Mediating Indigeneity: Public Space and the Making of Political Identity in Andean Peru

This article investigates the relationship between political identity and public space in the communities of the Colca Valley, in Peru’s rural Andes, by examining two moments in which the built environment became a medium for formatting and engaging a local indigeneity. The first is the colonial invasion, during which the reducción plan condensed and dispersed “unruly” native subjects around a public square and a church. The second is the contemporary moment, in which that same space is used to stage audits, evaluations, and competitions in the context of a development paradigm shifting from service provision to investing in indigeneity by financing the promotion of entrepreneurial and agricultural practices that organizations classify as typically indigenous. This article offers two arguments: (1) in the colonial era, notions of indigenous identity configured efforts to improve and regulate daily life—or, to achieve development; and (2) through changing historical contexts, the built environment is used as a medium for defining Colcan indigeneity, deploying it to generate strategic knowledge and regulatory force, and investing it with the potential for various kinds of salvation. This approach suggests that transnational paradigms do not simply “touch down,” but also, adjust and push existing dynamics through the local media at their disposal. [indigeneity, development, public space, colonialism, Peru, Andes]

In 1586 and in 1999, Spanish rulers came to the public squares of Andean Peru’s Colca Valley to learn about the indigenous condition. They saw indigeneity, in both encounters, as a messianic ethical disposition: the raw material for various forms of salvation, and, as such, a target for investing their resources. In the first, they came to expand the colonial frontier; in the second, to open new frontiers in development intervention. This article examines the relationship between what they found in each of those moments. I argue that an important legacy of the reducción (resettlement and conversion) process essential to creating the Spanish colony in the Andes, which was largely accomplished by reshaping public space, has been the built environment’s long history as a medium for producing, undoing, and remaking indigeneity. Today, this relationship lies at the root of a suite of investments, conferred in that very same space, that seek to put Colcan indigeneity to work for development.

Two Encounters With Indigeneity

On January 20, 1586, some twenty community leaders, several of whom had been born before the Spanish invasion of the Andes, were assembled in the brand new plaza de armas (public square) of the recently created reducción village of Yanque in the central Colca Valley (in contemporary Peru’s Arequipa region). This encounter was part of the visita general (General Inspection), a massive colonial audit of Andean territory. These leaders had first been sent to Mass in the ornate Franciscan church, a structure at the village center whose doors opened onto the square. Afterward,
Spanish inspector Juan de Ulloa Mogollón led them to the square for questioning as part of King Philip II’s inquiry into the resources of his realm and the potential Christians within it.

One witness, García Checa, testified about life before Spanish rule. He had lived in an ayllu—a “unit of relatedness” between kin, landscape, and other nonhuman and spiritual beings that anthropologists tend to gloss as “community” (Allen 2002; see also Solomón 1991 and next section)—on the other side of the Colca River until Viceroy Francisco de Toledo’s mass resettlement policy took effect. The elderly Checa had become the kuraca (local chief) of Yanque–Urinsaya, the new district’s downriver sector. Checa offered a history of the region’s ethnically predominant Collaguas, their agricultural and ritual practices, and what life was like under Inca rule, which the Spanish had ended just decades earlier (Cook 2007).

As Ulloa Mogollón reported in 1586, based on the testimony he heard that morning:

Some are called Collaguas; they call themselves this since ancient times; they have passed the name on by inheritance from parents to children, which came from a guaca or ancient shrine . . . that is a snowcapped mountain [shaped] like a volcano, distinguished from the other peaks around there, which is called Collaguata; they say that from around or inside that mountain many people came out and descended to this province and its valley, of this river that they populated, and conquered those that were natives and threw them out by force, while they remained; they prove this with forts, which they call pucaras in their language, which are built on some of the high peaks of the valley, from which they descended to make war. (Quoted in Wernke 2013, 91)

Ulloa Mogollón here records the Collagua charter myth, describing descent from mountain peaks and the conquest of nameless inhabitants, while emphasizing the importance of extant marks in the land that authenticate their emergence. These symbolic marks were (and for many still are) sacred sites that continually relate the Collagua community to its territory, history, and kin, animating what Peter Gose calls the “ayllu landscape” (2008, 165–66). Yanque resident Natalio Huayhua corroborates this origin story, narrating Collaguas’ descent from the eponymous volcanic peak to settle the fertile valley (Huayhua interview 2014). Ulloa Mogollón’s contribution to Spanish knowledge, based on this cultural audit he orchestrated in Yanque’s new public square, suggests that from its colonial inception, the idea of Andean indigeneity has been both intertwined with concepts of inhabiting space and generated through the deliberate staging of physical encounters.

