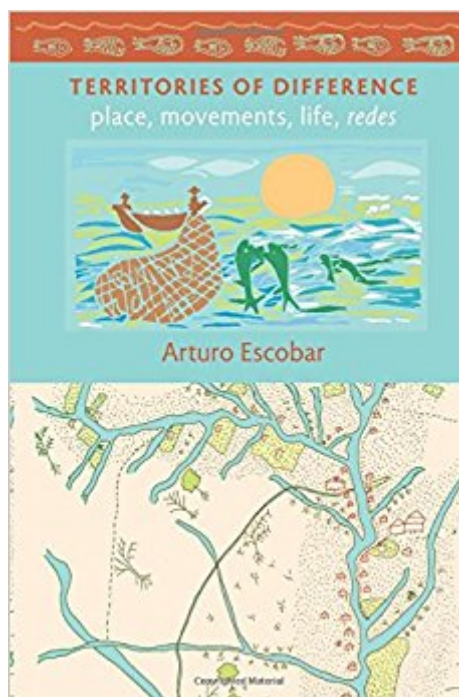




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# Territories Of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes (New Ecologies For The Twenty-First Century)



## Synopsis

In *Territories of Difference*, Arturo Escobar, author of the widely debated book *Encountering Development*, analyzes the politics of difference enacted by specific place-based ethnic and environmental movements in the context of neoliberal globalization. His analysis is based on his many years of engagement with a group of Afro-Colombian activists of Colombia's Pacific rainforest region, the *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (PCN). Escobar offers a detailed ethnographic account of PCN's visions, strategies, and practices, and he chronicles and analyzes the movement's struggles for autonomy, territory, justice, and cultural recognition. Yet he also does much more. Consistently emphasizing the value of local activist knowledge for both understanding and social action and drawing on multiple strands of critical scholarship, Escobar proposes new ways for scholars and activists to examine and apprehend the momentous, complex processes engulfing regions such as the Colombian Pacific today. Escobar illuminates many interrelated dynamics, including the Colombian government's policies of development and pluralism that created conditions for the emergence of black and indigenous social movements and those movements' efforts to steer the region in particular directions. He examines attempts by capitalists to appropriate the rainforest and extract resources, by developers to set the region on the path of modernist progress, and by biologists and others to defend this incredibly rich biodiversity "hot-spot" from the most predatory activities of capitalists and developers. He also looks at the attempts of academics, activists, and intellectuals to understand all of these complicated processes. *Territories of Difference* is Escobar's effort to think with Afro-Colombian intellectual-activists who aim to move beyond the limits of Eurocentric paradigms as they confront the ravages of neoliberal globalization and seek to defend their place-based cultures and territories.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“[A] wonderful, demanding, and courageous book. . . . It offers a theoretically informed perspective on social movements in the global South, anchored in questions specific to these actors and in dialogue with them. With his book, Escobar contributes an innovative method to the study of social movements.” - Pierre Hamel, *American Journal of Sociology*

“This book, magisterial in its command of an impressive range of theory and literature, is a provocative and cutting-edge guide to thinking about place, capital, nature, development, identity, and networks. . . . [I]n the sheer power, depth, and complexity of the analysis and in the author’s ethical engagement and belief in the possibility of worlds and knowledges otherwise, the book is a superb achievement.” - Peter Wade, *Hispanic American Historical Review*

“Territories of Difference will become a classic . . . [I]t is a mesmerizingly ambitious and provocative inquiry into social, cultural, biological, and economic life in the 21st century. It is also a highly original approach to the study of contemporary forms of domination and resistance that challenges Eurocentric conceptions of capitalist globalization and calls for alternatives to modernity.” - Ulrich Oslender, *American Ethnologist*

“A wonderful, massive tour de force by one of today’s leading anthropologists. Arturo Escobar links his ethnography to a series of larger pressing debates about globalization and development, biology and nature, and social movements and network theory. The result is a book of astonishing virtuosity, range, and insight. It is nothing less than a model for the dense, interdisciplinary, polyglot theoretical analysis needed to understand experience anywhere in the world today.” - Orin Starn, author of *Ishi’s Brain: In Search of America’s Last “Wild” Indian* and co-editor of *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*

“Books, like wines, take time to mature and develop their full strength. Then they are a delight, and not just for specialists. Arturo Escobar’s eloquent, engaged, and extremely well informed narrative of the Afro-Colombian movements in their struggles to defend their territories and ways of life is, to my mind, the best book on social movements to have appeared in years. It combines, in a unique way, the minutely traced complexity of the struggles and their evolving contexts with much broader issues that appeal to and impact all of us, such as biodiversity, alternatives to development, sustainability of life on earth, and

social and cognitive justice. We, academics, students, activists of social movements, cannot but be powerfully interpellated by this landmark book, and can only honor it by reading it attentively, as one savors a good wine. — Boaventura de Sousa Santos, editor of *Another Knowledge Is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*

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“The product of a lifetime of work on the pitfalls of development, Arturo Escobar’s new book is an engaging and engaged effort to bring together knowledge from Western academia and from Afro-Colombian activists. Through his own blend of discursive theory, he makes academia listen, in the words of one of his local interlocutors, to the ‘drumming’ of a place subjected to capital but resistant to it, brightly illuminating at once the geopolitics of knowledge and of modern empires. — Fernando Coronil, author of *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*

“This book invites us all into alternative projects of world-making. Never losing sight of the forces pushing back at us or the colonizing power of Western thinking, Arturo Escobar marshals an extraordinary array of intellectual resources and social networks to galvanize hopeful action. He grounds his honest yet truly inspiring vision in the place-based knowledge and global activism of his longstanding collaborators, the and resilient and resourceful Afro-Colombian activists of the Pacific region. — J. K. Gibson-Graham, authors of *A Postcapitalist Politics* and *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*

“Arturo Escobar brings his signature commitments — a focus on the materiality of place, nature, and environmental politics, and a recognition of difference and the inescapable histories of coloniality — to an analysis of regional ecological and cultural struggles in Colombia. It is a singularly original contribution, both empirically and theoretically, which forces us to confront the real complexities of capitalism, identities, and political struggle. This book should be required reading for everyone interested in contemporary forms of globalization and economies, as well as the social movements

organized against them. • Lawrence Grossberg, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

"A wonderful, massive tour de force by one of today's leading anthropologists. Arturo Escobar links his ethnography to a series of larger pressing debates about globalization and development, biology and nature, and social movements and network theory. The result is a book of astonishing virtuosity, range, and insight. It is nothing less than a model for the dense, interdisciplinary, polyglot theoretical analysis needed to understand experience anywhere in the world today."--Orin Starn, author of *Ishi's Brain: In Search of America's Last "Wild" Indian* and co-editor of *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*

This is a complex book and takes on the intersection of development conservation history, social movements and political narrative in one of the most difficult places to work, Colombia. It is one of those books that really rewards a careful reading and re-reading. But most importantly it illuminates a huge dynamic of development that is rooted in social movements that is having extraordinary impact in Latin America, and integrates it with globalization and the politics of nature. Its very clearly written but the topic is demanding. Students can really see what political ecology is about in this amazing volume. If you want to understand how the tropical future will work, this is the book to read.

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