral lands, participants emphasized education, open-mindedness, and shared values.

- **Education as a Key Factor:** Higher levels of education were seen as critical for fostering inclusive cultural engagement and overcoming narrow-minded thinking within migrant communities.
- **Balanced Governance:** Effective integration requires balancing traditional rights with the contributions of migrants. Participants highlighted the importance of enlightened thinking to harmonize diverse perspectives.
- **Strengthening Connections:** A common proposal was to shift from parochial thinking toward broader education, interaction and dialogue though participants acknowledged this as a challenging endeavor.

These perspectives resonate with the findings from transnational cases like Polish and Romanian migrants, who maintain cultural continuity while redefining territorial ties through investment and engagement.

The findings from interviews and case studies collectively highlight that **territory is more than a geographical space—it is an inclusive space of coexistence that fosters solidarity and a shared sense of belonging**. This understanding frame territory as a **socio-cultural and relational construct, shaped by interactions between people, shared values, and collective responsibilities**.

The interviews demonstrated how individuals' connections to their ancestral lands and current communities reflect this dynamic conception of territory. Migrants and their descendants bring unique perspectives and contributions that redefine spaces as inclusive and resilient. Their voices, enriched by cultural blending and lived experiences, emphasize the importance of fostering open-mindedness, education, and shared governance.

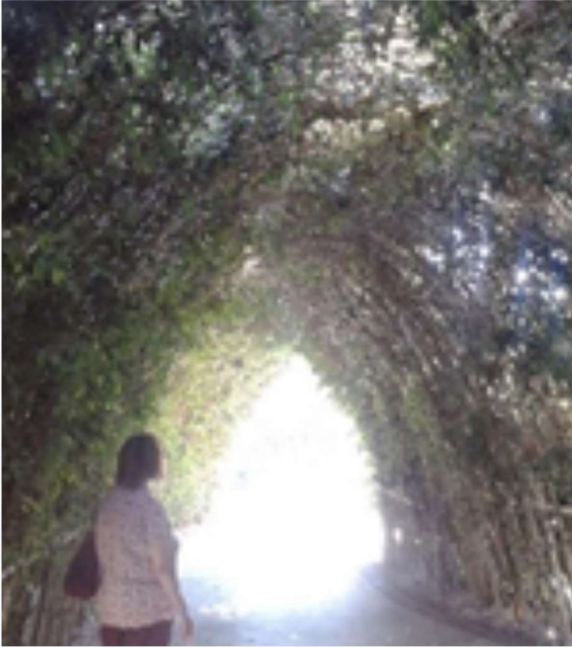
From the ejido system in Mexico to urban agriculture initiatives in the U.S. and Canada, these examples underscore how relational governance supports equitable resource distribution, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. Through collaboration and collective action, communities can create territories that honor both native and migrant contributions, fostering a shared future rooted in inclusion, diversity, and resilience.

## **Conclusion: Bridging Governance and Equity Through Flexible Territorial Constructs**

This paper has illuminated the transformative intersection of migration, environmental justice, and flexible governance frameworks in redefining territories as dynamic socio-cultural constructs. By analyzing case studies spanning continents—such as the adaptability of the ejido system in Mexico, the ingenuity of Zimbabwean peri-urban land transactions, and the cultural resilience embedded in transnational property ownership—we have demonstrated that territories are not static geographical spaces. Instead, they are vibrant, relational constructs shaped by shared values, collective responsibilities, and evolving socio-economic realities.

Migration emerges not as a force of disruption but as an opportunity to enrich territories through diversity, innovation, and community-driven governance. However, these potentials can only be realized through legal frameworks that embrace flexibility, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity. Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities further exemplify the necessity of protecting native rights and integrating historically displaced populations into governance systems. These cases collectively emphasize that equitable resource allocation and relational governance are essential to fostering resilient, inclusive territories.

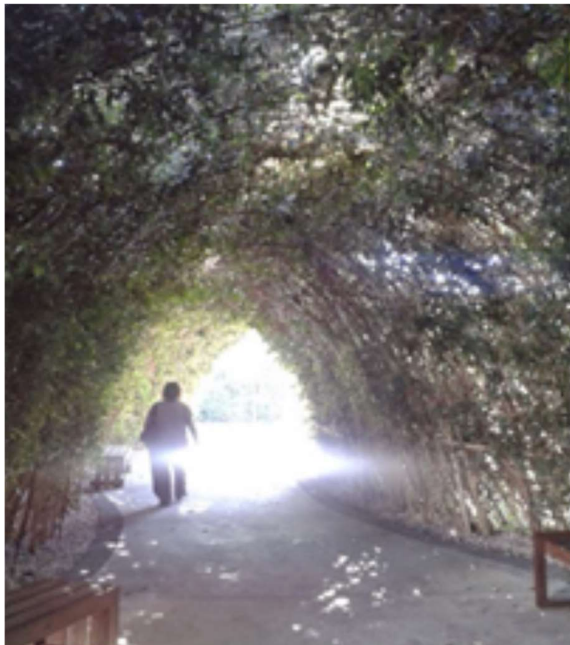
As we move toward *Paper 3*, we will delve deeper into policy recommendations and agreements designed to craft more adaptable legal frameworks. These proposals will aim to reconcile the tensions between collective and individual rights, prioritize sustainability, and address the complexities of transnational migration. By building on the arguments presented here, the next paper will provide actionable pathways to operationalize the vision of territories as inclusive spaces of coexistence and mutual growth, forging a future rooted in equity, environmental justice, and shared prosperity.



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*"Territories are not defined by borders but by the shared dreams, resilience, and collective actions of those who inhabit them—transforming spaces into living legacies of justice, equity, and hope." - Alma Segoviano<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> This phrase was crafted from personal reflections, inspired by the ideas and works of the authors cited throughout this document, whose contributions have enriched the understanding of the topics discussed.

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