The reducción was a project of fundamental change, a violent reorganization of land and life intent on improving what the Spanish perceived as spiritually and racially inferior natives through Christian order and its physical manifestation: Spanish-style villages. But it was also a project to recuperate some of what earlier colonists destroyed, having failed to appreciate the Incas’ impressive political organization and environmental adaptiveness, meant benevolently to “restore” a vision of prosperous Andean life. “Paradoxically,” argues Jeremy Mumford, “the Resettlement’s radical restructuring was designed to preserve certain aspects of indigenous culture,” such as co-opted Inca-era leadership structures and the “vertical archipelago” (Mumford 2012, 2), the colonization of land at multiple altitudes to ensure crop variety. This, “even while destroying others . . . until they were brought together in towns they could not be true Christians or, indeed, fully human” (2). Violently resettling Andeans simultaneously in the name of conversion, cultural recuperation, destruction,
and benevolent empowerment provided a founding image of indigeneity’s long legacy of ambivalence.

Generations later, in 1999, Hilde Checa, one of García’s descendants and a young Yanque entrepreneur, stood in the very same public square. She faced not a colonial inspector but the monarch herself, Queen Sofía of Spain, answering similar questions about origin myths and ritual practices. The encounter is memorialized in a photograph displayed in Hilde’s home, which now doubles as Yanque’s most successful cultural tourism hotel. Hilde is pictured standing next to the queen, with Hilde in her traditional embroidered skirt, vest, and sombrero. Upon her arrival, Queen Sofía was greeted in Yanque’s plaza with ceremony: Wititi dances, a drink of chicha (fermented maize), gifts from local artisans, and nearly the entire village population (Checa interview 2014).

Checa, with a group of local entrepreneurs, gave Queen Sofía a tour of the community, leading her outward from the plaza, along the grid, to several homes recently retrofitted with adobe bricks and freshly thatched rooftops in a new effort to showcase Yanque’s indigenous identity. By staging Yanque as a site of rich indigenous culture to a fascinated political figure, and an archeologist by training, these entrepreneurs deployed the town’s spatial layout to inaugurate a new kind of relationship with their ancestors’ colonizers: Spain would now become an investor in the community. The purpose of Queen Sofía’s visit was to announce funding and offer her blessing for the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, an international organization (IO) with regional headquarters in Chivay, the nearby provincial capital. The agency invests in the restoration of Spanish colonial heritage as a means of job creation by hiring Colcan laborers to renovate poorly maintained churches, crumbling public squares, and other structures that have configured local space since Spanish rule. It also promotes the “revalorization” of indigenous tradition by sponsoring training sessions, projects, and enterprises that take advantage of the booming demand for “authenticity” and “traditional knowledge” in the tourism, gastronomical, and agricultural export sectors (Ampuero interview 2012). Spain, now active in Colca for fifteen years, joins an increasing number of development initiatives that approach investments like these as a means of conquering extreme poverty and publicly inculcating practices vital to local growth.

From the time of García Checa to that of Hilde Checa, how has indigeneity come to be at stake through Colca’s built environment? What is it about colonially configured public space that transforms Colcan indigeneity into a contemporary resource? In this article I examine the conspicuous continuities between these two encounters to contextualize contemporary development policy within Colca’s longue durée history of using physical space to create and manipulate indigenous subjectivity. Drawing on archival documents, archeological and historical scholarship, and two years’ total of ethnographic research in Colca between 2008 and 2015, this article historicizes and tracks the coproduction (Jasanoff 2004) of indigeneity and public space. Indigeneity has a long, variegated history in Peru as a political identity deployed, repressed, and reshaped in various ways since the colonial era. Such history cannot exhaustively be covered here. This piece, instead, offers a partial picture, tracing analogous scenes in which public space mediates indigeneity during the colonial era and in the present. I suggest that scenes of contemporary development practice invite a rereading of the colonial intervention into indigeneity; at the same time, the reducción’s powerful legacy in Colca can illuminate how contemporary “development with identity” (García 2005) is more than an example of a transnational paradigm “touching down,” but also, a genre of intervention with deep local history.

In using the term political identity, I intend to convey the idea of a group’s form of alignment before, or categorization by, authorities in a way that configures the construction
of a polity. While many scholars have documented how identity-based empowerment actually depoliticizes indigeneity by rendering it ineffectual as a vehicle for meaningful structural change (Hale 2002; Povinelli 2002; also discussed below), it remains political in other ways by affording particular forms of engagement with and recognition within broader political projects. Reducción space was a tool for creating a class of political subjects in order to confer Christianity, extract wealth, and expand the realm. Today, the built environment sees an analogous role in mediating between the state and its responsibility to extend “inclusion.” This is now widely imagined as a market-based, financialized update of the idea of public welfare in Peru, visible in development investments in indigenous enterprises and institutions, and backed by a thriving economy of IOs, nongovernmental organizations, and government entities like the new Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (Luna interview 2013). Indigeneity is not exclusively a political identity. It is also an economic and spiritual identity. But its value as a kind of capital, as a source of self-worth, and as a relationship to various divine entities, is exactly what has made indigeneity the vehicle for embodied encounters with, and inclusion within (or exclusion from), encompassing political entities.

Of course, Spanish colonization and contemporary development investment are distinct. I do not claim that development in Colca is colonial or “neocolonial,” even if some of my interlocutors there do (Ocsa interview 2008). Such a claim risks overlooking development’s complex place in daily life. However, I suggest that colonization can be reimagined as a kind of development avant la lettre: a hierarchical exchange, reconfiguration, and regulation of resources and values meant for subjects’ benefit which, as it unfolds, crafts those very subjects.

Using public space as a medium for manipulating local subjectivity has been essential to reforms meant to “improve” Colca’s communities for at least as long as the historical record there exists. The Spanish were not Colca’s first colonizers. The Incas also did major work to “develop” this region, one of their most resource rich (Benavides 1983), by reconfiguring lived space in the name of economic and ritual efficiency. Yet for the Spanish, indigenous difference was special. By constructing spaces meant to regulate that specific difference, to frame it as the starting point on a moral trajectory toward religious salvation, and to put that difference to work for the realm, Toledo’s colonists founded an enduring relationship between physical structures and indigenous selves.

Forging Identity in Space and Time
Canonical theorizations of the public sphere (Arendt 1958; Habermas [1962] 1989; Warner 2005) tend to ignore built space and to overlook physicality’s political implications. The early colonial and late capitalist moments in Andean Peru invite an exploration of this embodied, spatial dimension of public life. Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) explicitly addresses how collectives produce space and how spaces configure certain kinds of collectivity. He is concerned with “the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias” (12). A built environment’s users, through these products of the imagination, are at once configured by and creatively engaged with authorized spatial projects. In his ethno-history of Troubles-era Northern Ireland, Allen Feldman describes space as a “force” (1991, 41). There, insurgents’ navigation of urban battlefields entailed investing potentialities into its physical limits—and thus into themselves as politically aligned “users”—through their strategic production of visibility, concealment, echoes, and obstacles. Justin Richland (2008) traces a distinct set of spatial engagements: his ethnography of the Hopi tribal court shows space at work as a
regulatory medium, where the legal authority generated through the court site is mutually constituted with the ongoing effort to define what it means to be Hopi.

In Colca, the ayllu, a widely recognized pan-Andean institution, illuminates the specific ways public space and indigenous political identity actively coproduce one another. As suggested above, the ayllu is a flexible unit of relatedness. It encapsulates relationships between human and nonhuman actors such as the *tirakuna* (earth beings)—for example sacred mountains—whose “constellation of sentient entities” animate daily life (De la Cadena 2010, 341). Catherine Allen defines the ayllu as “a group of individuals cohering as a social body around a place, ancestor, or task that provides a unifying focus” (2002, 108). Marisol De la Cadena narrows Allen’s definition to focus on its spatial dimension, suggesting it is the ayllu that marks “a given territory . . . as a specific place” (2010, 353), and, quoting an indigenous-identifying teacher’s definition:

“A dynamic space where the whole community of beings that exist in the world lives; this includes humans, plants, animals, the mountains, the rivers, the rain, etc. All are related like a family. It is important to remember that this place . . . is not where we are from, it is who we are.” (De la Cadena 2010, 354)

Bringing together these scholarly definitions, Yanque resident Gerardo Huaracha defines the ayllu as a group of people with whom one says, “Let’s work on this task, let’s go do this,” and as the site marked by that collective task (Huaracha interview 2014). As an example, he recounted the days when houses had only thatched roofs instead of the now-dominant corrugated tin. Upon finishing a rooftop, which required a large team of workers, all would sing in Quechua, marking the newly constructed space and its workers as an ayllu while praising its beauty:

*Ay, ayllu*

*Ima sumac ayllu* [what a beautiful ayllu]*

*Ay, ayllu*

*Ima sumac ayllu.*

In the creative animation and imposed reconfigurations of the ayllu characterizing both colonial and contemporary interventions, temporality also comes to be at stake. As a medium for constructing an indigeneity meant both to manipulate and empower Colcans, reducción space configured an Andean version of what Benjamin (1968) called “messianic time”: a temporality that was not merely about the passage of minutes, days, and years, but also a pathway drawing Christians ever closer to the coming of the Messiah. In their spatial trajectory from home and field to square and church, newly minted “indigenous” Andeans had to be prepared for this coming, simultaneously placed on a temporal trajectory toward salvation and Christian morality.

Development interventions offer a contemporary iteration of that messianism in the sense that they similarly entail preparing souls for a potential moment of redemption. If colonial Spain’s Colcan subjects were trained, as a result of their categorization as indigenous, to become Christian as ultimately a kind of preparation for salvation, today’s “development with identity” paradigm entails the unfolding of the indigenous self’s inherent potential, an unfurling of embryonic capacities: it is focused on utilizing latent capital lodged within that self to achieve economic salvation, preparing an intervention’s participants for market day, the customer’s arrival, the creditor’s deadline. It means priming subjects for inclusion.
More than a simple historical resemblance, this priming is a direct legacy of Catholic messianic time. According to Molvina Zeballos, president of Desco—one of Peru’s largest NGOs—many projects under the contemporary paradigm originated in mid-twentieth-century Peruvian church-based organizations promoting Catholic liberation theology, which intertwined spiritual preparation and class empowerment with development (Zeballos interview 2013). Even as their overt spiritual backing faded, what endured was a concept of interventions structured by an “intersubjective spacetime” (Munn 1986, 10) that engaged predictable action in particular project sites and networks, all bounded by a temporal horizon oriented toward saving the poor through entrepreneurship.

At the end of both interventions lay not only spiritual redemption and religious and economic salvation, but also, in the words of Peruvian historian Alberto Flores Galindo (1986), an “Andean utopia.” The colonial intervention happened in a milieu in which Thomas Moore’s *Utopia*, published in 1516, fueled Spanish fantasies about the Americas as a “place outside of time and space” (Flores Galindo 1986, 17). Toledo’s own “utopia” entailed a reconfigured spacing of bodies that left “nothing to chance” (Cook 2007, 84) while recuperating what he imagined to be the most useful dimensions of Inca heritage. Since then, diverse calls for social and economic change throughout Andean Peru have centered on the messianic return of the Inca—a figure strong and strategic in war, knowledgeable and egalitarian in collective life—and the Inca realm, the Tawantinsuyu: “a kingdom without hunger, without exploitation, and where they ruled once again” (Flores Galindo 1986, 27). By investing in the promise of Andean indigeneity, and by making their investments public in reducción space, practitioners today have begun to replace conventional development’s linear march toward modernization (Escobar 1995). Implementing one politically palpable interpretation of a revived Tawantinsuyu by reconfiguring Colcans as resourceful entrepreneurs, practitioners are repurposing development as a path to recover the idealized figures and traditions of the indigenous past, placing Andean utopia at the origo and telos of Colca’s historical timeline.

**Christianity “By Demand”: Conversion and Recuperation in Reducción Space**

Toledo’s ambition to reorganize the residential arrangements of every colonial subject called for “social engineering on a scale previously unthinkable,” as residents were forced to leave their ancestral ayllus for dense villages, which they had to build themselves (Cook 2007, 82–83). The reducción was “one of the largest resettlement programs in history—afflicting some 1.5 million native Andeans” (Wernke 2010, 52). As this physical removal suggests, defining the Andean indigenous subject as a category of person in need of moral and economic management meant engaging a fundamental concept of space. The 1493 papal bull *Inter caetera divinae*, in describing Spain’s evangelical mandate, employs the Latin *reducere* for the idea of conversion. “Reducere” literally translates to “bring to” Catholicism (Cummins 2002, 203). Reducere connotes a pathway in space and also within the self, “both physical centripetal movement and the sense of bringing about a new state or condition closer to divine unity” (Wernke 2013, 161). In doing so, it deictically constitutes natives as a class of spatially removed persons to “bring to” the Church.

The centripetal order of reducción districts simultaneously imposed and indexed the deployment of space as a civilizing medium. Each district’s centerpiece was a large open plaza, with the parish church taking up one side of the square, which by municipal law had to be the tallest building in each Colca community. Harmonious with the imperative of efficient tribute collection, the new jurisdictions were determined by a sonic discipline: subjects had to remain *bajo de la campana* (within hearing of the church bells) (Rafael
The church’s chimes limited this newly indigenous space, suturing together a Spanish and Christian temporality by reconfiguring the daily rhythms of rural Andean life, which suddenly entailed regular walks to the town center for Mass at the bells’ command. In this new routine, residents became part of regular gatherings of the reducción population in the church and plaza, which rescaled kinship interactions and organized new forms of belonging and “stranger sociability” (Warner 2005, 122). These gatherings positioned the assemblage of church and square as a kind of figurative amphitheater, as a center of action, and as a stage demanding one’s gaze and exerting an inward, centripetal force.

The reducción established a public spacing of bodies that facilitated the moral policing of behavior, hygiene, and appearance for those categorized as “Indian.” Facing the plaza were homes of Spanish authorities and sites of municipal governance, where Spanish-style cabildos (councils) were installed (Cook 2007). Beyond the square, houses for resettled subjects were built in a strict grid pattern along wide, straight streets from which family plots would be visible. “You shall lay out the Indians’ houses with doors opening onto the streets,” Toledo commanded, “so that no house opens into the house of another Indian, but that each have a separate house” (Toledo et al. 1986, 3435). Opening Colcans to the gaze of new “eyes on the street” (Jacobs 1961, 56), this spacing distinguished and disciplined the “Indian” populace through the perpetual possibility of colonial surveillance (Foucault [1975] 1995).

Spanish aspirations to utopian visibility and regulation linked moral management with the colony’s economic imperative, the fantasy of creating a total archive of every household, inhabitant, and exploitable resource to maximize tribute collection and the use of indigenous labor. Foreshadowing the contemporary rhetoric of human capital, authorities asserted that “Indians, and not silver, were the New World’s true riches” (Flores Galindo 1986, 132).

In these ways, conceptions of indigeneity and the usage of public space were mutually configured. Tying together moral, religious, and economic imperatives, the reducción was couched in a benevolent paternalism, an early ideology of “development” that entailed rendering subjects fit for inclusion in the realm by altering the way they used the built environment. Toledo wrote in his instructions to inspectors:

> The principal reason for the visita general is to provide order and structure so the Indians may have competent doctrine and be better instructed in the elements of our Holy Catholic Faith and we will be able to administer them the sacraments with greater facility and advantage and they may be maintained in justice and live politically as reasoning people as the other vassals of His Majesty. In order to achieve this end it is convenient for the Indians who live dispersed and spread about to be reduced into villages with design and order, in healthy places and of good disposition. (Toledo [1570] 1986, 33; my translation)

Violence was fundamental to configuring this new space, with some subjects literally dragged out of their precolonial homes to the places designated for their resettlement (Mumford 2012). But at a subtler level, reducción towns were also intricately designed so that space would “assert” certain ordinary encounters while “negating” and “denying” others (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 99). This rendered supposedly sincere acts of free will, such as conversion, effectively compulsory. Priests saw evangelizing the indigenous as a generous extension of Spanish spiritual insight. Many religious colonizers believed that opening native eyes to the choice between salvation and their impending damnation meant conversion could be something they genuinely sought and “came to” themselves. Forced conversion, balanced by the strategic permission of precolonial spiritual practices (Benavides 1983),
was thus couched in a notion of Christianity “by demand,” ideologically framing it as something optional. As Vicente Rafael argues in his history of colonial evangelization in the Philippines, Spain opportunistically saw Catholicism’s “rapid spread . . . as the inexorable manifestation of divine will pulling to itself the diverse peoples of the world,” despite anxieties that “natives were incapable of—or perhaps resistant to—‘sounding the depths of its mysteries’” (Rafael 1988, 87).

In light of this force disguised as disinterested benevolence, and this strategy masked as magnetic divine will, what did Toledo actually disrupt in Colca? The reducción project certainly entailed resettling people into new residences, but evidence suggests that it rearranged, rather than completely destroyed, Colca’s ayllus. This was a process of negotiation rather than erasure, as archeologist Steven Wernke (2013) suggests, adding layers of complexity and expanding the scope of spaces and built objects that ayllu relationality could activate, while usurping and deactivating other ayllu sites for new extractive institutions such as the colonial mines.

The example of Yanque demonstrates this layering. There, the reducción center was located across the Colca River, far from the precolonial settlement’s ayllus and agricultural fields. Such uprooting may seem counterintuitive because agricultural labor was vital to tribute collection, but the need for expansive space and an altar facing east, a feature of Franciscan architecture, took priority in coordinating the construction of church and village (Benavides 1983). The new site was probably chosen because its flat, open land better suited required construction and the expansive gridiron design radiating from the plaza. Much of Yanque’s farmland, a noncontiguous extension of the community’s ayllus, still surrounds the pre-Hispanic settlement site. Because farmland is less fertile near the reducción village, many families kept their land, but ever since the resettlement have regularly made an arduous commute across the river to access it. The water scarcity that has long characterized life in Yanque is a further legacy of resettling people far from what was a well-organized irrigation system at their old population center (Escalante and Valderrama 1987; Huaracha interview 2014).

This embodied legacy of Yanque’s colonial resettlement, in which Church, municipality, and plaza spaces are readily accessible while farms and fields lie at the end of a difficult journey now layered into local routines, endures as a feature of daily life (though footbridges recently built as part of a Canadian development project facilitate that commute today). “Indian” status thus activated a lasting set of reconfigured spatial trajectories that brought new political, spiritual, and economic subjectivities to life in Colca.

**Development “By Demand”: Putting Indigeneity to Work in the Public Square**

Long after Spanish rule, Colca’s colonial churches, squares, and grids remain. Until 1968, “Indians” were housed in regulated plots while the colonists’ creole and mestizo descendants throughout the Andes inhabited haciendas on massive tracts of land, and employed peon laborers in feudal fashion. The Velasco government’s late-1960s land reform outlawed the hacienda, and with it, the “Indian” or “native” as a policy category, and devolved considerable authority over territory to historically marginal rural populations (García 2005). Traditionally large haciendas were rare on Colca’s rugged terrain, but the reform was still deeply significant there in its creation of “peasant communities,” new institutional bodies meant to increase local authority over land issues (Benavides 1983). Perhaps the most ambitious intervention into the idea of Peruvian indigeneity since Toledo’s reducción, Velasco’s reform was meant to improve life for Peru’s rural citizens by eliminating a disempowering category that indexed territorial subjection.
Through this revolution in what counted as legal power over and usage of land in Peru, indios (Indians) became campesinos (peasants). This allowed them to frame struggles for territory and resources with the lens of class, which at that time offered an opportune form of aligning with a political culture that was both leftist and racist (De la Cadena 2010). But as María Elena García argues, “Indianness never disappeared from highland Peru. In a long history of indigenous resistance . . . strategic adaptation has often been mistaken for silence and absence” (2005, 176). In pushing rural Andeans to adopt the vocabulary of class and strategically self-identify as “peasants,” Velasco’s reforms illustrate the enduring importance of collective space in mediating political identity; it was through reconfiguring territory that indigeneity was unmade as a national policy category, with people long-identified as indios targeted for empowerment by way of that category’s very unmaking.

Thirty years later, the indio “returned” (cf. Albó 1991) to Peru, with Andean public space acting as a medium for selectively recuperating and displaying indigeneity. Transnational cultural politics by the 1990s put new emphasis on rights, local autonomy, and the celebration of multicultural differences that were compatible with neoliberal economic decentralization (Hale 2002). Meanwhile in Peru, celebrated differences took on a restorative dimension in the wake of years of rural violence, when the emerging Truth and Reconciliation Commission document—in tandem with the reopening of the Andean region, newly deemed safe for tourism—showed a national culture uniting around the idea that remote Andean peoples could no longer be ignored (Toche interview 2013). At the intersection of transnational and national tendencies, certain forms of openly exhibited indigenous practice became acceptable in rural Peru. Queen Sofia’s 1999 Colca visit and the rise of culture-oriented development heralded an era in which claiming indigeneity means a claim to legitimacy, visibility, and national inclusion.

Hilde Checa, in a recent interview, described the queen’s presence in Yanque, and those of the many other tourists she hosts, as opportunities to strengthen her own investments in Collagua life. She defined Collagua identity today as an active commitment to community activities simultaneously through claims on local space and a purchase on transnational markets. Being a Collagua person, Checa indicated, means maintaining her chakras, membership in Yanque’s water resource distribution committee, and participation in the annual pilgrimage to Mount Mismi to clean Yanque’s reservoir. She also embraced a politics of constructing her living space with locally available resources—adobe, stones, and eucalyptus wood—joining an increasing number of Colcans bucking the trend of “modern” cement homes. In other words, for Checa, Collagua political identity meant engaging in activities that continually reactivate nested ayllu relationships with her family, neighborhood, household, and the network of chakra sites on which it thrives, as well as the nonhuman and spiritual world. Just as important was her ability to strengthen her indigeneity by putting it on display as an entrepreneurial selling point (Checa interview 2014).

Identity-based development interventions meant to create more entrepreneurs like Hilde Checa are anchored in a discourse of “revalorization,” a term encompassing both the value of marketability and the recuperation of intangible cultural value. Since Queen Sofía’s visit, perhaps the intervention most directly involved with this goal in Colca has been the Sierra Sur initiative, started in 2005. It is based in Peru’s Ministry of Agriculture and is cofinanced by the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Sierra Sur’s mission statement on its website conveys the institutional argument that development is no longer about imposing improvements and offering handouts, but now entails “facilitating” growth for Andean “citizens, agents of their own development” (emphasis added) through competitively awarded investments and assistance.
Crucially, interventions like Sierra Sur are sometimes the only welfare source for Colcans just above the extreme poverty line and unprotected by government safety nets (Fuentes 2011). Though professionals imagine this form of intervention as an entirely optional resource, in practice, “winning” development investment in Colca often means accessing a rare source of much-needed help. This suggests that reframing development intervention as a form of investing in indigenous human capital rather than as a means of fulfilling specific human needs substitutes conventionally imposed modernization (Escobar 1995) with the imposition—expressed through public space—of the imperative to identify with and display a recognizable Colcan indigeneity (cf. Povinelli 2002). In these spaces, indigeneity, long-reviled and strategically masked, enters its latest chapter in an extensive Andean history of ambivalence; to the extent that it can withstand institutional interpellation, it is imagined by development’s practitioners as the secret weapon for growth, and by many Colcans as the secret to accessing basic resources.

Sierra Sur’s Colca office, in the reducción community of Ichupampa (bordering Yanque), sits in the town square; it is in rented government space next to the Spanish-style municipal building and several meters from the church. The cement building’s walls are covered with a brightly colored mural that depicts a thriving indigenous agricultural economy. Its situatedness in Ichupampa’s reducción square expresses the institution’s importance in community life and its power to define and teach what is locally valuable, a power largely generated by tapping, however inadvertently, into a colonial legacy of deploying space to categorize people as indigenous and to distinguish among them via technologies of conversion and resource extraction. Through a competitive resource distribution system based on drawing explicit distinctions between persons to identify the most ideal indigenous entrepreneurs for investment, and in using these exemplary entrepreneurs as highly visible pedagogical models, Sierra Sur exacts a degree of conceptual and emotional violence, brought into relief against the backdrop of material necessity. The publicity and physicality of its encounters with Colcan subjects—from its headquarters, to the squares where it stages investment contests throughout the region, to its use of the word visitas as a term of art for its follow-up inspections with project staff—frame today’s iteration of the imperative for Colcans to balance the reconfiguration of their lives with the recuperation of “their” indigeneity.

Gloria Dueñas, Sierra Sur’s Colca director in 2008, showed me a video of a massive pago a la tierra (offering to the land) ceremony the initiative had recently produced for commercial sale. Reviving the pago and other “endangered” rituals, she explained, can at once validate indigenous identity and relieve extreme poverty. Dueñas expressed the initiative’s concern:

In some places, for example, these practices of pago a la tierra are being lost. A number of families do it, but many are leaving it behind. Why? . . . I know that the thing they want is for those ancestral practices to return because it is part of their identity. We want to give them the freedom to seek these traditions—for those who practice, it is there. . . . So what Sierra Sur helps with is valorizing what they have. (Dueñas interview 2008)

“Valorizing” rituals like the pago had to happen with market mechanisms if indigeneity were to be at all promising as something that could sustainably generate income and improve local standards of living. Indigenous life had to be rendered legible for media circulation, and therefore learned, shaped according to Sierra Sur’s image of indigeneity. Leni Delgado, the Arequipa-based coordinator, explained that Sierra Sur’s goal is to “motivate and incentivize
families to rescue and revalue their culture, but at the same time, to develop products that serve to augment their incomes” (Delgado interview 2012). “Culture” is tied—with Delgado’s caveat “but at the same time”—to financial investment and marketable media that promise to yield growth by reconfiguring the quotidiant.

“Videos, books are produced, and then that serves to generate income for rural families . . . [W]e want to see how their culture also contributes to improving the way they live as something meaningful . . . their tradition, their history, all of this. Those are what we call “cultural products.” (Delgado interview 2012)

Sierra Sur is currently involved in a number of income-generating projects that place the burdens of development on its participants. Its key intervention is the Territorial Investment Plan, for which entrepreneurs compete for investment in activities involving sustainable land use and recuperated indigenous practice. These crowded, festive contests, regular public events in Colca’s reducción plazas, are named INTERCONs (the acronym for inter-cambio de conocimientos; knowledge exchanges), which suggests an institutional vision of development as a collaborative and egalitarian cross-cultural encounter.

I attended a 2014 INTERCON in the Colca reducción community of Madrigal. There, as Sierra Sur mediated between “cultural products” and everyday life, Madrigal’s square became the region’s public stage for indigenous self-fashioning. It provided a platform for the encounter in which the potential for indigenous capital would be judged: a panel of political leaders, sociologists, agronomists, and economists sat behind tables on an elevated, tented stage, and facing them from the square’s ground level, entrepreneurs competed for funding and technical assistance. The gathering began with rousing speeches from Sierra Sur’s directors and Arequipa-based politicians praising the people and culture of the Colca Valley. It continued with competitive presentations. Alpaca herding associations, aspiring quinoa exporters, and others made pleas for investment, peppering their presentations with songs, dances, sufficient Quechua language use to demonstrate indigenous identification, and technical Spanish to evoke entrepreneurial competence. The panel then interrogated each contestant.

During a break, Sierra Sur had contestants conduct a pago in the square, which involved burning a bundle of ritual goods, including coca leaves and alpaca fetuses, followed by rowdy dancing. This was both a public projection and a public recognition of what it means to be indigenous today in Colca. It was also a ceremony many Colcans agreed was needed after months of drought. Lilia Samayani, Sierra Sur’s Ichupampa-based director, was in the middle of the ritual action, constantly intervening to calm the collective effervescence and ensure it did not go beyond its allotted five minutes, maintaining its legibility as indigenous tradition “so long as it does not go too far” (Hale 2002, 490).

When not presenting, each competing association was responsible for hosting a booth that lined the square and detailed its proposed enterprise. One requirement for these booths was to demonstrate the investment’s projected impact with a diorama, mapping in three dimensions the land where the enterprise would intervene. First was a map labeled “before,” which tended to offer images of sparsely populated and resource-rich precolonial terrain. Next was a display labeled “now” interpreting the problematic contemporary situation, which tended to characterize Colcan territory as decaying and unsustainable. One “now” map devastatingly displayed Colca’s famous farming terraces in decay and desuetude. Last was the “after” or “future” display, showing fertile territories dotted with straw-covered adobe houses and other indices of a dynamic indigenous economy spurred to life by the contestant’s contribution, featured at the map’s center.
These displays indicate that indigeneity was not only something mandated and judged. The terrain that the colonial reducción configured—the enduring relationship it initiated between plaza and chakra, family home, and ayllu landscape—became a medium through which Colcans could imagine their own indigeneity, creatively engaging it as a development tool. An example of this is an association of Ichupampa families who in an earlier contest won investment to increase agricultural yield by composting on the small plots around their homes. When I joined Sierra Sur’s follow-up visita to the association’s households, I saw these entrepreneurs displaying higher yields while framing composting as a way to nurture chakra and ayllu, articulating an explicitly indigenous relationship to their gridded parcels.

Most entrepreneurs and associations competing in the 2014 INTERCON won some investment in the amount of several thousand soles, which tended to be earmarked for resources and technical consultants. Some of them won nothing, but all received feedback for improving their proposals. Those who won the most funding tended to have entrepreneurial experience, consistent access to Sierra Sur staff, and the political savvy to strategically orient their “identities toward the nation’s image of traditional cultural forms” (Povinelli 2002, 8; see also Markowitz 2001). Because of the difficult balance required between displaying a recuperated Colcan indigeneity and reconfiguring oneself as entrepreneurial through a viable business plan, many are barred from entry into development’s “spaces of appearance” (Arendt 1958, 204) as anything other than spectators. Yet the contest’s amphitheatric visibility entails a kind of pedagogy for all, suggesting that spectators, too, can learn to cultivate their own human capital and prepare themselves for national inclusion.

Delgado emphasized that Sierra Sur’s investments and assistance are only conferred “by demand. This is a project by demand. So, we do not really go and offer [our resources]. They have to come to us. They have to present their proposal and we are [just] facilitators, we are promoters of development” (Delgado interview 2012). This is a point many development professionals made: as long as people sought investment, organizations could justify their presence. It was not an imposition, but “the freedom to seek these traditions” (Dueñas interview 2008).

Development “by demand” is certainly distinct from the compulsion that modernization-based development entails, which anthropologists have incisively critiqued (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990). However, in practice, the ongoing mediating work of reducción space and the broader distributional politics of interventions happening within that space complicate notions of “demand” and “freedom.” Though Sierra Sur’s interventions are not imposed by force on Colca’s communities, public space makes participation more compulsory than its staff appear to believe. In Ichupampa, Sierra Sur’s centripetal force, with its evaluators circulating throughout Colca’s plazas, pulls people toward the institution. Engaging the indigenous self as the new, unrivaled strategy for achieving prosperity also masks the force of need. As nationally decentralized initiatives increasingly supplant conventional welfare institutions, they focus on inclusion, but like Sierra Sur, also use space to mask ongoing needs for essential goods and services. As with the Latin reducere, Delgado’s “come to us” deictically constitutes and reproduces a social group “demanding” development. Through this spatialized rhetoric of “coming to,” both colonial Christianity and postcolonial development disguise the obligation to become a certain kind of self—enforced through distinct forms of violence and spatial force—as an opportunity to join the saved.

Conclusion
In this article I have tracked the coproduction of indigeneity and public space through the longue durée of Colcan development. This has not been an effort to indict contemporary
development—indeed, initiatives like Sierra Sur also bring much good to the region—but rather, to learn how today’s dominant approaches to development are impacting public life in Colca. Doing so has entailed describing distinct historical scenes, as they unfold on the same stage, to show how one spatial assemblage, the reducción, mediates Colcan personhood. A notion of sinful and potentially subversive natives, also engaged in interesting cultural practices whose recuperation could prove useful to the realm, led the Spanish to fundamentally reconfigure the space and time of Andean everyday life. Today, as Queen Sofia’s visit and Sierra Sur’s contests suggest, the square remains a site of power-laden managed encounters in which investors and investment seekers are sharply distinguished.

However, as Lefebvre argues, it is impossible to “produce a space with a perfectly clear understanding of cause and effect, motive and implication” (1991, 37). As much as reducción space stages formalized encounters, it is also a site of backtalk and creativity, which is often equally essential to indigeneity’s public production, including the non-Hispanic practices and Quechua language used in Yanque’s colonial yet newly refurbished church, thanks to the Spanish Agency. Or, for example, at a recent fiesta when Yanqueños poured chicha on the plaza’s ground to toast Tayta Mismi, Yanque’s mountain deity.

Tracking the uses and users of built space over time allows contemporary development to be situated in its deep ethnographic context. Investing in indigeneity has a long history. The built environment is a crucial site for observing indigeneity in the making, allowing one to historicize its contemporary importance as far more than an “invention” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) or the touching-down of a transnational paradigm. Andean space and time were radically reconfigured as Toledo’s reducciones took form. The reducción’s messianic bent, its horizon of salvation, and its staging of an unfolding indigenous potential count among its most important long-term legacies. With a flourishing, self-reliant indigeneity—an Andean utopia—now imagined as the beginning and end of Colcan development, messianic time is again being layered into calendar time. Development there today is a supervised internal progress, organized by the time it takes the residents of Colca’s communities to deploy their human capital for salvation through the market, to be primed for inclusion, and to come to the public square as fully developed indigenous selves.

Notes

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1. See Morris 2013 for a discussion of Inca urbanism.
2. Chakra is Quechua for farmland. The term is often translated as a “living” space of mutual care (Grillo Fernandez 1998, 127).


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